

Health in the Function of Fitness Promotion in Serbia

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Abstract: Physical exercise is crucial for maintaining good health and well-being. Scientific research on the impact of physical exercise on health is fundamental for advancing our understanding of the subject, informing public health policies, promoting evidence-based medical practices, and ultimately improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities. The basic goal of this research is to determine the relevance of the term health as a carrier of a promotional message on the fitness market in the Republic of Serbia. The paper used descriptive statistics to describe the sample, T test of independent samples, one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationship between variables. The research results showed that the primary focus of the promotional message should still be health. Apart from this, the research found that a significant number of fitness centers use Instagram as the primary social network, and that there is great promotional potential in the relationships that develop between employees and service users.

Keywords: *service user's relations; fitness center; social networks, promotional message, health*

JEL Classification: I10, M37

INTRODUCTION

In the modern fitness market, which is primarily dynamic, it is difficult to achieve a long-term successful position. It is a fact that the fitness industry on a global level is growing rapidly, and that there are favorable circumstances, but also that this speed requires the participants to continuously monitor the market and find new potentials (Gómez Chávez, Pelayo Zavalza & Aguirre Rodríguez, 2020; Kercher et al, 2021; Veiga, Valcarce-Torrente, de la Cámara, 2020; Thompson, 2022). The nature of fitness services is such that it requires direct contact between the service provider and the one who buys it, which results in the great importance of employees on the satisfaction of service users. Finding a differential advantage in this relationship is one of the opportunities for service providers in the fitness industry, but the question is how many are actually using this knowledge. The second characteristic of fitness services, and at the same time a peculiarity that is related only to this industry (not including various areas of natural medicine) is the focus on health, that is, attracting service users through the connection of fitness with the health of the individual. Authors Wang and Chiu (2022) state that due to increased health awareness, fitness centers are increasingly present in the sports market. This focus can be two-fold, in the direction of prevention, i.e. maintaining the health of the body and spirit, but also in the direction of treating specific health problems that have already arisen. In this paper, we will focus on the first focus. The stated starting point will serve to analyze the usefulness of health-based promotion as part of fitness marketing. Many researches point to this relationship in a positive connotation, and it will be verified in this research (Tsitskari i Batrakoulis 2022; Somphong, 2020; Shehu, 2013; Edwards, 1996; Conrad, 1988). The aforementioned is based on the researches that support the fact that fitness improves certain health problems (Colcombe, et al., 2003; Colcombe, et al., 2006; Pitetti, et al., 2013; Tsai, et al., 2013).

The need for verification, that is, the dilemma that preceded this research, has to do with current changes in society, which are related to increasing demands for a more beautiful appearance. In order to achieve a toned body, slimmer figure and muscle mass, various preparations are

used, as well as cosmetic corrections that fall under the domain of medical interventions, especially when it comes to the female population. However, the motivation for engaging in recreational fitness can also arise from the stated desires. If the research determines that the respondents play sports in the fitness center for these reasons, this may result in a change in focus in the promotion of these participants in the sports market. Namely, health as the key word in the promotion of fitness centers based on the aforementioned dilemma can be replaced by a message in which a more beautiful appearance is directly linked to recreational training. Naturally, one does not exclude the other, but the trend of reasons for practicing recreational sports must be determined, with the aim of determining the relevance of the context of health in the function of fitness promotion. In addition to strengthening the body and improving health, exercise shapes the body, but also creates a better self-image (Farrell, et al., 2011; Andreasson and Johansson, 2013).

People's interest in a better appearance has resulted in the growth of the cosmetic industry, but also of aesthetic surgery. The global cosmetics market size was valued at USD 262.21 billion in 2022 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.2% from 2023 to 2030. (Grand View Research, a). The global aesthetic medicine market size was valued at USD 99.1 billion in 2021 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 14.5% from 2022 to 2030 (Grand View Research, b). At the same time, a higher percentage of interest in fitness recreation is recorded, which may be a consequence of the mentioned trend, but also a consequence of the desire for a healthier life (Grand View Research, c). The global fitness tracker market size to be valued at USD 138.7 billion by 2028 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.9% during the forecast period (Grand View Research, d). In the Republic of Serbia, according to research presented by the credit rating company CompanyWall, 1035 legal entities operated in the fitness market in 2021, the total income in 2020 was 779.6 million dinars, and a year earlier it was 890 million dinars. The assumption is that a certain number of service users withdrew, that is, they stopped training or continued in their homes or outdoors, due to the pandemic caused by the covid 19 virus. This is supported by the fact that revenues in 2021 increased to 1113 billion dinars (Vincan, 2023).

There are many ways of promotion, and in this research the focus is on determining the presence of

social networks in the fitness centers in the sample, as well as content related to health information. Additionally, this paper has examined the potential of relations with employees in the fitness center, then, the importance of the relationship between price and quality of service, the intensity of the influence of the environment on the choice of the fitness center, as well as other elements such as the arrangement of the space, proximity to the place of residence, etc. Certain forms of promotion can be content-oriented towards emphasizing health as the main reason for practicing recreational sports, such as social networks, then the potential of the relationship between exercisers and trainers, but also the offer of complementary products such as certain supplements. The promotional potential of the relationship between the employees of the fitness center and the users of the services, as well as the capacity of social networks, is very large, and these two infrastructures can be considered as key bearers of the promotional message about health. Nevertheless, other forms of promotion, such as the arrangement of space or the price-quality ratio, can only indirectly imply the improvement of health through the practice of recreational sports. Therefore, the capacity of these forms of promotion based on health content is lower than digital potentials, or face-to-face conversations, but certainly not negligible. By finding out the reasons for training, the fitness center can redirect the promotional contents, regardless of their form, from health to another topic, or it can use both topics.

Apart from revealing the capacity of health as a promotional content, this paper aims to determine the degree of use of exercise applications and training methods, among which video streaming is an option, as well as the degree of use of supplements. The above mentioned digital resources can be the infrastructure that will be used for promotion if there is an interest in them, as well as for the recommendation for choosing a place for promotion, i.e. for planning additional content. Also, supplements as complementary products accompanying the service can be put into the connotation of the message of health promotion.

Additionally, the contribution of this research lies in the conceptual context that highlights the application of promotional instruments, and through that marketing in general, in the fitness industry. Certain authors believe that insufficient attention is focused on organizational issues in the fitness market, and that the sports management literature does not pay enough attention to sports in other connotations than those related to sports events (Rowea, 2012). In this regard, it can be said that this research provides cer-

tain information that can be useful to participants in the fitness industry in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, with the aim of pointing out the capacities of implementing certain promotional instruments and emphasizing health as an important reason for training.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

By analyzing different understandings of free time, it can be said that free time is a socially conditioned phenomenon and that it represents an integral part of a person's time, thanks to whose activities a person creates, develops and determines his essence, both working and individual (Kačavenda-Radić, 1986). The struggle for free time is most often associated with the introduction of a series of technical aids that keep people away from movement, which leads to hypokinesia. The World Health Organization declared hypokinesia as the greatest risk for modern man (Organization, 2014). This phenomenon is closely related to the onset of diseases such as diabetes, diseases of the cardiovascular system and obesity (Boles, et al., 2017; Federation, 2010; Mendis et al., 2015; Sharkey & Gaskill, 2013; Đukanović, et al., 2010). In Serbia, according to the data of the Institute for Public Health (Boričić, Simić, Vasiljević, & Marinković, 2014), there were: 56.3% overnourished, of which 35.1% were pre-obese, (41.4% men and 29.1% women) and 21.2% obese. Inactivity and obesity are increasing at a rapid rate, negatively affecting public health globally (Guthold, et al., 2018; NCD-RisC, 2017). In Serbia, 57,000 people die annually as a result of cardiovascular diseases (55.5% of all deaths), and as many as 46.5% of the population over the age of 25 have hypertension (Pavletić Peršić, et al., 2010). Viewed globally, more than 200 million people suffer from osteoporosis, and in Serbia, 375,000 women (Boričić, et al., 2014). The situation did not change drastically in the following years either (Vesic, et al., 2020). The only way for modern man to overcome such a condition is to increase the frequency of movement, i.e. of exercise.

The definition of health by the World Health Organization (Organization, 2006) is not only related to the absence of disease, but to a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. The complexity of the concept of health is indicated by some later definitions (Huber, et al., 2011; Taylor & Marandi, 2008), which place in the forefront only its individual aspects such as body functions, metabolic efficiency, absence of pain, feeling of personal satisfaction, etc.

In the general approach to health, it is not enough to observe only three aspects of health such as physical, mental and social health, but also the feeling of subjective health is important as well as functional abilities, which was added later (Leonardi, 2018).

One of the primary tasks in recreational exercise is to have a positive impact on human health and improve the quality and length of life, i.e. that is „*health related fitness*“ (Oja, 1995). Fitness is part of recreation and a special approach to a healthier lifestyle. According to the European network of Fitness Associations, fitness is a dynamic state of physical, psychological and social well-being, which is improved by physical activities, individual abilities, possibilities and wishes of each individual (Adami, 2002).

The reasons for exercising are mainly the fight against cellulite, fatty tissue and pain (Sabic, 2018), but actually they should be the comfort of life, lifestyle and health improvement (Piletić & Čabarkapa, 2010). In order for the exerciser, among the abundance of offers, to choose what is really good for him, he needs education, both of him and of the trainer, i.e. the employees of the fitness center (Tharrett & Peterson, 2006).

Every trainer, as well as other employees in the fitness center, can be an excellent promoters of the services provided by the center, and in general of the brand in the environment of which the services are delivered. The importance of employees in the organization is all the greater if they are observed as key influences on the satisfaction of service users, because they are an integral part of the fitness service. This relationship has shown its potential many times in practice, and as such is the subject of numerous researches (Ratković, 2009; Tsitskari & Tsakiraki, 2013; Tsitskari, et al., 2014). In the research by Panasenko et al. (2018), a special category of users of fitness services is distinguished, which is focused on the emotional dimension in the overall offer, and it is considered that employees in direct contact can have a special influence on them. In the mentioned research (Panasenko, et al., 2018), another category of service users who focus on price, i.e. cost reduction, is mentioned. Regarding them, we can assume that other factors of choosing a fitness center will not have a dominant influence, and that the promotion will not have the same effect as on other categories. Nevertheless, indirectly, employees also determine the attractiveness of the relationship between the price and the quality of the service (Tsitskari, et al., 2014;). Namely, employees are an integral part of the quality of the service, and as such they are on that side. In this regard, it can

be said that employee loyalty is an important characteristic of the satisfaction of users of fitness services, because it most often shows the stability and reliability of the fitness center, as well as good relations among employees generally speaking. Since the satisfaction of service users is the key focus of investing marketing efforts (Law, et al., 2022; Sobari, et al., 2022; Ratković, 2012), every potential that can serve this must be used for these purposes.

Arrangement of the sales space as a factor in attracting and retaining service users is used as an important resource of promotion. Research on the impact of this factor on the satisfaction of service users has shown a positive correlation, as well as a longer stay in a facility that is more comfortable in various aspects (Sokolović-Mladenović i Čuzović, 2015; Renko i Grgić, 2012).

Using social networks as a promotional potential is a widely accepted resource today (Kalinová i Kovaříková, 2023; Dašić, Jeličić, 2016; Dašić, et al., 2021). In 2021, global social media advertising spending stood at around 116 billion U.S. dollars, and it is predicted that in 2028 this figure will grow to 262 billion (Statista, 2023). The importance of social networks as digital media infrastructure is great, and this research aims to determine their representation on the fitness market. According to the Statista website (2013), investment in social media marketing in 2021 in the Republic of Serbia reached 21.6 million euros, which is 37% more than the year before.

Regarding the digital potential in the fitness industry, this paper analyzes the use of exercise applications, as well as video streaming of training. Both infrastructures can serve as a form of promotion, and it is believed that their attractiveness will increase, especially after the pandemic caused by the Covid 19 virus. (Thompson, 2022). The global virtual fitness market size was valued at USD 16.4 billion in 2022 and is expected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26.72% from 2023 to 2030 (Grand View Research, a).

According to Somphong (2020) Marketing and promotion are factors that give potential to the fitness center for offers. It should also be emphasized that some authors (Perić, 2014), as well as fitness service providers, create confusion regarding the understanding of the terms marketing and promotion, by predominantly using them as synonyms, which is incorrect. Promotion, as part of marketing activities, represents a set of numerous instruments that directly or indirectly communicate with existing and potential members of the fitness center (Khan, 2014; Patrick, et

al., 2022). Which of the wide range of these instruments will they notice the most, as well as which content of the message should be marketed to them, is a decision of strategic importance for the fitness center, and is part of the marketing strategy. In this research, several methods of promotion were chosen with the assumption that the center of the message addressed to the target group should be health, without entering into the analysis of the content of the accuracy of the message being placed, as well as into the research of the competence of employees in the fitness center on the topic of transmitting messages of this content to users a favor. Also, although the interest in the type of physical activity is different for women than for men (Avourdiadou and Theodorakis, 2014; Harro-González, et al., 2018; Xiong, et al., 2020), in this research, our starting point is the fact that for most of the mentioned parameters there are no significant differences in perception by gender, which is also shown in the results.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in the period between 20.01.2023. and 07.03.2023. The questionnaire was sent to 326 addresses, mostly through the Association for Recreation and Fitness of Serbia, but also through social networks. The sample consisted of individuals who train in different fitness centers in the Republic of Serbia. 152 correctly completed surveys were received.

The basic goal of the research is to determine the relevance of the concept of health as a carrier of a promotional message on the fitness market in the Republic of Serbia. In accordance with the stated goal, as well as the previously stated starting point, the following research questions were defined:

Q1: Should health in the promotion of fitness centers be the focus of the promotional message?

Q2: Whether employees are an important potential of fitness center promotion?

Statistical data processing and analyzes were performed using the software IBM SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Science) version 25. The paper used descriptive statistics to describe the sample, t test of independent samples, one-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationship between variables.

The level of 0.05 was used for the borderline value of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

152 respondents participated in the research, of which 53 respondents were male and 99 respondents were female. The youngest respondent is 15 years old, while the oldest respondent is 75 years old ($M=38.17$, $SD=10.59$). For minors, parental permission was obtained for the examination. From Table 1, we can see that the vast majority of respondents mainly train recreationally, three or more times a week, mostly alone, and that the majority do not use exercise apps and do not use supplementation.

Based on the results shown in Table 2, we can conclude that fitness centers mostly have an account on social networks, that there is information about a

healthy lifestyle on the fitness center account, and that supplements can be bought in the fitness center

From Graph 1, we can see that most fitness centers have an account on Instagram. This means that most fitness center owners recognize the importance of using social media in business.

The main motivation for training is health, followed by the intention to reduce/maintain weight (Graph 2). Both motives point to health as a key reason for training, although the desire to reduce weight can also be interpreted in the context of achieving a beautiful appearance. When choosing the fitness center where you train, the most important factors are the expertise of the trainer, the proximity of the fitness center,

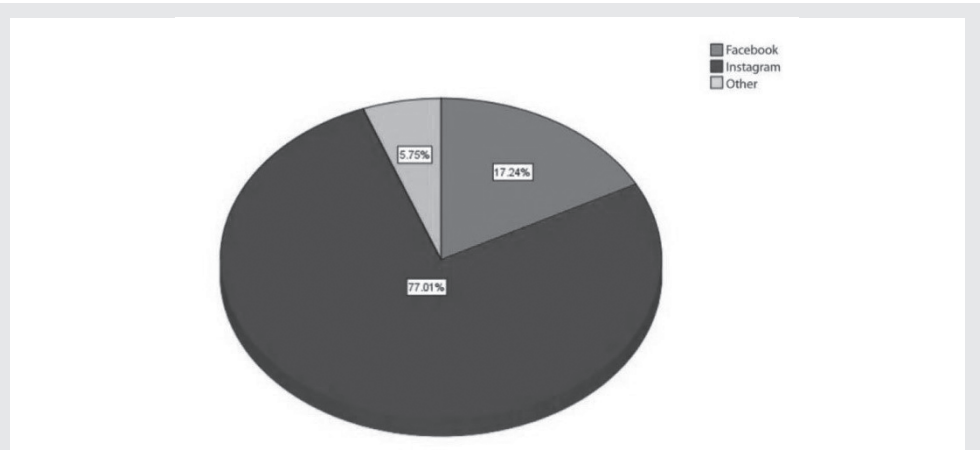
Table 1. Respondents' answers to questions related to training

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Do you exercise?		
Yes, I train recreationally	139	91.4
Yes, I train professionally	13	8.6
How often do you exercise?		
Once a week	7	4.6
Twice a week	38	25.0
Three or more times a week	107	70.4
Who do you exercise with?		
Alone	72	47.4
In a group	48	31.6
With a personal trainer	25	16.4
Online/video streaming	7	4.6
Do you use apps or an exercise program?		
Yes	41	27.0
No	105	69.1
I intend to	6	3.9
Do you use supplements in your diet?		
Yes	57	37.5
No	95	62.5

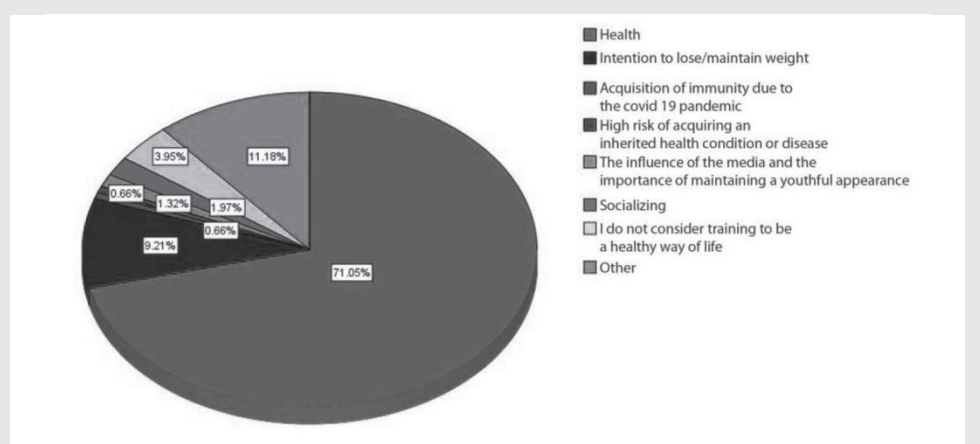
Table 2. Respondents' answers to questions related to fitness centers

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Does the fitness center have a social media account?		
Yes	101	66.4
No	30	19.7
I don't know	21	13.8
Is there information about healthy living on the fitness center's website or social networks?		
Yes	90	59.2
No	62	40.8
Can I buy supplements in the fitness center?		
Yes	60	44.1
No	50	32.9
I don't know	35	23.0

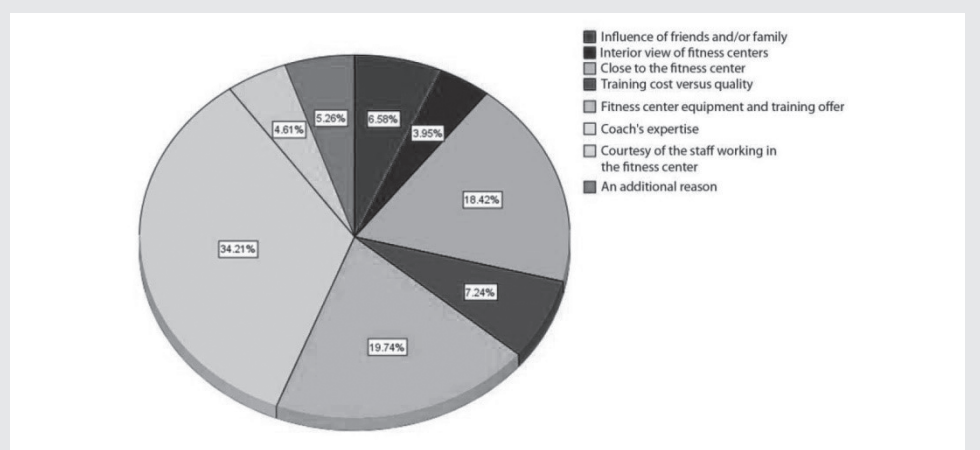
Graph 1. On which social network does the fitness center have an open account



Graph 2. Motives for training



Graph 3. The most important items when choosing a fitness center



Graph 4. What do you value in particular in a fitness center

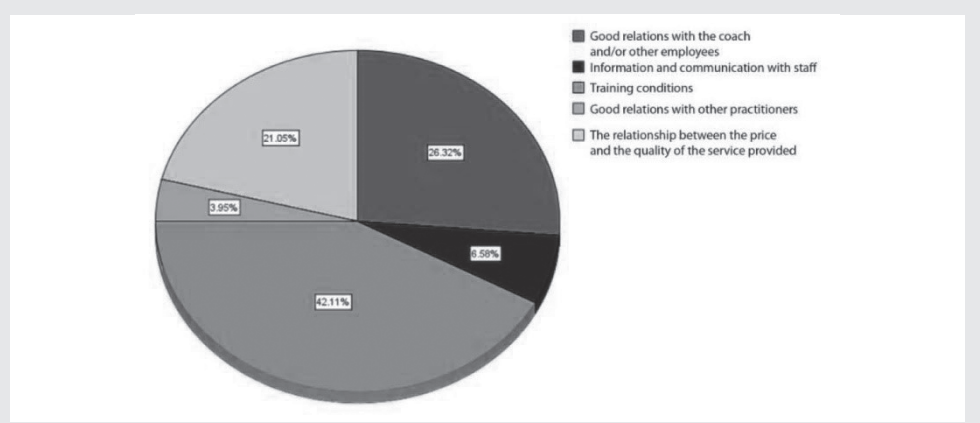


Table 3. The degree of agreement of respondents with the stated statements

	M	SD
Mental health is affected by training.	4.65	0.51
I train to maintain a youthful appearance.	3.61	1.01
In my diet, I take care of the intake of fruits and vegetables.	3.92	0.81
I believe that healthy food as well as regular training is a prerequisite for good health.	4.51	0.61
Celebrities are important for promoting a fitness center.	2.75	1.12
The friendliness of the staff working in the fitness center is important to my overall satisfaction with the training.	4.13	0.72
Are the employees of the fitness center a good source of information about healthy living?	3.70	0.78
Total score	3.89	0.40

as well as the equipment of the fitness center and the offer of trainings (Graph 3).

The competence of trainers indicates the importance of their education, but also the potential of their influence on the user of the service. Respondents value the training conditions, good relations with the trainer and other employees, as well as the price-quality ratio of the service provided in the fitness center the most (Graph 4). It is precisely the quality of the service in fitness that is significantly influenced by the trainer, and it is considered that this answer indirectly indicates the potential and importance of the relationship between him and the user of the service.

Then we looked at the respondents' degree of agreement with the statements made and based on the overall degree of agreement ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.40$) we can conclude that the respondents agree with the statements made. From Table 3, we can see that the respondents completely agree that training affects mental health ($M=4.65$, $SD=0.51$) and that healthy

food and training are a prerequisite for good health ($M=4.51$, $SD=0.61$). The lowest level of agreement is for the statement that celebrities are important for promoting a fitness center ($M=2.75$, $SD=1.12$).

As part of the research, we wanted to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in the degree of agreement of the respondents with the stated statements in relation to the gender of the respondents. The t-test of independent samples was used to examine the difference in relation to gender. The significance level of the t-test is higher than the observed statistical level for all statements and the total score, on the basis of which we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in relation to gender (Table 4). As stated in the introduction, there are differences in the choice of training between the sexes, but it was shown that in the research of the mentioned factors in this paper, they are not significant.

Table 4. Differences in relation to the gender of the respondents

	Male (N=62)	Female (N=113)	t	p
	Srednja vrednost			
Mental health is affected by training.	4.58 ± 0.56	4.68 ± 0.48	-1.105	0.249
I train to maintain a youthful appearance.	3.43 ± 1.16	3.70 ± 0.90	-1.480	0.143
In my diet, I take care of the intake of fruits and vegetables.	3.88 ± 0.93	3.93 ± 0.75	-0.377	0.707
I believe that healthy food as well as regular training is a prerequisite for good health.	4.47 ± 0.57	4.53 ± 0.64	-0.602	0.548
Celebrities are important for promoting a fitness center.	2.98 ± 1.15	2.62 ± 1.10	1.862	0.065
The friendliness of the staff working in the fitness center is important to my overall satisfaction with the training.	4.11 ± 0.86	4.15 ± 0.64	-0.308	0.758
Are the employees of the fitness center a good source of information about healthy living?	3.64 ± 0.81	3.73 ± 0.77	-0.714	0.476
Total score	3.87 ± 0.44	3.91 ± 0.38	-0.561	0.576

* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

Table 5. Correlation between the age of the respondents and the degree of agreement of the respondents

	Age of respondents
Mental health is affected by training.	0.136
I train to maintain a youthful appearance.	-0.096
In my diet, I take care of the intake of fruits and vegetables.	0.008
I believe that healthy food as well as regular training is a prerequisite for good health.	-0.070
Celebrities are important for promoting a fitness center.	-0.042
The friendliness of the staff working in the fitness center is important to my overall satisfaction with the training.	0.011
Are the employees of the fitness center a good source of information about healthy living?	0.058
Total score	-0.020

* Statistical significance at the 0.05 level, **Statistical significance at the 0.01 level

As part of the research, we wanted to examine whether there is a statistically significant correlation between the age of the respondents and the degree of agreement of the respondents with the stated state-

ments. Pearson's correlation analysis was used to examine the relationship. From Table 5, we can see that there is no statistically significant relationship between the age of the respondents and the degree of

Table 6. Differences in relation to the method of training of the respondents

	Category	Mean	F	p
Mental health is affected by training.	Alone (N=72)	4.56 ± 0.55	1.365	0.256
	In a group (N=48)	4.72 ± 0.49		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	4.68 ± 0.47		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	4.85 ± 0.37		
I train to maintain a youthful appearance.	Alone (N=72)	3.63 ± 1.05	0.167	0.918
	In a group (N=48)	3.56 ± 0.94		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	3.68 ± 1.10		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	3.42 ± 0.78		
In my diet, I take care of the intake of fruits and vegetables.	Alone (N=72)	3.97 ± 0.82	0.411	0.745
	In a group (N=48)	3.81 ± 0.86		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	3.96 ± 0.73		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	4.00 ± 0.81		
I believe that healthy food as well as regular training is a prerequisite for good health.	Alone (N=72)	4.50 ± 0.55	0.261	0.853
	In a group (N=48)	4.50 ± 0.68		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	4.52 ± 0.65		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	4.71 ± 0.75		
Celebrities are important for promoting a fitness center.	Alone (N=72)	2.87 ± 0.99	1.583	0.196
	In a group (N=48)	2.77 ± 1.22		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	2.56 ± 1.26		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	2.00 ± 1.15		
The friendliness of the staff working in the fitness center is important to my overall satisfaction with the training.	Alone (N=72)	4.18 ± 0.73	0.485	0.693
	In a group (N=48)	4.16 ± 0.69		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	4.00 ± 0.76		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	4.00 ± 0.81		
Are the employees of the fitness center a good source of information about healthy living?	Alone (N=72)	3.56 ± 0.70	1.721	0.165
	In a group (N=48)	3.77 ± 0.80		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	3.96 ± 0.88		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	3.71 ± 0.95		
Total score	Alone (N=72)	3.90 ± 0.37	0.102	0.959
	In a group (N=48)	3.90 ± 0.43		
	With personal trainer (N=25)	3.90 ± 0.45		
	Online/video striming (N=7)	3.81 ± 0.35		

* Statistical significance at the level of 0.05

agreement of the respondents, which is confirmed by the low values of the correlation coefficient.

As part of the research, we wanted to examine whether there are statistically significant differences in the degree of agreement of respondents with the stated statements in relation to the way of training respondents. One-factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to examine the difference in relation to the training method. The level of significance of the ANOVA test is higher than the observed statistical level for all statements and the total score, on the basis of which we conclude that there is no statistically significant difference in relation to the training method (Table 6).

The conclusion made in relation to the above is very significant, since there was an assumption that users of different forms of fitness service offers may have different opinions on the issues raised. In case a different opinion was reached, then the relevance of other results would be disputed.

CONCLUSION

Promotion as the basis of the fitness center's communication strategy should be based on infrastructures used and monitored by service users. In this research, a high degree of presence of social networks was determined, first of all Instagram, followed by Facebook and other networks. This is in accordance with the trends of the increase in the use of social networks, and it can be said that the participants in the fitness industry follow the behavior of the target groups. This conclusion was drawn based on the responses of the respondents, and on the basis of the majority, but it should be taken into account that 21 respondents did not know whether the fitness center had an account on any of the networks, i.e. that some centers do not have accounts. However, this does not diminish the claim that social network infrastructures should definitely be used for promotion.

Based on the research, it was concluded that the promotion of fitness centers must include employees who are in direct contact with service users. When it comes to the factors for choosing a fitness center, the most common answers appear to be the trainer's expertise and equipment, that is, the offer in the fitness center, followed by proximity, the price-quality ratio, etc. When asked what is especially valued in a fitness center, most of the answers were focused on training conditions, but also good relations with the trainer and other employees, and then again on the

relationship between price and quality of service. Under the quality of service in both answer options, the relationship with the trainer is also included, and it can be concluded that, in addition to explicit answers in that direction, the relationship with the employees is perceived as a significant factor in the satisfaction of service users. Therefore, promotion based on the above has two focuses. The first focus is on social networks as a form of marketing a promotional message, and the second focus is on employees in the role of service producers and service providers. Additionally, the influence of friends is also important, which the respondents would label as word-of-mouth advertising, but that is why advertising as a response option, promotion in the general sense, as well as the inclusion of famous people in promotion, are not considered important reasons and influences for engaging in sports.

The relation between the price and the quality of services includes the role of the service producer and the service provider, that is, the trainer, which this research has shown to be very important. Namely, a large number of respondents emphasized the relationship with the trainer as an important factor in the training process, and it can be assumed that these employees have a potentially significant influence on the satisfaction of service users. Consequently, it can be concluded that employees represent the potential for conveying a promotional message. Therefore, what can be definitely concluded on the topic of the role of employees in fitness centers, is that their influence on the satisfaction of exercisers can be significant, and that certain aspects of promotion can be implemented successfully in a personal relationship. The trust and loyalty of exercisers is a great capital for any fitness center, not only based on the purchase of services over a long period of time, but also because of the living word they will convey in their environment. The above can be concluded from the fact that the „influence of friends“ is one of the important reasons for engaging in recreational sports.

On the other hand, a small number of respondents rated relations with other exercisers as a significant factor, which is in contrast to the trends of organized socializing in certain fitness centers. Bearing in mind that we are still under the impression of the negative effects of the pandemic, and that they will become weaker over time, for now it can be concluded that less interest in these activities is a consequence of the above. Nevertheless, due to the lack of detailed information, the above cannot be asserted with certainty,

and this dilemma remains for research in some other papers.

Another conclusion that can be drawn based on this research is that health as a key motive for recreational training still has primacy, and that the desire for a better appearance exists, but is still less prevalent than the desire for good health. As the trend of the growth of the cosmetic industry and aesthetic medicine has been established, it is considered that this motive must be included in the promotion. However, since it is represented significantly less than expected in the answers as the first reason for exercise, we can conclude here that it is not of great importance as a carrier of a promotional message. In support of the above, the answers reveal that the respondents' awareness of the impact of exercise on physical and mental health is high. Based on this, it can be assumed that the global trends of a healthier life have conquered the domestic market as well, but also that the recent pandemic caused by the Covid 19 virus has influenced the increase in awareness of a healthy lifestyle. Future research in the field of the fitness industry could be aimed at collecting data on the above. The thing that further points to the need for further research is that a significant number of respondents cited a reduction in body weight as the reason for training, and this can be interpreted in the context of improving health, but also in the context of achieving a better body appearance.

This paper further provides data on the offer of supplements in fitness centers, which shows that these participants in the sports market consider it important to have them in their assortment. On the other hand, they are not the subject of purchase by the majority of respondents. However, since the consumption of the same in the present moment in relation to the earlier period was not investigated, no clear conclusions can be drawn regarding this issue. The only thing that can be assumed is that there is a demand for these products, and that they must be provided in fitness centers, and that they can be part of a promotional campaign on health and recreational training, since there are respondents who perceive them as complementary products to basic services.

The use of applications and video streaming of training is on the rise compared to previous years, and these forms of added value can also be used as

platforms for promotion. However, in the research carried out, traditional forms of training are still more prevalent. Nevertheless, taking into account general trends, it can be recommended in perspective to use the mentioned infrastructures for promotion purposes with a focus on health, or on additional topics that will become current as well.

In accordance with the review of the main conclusions of the previous research, it can be stated that the answers to the next research questions are affirmative: Q1: Should health in the promotion of fitness centers be the focus of the promotional message, and Q2: Whether employees are an important potential of fitness center promotion.

Limitations and recommendations for further research

Limitations of the research refer to the need for a larger number of respondents who would constitute a representative sample in relation to the training method, and for obtaining information that would be more relevant, especially from those who do individual training. In addition, the paper investigated the extent to which social networks are represented in the fitness market, but not the way they are used, from which it would be possible to find out to what extent they are actually used for promotion. Another limitation is that the questionnaire was prepared in such a way that it was possible to circle only one answer, and that the respondents could not choose another important or equally important answer option.

Nevertheless, regardless of the stated limitations, the conducted research provides clear information in the direction of confirming the defined hypotheses, which is why it is considered that the goal of the research has been fulfilled.

For future research on this topic, the following is recommended: Using the SERVQUAL model on a sample that will consist of a homogeneous structure of service users in relation to the way of training, as well as an in-depth interview to determine the motivation for training. Furthermore, we also recommend to conduct a more detailed investigation of the intensity of the use of social networks, both from the perspective of users of services for the purposes of information and education, and from the perspective of participants in the fitness industry.

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Apstrakt

Zdravlje u funkciji promocije fitnesa u Srbiji

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Fizička aktivnost je ključna za održavanje dobrog zdravlja i blagostanja. Naučna istraživanja o uticaju fizičke aktivnosti na zdravlje su osnovna za unapređenje našeg razumevanja ove teme, informisanje javnih zdravstvenih politika, promovisanje medicinskih praksi zasnovanih na dokazima, i konačno poboljšanje zdravlja i blagostanja pojedinaca i zajednica. Osnovni cilj ovog istraživanja je da se utvrdi relevantnost pojma zdravlje kao nosioca promotivne poruke na fitness tržištu u Republici Srbiji. U radu je korišćena deskriptivna statistika za opisivanje uzorka, T test nezavisnih uzoraka, jednofaktorska analiza

varijanse (ANOVA) i Pirsonova korelaciona analiza da bi se ispitao odnos između varijabli. Rezultati istraživanja su pokazali da primarni fokus promotivne poruke ipak treba da bude zdravlje. Osim toga, istraživanje je pokazalo da značajan broj fitnes centara koristi Instagram kao primarnu društvenu mrežu, te da postoji veliki promotivni potencijal u odnosima koji se razvijaju između zaposlenih i korisnika usluga.

Ključne reči: *odnosi korisnika usluge; fitnes centri; društvene mreže; promotivne poruke; zdravlje*

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