

Business Operational Analysis of Fitness Gym & Wellness Services

NESTOR C. NATIVIDAD, MBA

Chairperson, College of Management – Atate Campus
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology
Palayan City, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

ROWELL A. DIAZ, MBA

Faculty Member, College of Management – SIC
Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology
San Isidro, Nueva Ecija, Philippines

Abstract:- In fitness gym service setting, it is very important that the tools are ready and the strategy is working effectively. The objective of this study was to understand to business operation in terms of management, marketing, financial and technical facet of selected gym and wellness services together with its problems and prospects.

The descriptive survey method for this study was conducted in order to answer the problems. To gather all needed data –informal observations, interviews and the use of questionnaire-checklist was employed among the respondents namely: eight (8) owners, thirteen (13) instructors and eighty (80) customers of a fitness gym in Cabanatuan City.

All fitness gyms had been registered as sole proprietorship and owned mostly by males. Owners who were capable demanded the hiring of gym instructors. They were all males, mostly married, but not all entitled with benefits like SSS. In terms of compensation, it varies from education and length of service as factors. Students who were in college were the main customers of fitness gym. The preferred fitness gym varies from location, rates, etc. Fitness gyms in the nearest school enjoyed this advantage. Majority of the fitness gyms had been in the operation for four (4) to less than seven (7) years which also offered food and snacks, supplements to its customers. In terms of source of capitalization, most owners sourced it from their personal savings. In terms of revenue, the months of January to March, June and July, and November were classified as peak months.

There were also problems that encountered by the fitness gym owners, instructors, and customers. Fitness gyms had managed to solve the problems. Assessment on the findings of the study could be used as guide for would be entrepreneurs in operating their own fitness gyms.

Keywords:- Fitness Gym; Operational Analysis; Fitness; Cabanatuan; Entrepreneur.

I. INTRODUCTION

Fitness gym is an emergent service industry sector in Cabanatuan City. Nowadays, private health clubs and fitness gyms are a huge global business, and fitness has become a folk movement (Andreasson & Johansson 2014). A fitness gym (also popularly known as fitness center) is a site that gathers fitness-minded individuals seeing the significance in doing physical activities with the use primarily of exercise equipment. Entrepreneurs spend time and money exploiting business ideas. They were able to handle business competition because they used an adaptation strategy to understand customer preferences and other locale-specific requirements (Mamaclay & Subia et al, 2020). The high rate of failure in new venture business, however, indicates a concomitant failure on the part of entrepreneurs to adapt schemes that will work. When aspiring entrepreneur is confronted with a business idea, it is to his best interest to determine its soundness (Roberto G. Medina, 2015). For fitness-minded entrepreneurs, gyms are a growing service industry sector in Cabanatuan City. In 2015, more fitness gyms were registered and added in the list as per record on Cabanatuan City Business Permits and Licenses Division. Opening a fitness gym requires careful planning and research, and the following are aspects of the business that should be considered: marketing, management, technical and financial.

A fitness gym (also known as health club, fitness center, health spa) is a place which houses exercise equipment which primarily consists of free weights including dumbbells, barbells and exercise machines in the main workout area for the purpose of physical exercise. Owning a gym is just like owning any other *business industry*. In the study of MacFarlane et al 2019, the formation of fitness industry registers to impart self-regulation is a common global occurrence. Gyms as service business require machines and equipment but in wider display. In stiff competition, there are innovations that have to come up like the addition of other physical facilities, attractive rates, friendly staff, etc. that can maintain a strong relationship with the customers.

People from all walks of life should explore the importance of having a regular physical activity. According to the survey conducted in 2011 by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute (FNRI) showed that 22.3 percent of Filipino adults are overweight and 6.1 percent are obese. The prevalence of overweight Filipinos is expected to increase significantly by 2015. This was reported by philstar.com as “Phl leads countries with highest obesity levels”. Hence, getting regular exercise is one of the best things that can be done, thus, a place like fitness gym can be considered as an option. Also, according to the WebMD, as reiterated, it helps cut probability of getting heart disease. It's good for blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, energy level, and mood, too, to name just a few of the benefits. Fitness gym simply promotes “physical fitness” as it is helpful for the health. Claire Moxham & Faye Wiseman (2009) in their study, health and fitness market has been described as blandly premium as there is little differentiation between service offerings indicating that there is opportunity for competitive advantage to be achieved by focusing on quality.

Cabanatuan City, as the center of economic and educational activities in the province of Nueva Ecija, has this one kind of source of livelihood for entrepreneurs. Fitness gyms that conduct programs for regular exercises carry many physical and mental health benefits as many Cabanatuëños and people from nearby cities allot time to the gym to improve cardiovascular health and build muscle.

Based on the above premises, a need to study the fitness gym business finds timeliness and relevance for all future entrepreneurs who are interested in establishing this venture.

A. Objectives of the study

The study tried to assess the business operation of fitness gym in the city of Cabanatuan. The specific purposes of the study are as follows: To describe the business operation of fitness gym in Cabanatuan City in terms of: Management aspect that includes type of business ownership; manpower; and management related matters, Marketing aspect under customers; comparative advantages of fitness gym in terms of marketing strategies, Technical aspect on gym equipment and physical facilities; goods/services offered and Financial aspect together with source of initial investment; capitalization; revenues; expenditures and recovery of initial investment. To examine the problems met by the owners/gym instructors in the operation of their fitness gym in terms of management aspect, marketing aspect; technical aspect and financial aspect and to assess the problems met by the customers in the fitness gym and wellness services.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Development and Organization of Fitness Gym

Based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative data from Denmark and Norway, contemporary differences in the distribution and organization of fitness exercise in these two countries are identified. Compared to Norway, Denmark has a relatively weakly developed for-profit fitness sector, combined with a strong tradition for fitness exercise within the non-profit sector (Kasper and Kirkegaard, 2010). In-order to continue to operate the business and management of fitness gym services, there is a need for membership retention. The concept of retention in fitness clubs refers to membership retention (Storbacka, Strandvik & Gronroos, 1994) and is fundamental for the profitability of Gyms and Health Clubs (GHC) (Ferrand, Robinson & Valette, 2010). To this end, GHC have tried to understand their customers in order to acquire better members (Green, 2005) - those who will not quit early.

However, there are a number of aspects in trying to understand a member that require further research. For Talley (2008), there is no simple solution for the problem of retention, but rather several strategies and processes that can be adopted. Retention management tries to deliver an adequate service to the member through several variables that can affect their retention behaviour. Several efforts have contributed to the understanding of the club member and retention: through the influence of satisfaction (Alexandris, Zahariadis, Tsorbatzoudis & Grouios (2004); Bodet, 2006); through attributes perception (Green, 2005, Alexandris et al) and the level of satisfaction has indicated a significant relationship to some area of services (Diaz, 2019).

B. Marketing Management Strategies of Fitness Gym

The strategies available to fitness gyms can be divided, according to the spectrum of the resources they refer to, into: generic (overall) and specific for marketing mix elements. The first category includes the strategies differentiated according to the competitive position (relative market share) – for the leader, challenger, follower and specialist. Another approach belongs to Porter (1980; 1990) and refers to the strategies of cost leadership, differentiation or focus. Often encountered is Ansoff's (1965) product-market matrix with its four strategies. In what follows are presented the overall strategies used by the four categories of competitors, because there may be noticed differences in gyms' approaches to market according to their market position and the specific strategies.

C. Technical Features and Service of Fitness Gym

Papadimitriou and Karteroliotis (2000) used exploratory factor analysis and the QUESC instrument (Kim and Kim, 1995) to examine service-quality expectations of customers in private sports and fitness centres. The study resulted in a four-factor model of: “instructor quality”, “facility attraction and operation”, “program availability”, and “delivery and other services”. Afthinos et al. (2005) also used the QUESC instrument to examine whether different groups of fitness-centre members have different desires with respect to service

delivery. Their survey showed that “cleanliness” was the most important general consideration, and that “professional knowledge”, “responsibility”, and “courtesy” of employees were the highest-ranked aspects of the core service. In addition, they identified several differences in preferences related to gender and age. Differences related to age were also identified by Westerbeek (2000) in a study of Australian sports spectators.

III. METHODOLOGY

The present study adopted the descriptive survey method in order to answer the problems. It is anchored on the choice based on the different ideas of the experts below.

As defined by Sevilla (1984), descriptive survey method is designed to gather information about the present existing conditions. It is helpful in describing the nature of the situation, as it exists at the time of the study. It involves collection of data in order to test hypotheses and to answer questions concerning current status relative to the study.

Padua (1994) similarly opined that the purpose of a descriptive study is to describe the status of events, people or subjects as they exist. He added that descriptive research usually makes some type of comparison, contrasts and correlation, and sometimes, cause and effect relationship.

The descriptive survey method for this study was conducted in order to answer the problems. To gather all needed data –informal observations, interviews and the use of questionnaire-checklist was employed among the respondents namely: eight (8) owners, thirteen (13) instructors and eighty (80) customers of a fitness gym in Cabanatuan City. The researcher also employed the use of the following research techniques to gather all needed data –informal observations, interviews and the use of questionnaire-checklist.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study focused on the operation of fitness gym in Cabanatuan City, which have been in existence from 2013-2015. The description and assessment of the fitness gym are based on the management, marketing, technical and financial aspects of operating a business.

The study employed descriptive research method where informal observations, interviews, and questionnaire-checklist were used as tools in data gathering. The respondents were the 8 owners of the fitness gyms, the 13 gym instructors, and the 80 customers of the 8 fitness gym establishments.

➤ *The status of the fitness gym business in Cabanatuan City in terms of:*

- *Management Aspect*

Single proprietorship is the best preferred type of ownership of fitness gym owners as it is easy to start and only a small amount of capital is required in starting. Of the 8 fitness gyms, three or 37.5% employed two gym instructors for the business operations while another three or 37.5% employed at least one instructor. One or 12.5% had only the ability to employ four instructors while another one or 12.5% had no instructor. Majority of the owners were males. The male owners know more how to accommodate the demands of its customers as fitness program requires training for physical activity, etc. Majority of the owners were married; belonged to the age group of 25-34 years and 35-44 years. As college graduates, owners preferred to be self-employed with their own businesses. All gym instructors were males and aged 15 to 44 years old. There are more married instructors than the singles. Almost half had attained college graduation. Majority of the owners preferred male instructors. They believe males can meet the demand of its customers more particularly on males who greatly comprise more than 70% of the market. Majority of the gym instructors received a salary within a bracket of P351-400. These instructors have already provided long years in service or since the business was established. They are also entitled with other benefits such as meal and transportation allowances. Majority of the fitness gyms or 84.62% provided SSS contribution for their gym instructors.

- *Marketing Aspect*

Majority of the customers of fitness gym aged 16-25 years and according to Al Zaidi, S.M. and Ahmad, S.Z. (2019), the demand for fitness and healthy lifestyle pursuits is high in the region, the market has also expanded greatly to meet this demand, with many high-quality options becoming available.; generally males; singles; residents of Cabanatuan City and Nueva Ecija; and college graduates. In terms of the customers' visiting and using the services of the fitness gyms, majority or 53.35% visited fitness gyms between 5pm to 9pm. Majority also of the customers preferred to visit fitness gyms for three to four days only. Meanwhile, also most with 58.75% of the customers visited fitness gym with their friends or someone. Customers' reasons for fitness membership are: to be healthy, to have a nice body, to relieve stress, to improve athletic ability, to see friends, to socialize, cheaper than buying equipment and to get a break from families. Customers consider factors for choosing a particular gym. Oh et al 2011, regular and effective communications with customer is essential in order to reduce perceived risk and uncertainty, shape expectations, educate the customer, resolve any misunderstandings and explain the options in a jargon-free way. These are the accessibility of the location, equipment and other amenities, cleanliness of the workout area, members, fee, operating hours, well-trained professional staff and classes offered. Fitness gyms maintain their competitive advantages over competitors like: nearness to school and maintained equipment, nearness to school and new equipment, friendly staff, lower rates, cleaner area,

spacious area, more equipment/facilities, and no membership fee. As to marketing strategies, the owners employed promos, discounts, and advertisements.

- *Technical Aspect*

Majority of the fitness gyms have already in the business operation for four to less than seven years. Others are one year to less than four years, seven years to less than ten years, and ten years and above. Majority of the fitness gyms offered food/snacks like bottled water, biscuits, etc. and supplement like Whey protein, Amino 2222, etc. to their customers as additional source of income for the business. Majority of the fitness gyms are equipped with weight plates (515), dumbbells (416), straight bars (31), stationary bikes (24), treadmill (24), barbells (23), triceps bar (22), flat bench press (20), ez curl bar (19), etc. For physical facilities, the fitness gym had sufficient lighting (34), fire extinguisher (14), comfort room (13), electric fan and ceiling fan (12), sound system (8), refrigerator (7), parking space (6), fire alarm system (5), locker (4), etc. The services offered by the fitness gyms were as follows: weightlifting, personal training, aerobics, zumba, wall climbing, etc. Half of fitness gyms do not employ membership fee to customers. Majority of the fitness gyms have changed their gym equipment mostly on stationary and elliptical bikes, and treadmills which usually with shorter useful life. Among the innovations employed by fitness gym are new equipment, lower rates on services, availability of snacks and bar, separate gym for women and availability of supplements. For protection holdups and robbery, fitness gyms secured their establishment as of the following: coordinated with PNP/Bantay Bayan, hired security guard and installed CCTV camera, make someone sleeps during at night in the establishment and with secured gate in the area.

- *Financial Aspect*

Fitness gyms owners, 87.5%, used savings as sources of initial investment in putting up their business; while 12.5% of them used a combination of savings and borrowings. Two fitness gyms (25%) have the highest initial investment amounting to P600,000 and above. Others are in the range of P400,000 to less than P500,000, P300,000 to less than P400,000, P200,000 to less than P300,000, and P100,000 to less than P200,000. In terms of present capital, majority is already in the range of P300,000 to less than P400,000. Others are also already in the brackets P500,000 to less than P600,000 and P600,000 and above. One gym is in the lowest bracket of P200,000 to less than P300,000. In terms of revenue, the months of January to March, June and July, and November are classified as peak months with good revenues. Meanwhile, months with low sales are recorded in May, September, and October. Highest sales on daily basis has a record of P5,000 and above while the lowest is ranging from P100-P199. Fitness gyms to break even in the operation must earn in the range of less than P500 to P3,500. Gyms with higher operating expenses like rent, salaries of personnel, etc. have the highest target of sales on daily basis. In terms of expenditures, fitness gyms incur monthly expenses for: electricity ranging from less than P2,000 to P10,000 and

above, water ranging from less than P500 to P2,501 and above, space rental ranging from P9,001 to P12,001 and above. Other expenses also incurred by the business are supplies, repairs and maintenance, insurance, permits and licenses, and transportation. Majority or 50% of the fitness gyms recovered their investment for 3-4 years. Others recovered faster their investment for 1-2 years. Only 1 fitness gym has not yet recovered the investment.

- *Problems Met by the Owners/Gym Instructors in the Operation of their Fitness Gyms in terms of:*

- Problems Met by Gym Owners

- *Management*

Fitness gym owners met problems with their instructors such as tardiness and absenteeism. They need to hire and recruit back-up instructor for sustainability purpose. It should also be noted that “recruitment” has been identified by Papadimitriou and Karteroliotis (2000) as a prerequisite for their factor of “instructor quality”. Moreover, “recruitment” has been emphasised by Afthinos et al. (2005) as an important aspect of professional knowledge. Dishonesty in recording and remitting the sales of the business and having a “moody” attitude are also experienced by some fitness gym owners in the operation.

- *Marketing Aspect of fitness gym*

The problems encountered by the fitness gym owners in marketing are in relation with its customers, as follows: disobeying gym policy, customers compare services from other gyms; non-payment of charge/bills; minor theft cases; and customers with health problem in the leisure centre. In a study of leisure centres in the Grampian region of Scotland, Tawse and Keogh (1998) found that the key quality issues for customers included: “value for money”, “health and safety”, “service guidelines” (for the education of customers and instructors), “class objectives”, and “shorter modules”.

- *Technical Aspect of fitness*

In an attempt to define the dimensions of fitness-service attributes, Chelladurai et al. (1987) collected questionnaire data from Canadian fitness-club members. Five dimensions were defined: “professional services”, “consumer services”, “peripheral services”, “facilities and equipment”, and “secondary services”. Of these, “facilities and equipment” was the most influential dimension, whereas “secondary services” (such as bars and restaurants) had the least influence. The problems encountered by the fitness gym owners in technical aspect of the business are as follows: bad weather, long business hours, prone to robbery due to evening operation, location not strategic, power interruption, limited facilities, and lack of other fitness services offered. The “technical quality” identified by Groenroos (1990, 2000) corresponds to the category of “technical competence” that emerged in the present study. Facilities and equipment influenced this factor in the present study – a finding that has also been made by Tawse and Keogh (1998).

- *Financial Aspect of the Business*

In financial aspect of the business, fitness gyms encountered the following problems: low revenues during vacation time of students, space rental too high, costly monthly electric bill, and salaries of instructors not sustained.

- *Problems Met by Gym Instructors*

Gym Instructors also encountered problems in the business operation: low salary, noisy customers, long hours of work, irritable customers, and moody boss but according to Maconachie and Sappey 2011, Fitness workers appear to be prepared to ignore poor employment conditions or trade-off standard entitlements for the alternative rewards that their physical capital brings.

- *Problems Met by Customers in Using Gym Equipment and Facilities*

Fitness gym customers as members of a fitness gym encountered problem in using equipment and facilities during their fitness program as follows: hazards when going home at night, no vacancy of equipment, limited equipment and machines, dirty and rusty equipment, presence of mosquitoes in the area, lack of instructor, smelly weight belts and accessories, disordered equipment, poor ventilation, high rates on fitness services, lack of toilet, noise pollution, and unannounced closing of gym.

V. CONCLUSION

The operation of fitness gyms in Cabanatuan City has been described and assessed based on four aspects of operating businesses – management, marketing, technical, and financial, as follows:

- *Management Aspect*

The fitness gyms are managed and operated through single proprietorship. The capital investment needed for establishing fitness gym can be shouldered by single investors.

The hiring of gym instructors of fitness gyms depends on the number of customers or membership, size of the business, and number of hours of the operation. There are more male owners than the female ones. It is noted that cultural phenomenon is shaped and formed in particular ways, pointing towards certain strong national sentiments concerning body ideals, views on gender and exercise and relaxation Jesper Andreasson & Thomas Johansson (2017). Majority of fitness gyms limit their fitness services to weightlifting as they are focused, knowledgeable and well-experienced in this fitness activity. Married owners as majority who do not have formal employment consider fitness gym as a good livelihood. Gym instructors are of legal age that is capable and also well-experienced in the fitness program. As majority is college graduates, the passion to work is what driven them in the fitness gym. Fitness gym owners consider males are more appropriate to be gym instructors. This is majority of fitness gym customers are males from weightlifting services. Male instructors also secure the maintenance and safety of the

gym facilities. Gym instructors have better salary depending upon on their length of service or loyalty to the company. They also receive some benefits like food/transportation allowances and security benefits.

- *Marketing Aspect*

The customers of fitness gyms are mainly young employees who are college graduates and students in college level as fitness gyms near business establishment and schools/colleges/universities. They are already called as “members” once they availed the fitness services. Customers generally visit fitness gym from 5pm to 9pm for three to four days. Polyakova, O. and Mirza, M.T. (2016) describes an approach that brings a new light to the meaning of “a customer’s perspective” and emphasises the dynamics of service co-creation in the fitness industry. These times are when customers are usually off from their school and work during weekdays. There are a lot of reasons why customers make fitness activity a routine. The main reason is to become healthy. Fitness exercises are good and healthy lifestyle. In terms of factor in choosing a particular gym, customers preferred the location and equipment/facilities as the most influencing factors. Customers usually do not incur cost on transportation for the nearest gym and see a better fitness program in more equipment and facilities. Fitness gyms which are nearer to schools/universities/colleges have the most number of student customers as it is found as a best competitive advantage. Students could find fitness gym very accessible. Marketing strategies are also employed by the business like promos, discounts, and advertisements. Furthermore, customer delight influenced customers’ satisfaction and behavioural intentions as interpreted in the study of Foroughi et al 2019.

More customers will be encouraged to member in the fitness program with low rates on fitness services.

- *Technical Aspect*

Fitness gyms in the operation for several years indicate the profitability of the business as they already exist. It is a source of good income is generated from venturing on this industry. Aside from services, fitness gyms usually offer goods like food/snacks and assure it is always available when customers call for it. Gym supplements are also available as an additional features for happy customer. Satisfaction is generally regarded as a key element in the relationship of members with services, demonstrating a positive association between satisfaction and membership retention (Bodet, 2006). Evidence showing that a happy customer is more likely to maintain an established relationship can also be found in the study conducted by Vázquez-Carrasco and Foxall (2006). Besides from income generated by services, more additional income will come into the business. To always assure the availability of fitness gyms, there are equipment and facilities that are already needed to be replaced. This is additional cost on the part of the business but still providing a customer service. Some innovations are also employed by the business such as investment on new equipment and setting lower rates on services. More customers will be

attracted with some changes favorable to customers. To secure the establishment from holdups and robbery, fitness gyms usually have coordination with the PNP/Bantay Bayan to protect the business. Gyms will maintain its normal operation more particularly during evening operation.

➤ *Financial Aspect*

Investment purely sourced from savings is the most preferred way of the owners. There is no pressure on the part of the owner when paying obligation on loan as investment is not sourced through borrowings. Fitness gyms with huge investment have better equipment and facilities but with higher price on services and longer period for return of investment compare to gyms with lesser investments. Better earnings come in the fitness gym during the months of the months of January to March, June and July, and November. Fitness gyms enjoy good revenue when customers are crowded and more memberships are availed. Fitness gyms with other expenses like rental of establishment and salaries for more employed instructors have the highest targeted revenue of the day to breakeven. Gyms with more equipment and appliance that consume electricity also likely to have high targeted income. Expenditures incurred by the owners are water, supplies, repairs, maintenance, insurance, permits and licenses, and transportation.

Fitness gym owners meet problems in the operation of their businesses – problems with tardy, dishonest instructors; with policy-breaker customers, technical aspect of the business particularly bad weather, long business hours, and limited facilities. Financial problems i.e. low revenue occurs when customers are in vacation. Loans can provide their needs (Campos & Mina, 2018). Gym owners as considered these as obstacles in the operation keep the business still normal.

Most of the problems met by the customers using the gym equipment and facilities are hazard when going home at night, no vacancy of equipment, limited equipment and machines, dirty and rusty equipment, presence of mosquitoes in the area, etc. Careful advice are given to customers from time to time who finished late their workout since hazards are prone to happen at night, Jesper Andreasson & Thomas Johansson (2018) this can be related to the standardisation of training programmes. There is a sense of responsibility between the management and the customers. Overcrowded customers during evening resulting in no vacancy of equipment as expected are understood. Almost every fitness gym encounters such problem. Customers are encouraged to work out early to achieve their goals and not to quit. For McCarthy (2007), quitting is currently the major problem of the fitness industry, which the author considers a triple loss: it represents a financial loss for fitness owners, an opportunity loss for fitness manager and an experiential failure for club members. Therefore, the growth of the industry and the well-being of members are dependent on membership retention. Nothing could more sharply

accelerate the continuous worldwide growth of the industry than imp

Entrepreneurs who plan to put up their own fitness gym businesses can acquire knowledge from the findings of the study. Best practices can also be adopted when establishing this kind of business. Existing problems that may encounter in the operation are already found out in this study. Entrepreneurs can already have the assessment in the business operation.

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