



Marketing factors affecting the use of a fitness center in Bangkok: A case study of the PAC sports center

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Abstract

This research aimed to study the behavior of customer in using the service of a fitness center and factors that influence the decisions to use the fitness center in Bangkok. It was thus a case study of the PAC Sport Center. The framework of the study includes the theory of the strategic marketing mix (7 P's of marketing) and the findings of the research were be used as a guide to set a strategic marketing mix for the fitness center. The researcher sampling (purposive sampling) was from the service users of The PAC Sport Center and comprised 400 persons and managers of the center. The instrument used in this study was a questionnaire together with a structured interview that the researcher created which passed a quality check of the tool which uses determination of the exact structure (construct validity) by calculating the consistency index (index of item objective congruence) according to the experts' and the confidence or reliability was determined by monitoring the data centers (data triangulation). An effective marketing strategy to the fitness center is to focus on the service that is determined primarily by especially the customers' needs. This requires the development of a service point and consideration of the price charged at a rate that customers can afford and are willing to pay. The process of communication between the service and the provider can hopefully lead to transfer information for improvement in service provision and effective promotion. More important is how the client is made to feel comfortable in every way, and the meeting of the desired service and value for the money they paid.

Keywords: Marketing, fitness center, sports center, management.

Introduction

Current economic and social growth with progress in science and technology are likely to grow even more. Man will be a major force in developing countries in accordance with the situation and development trends in the future wellbeing of a community (Thobile, 2018; Nicolaidis, 2018; Pongpeng, 2018; Somphong et al. (2019). The three most common reasons for using a fitness center are to keep healthy, develop physical fitness and relax. The World Health Organization (WHO) has accepted the prominence of, and promoted a policy to determine the Ottawa Charter in 1986 in order to improve the quality of life in areas with an emphasis on public health policy, which includes exercise and a healthy sport that consistent with national development plans, No. 5 (2012-2016). This must be focused on achievement and social development of a high quality and healthy operation including managing enterprise integration by allowing all stakeholders to participate in exercise and sports as a tool to improve the quality of life in society and arrive at authenticity as agreed with by Nicolaidis, (2018). Instilling sportsmanship in the values and culture that are handed down from one generation to the next is an important aspect as well. People tend to join in sporting activities for diverse reasons, such as losing weight, developing muscles and reducing body fat levels. In addition it helps to prevent downheartedness and often improves one's self-esteem and body image. Any sports club's main purposes must be to offer quality and enjoyable sports participation and have all members perform optimally but optimal marketing is also critical. While some people join for fun and enjoyment for others identity issues lead them to participate in fitness center settings



often more so than apparent health benefits. Many consider the enjoyment and social interaction in a fitness center to be a key reasons to participate and be physically active.

The quality of life is important and it is the key to driving growth of economic and social growth and this drive people look for real things (Nicolaidis, 2014). One thing we can do to encourage people to have a better quality of life is to exercise both the body and mind. When the two things are to be strengthened, our bodies are healthy and able to work better and allow us to live more effectively. There are constantly reports that the reason why men and women don't exercise is due to the lack of time and a suitable venue and not enough facilities are available for the population. "Typical informal and flexible sports settings are commercial health centres and gyms, informal groups and individual participation in the public space, all of which make participants less dependent on formal structures such as membership obligations, opening hours and the availability of specific sports facilities" (Deelen et al., 2019:2).

The close location and well-resourced facilities of a sports center are powerful tool which allow the exercise behavior of the population to improve. We should be encouraged to understand the notion of exercise development and promotion correctly. Although the growth and decline of human body is controlled by natural effects, exercise is a natural way that one can positively affect the body with full growth potential and strength with integrity. This also functions to slow down the aging process and the development of both the anatomy and physiology or the ability to work is enhanced. If the use of organs is incorrectly handled and inappropriate, this leads to slow growth, and ultimately incomplete and unhealthy organs in the body. Degradation of organ function is more likely to be the cause of bringing on a range of diseases. Convenient sport facilities are an important factor in the motivation to make behavioral health care a priority issue.

Currently market products and services related to health are growing at a high rate and compete fiercely with others. They are also notable by the goods and services related to health that are increasingly widespread in the market, including healthy food or a business that provides services related to health (fitness, spa, sports club, etc.) The awareness created about the health of people is increasing and as a result, many branded products need to consider various issues such as the probability of current business operations marketing being successfully integrated (University of Southern California, 2008; Ottawa Charter, 1986). Nowadays there is clearly is adequate information to develop, apply and appraise interventions aimed at augmenting the health promotion profile of sports clubs through marketing that is effective.

The Ottawa Charter states the significance of settings in health promotion. It also accentuated the importance of finding new settings in which to conduct health promotion. Health promotion is certainly not the responsibility of only health sector, it invariably extends beyond healthy lifestyles to individual well-being. In seeking to promote any type of sports club, and to succeed one must prudently consider the specific setting and its characteristics, such as inter alia the organizational culture, and the approaches of key stakeholders, and the wider social, economic and political context (Poland et al., 2000). One of the interesting trends in the health business is fitness center growth, which is popular among consumers nowadays resulting in an increasing number of consumers having a choice in the decision to use the services offered. Therefore, the competition in the market has several factors which consumers consider when choosing to use services for fitness and cost is one factor while services on offer is another. The latter must always be top-notch hence Ramphal and Nicolaidis, (2014), stress the importance of service quality excellence at all costs.

Borgers determined that sports participation in non-traditional settings like gym activities appears seemed to be compelled by standards related to healthy lifestyle and physical look. But members of sports clubs are more likely to be involved in sports because of sociability and



performance-related objectives. Either way, businesses in the field of sports need to use various marketing strategies to attract consumers to become members and take advantage of their physical location and pricing strategies. For this reason, this research focuses on the behavior and the use of the fitness center include market factors (Kotler, 2011) impacting the use of the fitness center in Bangkok, This is done by using the framework of the study including the theory of marketing mix strategy (7 P's of marketing). The findings of the research will be used as a guide to set a strategic marketing mix for fitness centers in Thailand so as to be helpful in accommodating the increasing competition effectively. It may also serve as a guide to those interested in this business to use it as needed for development of the business of the fitness center in the future.

Objectives

- (1) To study the behavior of customer who use the services of the PAC Sports Center.
- (2) To study the marketing factors for use of the service from The PAC Sport Center by using the framework of the theory of the marketing mix strategy (7 P's of marketing).
- (3) The results of the study may be used as a guide to set a strategic marketing mix path for the fitness center business.

Methodology

The population in this study was the members and users of the PAC Sports Center in the period between January and December 2019 which amounted to 15,500 persons. The sample was obtained by purposive sampling and included 400 respondents including three managerial role persons. The tools used in this study included a questionnaire and a structured interview technique (Boontam, 2009) which the researcher created and passed the quality check of a pilot study. The determination of the exact structure (construct validity) and calculating the consistency index method (index of item objective congruence) was based on consideration of what experts stated. Reliability was assessed via monitoring the data using triangulation. The research process was as follows:

- (1) The researcher studied and analyzed the meaning and elements of the marketing mix factor using the theories of the mix strategy marketing (7 P's of marketing) that analyzed the behavior to be measured as outcomes from the relevant documents.
- (2) The researcher extracted the elements and marketing mix factors that represent the behavior of customers who use a service from a fitness center and which influence their choice for selected fitness center. This data came from the analysis of relevant documents such as academic peer-reviewed journals etc.
- (3) The researcher create a comprehensive set of behavioral questions about the use of the fitness center and the marketing mix factors that influence the choice of the fitness center selection.
- (4) The Research Commission advisory board examined the validity of the questions.
- (5) The researcher put the questions to the experts in marketing and sports management to determine behavior of a customer for selecting a fitness center and considered marketing mix factors that influence the selection choice of the fitness center.



- (6) The researcher improved the questions posed depending on the advice of experts and calculated the consistency index (index of item objective congruence: IOC) to determine the exact structure (construct validity) of the questions.
- (7) The researcher tried out of that questionnaire with 30 customers who use the fitness center.
- (8) The researcher determined the reliability of the questionnaire by means of the Cronbach Alpha (Cronbach's Alpha Reliability).
- (9) The researcher use the final questionnaire to collect data from a sample of 400 respondents set by compliance with the operational framework.
- (10) The researcher analyzed data from the questionnaire by using descriptive statistics in order to know the characteristics of the sample percentage (%), mean (\bar{X}) and standard deviation (SD).
- (11) The results from this study were summarized and discussed in order to be used as a guide in determining the marketing mix strategy of fitness center.
- (12) The research report was presented to the experts and research advisors also then summarized the comments and proposals for improvement.

Results

The research aimed to study the behavior and factors that influence the decision of people to use the fitness center in order to determine the appropriate marketing mix strategy. The results of the research, conclusions, discussion and suggestions from the research are as follows:

- (1) Overview of customer of the PAC sport center. The majority of respondents were male aged between 20-30 years old and either professional employees or students. The average income of respondents was 10,001-20,000 baht.
- (2) Analysis behavior of customer who use the service of the PAC sport center. The customer of the PAC sport center through the questionnaire showed that they are experienced in the use of the fitness center in Bangkok and others. Most of them choose the comprehensive fitness center service. The motivation for their decision to use of the fitness center was well-being. The frequency of use of the fitness center was at the weekends and they exercised in the fitness center for 2 hours about 1-2 times per week between 6.00 – 9.00 pm. Customer booking is generally by phone and the respondents were informed about the fitness center information by friends or acquaintances. Trends suggest that there will be an increase in use the center.
- (3) Data analysis marketing mix factors that influenced the choice for selection established the following:
 - (3.1) The products and services factors are important as they lead to the fitness center offering a variety of physical activities to choose from their services available. This was at a high level.
 - (3.2) The price factor has focused on the reduced prices with subscription to groups. This was at a high level.
 - (3.3) The distribution channels that are so important have a system of payment for the services with convenience and a multi-channel for service are in the priority of high level.



(3.4) Marketing and promotion factors that give priority to the fitness center for offers and activities to members were also at a high level.

(3.5) Personnel factors focus on who is working in the fitness center and if they are eager to provide great service. The focus was at the highest level.

(3.6) Service process factors are also important to ensure the safety of the services. This focus was at the highest level as well.

(3.7) Physical environmental factors that have an emphasis on cleanliness of a stadium and fitness room are also on the highest level.

(3.8) Overall marketing mix factors were found to be very important to the marketing mix, overall service levels and the focus is on the aspects of the physical environment. The factors that are considered to be minor are the service price, the distribution channel of products and human resources services and marketing support respectively.

(4) Establishing the truth through the marketing mix (7 P's of marketing).

(4.1) Product: Product and selection of a service for the PAC Sport Center is created by the products or services based on the needs of consumers. The PAC Sport Center has studied consumers' demands for a fitness center and other services use in the surrounding area. That includes the facility sizes and offerings of a wide variety of exercises.

(4.2) Price: Prices of the service providers probably do not always go according to their own needs, but are based on the price that consumers can afford and are willing to pay. That is the basis of the price charged by the PAC Sport Center through the survey about the purchasing power of consumers in the area that can afford to pay. Price is established by appropriate quality service that consumers' are willing to pay for the service.

(4.3) Place: Consumers may be not interested in places that are far away or close to any of the other desired services, but the emphasis is on comfort. This means that even if it takes time to travel, if the trip is comfortable, people will travel by either mass transit or highway including bus links to the company providing the fitness service. Consumers may thus ignore how far a center is and be willing to travel because it is convenient and comfortable. Consumer focus is generally on safety aspects and how the company operates and is informed to an extent by reputation and required certification.

(4.4) Promotion: Communication and promotional activity must be done by effectively communicating with consumers and communication by word of mouth to friends, relatives or acquaintances is vital. This is considered to be the best marketing tool and need not cost anything, but the heart of the service is key and must be taken very seriously.

In addition to its location, the sport center can use promotional activities to the customers at shopping centers including communication with the residents of the village, condominiums or even workers in factories and industrial estates located near the sport center through a series of promotional activities such as road shows. Entrepreneurs are vital to the clients or customers, and the concept of 7Ps will make a marketing plan a powerful and easy strategy to reach customers or clients. Services must be priced according to the clients' abilities to be able to pay them. Services must be easily accessible on the basis of convenience. Communication channels with customers and clients must be carefully selected as a medium by which to send needed marketing information both directly and indirectly.



(5) People: The PAC Sport Center emphasizes the need of personnel to work well as a primary concept using the right people for the right job. The management personnel are thus critical in this regard as they are the people who encourage the service quality and make sure all is run efficiently and that services offer a strategic advantage over the competitors. Employees must have the skills and knowledge to provide the service for consumers with a professional demeanor. Personnel who work in sport centers are the front face image of the organization and consumer expectations in the market must be met by them. The key members in the transaction process are: 1) The consumer who is paying for goods or services 2) Those responsible for decisions are a catalyst for purchasing decisions to the consumer 3) Production approaches in the organization which produces the service 4) Employees who serve the clients 5) Engaging in business partnership, with all stakeholders of the organization.

(6) Process: Process is an activity related to the procedures and practices in service. It is important to offer things to consumers by delivering services quickly, accurately and give consumers a good impression. Creating value or added value for the product by using and developing relationships between the customer and the vendor, makes the experience worthwhile and creates a good long-standing relationship.

(7) Physical evidence: Establish activities and present the physical characteristics of the PAC Sport Center through to consumer's service by building quality of both the physical and the form of services offered to create value for consumers by using aspects such as the clean appearance of workers, quality of administration and speedy service provision. The physical environment is an important aspect of an effective marketing strategy for the sport or fitness center which focuses on service first. The consumer or customer desires that their needs and wants are met. One must also consider the price charged at a rate that customers can afford and are willing to pay. The process of communication between the customer and service providers must be good in order to improve the service and support the promotion of the venue. More importantly, is how the customers feel and if the desired service and value for the money paid is attained.

Conclusion and recommendations

Based on the research and study of textbooks, articles and research papers related to the business of a sport center it was found that the use of a fitness center by different professions is impacted upon by a range of external factors that involve the decision to purchase a service for sport or fitness. For example, some factors include 1) Psychological factors including motivation, personality, perception / learning. Values / beliefs / attitudes and Lifestyle. 2) The Markets Service factors (7 P's of marketing) consisting of products and services, pricing, distribution channels, promotion, people, process and physical appearance 3) Social and cultural factors influencing an individual, group, family, culture and social class. 4) Risk Factors consisting of the risk of system performance, financial risks social risks, physiological risk and psychological risks which will affect the decision to purchase services. The ideal concept of the health promoting sports centers is a based on a grouping of prior literature and theory and information on the daily activities of the PAC Sports Center.

A limitation of this study is in the fact that there is to an extent insufficient information to develop, implement and evaluate provisional interventions aimed at augmenting the promotion profile of the sports center. It is also recommended that future studies more fully explore the area with a far larger sample.

Evaluation of post-purchase service shows customers may either be satisfied or dissatisfied. It is the duty and responsibility of the operator, personnel and any state officials to help in developing the business and services more effectively. The marketing strategy of the sport or fitness center should focus especially on the effectiveness of the marketing mix strategy for business in the fitness center to grow in that that the effect is the satisfaction of the customers' who use the sport or fitness center services. It is strongly recommended that to maintain



consumer loyalty in buying a service as a repeat client in the future, that promotion should be based on individual activities.

It is important to be a product-related sport center that people need to be convinced to buy into. The venue must be clean and the price good. Good promotion is essential, so one needs to think carefully about the channels you will employ and what attitude you have to get the message across to people seeking a healthier life. The employees used are also vital to success and must be committed people. Physical evidence of the venue must give a sense of reassurance to customers so that they can make an informed decision to stay as members. Getting all stakeholders on board is critical.

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