

FACTORS INFLUENCING PEOPLE'S DECISIONS TO USE EXERCISE AND FITNESS CENTER SERVICES IN MUEANG DISTRICT, SISAKET PROVINCE

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ABSTRACT

The objectives of this research were: 1) to investigate personal factors influencing people's decisions to use exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province; and 2) to examine service selection factors influencing people's decisions to use exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province. The sample consisted of 400 people who used exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province, selected via convenience sampling. The research instrument was a questionnaire. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including the mean, percentage, and standard deviation.

The findings revealed that the majority of respondents who used exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province were female (68.50%). The largest groups were aged 18-24 years (32.00%), held a bachelor's degree (47.50%), were students (23.00%), and did not disclose their income (28.00%). In addition, the factors influencing the selection of exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province were Product, Price, Promotion, Personnel, Process Management, and Physical Characteristics of the Establishment, which were overall rated at the highest level in all aspects.

Keywords: Factors, Service Selection, Exercise Facility, Fitness Center

INTRODUCTION

The Seventh National Sports Development Plan (2023-2027) focuses on encouraging people of all age groups to engage in exercise and sports as a way of life. The aim is to promote good well-being and physical health, thereby reducing the morbidity rate of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and alleviating healthcare costs. Furthermore, the plan aims to instill sports values, support regular physical activity, and develop infrastructure, venues, and facilities to ensure comprehensive access for the entire population (Ministry of Tourism and Sports, 2023). This aligns with the National Strategy (2018-2027), which promotes public participation in physical activities, sports, and recreation. It emphasizes creating opportunities for continuous participation alongside cultivating discipline and sportsmanship, specifically knowing how to lose, win, and forgive, as well as developing personnel and elevating the standards of equipment and facility infrastructure.

Exercise is a crucial factor in strengthening physical fitness, resulting in a cheerful, clear mind and an energetic state, while also reducing the risk of various diseases. Current forms of exercise are diverse, ranging from walking, running, yoga, and swimming to using services at fitness centers. These

activities are supported by various venues, such as public parks, stadiums, and exercise facilities within educational institutions, hotels, and government agencies. However, contemporary exercise facilities and fitness centers face the challenge of responding to rapidly changing consumer needs, particularly regarding heightened expectations for convenience, cleanliness, safety, and service novelty. It has been found that highly frequented fitness centers are often those that are easily accessible and provide ample parking; moreover, cleanliness and safety are cited as key factors in the decision to use a service. Additionally, in a rapidly changing modern society, traditional forms of exercise alone may no longer suffice to meet user demands (Jirathamwit, 2021).

The importance of exercise for daily living has led both public and private sector organizations to recognize its value and collaborate in creating a trend of health awareness, resulting in the continuous growth of the fitness center business. In Mueang District, Sisaket Province, there are six main exercise facilities and fitness centers provided by both the government and private sectors: Thailand National Sports University (Sisaket Campus), Sisaket Rajabhat University, Sisaket Sports School, Nice Fitness Sisaket, LS Fitness Sisaket, and The One Fitness Sisaket. The high number of service providers offers consumers diverse choices, leading to competition in service quality development, appropriate pricing strategies, and promotional activities to attract members. As stated by Meecharoen (2018), a fitness center is an exercise venue that consolidates various activity forms within a designated area for users to select. Generally, these are divided into two main sections: Cardio Exercise and Weight Training. Consequently, both public and private operators must ensure their facilities and equipment are ready to effectively meet demand and support the fitness business in Mueang District, Sisaket Province, providing users with more diverse options.

Based on these reasons, the researcher is interested in studying the factors influencing the decision to use exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province. The data obtained from this research will be beneficial to fitness center administrators and relevant stakeholders. It serves as a guideline for developing and improving service quality to align with consumer needs, thereby promoting increased patronage in the future.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate personal factors influencing people's decisions to use exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province.
2. To examine service selection factors influencing people's decisions to use exercise and fitness center services in Mueang District, Sisaket Province.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Group

The sample group for this research consisted of individuals utilizing services at exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province. The sample size was determined using Cochran's formula (Cochran, as cited in Silpcharu, 2012) at a 95% confidence level and an acceptable margin of error of 5%, resulting in a total sample size of 400 participants. Convenience sampling was employed for participant selection.

Data Collection

1. Primary Data: Data were obtained through the collection of questionnaires from 400 individuals using services at exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province.

2. Secondary Data: Data were gathered from various sources, including academic textbooks, documents, and related research literature, as well as information retrieved via the internet.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the data using descriptive statistics, consisting of:

1. Percentage
2. Mean
3. Standard Deviation

RESULTS

Based on the analysis of factors influencing the decision to use exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province, the research findings can be summarized as follows:

1. General Information and Personal Factors of Respondents

The study found that the majority of respondents were female, accounting for 68.50%. Regarding education, the highest level attained was a bachelor's degree, representing 47.50%. In terms of occupation, the largest group consisted of students, accounting for 23.00%. Regarding average monthly income, the majority of respondents declined to disclose this information, accounting for 28.00%.

2. Factors Influencing the Decision to Use Exercise Facilities and Fitness Centers

The analysis of the importance level of factors influencing the decision to use exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province, comprising Product, Price, Promotion, Personnel, Process Management, and Physical Characteristics of the Establishment, yielded the following results:

Table 1
Overall Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
Product	4.79	0.28	Highest
Price	4.76	0.33	Highest
Promotion	4.78	0.32	Highest
Personnel	4.72	0.32	Highest
Process Management	4.75	0.31	Highest
Physical Characteristics of the Establishment	4.61	0.32	Highest

Overall Mean	4.47	0.31	Highest
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As shown in Table 1, the overall factors influencing the decision to use the fitness center services were rated at the highest level ($\bar{X} = 4.47$). When considering each aspect individually and ranking them by mean score from highest to lowest, it was found that the Product aspect had the highest mean ($\bar{X} = 4.79$), followed by Promotion ($\bar{X} = 4.78$), Price ($\bar{X} = 4.76$), Process Management ($\bar{X} = 4.75$), and Personnel ($\bar{X} = 4.72$). The Physical Characteristics of the Establishment had the lowest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.61$), respectively.

Table 2

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Product

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Product	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. Availability of modern exercise equipment	4.91	0.30	Highest
2. Sufficiency of equipment relative to users	4.71	0.46	Highest
3. Reputation of the fitness center	4.80	0.43	Highest
4. Variety of exercise classes	4.78	0.44	Highest
5. Adequate space relative to the number of users without overcrowding	4.79	0.41	Highest
Overall Mean	4.79	0.28	Highest

As shown in Table 2, the influence of the Product factor on the decision to use the fitness center services was rated at the highest level overall ($\bar{X} = 4.79$). When examining individual items, it was found that the availability of modern exercise equipment had the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.91$). This was followed by the reputation of the fitness center ($\bar{X} = 4.80$), adequate space relative to the number of users without overcrowding ($\bar{X} = 4.79$), variety of exercise classes ($\bar{X} = 4.78$), and sufficiency of equipment relative to users ($\bar{X} = 4.71$), respectively.

Table 3

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Price

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Price	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. Reasonableness of membership rates	4.80	0.42	Highest
2. Availability of installment payment plans	4.64	0.51	Highest
3. Convenience of payment methods	4.79	0.41	Highest

4. Absence of entrance fees	4.76	0.43	Highest
5. Variety of membership packages tailored to needs	4.84	0.37	Highest
Overall Mean	4.76	0.33	Highest

As shown in Table 3, the influence of the Price factor on the decision to use the fitness center services was rated at the highest level overall ($\bar{X} = 4.76$). When examining individual items, it was found that the variety of membership packages tailored to needs had the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.84$). This was followed by the reasonableness of membership rates ($\bar{X} = 4.80$), convenience of payment methods ($\bar{X} = 4.79$), absence of entrance fees ($\bar{X} = 4.76$), and the availability of installment payment plans ($\bar{X} = 4.64$), respectively.

Table 4
Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Promotion

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Promotion	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. Offering discounts for membership renewal	4.83	0.39	Highest
2. Publicizing promotions via various media channels	4.69	0.48	Highest
3. Provision of information and promotion recommendations by sales staff	4.80	0.40	Highest
4. Distribution of free trial coupons	4.78	0.45	Highest
5. Organizing customer relation activities	4.81	0.41	Highest
Overall Mean	4.78	0.32	Highest

As shown in Table 4, the influence of the Promotion factor on the decision to use the fitness center services was rated at the highest level overall ($\bar{X} = 4.78$). When examining individual items, it was found that offering discounts for membership renewal had the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.83$). This was followed by organizing customer relation activities ($\bar{X} = 4.81$), the provision of information and promotion recommendations by sales staff ($\bar{X} = 4.80$), distribution of free trial coupons ($\bar{X} = 4.78$), and publicizing promotions via various media channels ($\bar{X} = 4.69$), respectively.

Table 5
Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Personnel

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Personnel	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
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1. Staff politeness and cheerfulness	4.79	0.42	Highest
2. Staff knowledge and ability to provide accurate advice	4.67	0.48	Highest
3. Sufficiency of trainers relative to user needs	4.75	0.44	Highest
4. Staff enthusiasm and attentiveness in providing services	4.70	0.47	Highest
5. Staff ability to solve problems and assist users	4.71	0.45	Highest
Overall Mean	4.72	0.32	Highest

As shown in Table 5, the influence of the Personnel factor on the decision to use the fitness center services was rated at the highest level overall ($\bar{X} = 4.72$). When examining individual items, it was found that staff politeness and cheerfulness had the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.79$). This was followed by the sufficiency of trainers relative to user needs ($\bar{X} = 4.75$), staff ability to solve problems and assist users ($\bar{X} = 4.71$), staff enthusiasm and attentiveness in providing services ($\bar{X} = 4.70$), and staff knowledge and ability to provide accurate advice ($\bar{X} = 4.67$), respectively.

Table 6
Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Process Management

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Process Management	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. Ease of membership registration	4.83	0.37	Highest
2. Availability of an online class booking system	4.64	0.51	Highest
3. Speed of notifying members about important information	4.82	0.39	Highest
4. Variety of payment channels	4.72	0.45	Highest
5. Equality and fairness in service provision	4.73	0.44	Highest
Overall Mean	4.75	0.31	Highest

As shown in Table 6, the influence of the Process Management factor on the decision to use the fitness center services was rated at the highest level overall ($\bar{X} = 4.75$). When examining individual items, it was found that the ease of membership registration had the highest mean score ($\bar{X} = 4.83$). This was followed by the speed of notifying members about important information ($\bar{X} = 4.82$), equality and fairness in service provision ($\bar{X} = 4.73$), variety of payment channels ($\bar{X} = 4.72$), and the availability of an online class booking system ($\bar{X} = 4.64$), respectively.

Table 7

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Physical Characteristics of the Establishment

Factors Influencing Decisions to Use Fitness Center Services in the Aspect of Physical Characteristics of the Establishment	$\bar{X}$	S.D.	Level
1. Availability of shower facilities	4.82	0.40	Highest
2. Spaciousness of the service area	4.66	0.48	Highest
3. Atmosphere that motivates exercise	4.67	0.48	Highest
4. Adequacy and safety of parking facilities	4.50	0.51	Highest
5. Availability of internet/Wi-Fi services	4.43	0.60	Highest
Overall Mean	4.61	0.32	Highest

As shown in Table 7, the influence of the Physical Characteristics of the Establishment factor on the decision to use the fitness center services was rated at the highest level overall ($\bar{X}$ = 4.61). When examining individual items, it was found that the availability of shower facilities had the highest mean score ($\bar{X}$ = 4.82). This was followed by an atmosphere that motivates exercise ($\bar{X}$ = 4.67), spaciousness of the service area ($\bar{X}$ = 4.66), adequacy and safety of parking facilities ($\bar{X}$ = 4.50), and the availability of internet/Wi-Fi services ($\bar{X}$ = 4.43), respectively.

DISCUSSION

Based on the study of factors influencing the decision to use exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province, it was found that the six factors overall were rated at the highest level of importance. When ranked by mean score from highest to lowest, the order is Product, followed by Promotion, Price, Process Management, Personnel, and Physical Characteristics of the Establishment, respectively. The results for each aspect can be discussed as follows:

1. Product

The study found that this factor was rated at the highest level because users prioritize the modernity of exercise equipment, the reputation of the service provider, adequate space to prevent overcrowding, and the variety of exercise classes. This finding is consistent with the research of Lerdchairat and Kaewpromman (2020), who studied the marketing mix and psychological factors affecting the decision to use 24-hour fitness centers among working-age people in Bangkok. Their study found that entrepreneurs should prioritize providing efficient, modern, and clean exercise products to best meet consumer needs.

2. Price

The study found that this factor was rated at the highest level because users value the ability to choose membership packages that suit their needs and the convenience of payment methods. This finding is consistent with the research of Jirathamwit (2021), who studied factors affecting fitness service selection among women in Mueang District, Samut Prakan Province. That study found that consumers prioritize the appropriateness of membership rates and value for money relative to the services received.

3. Promotion

The study revealed that this factor was rated at the highest level, reflecting user demand for promotional activities, such as discounts for membership renewal and special events for customers. This finding is consistent with the research of Kosanguan and Mohprasit (2020), who investigated factors affecting the decision to use fitness center services in Mueang District, Uttaradit Province. They found that marketing promotion was a crucial factor, particularly the organization of weight loss competitions, which served as an attractive program for users.

4. Personnel

The study revealed that this factor was rated at the highest level, attributed to staff providing services with politeness and cheerfulness, having a sufficient number of trainers to meet demand, and being capable of solving problems, assisting, and providing accurate advice to users with enthusiasm. This finding is consistent with the research concept of Kothpab et al. (2016), who studied marketing mix attitudes related to the loyalty of parents at Vimol Srivan Technology College. They found that service recipients similarly prioritized the quality of service provided by personnel at a high level.

5. Process Management

The study revealed that this factor was rated at the highest level because users experience convenience in membership registration, receive rapid notifications of important information, are treated with equality in service provision, and have access to a variety of payment channels and online class booking systems. However, this finding differs from the research of Ampanrat and Sinrungram (2024), who studied factors influencing the decision to use fitness centers among consumers in Nonthaburi Province. They found that the process management factor did not significantly affect the decision to use the services. This discrepancy may be attributed to the differing needs of consumers in different geographical areas or distinct perspectives regarding data management systems.

6. Physical Characteristics of the Establishment

The study revealed that this factor was rated at the highest level because the facilities feature beautiful and modern decoration, safety, an atmosphere conducive to exercise, spacious areas, adequate parking, and Wi-Fi availability. This finding is consistent with the research of Siribal (2019), who studied factors influencing the decision to use fitness centers in Bangkok. That study found that the provision of adequate and high-quality space and facilities generates satisfaction and demonstrates attentiveness to members.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

1. Future research should investigate the factors influencing the decision to use exercise facilities and fitness centers in Mueang District, Sisaket Province, by focusing on a comparative analysis among different age groups, such as adolescents, working-age adults, and the elderly.
2. Future research should expand the scope of the study regarding factors influencing the decision to use exercise facilities and fitness centers to encompass other provinces or geographical areas.

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