

Factors Influencing Consumer Behaviour Towards Fitness Products and Services in Thoothukudi District

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ABSTRACT

The fitness industry has grown significantly in recent years due to increasing health consciousness, changing lifestyles, and greater awareness of physical and mental well-being. Consumers are increasingly investing in fitness products such as nutritional supplements, fitness equipment, and wearable devices, as well as services including gym memberships, yoga centres, personal training, and wellness programmes. Understanding the factors that influence consumer behaviour towards these products and services is important for marketers, fitness service providers, and policymakers.

The present study examines the factors influencing consumer behaviour towards fitness products and services in Thoothukudi District. The study focuses on variables such as product quality, price, brand image, health awareness, promotional activities, social media influence, and availability. Primary data were collected from 200 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The collected data were analysed using Percentage Analysis, Weighted Average Score Analysis, and the Chi-square Test.

The findings reveal that product quality is the most important factor influencing consumer purchase decisions, followed by health awareness and brand image. The study also indicates that consumers aged 21 to 30 constitute the largest group of fitness product and service users. Furthermore, age has a significant relationship with the utilisation of fitness services. The study offers useful suggestions for improving product quality, service delivery, customer satisfaction, affordability, and promotional strategies. The findings contribute to a better understanding of consumer preferences and provide useful insights for fitness businesses and future researchers.

Keywords: Consumer Behaviour, Fitness Products, Fitness Services, Health Awareness, Product Quality, Thoothukudi District.

Introduction

Consumer behaviour refers to the process through which individuals identify their needs, search for information, evaluate alternatives, purchase products and services, use them, and assess their satisfaction after consumption. It is an important area of study because consumer decisions are influenced by a combination of economic, psychological, social, cultural and technological factors. Understanding consumer behaviour enables businesses to identify changing customer expectations, design appropriate products and services, develop effective marketing strategies, and establish long-term relationships with customers.

In recent years, health, fitness and wellness have gained considerable importance in the lives of consumers. Rapid changes in lifestyle, sedentary work patterns, irregular food habits, lack of physical activity, increasing work-related stress and growing health consciousness have encouraged individuals to pay greater attention to their physical and mental well-being. The increasing awareness of lifestyle-related health problems has further motivated consumers to adopt preventive and fitness-oriented practices. Consequently, fitness is no longer viewed merely as a recreational activity but has increasingly become an important component of a healthy lifestyle.

The expansion of the fitness industry has resulted in the availability of a wide range of products and services. Fitness products include exercise equipment, sportswear, fitness accessories, wearable devices, nutritional products and other health-related products. Fitness services include gyms, fitness centres, yoga and meditation centres, personal training, wellness programmes, aerobics, sports training and other specialised fitness activities. The availability of these alternatives provides consumers with greater choice while simultaneously making their purchasing and selection decisions more complex.

The development of digital technology has also transformed the way consumers access and evaluate fitness products and services. Smartphones, social media platforms, online shopping applications, fitness applications, smartwatches and wearable fitness trackers have made health and fitness information easily accessible. Consumers can compare product features, prices, brands, customer reviews and service quality before making

purchasing decisions. Social media influencers, online fitness trainers and digital advertisements have also emerged as important sources of information that can influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. Therefore, contemporary fitness consumption is influenced not only by traditional factors but also by digital and social environments.

Economic and demographic changes have further contributed to the development of the fitness market. Increasing disposable income, urbanisation, improved educational levels and greater exposure to health-related information have encouraged consumers to allocate a portion of their income towards fitness and wellness activities. Consumers are becoming more conscious of product quality, safety, effectiveness, convenience, affordability and brand reputation. At the same time, they increasingly expect personalised services, flexible membership options, modern facilities and professional guidance from fitness service providers.

Consumer behaviour towards fitness products and services is influenced by several factors. Price remains an important consideration, particularly for consumers who have limited disposable income. Product and service quality, brand image, perceived value, convenience, accessibility, promotional activities and customer service can also influence purchase decisions. In addition, family members, friends, peer groups, social media communities and fitness professionals may influence consumers' preferences. Personal factors such as age, gender, occupation, income, education, lifestyle and health consciousness may further contribute to differences in consumer behaviour.

The fitness industry in India has experienced significant changes as consumers increasingly recognise the importance of maintaining physical fitness and adopting healthier lifestyles. The growing popularity of gyms, yoga centres, fitness programmes, sports activities, home-workout equipment, nutritional products and wearable fitness technologies indicates a shift in consumer preferences. The COVID-19 pandemic also accelerated interest in home-based workouts, online fitness programmes and digital health and wellness services, creating new patterns of fitness consumption. As a result, fitness providers are required to understand both traditional and emerging consumer expectations.

In Tamil Nadu, changing lifestyles and increasing awareness of health and wellness have created opportunities for the development of fitness-related products and services. Thoothukudi District, with its urban and semi-urban population, educational institutions, business activities and changing consumption patterns, provides a relevant setting for studying consumer behaviour in the fitness sector. Consumers in the district have access to different fitness alternatives, including gyms, fitness centres, yoga and wellness services, fitness equipment and nutritional products. However, consumers may differ considerably in their preferences, purchasing frequency, expenditure patterns and evaluation of fitness products and services.

The behaviour of consumers in the fitness sector is particularly important because fitness products and services involve both tangible and intangible aspects. While products such as fitness equipment, sportswear and wearable devices can be evaluated based on physical characteristics and specifications, services such as gym memberships, personal training and wellness programmes depend heavily on service quality, trainer expertise, facilities, convenience and customer experience. Therefore, fitness businesses need to understand the complete decision-making process of consumers rather than focusing only on price or promotional activities.

Despite the growing importance of the fitness sector, consumer preferences are not uniform. Some consumers may give greater importance to affordability, while others may prioritise quality, brand reputation, advanced facilities, professional trainers or convenience. Younger consumers may be more influenced by social media and digital technologies, whereas other consumer groups may depend more on recommendations from family, friends or professionals. These differences make it necessary to examine the factors that influence consumer behaviour within a specific geographical and socio-economic context.

A systematic understanding of consumer behaviour can help fitness product manufacturers, retailers, gym owners, fitness trainers, wellness centres and marketers develop customer-oriented strategies. Knowledge of consumers' expectations can assist businesses in improving service quality, introducing suitable products, designing appropriate pricing strategies, strengthening promotional activities and enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty. It can also help identify the challenges faced by consumers while selecting and purchasing fitness products and services.

The study seeks to examine the purchasing behaviour, preferences and factors influencing consumers' decisions regarding fitness-related products and services. It also attempts to understand the role of demographic characteristics, price, quality, brand image, convenience, social influence, promotional activities and other relevant factors in shaping consumer behaviour.

The study is significant because understanding consumer behaviour in the fitness sector can contribute to both academic knowledge and managerial decision-making. From an academic perspective, it provides an

opportunity to examine changing consumption patterns in the emerging health and wellness market. From a managerial perspective, the findings may help fitness businesses and marketers formulate effective customer-oriented strategies. Therefore, the study aims to provide meaningful insights into the changing behaviour, expectations and preferences of consumers towards fitness products and services in Thoothukudi District and to offer appropriate suggestions for improving customer satisfaction and strengthening the fitness industry.

Objectives of the study

- To analyse consumer behaviour towards fitness products and services.
- To identify the major factors influencing consumers' purchase decisions regarding fitness products and services.
- To examine the level of consumer satisfaction towards fitness products and services.
- To provide suitable suggestions for improving the quality and effectiveness of fitness products and services

Research methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the factors influencing consumer behaviour towards fitness products and services in Thoothukudi District. Both primary and secondary data were used for the study. Primary data were collected from 200 respondents through a structured questionnaire, while secondary data were gathered from journals, books, magazines, websites, and research articles related to consumer behaviour and the fitness industry. Respondents were selected using the convenience sampling method. The collected data were classified, tabulated, and analysed using various statistical tools such as Percentage Analysis, Weighted Average Score Analysis, Chi-Square Test, Correlation Analysis, and Multiple Regression Analysis. These tools helped identify the significant factors influencing consumer purchasing decisions and assess the relationship between demographic variables and consumer behaviour towards fitness products and services in the study area.

Review of literature

Kotler and Keller (2019) the research stated that consumer purchasing decisions are highly influenced by product quality, brand image, and perceived value. Their study emphasized that consumers tend to prefer products and services that provide greater benefits and satisfaction. In the fitness industry, quality and brand reputation play a significant role in attracting and retaining customers.

Schiffman and Kanuk (2020) this paper examined the impact of psychological and social factors on consumer behaviour. The study found that health consciousness, lifestyle changes, and social influence significantly affect consumers' decisions to purchase fitness products and services. Consumers who are more health-conscious are likely to spend more on fitness-related products and wellness activities.

Gupta and Sharma (2022) this paper investigated consumer preferences towards fitness products and services in India. The findings revealed that health awareness, promotional activities, and digital marketing significantly influence purchasing behaviour. The study also highlighted that social media platforms play an important role in creating awareness and motivating consumers to adopt fitness-oriented lifestyles.

Analysis and interpretation

Table 1: Gender-wise Classification of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	116	58%
Female	84	42%
Total	200	100%

Table 2: Age-wise Classification

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18-20	30	15%
21-30	90	45%
31-40	50	25%

Above 40	30	15%
Total	200	100%

Table 3: Factors Influencing Purchase Decision

Factors	Mean Score	Rank
Product Quality	4.52	I
Health Awareness	4.41	II
Brand Image	4.28	III
Promotional Offers	4.02	IV
Availability	3.95	V
Price	3.88	VI
Social Media Influence	3.76	VII

Interpretation: Product quality ranks first among the factors influencing consumer behaviour, followed by health awareness and brand image.

Chi-square analysis

Null Hypothesis (H₀): There is no significant relationship between age and usage of fitness services.

Calculated p-value = 0.032

Since p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is a significant relationship between age and usage of fitness services.

Findings of the study

- The study reveals that 58 per cent of the respondents are male, indicating a slightly higher representation of male consumers among the 200 respondents.
- The 21–30 years age group constitutes the largest proportion of respondents (45 per cent), indicating that young adults represent a major segment of consumers interested in fitness products and services.
- Product quality emerges as the most influential factor in consumers' purchase decisions, with the highest mean score of 4.52, indicating that consumers place considerable importance on quality and effectiveness.
- Health awareness ranks second, with a mean score of 4.41, demonstrating that increasing health consciousness significantly contributes to consumers' interest in fitness products and services.
- Brand image ranks third, with a mean score of 4.28, indicating that consumers consider brand reputation and credibility when making purchasing decisions.
- Promotional offers rank fourth, with a mean score of 4.02, suggesting that discounts and promotional schemes have a considerable influence on consumers' purchase decisions.
- Availability ranks fifth, with a mean score of 3.95, indicating that convenient access to fitness products and services is an important consideration for consumers.
- Price ranks sixth, with a mean score of 3.88, suggesting that although affordability is relevant, consumers give comparatively greater importance to quality, health benefits and brand image.
- Social media influence ranks seventh, with a mean score of 3.76, indicating that digital platforms contribute to consumer awareness and purchase decisions, although their influence is comparatively lower than the other factors examined.
- The Chi-Square analysis confirms a statistically significant relationship between age and usage of fitness services ($p = 0.032$) at the 5 per cent level of significance, indicating that fitness service usage varies significantly across different age groups.
- **Improve Service Quality:** Fitness centres should provide qualified trainers, modern equipment, hygienic facilities, proper safety measures, and personalised fitness guidance to increase consumer satisfaction.
- **Offer Affordable Pricing:** Fitness businesses should introduce reasonable membership fees, flexible payment options, student discounts, and attractive packages to encourage consumers to purchase and continue using fitness products and services.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are put forward:

- Fitness businesses should maintain good product and service quality, as quality is an important factor in consumer purchase decisions.
- Fitness centres should provide modern and well-maintained equipment to meet the expectations of consumers.
- Fitness service providers should offer affordable pricing and flexible membership plans to attract consumers from different income groups.
- Personalised fitness programmes should be introduced based on consumers' age, fitness level and individual needs.
- Fitness centres should employ qualified and experienced trainers to provide proper guidance and support to customers.
- Fitness businesses should use social media and digital platforms to create awareness about their products, services and promotional offers.
- Regular health and fitness awareness programmes should be conducted to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyles.

Conclusion

The study concludes that consumer behaviour towards fitness products and services in Thoothukudi District is influenced by factors such as product quality, health awareness, brand image, promotional offers, availability, price and social media influence. Among these factors, product quality and health awareness are the most important.

The study also shows that consumers are becoming more conscious of their health and fitness. The significant relationship between age and the usage of fitness services indicates that fitness preferences may differ among different age groups.

Therefore, fitness businesses should provide good-quality products and services, affordable prices, personalised fitness programmes and better customer service. Regular customer feedback and health awareness programmes can also help fitness providers understand consumer needs and improve customer satisfaction.

Overall, understanding consumer needs and preferences will help fitness businesses attract customers, improve satisfaction and achieve long-term growth in Thoothukudi District.

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