

Fit as a FIDDLE

A study on consumer consciousness about being fit and propping allied wellbeing trends within the country

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The fitness industry is poised to grow at a staggering 30% p.a. and the industry is undergoing a transformation with myriad forms of fitness being marketed. The market size of the gym business is close to 300 crore and is growing at a healthy rate of 25% per year. Increase in awareness of the benefits of regular exercise, coupled with rising obesity in urban India and increase in metabolic diseases due to unhealthy lifestyles, is spurring interest in fitness.

Staying Fit

Being fit is a choice that people make consciously. An increasingly sedentary lifestyle, early onset of lifestyle diseases and influence of well groomed celebrities is spurring demand for fitness. Several hotels have launched their own fitness programs that are not just open to in house guests but also via membership. Sheraton Bangalore Hotel at Brigade Gateway encourages guests to keep in shape with Sheraton Fitness Programmed by Core Performance, a partnership that offers guests a comprehensive health and fitness program that helps maintain an exercise routine while on the road. Says Asif Khan, Fitness Instructor of Goa Marriott Resort & Spa, "If we compare the fitness and wellness facilities 5 years ago to what it is now, there is a massive change in the Indian market, which now caters not only to reduced obesity but also lifestyle disorders." Adds Dr Vishnu Radhakrishnan, Spa Manager, Kenilworth Resort & Spa, Goa, "Over the last few years, the attitude of people in India, towards



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Husnawaz Dastur
Spa Manager, Renaissance Mumbai

work. Therefore, people have started taking fitness seriously. Another reason is obesity amongst kids, which has increased resulting in health issues at a younger age."

Trend Alert

A new survey of fitness trends shows body weight training, including back to basics exercises like Push-ups, planks, and Pull-ups is expected to be one of the top fitness trends of 2013. "Researchers say education and certification programs for health and fitness professionals are experiencing exponential growth," says Dr. Radhakrishnan. "The body builder's look is passé and the current trends

fitness, has largely changed. They keep exploring as well as trying new fitness trends. Having a fit body has become a basic thing one needs to maintain now a day." Physical fitness improves the overall quality of life, reduces stress and encourages a healthy lifestyle. "With age being no barrier these days you will find a 40 year as fit as a 20 year old person. Club Renaissance (fitness club) at Renaissance Mumbai Conventional Center Hotel has dedicated fitness professionals/ instructors who give consultation and look after each need of our guest," says Husnawaz Dastur, Spa Manager, Renaissance Mumbai Convention Centre Hotel & Lakeside Chalet Mumbai- Marriott Executive Apartments. "Bollywood's fitness icons, dedicated fitness TV shows and media hype on fitness, increased focus on looking young/fit/healthy are the game changers leading to significant awareness and action in recent times," says Pavithra N. Raj, Dietician,

Columbia Asia Referral Hospital – Yeshwanthpur. Doctors and fitness professionals are bringing a change in everyone's mind set and equate a healthy mind and body to a happy and long lasting life. Pratik S Rao, Fitness Training Manager of Fitness First adds, "Stress levels in the corporate world has increased tremendously and it has a very high impact on their



are veering towards 'functional, holistic fitness'. Boot camp drills, CrossFit, Yoga, Pilates, Zumba (Latin dance based aerobics) are all the current rage," says Reebok Master Trainer Vinata Shetty. Again the number of people undergoing nonsurgical fat reduction is skyrocketing and a recent healthcare market research report predicts the weight loss market to reach \$310 billion annually by 2014.

The new buzzword Pilates which is done on special machines, encompasses functional fitness and strengthening of the core. "It helps the individual to carry out daily activities efficiently, enhance sports performance or rehabilitate from injury. More and more athletes are using Pilates for injury prevention and longevity of their careers. It is also used by rehab professionals worldwide," says Sharat Sareen, co founder of The Zone Pialtes Studio in Bangalore. "Fitness today is moving outdoors as well with trends such as marathon, cycling, nature trails etc. In our Gym at Spa Alila we offer cycling, beach runs and jogs and nature trails as an alternate form of fitness to guests seeking activities beyond the gym," explains Dr. Deepika Dalvi, Spa Manager, Spa Alila at Alila Diwa Goa.



Significant changes in lifestyle related to lack of physical activity and increased consumption of fast food among both affluent and working class population has led to greater need for healthy lifestyles

Dr. Vasant Kumar
Spa Manager, Rejuve-The Spa, The Lalit Ashok, Bangalore

The increasing awareness about the benefits of various alternate therapies and a gradual increase of disposable income has fuelled the entry of the Spa and Wellness culture in the league of fitness trends in India. "Today, people visit spas to heal their bodies. There is a veering towards anything with the word, 'organic' and following the trend, spas are now offering organic treatments and organic products for skincare services," says Vella Ramasawmy, General Manager at

Kempinski Ambience Hotel. "A new and emerging segment of people belong to those who are adopting self curing or healing fitness mantras to keep them fit around the year rather than short term courses or operation or surgery," says Dr. Dinesh Verma, Director- Ipsicura. Another trend is that of boot camps, a high-intensity structured activity patterned after military-style training. "Boot camp includes cardiovascular, strength, endurance, and flexibility drills and usually involves both indoor

and outdoor exercises typically led by an enthusiastic instructor. Boot camps also can combine sport-type drills and calisthenics," says Althea Shah, VP Marketing & Fitness expert, Gold's Gym India. Increasingly, people are migrating towards the age-old traditional healing science of Ayurveda for health and fitness. "Earlier mostly foreigners used to come to the country to rejuvenate and detoxify themselves through Ayurvedic massaging and Panchakarma. However, nowadays a lot of Indians are going for body rejuvenation and fitness through Ayurveda. Panchakarma helps the body to reclaim its stability and to achieve a more natural body weight," says Dr. Vyanketesh Joshi, senior physician and Founder, SDF Holistic Healthcare, a chain of Holistic Ayurveda health clinics in Mumbai.

Overcoming Hurdles

Increasing demand also increases competition in the industry and new forms of exercise, new styles and offers need to be made to attract customers. "The primary challenge is the lack of education about the benefits of exercise, health and fitness and the second challenge is the unplanned and unregulated opening of gyms of all types, shapes and sizes, which are not equipped or staffed to provide a safe and fun exercise environment. A lot of such gyms open up with a lot of fanfare and positioning but immediately start reckless discounting as they are not able to build a healthy membership base and cash flow," opines Dr. Manjiri Patankar Puranik Founder, Instasculpt. Other challenges include that fitness centers must continue to buy equipment to keep up with the latest trends. But this can be an onerous capital expense. There is a degree of seasonality to gym revenues



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as well and this also must take in to consideration. Everyone is jumping onto the fitness bandwagon. "There are no regulatory/governing bodies to supervise credibility and safety components of gyms as well as fitness trainers. Nor is there an emphasis on the precautionary and safety considerations of physical activity which help prevent injuries," says Shetty. Lack of certified and qualified fitness trainers is another issue. Recently, the National Accreditation Board for Hospitals and Healthcare providers (NABH) had launched a voluntary accreditation programme under the Quality Control of India (QCI) for the fitness and wellness sector but it has met with a lukewarm response so far. Accreditation ensures that the centre follows set standards in controlling infections and safety practices besides meeting service delivery standards. "The major problem is the limited number of serious players in the wellness industry. Since the entry barriers are low, any one can just open a massage centre, call it a spa and they are not on. What are the products being used, what therapy is being

delivered is just being looked into," opines Krishna Suri, CEO, Mystic Spa. The Indian Fitness & Slimming Industry is set to ride high with all levers in place. "Significant changes in lifestyle related to lack of physical activity and increased consumption of fast food among both affluent and working class population has led to greater need for healthy lifestyles," concludes Dr Vasant Kumar, Spa Manager, Rejuve – The Spa, The Lalit Ashok, Bangalore.

Color Your Way to a Healthier Diet (Courtesy Sheraton, Bangalore)

- Yellow foods: optimize brain functions
- Green foods: rejuvenate musculature and bone
- Orange foods: support skin and eye health
- Red foods: support heart and circulatory health
- White foods: enhance immune system, lymph system and cellular recovery
- Purple foods: promote microcirculation

