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RESEARCH ARTICLE

**WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVE TOWARDS HEALTH AND FITNESS – A
CASE STUDY ON INDIAN FITNESS INDUSTRY AND WOMEN**

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ABSTRACT

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Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to analyse the women's perspective towards health and fitness industry.

Design/Methodology: Research design is based on exploratory and descriptive research from India on the basis of convenience sampling, with the sample size of 50 women's & data is analysed using simple tools like averages and percentages.

Findings: There is a huge scope and demand for health and fitness industry in the country like India due to the increasing health issues, to overcome hectic stressful and busy life, to overcome stress levels and majorly 20+ Years aged women's are getting influenced by fashion icons hence they want to look and feel good they consider building fitness is a status symbol. Health and Fitness is a booming industry in the coming future as well. **Research limitations/implications:** The study is restricted to Indian women. **Originality/value:** This paper presents the health and fitness importance and awareness levels present in the today's women also the transformation in them from 1990's to 2017 and expected changes by the year 2020. New trends information and how fitness is inbuilt in the women's daily life. It also gives us an insight on where do we stand when compared to international market from the fitness

1.1 INTRODUCTION

From creating safe havens for women to spreading a word about new ways to exercise, many women both young and old are making fitness a more positive experience for all.

After being ignored for decades, the women fitness market is now the hottest and fastest growing industries, due to athleisure fad and the large no. of women who were yoga pants to do everything except workout, but the



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market is also full of women's who wants to shed pounds, add-muscle and get healthy. According to Forbes, Nike alone saw enough opportunity in this segment to grow the market by nearly 12% into 2013 and extending its growth to 20% by 2020.

When it comes to attaining a svelte, athletic and powerful physique, while simply feeling confident and healthy women have to overcome a massive barrage of mental and physical hurdles unfortunately in physical society, including the fitness industry women and young females are incessantly pressured or shamed into feeling like they should workout or diet or solely to change their appearance, that they should strive to become smaller, skinnier, more feminine and subservient version of their current self.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

To analyse women's perspective towards health and fitness in the growing women's fitness market.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To understand and analyze the Indian fitness industry
- To understand and analyze women's perspective towards health and fitness

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

Al –falasi et.al carried out a research in the year 2008 to access the knowledge, attitudes and use of anabolic steroids among gym users in Al-Ain district, UAE. The study gives us an insight on anabolic steroid usage is significantly higher among body builders, weight lifters and commercial club users despite of creating awareness on consequences of anabolic steroids.

Buchha highlighted insights on fitness trends in India in the year 2012 and he observed that fitness trends and technologies were changing fast hence there is a need for educating new users on new trends, he also observed a shift towards gentler more introspective exercises that contributes to improve cardiovascular health while increasing flexibility and

muscular strength. He also concluded that fitness clubs must provide highly customized fitness products and experiences that meet customer's requirements.

Darper et.al. Carried a study in the year 2006 on South African fitness industry and it stressed upon that, all the facilities were located mostly within urban areas hence only 2% population was served by fitness centres. But the facilities offered a wide range of equipments and services to their customers and majority were in the age ranging 18-25years, 55% were male and 49% were female and 25% were university qualified.

Deloitte access economics commissioned by Australian fitness centre in the year 2012 provided us with the important data and trend information which contributed to industry development. The data obtained indicated high number of users within the age range of 25-34years with majority of female participants. It also showed that there is huge growth for fitness industry when compared to other industries and also predicted further growth for the industry. It also stressed on industry innovation to meet changing consumer preferences and to develop a greater capacity to integrate advanced technology in service provision.

EHFA's 'European Health and Fitness Operations report' provided insights in the year 2013 about many different facilities like gym, wellness centre, spa sauna, swimming pool racquet sports, Aerobics etc which needs to be provided to the customer as the retention reports were increasing from the fitness centre. By introducing multiple fitness regimes you can easily cater your special customers and retain them by satisfying their needs and requirements.

Franchise help report 2014 states about fitness industry analysis 2014-cost and trends, analysed the current costs and future trends expected in the health fitness industry in America. Acc to this the fitness industry would continue to rise and health fitness centres needs to concentrate more on older



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age groups, it also suggest fitness centres to purchase the equipments on the regular basis and be updated with the latest trends but it could be expensive huge amount is needed, but increased percentage of obesity rates prevalence of lifestyle diseases would continue to attract people to health clubs resulting in growth.

IHRSA and leisure trend groups published in the year 2014 proved useful for many reasons: to track past trends, analyze the findings, highlight areas of opportunities and address what needs to be done to increase member participation. This latest report focuses on health club consumer behaviour of Americans of age group above 16. It also shows that young American was playing a big role in health and fitness club memberships. More than one-fourth (37%) of them are in the age group of 21-30.

The Australian Report: wellness trends growth and market opportunities published by Hannah Wilkinson on Dec 2016 states that 15 percent of Australian adults gym members and some 20,000 are employed in the fitness industry alone, the country's mature wellness market provides a fertile breeding ground for industry innovations. Some 44 percent of Australian consumers avoid sugar when making food purchasing decisions. "The Australian consumer is 3-4 years ahead of the UK consumer, and fruit juice is regarded as added sugar by many Australians is embracing the notion of simply eating real food. Going forward, success for UK and US players looking to penetrate the Australian market rests on truly disruptive ideas, marketing strategy, and product innovation. They may manifest through clever brand collaborations, retail partnerships, destination-led experiences, or infusing technology and science with wellness since demand is high, but businesses must create innovative ways to leverage it.

Amareesh Ojha CEO and founder of Gympik contributed a study on evolution of fitness in India –Riding high on growth in the year 2017

that modern fitness concepts have entered market 20 years ago so it will not be right to say that fitness industry is in the infant stage. Fitness industry has a very good opportunity in the Indian country to grow and it might increase our national income by 20-30% due to the increasing health issues and increased literacy rate people are depending on fitness clubs.

Deloitte access economics-fitness industry workforce report :2010-2020 in Australia was published in the year 2012 which has given a updated stats on fitness industry ie, According to the comprehensive report, Spain is home to 4,350 health clubs, with an average size of 3,859sq m including outdoor activity space. On average, each club has 3,037 members with an average age of 36.5 years. Spanish health club members are slightly more likely to be female (50.6 per cent) than male (49.4 per cent), with an average monthly cancellation rate of health club membership coming in at 6.7 per cent. In 2015, Spanish health clubs spent, on average, 37.7 per cent of income on personnel salaries, 9.9 per cent on supplies, 3.5 per cent on marketing and promotions, and 1.3 per cent on education and training.

Macfarlane and Thomas has contributed a research paper on 'Exercise and diet in weight management in the year 2010 he stated that solving the overweight and obesity problem via appropriate modifications to exercise /diet appeared easy but in practicality it was very difficult and only a small percentage of people were able to maintain their weight loss for long term so they thought guidance by doctor, dieticians and allied health professionals would be the right people to guide those who are at over-weight and obesity risk.

Phillips has done a study on improvement of physical activity with special reference to the isokinetic or sedentary behaviour of the modern society and its impact on health of American population in 2012, he stresses that American population were not performing intended physical activity so new strategies



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were supposed to be brought to bring a change in this arena. He observed that patients respected their physicians as credible sources of information and looked to them for health-related guidance, unfortunately many physicians were not talking to their patients about physical activity hence a unique opportunity to raise awareness about fitness was missing. So he started stressing on the health care community in making Americans more physically active.

Zhang carried out a study on consumer behaviours of commercial health clubs in Liverpool in the year 2014 and he suggest that targeting marketing strategies of the clubs should be suggested accordingly in order to design service channel, price reasonably, communicate with consumers and provide satisfying environment.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher has applied exploratory and descriptive research design by constructing the questionnaire and subjected the questionnaire to 50 women consumers who are fitness freaks in a growing country, India. Using convenience sampling for data collection, the collected data has been analysed using simple tools such as averages and percentages to arrive at a desired results.

Research Design	Exploratory and Descriptive research
Sample design	Convenience
Sample size	50 women fitness freaks
Data collection method	Structured questionnaire
Sources	Primary data and secondary data
Tools for Data analysis	Averages and percentages

1.6 INDIAN FITNESS INDUSTRY

Fitness and wellness sector in India has reached a long way from the ways of local akhadas to wrestling boxing now being the part of international Olympics where Indian's are taking part in it irrespective of the gender and winning the medals. Earlier physical fitness was confined only to those who were practicing body building and power lifting they used to conduct it for their survival and livelihood during the festival and social occasions they use to travel miles to participate in the event which in turn requires huge level of strength and stamina. Other such physical activity is people use to work hard in agriculture and men use to get trained for getting into soldier. But today fitness industry in India is driven towards health, well being, fitness, good looks confidence and they look fitness as their status symbol hence they are moving towards aerobics, Zumba, aerial yoga, Pilates, MMA, kickboxing etc. have become the fitness trends over the years.

Currently fitness industry in India is largely an unorganised and unstructured sector, waiting to be integrated into an organised entity. It has been observed that many mom-and-pop structures are making way towards organized retailing in the gym business and the trend will only accelerate in the coming times, with the entry of global players.

We should thank today's fast pace, hectic, stressful and modern lifestyle which has made people workout actively and follow well-designed fitness regime for healthy lifestyle. Now we have our fitness and health related app in the smart phone which is increasing the awareness levels of people towards the importance of fitness and forcing them to follow those workouts and diet to keep themselves fit and healthy. Nowadays we see even on the eatable products packages like for healthy heart, fat free, sugar free, low cholesterol, baked or boiled, probiotic etc. Moreover muscular and toned bodies of celebrities, models and fashion icons coupled with healthy lifestyles are making Indian consumers embrace fitness like never before.



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People never mind taking out their precious timeout even in their busy schedule to do some workouts to look good, healthy and fit.

It has been proved and people are coming to terms with the fact that those who are regularly doing some exercises and workouts are happier and healthy. Workouts also reduces stress level, depression, anxiety also keeps the diseases at bay including the cancer. It also strengthens your immune system, stamina and strength.

In India, the total retail market for fitness as a category is valued at Rs. 4,579 Cr (US\$ 0.76 bn), growing at 16-18 per cent and as per the estimation it has crossed Rs. 7,000 crore (US\$ 1.18 bn) by the year 2017. Modern retail total market as per the estimation has grown by 22-27%. Fitness centres are flourishing as disposable per capita income rises and desk-bound lifestyles lower immunity amongst today's youth.

Indian fitness industry is undergoing riot by increasing incidences of obesity and diabetes, even when we look around on a daily basis we find weight loss advertisements are rampant everywhere. This is one of the key reasons for the increased memberships in health club and gym. Spending on fitness was considered as a luxury a decade back but now it has become a daily routine not just in urban cities but also in tier 2 and tier 3 cities, towns and villages where people are opting for fitness. The proactive approach to fitness has increased the demand for not just fitness services but also for the products because this generation people would like to look good and feel good at any cost this is increasing the growth of service and products.

Moreover global corporations, IT industry KPO's BPO's have also provided momentum to industry by installing in-house fitness centres and health clubs within their work premises. It is been followed by hospitality industry, national and international hotel chain in India many others are in pipeline. Hotels in smaller cities are providing gym if not spas- in order to satisfy the new age health

conscious people. Nowadays even the wedding couples are gifted with gym subscriptions and fitness equipments.

Residential societies, community centres, apartments, complexes are also compulsorily hosting gym not just in metropolitan cities but also in tier 2 and 3 cities it is spreading like wildfire. Multinational fitness chains and gyms are taking the franchisee route in order to enter into Indian sub-continent considering India's high and middle class population.

Small in-house gym setup is also coming up in the houses of business tycoons, industrialists, sport icons, celebrities, socialites and fitness freaks that are elite sound in terms of finances and space is not a concern. Even online tutorials and apps are in demand which provide gym trainers, fitness experts, and nutritionists etc at your place with cost.

Prominent and recognised fitness centres are already diversifying their products and service portfolio into market in every possible way to satisfy and reach the potential customers. Skyrocketing prices and cost of healthcare and medicals have pushed people towards the preventive viable option, rather than cure. As one of the health mantra is **"Prevention is better than cure"**.

Interestingly the fitness oriented customers are mostly in the age group of 20-40 who are either students or employees, which gives us a evidence that from the college days to employment people are fond of looking good, maintaining fitness and toned body. Once they cross 40 they do some workouts to fight with their health issues or doctor might have suggested them to do so for better lifestyle.

Earlier it was only males who embraced physical fitness but today 45% of females are involved in fitness regimes. Digital enforcement and easy access to technology, TV has brought a drastic paradigm shift in women's perspective towards fitness and health seriously. Rising cases of osteoporosis and lowering of bone density have catapulted women to take up health, diet and fitness in a



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major way. Nowadays breast cancer is increasing drastically it is taking away the millions of women lives it is also second most common type of cancer in India. At the contrary every days trendy lifestyles, Hollywood, Bollywood celebrities lifestyle influence are some of the factors to create interest in women's to look good and have better physique.

Fitness regime and modern lifestyle have entered India a good 20years ago so it would be wrong to say that the industry is at blooming/budding stage by any means. All stakeholders, trainers and educational, institutions, fitness franchises, equipment and nutrition manufacturers and distributors, including gym owners, professional associations and the government should come together and catapult the industry to a stage where it can flourish. Undoubtedly, fitness industry has great potential in a country like India where there is a huge opportunity hidden. It is a sunrise sector, poised to grow by 30-40 per cent year on year.

India's top fitness centres:

1. Talwalkars
2. Fitness first
3. Golds gym
4. Fitness one
5. Ozone fitness and spa

India's market wellness trend report- Growth and market opportunities

With India's economy on course India is world's fourth fastest grown country by 2017, and under 25s making up almost half its population, the region's burgeoning wellness industry is full of potential.

A report published in Dec 2016 by FICCI (Federation of Indian chambers of commerce and industry) in association with consulting firm EY, it has predicted double industry wide growth for the rest decade with gym and fitness centre to see a expansion of 18%."Attitudes to wellness have changed a lot in last 5-10 years due to instagram and also India's upper class people are highly mobile and return from travelling abroad with an

appetite for products they've discovered in the US and UK," explains Rohini Bajekal, a former Brand Manager for both RAW Pressery — India's first cold-pressed juice brand, and the country's first vegan and gluten-free snack startup Eighty20.

A staggering 47 percent of India's 1.3bn population is under the age of 25, and the importance of social media in driving millennial interest in wellness is impossible to overstate. Bollywood stars like Amrita Arora regularly feature on the Instagram feed of luxury Mumbai health club I Think Fitness, while actress Gul Panag is the Co-Founder of MobieFit, a fitness coaching and motivation app. And in a market where government support for new businesses is limited, stars even play a role in the funding space. In April 2017, RAW Pressery attracted a \$559,000 investment from actress and model Jacqueline Fernandez.

Finally with increased interest in yoga and meditation showing no signs of slowing down outside India, opportunities to build on the country's spiritual reputation are only going to increase. Indian wellness industry likely to hit Rs1.5 trillion by FY2019-20: as the industry estimated close to 85000 crores in financial year 2014-15 and is expected to grow at a compounded annual growth rate of nearly 12% for next 5 years so it can easily achieve above 1.5 trillion by FY20.

[Source: WELLTODO-Global wellness news - The India Market Report: Wellness Trends, Growth and Market Opportunities-BY HANNAH WILKINSON ON JULY 20, 2017]

1.7 DATA ANALYSIS

1. Awareness levels of BMI (Body Mass Index) in women's are very high it is found that 90% of them know about BMI.
2. 20-45 Age range of women's showed high awareness levels towards their own BMI levels.
3. Awareness level towards their own BMI measurements is moderately



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- high.70% of the women has the knowledge about the levels of their BMI and 30% doesn't have any knowledge about it.
4. Obesity levels in women's is as follows:
 - a. 10% of women's have very high obesity levels whose weight is above 85kg.
 - b. 20% of women's have moderately high obesity level whose weight is between 75-85 kg.
 - c. 30% of women's have average obesity level whose weight is less than 75 kg.
 - d. 40% of women's are having low or normal obesity and BMI levels.
 5. Occupations of women's who is aware about BMI are:
 - a. It is found that 50% of the respondents belong to student's category and working spinster.
 - b. 30% are housewives and 20% are working women.
 6. Stress levels of women are as follows:
 - a. From the sample size result is it found that 5% of the women are having very high stress levels.
 - b. 50% of the women are having moderately high stress levels.
 - c. 20% of the women are having moderately low stress level as compared with 50% women.
 - d. 25% of the women are having low stress levels
 - e. Even their stress levels are affecting their health and fitness to a greater extent.
 7. Initiatives taken by women's to overcome their stress levels are:
 - a. 20% are fond of gym to overcome their stress and to be fit and healthy.
 - b. 30% of them go for a regular walk in the morning and evening as a fitness regime.
 - c. 50% of women's are following yoga and meditation as a stress reliever and health mantra.
 8. Location chosen by women's to carry out their regular fitness activities.
 - a. 60% of them visit's fitness clubs.
 - b. 30% prefers to carry out physical activities in the parks and grounds.
 - c. 10% women's would like to stay at home and do their regular exercises with gym equipments placed at home and meditations.
 9. Parameters on the basis of which women chooses her fitness clubs or locations.
 - a. 20% of the women look for the accessibility as a priority to join a fitness centre.
 - b. 40% of the women look for the credibility and expertise of the coach in the fitness centre.
 - c. 40% of them see to it that equipments/instruments are well maintained and placed in the centre as per there requirements.
 10. Number of women owning their own fitness equipments are:
 - a. 20% of the women from the elite segment own the fitness machines in their home.
 - b. Other 80% of the women's are dependent on fitness centre they do not own any equipments.
 11. The type of instruments owned by the women are:



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- a. 40% own treadmill in order save their time going out for a walk.
 - b. 10% of them own different set of instruments.
 - c. 50% own cycling machine with some extra fittings as a fitness remedy.
12. How many of them strictly follows the diet chart prescribed by the trainers or doctors:
- a. 50% of women strictly follow the diet charge and they are highly serious about it.
 - b. 40% of them are moderately following the diet chart.
 - c. 10% are low in practicing the diet chart regularly.
13. Women who are sports lovers are:
- a. 5% of the women are sports lovers and they are very particular about their health and fitness.
 - b. 50% are moderately interested in physical activities like dance, aerobics, zumba etc.
 - c. 45% are traditional fitness followers like walking, exercises, yoga with normal diet.
14. Diabetic patient percentage in women - 5% of the women whose age is 40+ is affected by the diabetes.
4. Increased obesity and diabetic risk in today's generation has given a huge scope towards fitness regime and women above the age of 40 are suffering with such issues.
 5. Women's are more specific when it comes to fitness clubs they are looking for experienced trainers, customised instruments, ambiance, location etc.
 6. Women's are getting influenced by fashion icons, celebrities, Hollywood, Bollywood, peer groups showing interest in fitness alternatives like aerobics, zumba, pilates, yoga, gym, nutrition diets and counselling sessions etc.
 7. There is less demand for fitness equipments due to increase in fitness centre which provides a package of physical activities.
 8. Women prefers multiple beneficiary packages at one location like well set gym equipments, trainer, nutritionist guidance, relaxation, entertainment, health drinks/snack, fitness shopping centre at one location.
 9. Women's from elite background set up a in-house fitness club at their home and do the workouts.
 10. Physical activities reduce the stress level, anxiety, depressions in women to a greater extent.
 11. Today's generation feels that being fit is their identity, as the medical expenses are also increasing instead of spending on medicals they are happy spending on fitness activities and have a healthy lifestyle.
 12. Finally there is a huge demand and opportunity available in India for the fitness industry and it's a blooming industry and keeps growth over the years ahead.
 13. It is found that in order to get rid of busy, hectic and stressful lifestyle women's are mandatorily getting

1.8 FINDINGS

1. Awareness levels of women's towards fitness and its importance in life is high.
2. Majority of the adults and youths are showering interest on fitness clubs when compared to old aged people as they want to look good and feel good and create an image for themselves.
3. Old aged or 40+ aged women are looking for fitness club for health related issues.



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involved in different fitness activities and they are following a mantra of **“Health is Wealth”**.

14. Due to the emergence of deadly diseases where 13 types of cancer including breast cancer has been proved to be 2nd highest disease found in India. So people have considered health and fitness as a priority and necessity in their day-to-day life irrespective of the high cost charged by the health and fitness centres.
15. It is found that women are also more determined towards yoga, meditation and moving into spirituality in order to have a better health and fitness in a long run.

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