

## **Adoption of Best Practices in Fitness Clubs with Special Reference to Pune City: A Step towards the Industry's Aspirations for Sustainable Development**

**Ms. Anitha A**

Assistant Professor,  
Dayananda Sagar College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Bengaluru,  
anithaananth7@gmail.com,  
ORCID-0009-0009-5300-9838

**Dr Kiruthiga V**

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Management  
SRMIST, Ramapuram, Part-Vadapalani  
kiruthiv@srmist.edu.in,  
ORCID-0000-0002-3570-8987

**Dr. Sudarshan S Savanoor**

Assistant Professor,  
Dayananda Sagar College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Bengaluru,  
sudarshan.savanoor@gmail.com,  
ORCID-0000-0002-0768-6493

**Dr Smriti Verma**

Senior Assistant Professor,  
Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Nagpur  
Smriti.verma@sibmnagpur.edu.in  
ORCID-0000-0002-8339-1670

**Catherine Julie Aarthi C**

Senior Assistant Professor, School of Management  
Symbiosis Institute of Business Management, Nagpur  
catherinejisaac@gmail.com  
ORCID-0000-0001-9353-5546

**E.Gopi**

Associate Professor, Department of Business Administration, School of Management,  
Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology,  
Avadi, Chennai 600056  
ethirajgopi@gmail.com  
ORCID-0000-0001-9029-2649

### **Abstract**

Growing interest in fitness services calls for efficient service management and operations. This research examines the management approaches that fitness centres in Pune City could implement to boost member involvement and ensure enduring business viability. A cross-sectional qualitative approach was employed: semi-structured interviews were carried out with 20 managers of privately owned fitness establishments (6 budget, 10 mid-range, and 4 high-end). Interview answers were coded through the Constant Comparative Method into 30 codes and five groups, and the 592 coded responses that emerged were examined quantitatively using descriptive statistics, 95% confidence intervals, chi-square goodness-of-fit tests, one-way

ANOVA, the Kruskal–Wallis H test, Shapiro–Wilk and Tukey–fence outlier diagnostics, and Pareto analysis. The coded responses were not uniformly spread across categories ( $\chi^2(4) = 79.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ); the category Service Offering to Customers represented 33.3% of all responses and was significantly over-represented compared with the number of codes it includes (standardised residual = +5.01), whereas Marketing and Social Quotient was under-represented (−4.52). Manpower/staff (118 responses, 19.9%) emerged as a statistical outlier and the most frequently discussed single theme.

Mean code frequency did not vary significantly among categories (Kruskal–Wallis  $H(4) = 3.45$ ,  $p = .485$ ), suggesting that the five categories are collectively important rather than any one being insignificant. Thriving centres blend sufficient tangible quality, welcoming customer service, loyalty schemes and digital marketing, and are conveniently situated within a 15-minute round trip.

**Keywords:** Business sustainability; fitness service; customer service; loyalty programmes; sporting facility; Pune; qualitative–quantitative analysis.

## 1. Introduction

Over the last few decades, rising involvement in physical activity has driven a consistent growth of fitness establishments. Globally, over 183 million members are served by more than 210,000 facilities (Walsh, 2019), while India is thought to have roughly 90 million health-conscious people (Krishna, 2019). The manner in which fitness is funded has likewise evolved, as organised chains, boutique studios and budget centres have broadened the range of business models (Motwani, 2019). In spite of this expansion, evidence indicates that most Indian fitness centres still do not have a website or mobile application (Krishna, 2019), which highlights substantial room for digital uptake.

Urban India has experienced a move toward sedentary ways of living, along with growing obesity, cardiovascular illness and diabetes. Households in the upper- and middle-income brackets are becoming more conscious of the value of a balanced diet and consistent exercise, and media-fuelled concern with physical appearance has further stimulated gym sign-ups. Gyms have outgrown the conventional perception of being venues solely for building muscle and now provide extras including spinning, saunas and salad bars (Jena, 2013).

To stay competitive, fitness centres need to place greater emphasis on long-term sustainability and customer engagement, and must tailor their services to industry trends in order to draw members and expand market share. Heightened competition and professionalisation render services more intricate and call for improved management approaches. Centres that cannot maintain their standing face closure or compelled repositioning. Building effective managerial strategies calls for an approach that blends qualitative insight with quantitative evidence (India Gyms, Health and Fitness Clubs Market to 2027, 2023).

Accordingly, the current study poses the following question: which managerial practices do fitness-centre managers in Pune consider most crucial for engaging members and sustaining their business, and how prominently are these practices reflected across service, facility, customer-service, marketing and access-related dimensions? The qualitative interview data are complemented by statistical examination of the coded responses, enabling the relative importance of each theme to be evaluated objectively.

## 2. Review of Literature

Savani (2023) documents considerable expansion in online and virtual fitness across India, fuelled by millennials' growing interest in healthier diets and exercise regimes as well as the ease, adaptability and affordability of digital classes. This lends weight to the argument for

technology-driven service delivery within traditional fitness centres.

Marti (2021) investigated mid-term behavioural change by applying reinforcement, confrontation and social-influence nudges in a gym environment, finding that reinforcement and confrontation nudges prompted individuals to produce clean energy from exercise equipment, while social-influence nudges encouraged a cooperative mindset. Longer-term research was advised in order to clarify what drives behavioural change.

Perceptions of service vary across demographic segments. León-Quismondo et al. (2020) observed that women attach more value than men to variety, personal training and service quality, and are more drawn to offerings such as swimming pools, whereas older members express lower satisfaction with cleanliness and safety. García-Fernández et al. (2020), applying Importance–Performance Matrix Analysis to the servicescape, pinpointed scope for enhancement in equipment and facility condition, especially among women aged over 21. Drawing on a sample of 398 customers, García-Pascual et al. (2020) demonstrated that management variables are stronger predictors of satisfaction, perceived value and future intentions than age, gender, subjective well-being or emotions. García-Pascual et al. (2023) put forward a sports-centre management model built around customer experience, satisfaction, engagement and loyalty, in which satisfaction mediates the relationship between service experience and commitment.

Viewed through an exercise-science lens, Bouchard (1995) connected perceptions of regular and vigorous activity with health-related fitness, and Hamdouni et al. (2024) found that resistance training, high-intensity functional training and choreographed high-intensity classes each enhanced body composition, endurance and aerobic capacity among untrained participants. Taken together, these studies indicate that evidence concerning customer experience and service quality is well developed, yet scant research has measured how much relative weight managers assign to different practice areas within the Indian setting, and particularly in Pune. The present study fills that gap.

### **3. Objectives and Hypotheses**

#### **3.1 Objectives**

- To understand the concept of practices in fitness clubs.
- To examine sustainability in fitness clubs.
- To suggest the most suitable practices for building sustainable fitness clubs.
- To quantify the relative emphasis placed by managers on each practice category using statistical tools.

#### **3.2 Hypotheses**

**H1:** The distribution of coded manager responses across the five practice categories differs from an even (equal) distribution.

**H2:** The distribution of coded responses differs from that expected if each category received attention in proportion to the number of codes it contains.

**H3:** Mean code frequency differs significantly between the five categories.

**H4:** The three business models (low-cost, mid-market, premium) are not equally represented among managers in the sample.

### **4. Research Methodology**

#### **4.1 Research design**

A descriptive, cross-sectional qualitative design was adopted, using semi-structured interviews. Data were collected in two phases: a literature review, followed by an interview-cum-

administered structured questionnaire of 18 items covering personal characteristics, facility features and management. The research setting was Pune City, and non-probability convenience sampling was used.

#### 4.2 Participants

The study drew on 20 managers of fitness facilities, whose ages ranged from 22 to 50 years ( $M = 33.91$ ,  $SD = 9.26$ ) and who had spent an average of 6.34 years ( $SD = 5.32$ ) working in similar positions. Facilities qualified for inclusion if they were privately operated, did not specialise in martial arts or general sports, and contained at least one weight room equipped with machines and free weights along with one or more rooms for group instruction. The business models covered were premium ( $n = 4$ ), mid-market ( $n = 10$ ) and low-cost ( $n = 6$ ) centres. Prospective participants were contacted in person and asked to take part on a voluntary basis; every one of them agreed to have their voices recorded after being assured that their responses would be kept anonymous. On average, interviews ran for 15 to 18 minutes ( $SD = 6.82$ ). Thematic saturation was achieved with these 20 key informants, suggesting that conducting additional interviews would not have produced further insights.

#### 4.3 Qualitative analysis

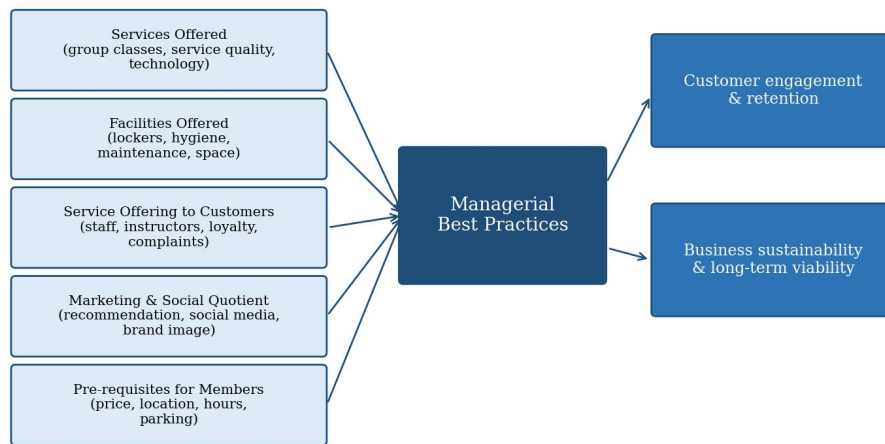
Interviews were transcribed and analysed using the Constant Comparative Method, whereby interviews are transcribed while data collection proceeds, coded, and grouped into categories. This produced 30 codes organised into five categories: Services Offered, Facilities Offered, Service Offering to Customers, Marketing and Social Quotient, and Pre-requisites at the Fitness Club for Members.

#### 4.4 Statistical tools

The number of reported responses for each code ( $n = 30$  codes; 592 responses in total) was treated as the unit of quantitative analysis. The following tools were applied ( $\alpha = .05$ ):

- **Descriptive statistics** (mean, SD, median, range, skewness, kurtosis) and 95% t-based confidence intervals for the participant profile.
- **Shapiro–Wilk test** for normality of code frequencies, determining whether parametric or non-parametric comparison is appropriate.
- **Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests** comparing observed category totals with (a) equal expected frequencies and (b) frequencies proportional to the number of codes per category; standardised residuals identify the categories driving any difference. The same test was applied to the business-model distribution, supplemented by an exact binomial test and Wilson interval.
- **One-way ANOVA and Kruskal–Wallis H test** for differences in mean/rank code frequency between categories, with eta-squared ( $\eta^2$ ) as effect size; both were repeated after removing the outlying code.
- **Tukey’s fences ( $1.5 \times IQR$ )** for outlier detection and **Pareto analysis** to identify the “vital few” codes accounting for most responses.

**Analytical caution** - Because several coded responses can originate from the same manager, they are not strictly independent observations. The inferential tests are therefore used as indicators of the relative weight of themes rather than as population-level estimates, and the p-values should be interpreted conservatively. The sample is a convenience sample and findings should not be generalised statistically beyond the study group.



**Figure 1: Conceptual framework – managerial practice categories and sustainability outcomes**

## 5. Data Analysis and Results

### Codification of Reported Responses

**Table 1: Codes, reported responses and categories (N = 592 responses, 30 codes)**

| S.N. | Code                                  | Responses | Category                      |
|------|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 1    | Supplementary Services                | 2         | Services Offered              |
| 2    | Classes in Group                      | 45        | Services Offered              |
| 3    | Technology in Centre/Service Offering | 5         | Services Offered              |
| 4    | Service Quality                       | 21        | Services Offered              |
| 5    | Level of Maintenance                  | 20        | Facilities Offered            |
| 6    | Importance                            | 14        | Facilities Offered            |
| 7    | Availability of Equipment             | 15        | Facilities Offered            |
| 8    | Locker Rooms                          | 39        | Facilities Offered            |
| 9    | Hygiene and Cleanliness               | 18        | Facilities Offered            |
| 10   | Space (Large Capacity)                | 15        | Facilities Offered            |
| 11   | Grievances/Complaints                 | 5         | Service Offering to Customers |
| 12   | Reception Counter                     | 13        | Service Offering to Customers |
| 13   | Familiar Treatment (Attention)        | 6         | Service Offering to Customers |
| 14   | Personal Treatment (Attention)        | 8         | Service Offering to Customers |
| 15   | Instructor (incl. PT)                 | 27        | Service Offering to Customers |
| 16   | Loyalty                               | 20        | Service Offering to Customers |
| 17   | Manpower/Staff                        | 118       | Service Offering to Customers |
| 18   | Brand Image                           | 15        | Marketing and Social Quotient |

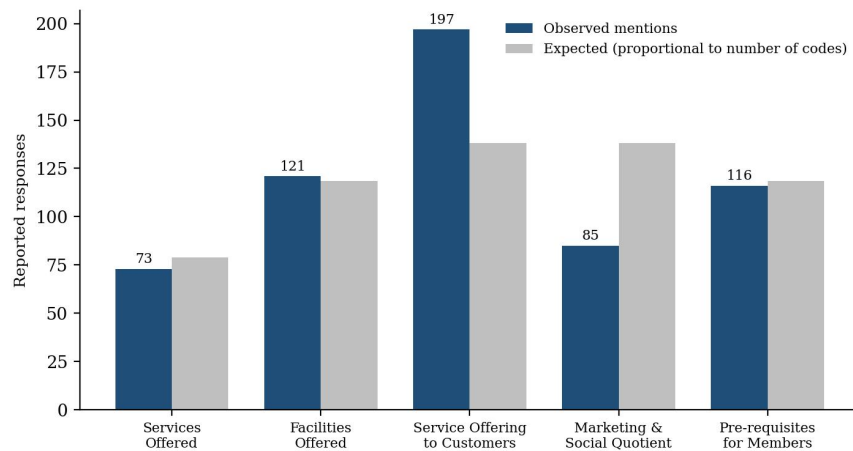
| S.N. | Code                            | Responses | Category                      |
|------|---------------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 19   | Competition among Fitness Clubs | 12        | Marketing and Social Quotient |
| 20   | Recommendations/Influences      | 21        | Marketing and Social Quotient |
| 21   | Promotional Activities/Offers   | 8         | Marketing and Social Quotient |
| 22   | Social Networks                 | 9         | Marketing and Social Quotient |
| 23   | Traditional/Customary Tools     | 14        | Marketing and Social Quotient |
| 24   | Members/Customers Attainment    | 6         | Marketing and Social Quotient |
| 25   | Restricted Holidays             | 16        | Pre-requisites for Members    |
| 26   | Opening Days                    | 20        | Pre-requisites for Members    |
| 27   | Opening Hours                   | 23        | Pre-requisites for Members    |
| 28   | Price                           | 29        | Pre-requisites for Members    |
| 29   | Parking                         | 6         | Pre-requisites for Members    |
| 30   | Location of Fitness Centre      | 22        | Pre-requisites for Members    |

### 5.1 Profile of respondents

**Table 3: Coded responses by category**

| Category                      | Codes     | Total      | % of total   | Mean         | SD           | Median      |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Services Offered              | 4         | 73         | 12.3         | 18.25        | 19.69        | 13.0        |
| Facilities Offered            | 6         | 121        | 20.4         | 20.17        | 9.50         | 16.5        |
| Service Offering to Customers | 7         | 197        | 33.3         | 28.14        | 40.42        | 13.0        |
| Marketing and Social Quotient | 7         | 85         | 14.4         | 12.14        | 5.08         | 12.0        |
| Pre-requisites for Members    | 6         | 116        | 19.6         | 19.33        | 7.79         | 21.0        |
| <b>All categories</b>         | <b>30</b> | <b>592</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>19.73</b> | <b>21.00</b> | <b>15.0</b> |

*Note: SD and mean are computed across the codes within each category.*



**Figure 2: Observed versus expected coded responses by category**

Note: CI = confidence interval; CV = coefficient of variation (SD/M). CIs use  $t(19) = 2.093$ . The mean age of 33.91 years (95% CI 29.58–38.24) shows a relatively young managerial cohort. Experience varied widely (CV = 83.9%), meaning that the sample combines newly appointed managers and long-serving ones, which strengthens the range of perspectives captured. The business-model distribution (6/10/4) did not differ significantly from an equal split,  $\chi^2(2) = 2.80$ ,  $p = .247$ ; an exact binomial test of mid-market share against 50% was likewise non-significant ( $p = 1.00$ ). Hypothesis H4 is therefore not supported: the sample is adequately mixed across models, although the small cell for premium centres ( $n = 4$ ) limits model-specific conclusions.

## 5.2 Distribution of coded responses

The 30 codes attracted 592 responses in total, i.e. 29.6 coded responses per manager. Code frequency ranged from 2 (Supplementary Services) to 118 (Manpower/Staff), with  $M = 19.73$ ,  $SD = 21.00$  and  $Mdn = 15$ . The distribution was strongly right-skewed (skewness = 3.78; excess kurtosis = 17.22) and significantly non-normal (Shapiro-Wilk  $W = 0.594$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Non-parametric methods are therefore preferred for group comparisons. Tukey's upper fence is 40.13 ( $Q1 = 8.25$ ,  $Q3 = 21.00$ ,  $IQR = 12.75$ ); Manpower/Staff (118) lies far beyond it and is a clear outlier, while Group Classes (45) and Locker Rooms (39) are the next most frequent codes. The complete code table is given in Appendix A.

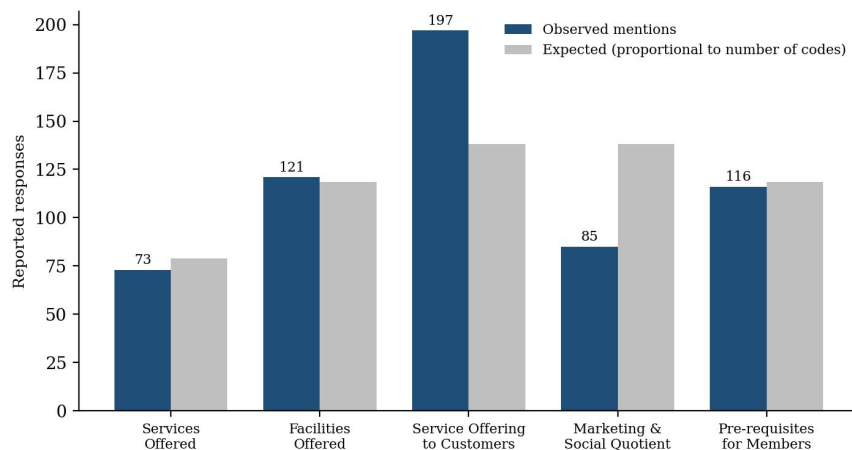
## 5.3 Descriptive statistics by category

**Table 3: Coded responses by category**

| Category                      | Codes | Total | % of total | Mean  | SD    | Median |
|-------------------------------|-------|-------|------------|-------|-------|--------|
| Services Offered              | 4     | 73    | 12.3       | 18.25 | 19.69 | 13.0   |
| Facilities Offered            | 6     | 121   | 20.4       | 20.17 | 9.50  | 16.5   |
| Service Offering to Customers | 7     | 197   | 33.3       | 28.14 | 40.42 | 13.0   |

| Category                      | Codes     | Total      | % of total   | Mean         | SD           | Median      |
|-------------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Marketing and Social Quotient | 7         | 85         | 14.4         | 12.14        | 5.08         | 12.0        |
| Pre-requisites for Members    | 6         | 116        | 19.6         | 19.33        | 7.79         | 21.0        |
| <b>All categories</b>         | <b>30</b> | <b>592</b> | <b>100.0</b> | <b>19.73</b> | <b>21.00</b> | <b>15.0</b> |

*Note: SD and mean are computed across the codes within each category.*



**Figure 2: Observed versus expected coded responses by category**

Service Offering to Customers received the most attention (33.3% of responses), but its high mean (28.14) and very high SD (40.42) are caused by the single outlying code Manpower/Staff; its median (13.0) is no higher than that of Services Offered. Marketing and Social Quotient had the lowest and most uniform emphasis ( $M = 12.14$ ,  $SD = 5.08$ ). Facilities Offered and Pre-requisites for Members were of similar and moderate prominence (about 20% each).

#### 5.4 Chi-square goodness-of-fit tests ( $H_1$ and $H_2$ )

**Table 4: Observed and expected category frequencies**

| Category                      | Observed | Expected (equal) | Expected ( $\propto$ codes) | Std. residual ( $\propto$ codes) | Interpretation    |
|-------------------------------|----------|------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------|
| Services Offered              | 73       | 118.4            | 78.9                        | -0.67                            | As expected       |
| Facilities Offered            | 121      | 118.4            | 118.4                       | +0.24                            | As expected       |
| Service Offering to Customers | 197      | 118.4            | 138.1                       | +5.01                            | Over-represented  |
| Marketing and Social Quotient | 85       | 118.4            | 138.1                       | -4.52                            | Under-represented |
| Pre-requisites for Members    | 116      | 118.4            | 118.4                       | -0.22                            | As expected       |

Note: Standardised residual =  $(O - E)/\sqrt{E}$ ; values beyond  $\pm 1.96$  are significant at  $\alpha = .05$ . Against an equal distribution, the category totals differ significantly,  $\chi^2(4, N = 592) = 79.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , supporting H1. Adjusting for the number of codes in each category still yields a significant departure,  $\chi^2(4, N = 592) = 46.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , supporting H2. The residuals show that this is driven by two categories: Service Offering to Customers is discussed far more than its share of codes would predict (+5.01), and Marketing and Social Quotient far less (-4.52). Managers thus place staff, instructors, reception and loyalty ahead of promotional activity when describing what sustains a centre. This should be read with the caution that the Manpower/Staff code alone contributes 118 of the 197 responses in the first category; without it, the category would not stand out.

### 5.5 Differences in mean frequency between categories (H3)

**Table 5: ANOVA and Kruskal–Wallis tests on code frequency by category**

| Analysis                              | Test statistic | df    | p-value | Effect size     |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|-------|---------|-----------------|
| One-way ANOVA (all codes)             | F = 0.479      | 4, 25 | .751    | $\eta^2 = .071$ |
| Kruskal–Wallis (all codes)            | H = 3.453      | 4     | .485    | –               |
| One-way ANOVA (excl. Manpower/Staff)  | F = 0.831      | 4, 24 | .519    | –               |
| Kruskal–Wallis (excl. Manpower/Staff) | H = 4.526      | 4     | .339    | –               |

Neither the parametric nor the non-parametric test detected a significant difference in mean code frequency between categories, and the result was unchanged after removing the outlier. H3 is therefore not supported. The effect size ( $\eta^2 = .071$ , a small-to-medium effect) indicates that category membership explains only about 7% of the variance in code frequency. Taken together with Section 5.4, the findings indicate that the categories differ in total volume of discussion (a function of how many codes they contain and of the Manpower/Staff outlier) but not in how intensively the typical code within each category was discussed. Managers consider all five areas relevant; no area can be dismissed as peripheral. With only 30 codes, the tests have limited power, so the non-significant result should not be read as proof of equivalence. A Spearman correlation between the number of codes per category and its total ( $\rho = .53$ ,  $p = .361$ ,  $n = 5$ ) was positive but not significant.

### 5.6 Pareto analysis

**Table 6: Ten most frequently reported codes**

| Code             | Responses | %     | Cumulative % | Category         |
|------------------|-----------|-------|--------------|------------------|
| Manpower/Staff   | 118       | 19.93 | 19.93        | Customer service |
| Classes in Group | 45        | 7.60  | 27.53        | Services         |
| Locker Rooms     | 39        | 6.59  | 34.12        | Facilities       |
| Price            | 29        | 4.90  | 39.02        | Pre-requisites   |

| Code                       | Responses | %    | Cumulative % | Category         |
|----------------------------|-----------|------|--------------|------------------|
| Instructor (incl. PT)      | 27        | 4.56 | 43.58        | Customer service |
| Opening Hours              | 23        | 3.89 | 47.47        | Pre-requisites   |
| Location of Fitness Centre | 22        | 3.72 | 51.18        | Pre-requisites   |
| Service Quality            | 21        | 3.55 | 54.73        | Services         |
| Recommendations/Influences | 21        | 3.55 | 58.28        | Marketing        |
| Level of Maintenance       | 20        | 3.38 | 61.66        | Facilities       |

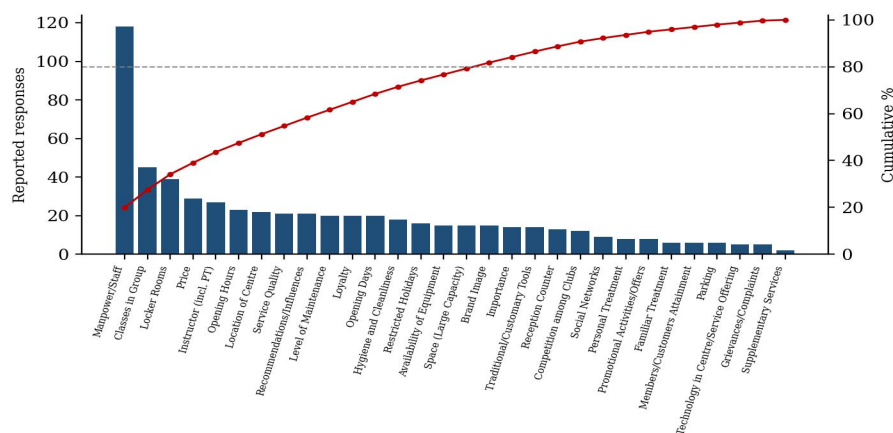


Figure 3: Pareto chart of coded responses

The top seven codes (23% of the 30 codes) account for 51.2% of all responses, and the top three – Manpower/Staff, Group Classes and Locker Rooms – for 34.1%. Eighty per cent of responses are reached only after 17 codes (cumulative 81.8%), so the classical 80/20 pattern is not strictly met: attention is concentrated on a core of staffing, group classes, locker rooms, price and instructors, but is spread across many supporting themes.

## 6. Interpretation of Results by Segment

### 6.1 Services offered

Group classes stand out as the most worthwhile service that fitness centres provide. They supply motivation, a sense of fulfilment, loyalty and the opportunity to train with a specific instructor, and the sheer number of classes offered can in itself serve as a promotional device for attracting new members. Service quality carries more weight than equipment, since it is delivered by staff and acts as a point of differentiation. For customers, price is the leading consideration, though charging more can help fund superior service. Managers ought first to grasp members' short-, medium- and long-term objectives and make sure that what is actually provided aligns with what has been promised. Premium centres are increasingly technology-driven, using equipment that makes exercising more enjoyable along with systems that simplify registration and class booking, and supplementary services matter greatly where prices are high and the member base is varied.

### 6.2 Facilities offered

Clean locker rooms rank as the foremost concern, since roughly 90% of members walk through them, which makes them the most important zone. The weight room sees the heaviest use,

while the swimming pool is viewed as a supplementary feature. Hygiene matters not only in changing rooms but also in activity areas and corridors, and managers emphasise sanitation, preventive upkeep, clear communication about maintenance work and routine replacement of equipment. Limited floor space constrains service delivery, yet bigger premises do not guarantee satisfaction on their own. For users, the brand of equipment holds only minor significance; mid-market managers caution that low-cost centres gain from newer machines that allow people to train easily without an instructor.

### **6.3 Service offering to customers**

Customer service is essential no matter which business model a centre follows. The front desk ought to be founded on trust and confidence, instructors form the backbone of service delivery, and blending familiar recognition with individual attention is vital, especially in mid-market centres that rely on nearby members. How complaints are handled varies according to the size of the centre and its membership numbers. Retention was said to improve through loyalty schemes, rewards for senior members and a cancellation process made more demanding. Staff who are motivated and satisfied exert a positive effect on operations; stable staffing is favoured, and newly hired instructors should possess suitable certification and experience leading group classes. The statistical predominance of the Manpower/Staff code (19.9% of all responses) affirms that managing people is the leading operational priority.

### **6.4 Marketing and social quotient**

For the most part, managers do not view marketing as a prerequisite for success, yet they acknowledge that responding to market demands is essential. Word-of-mouth endorsement is the strongest and least costly tactic and is suitable for every business model. Staging events close to the centre boosts brand visibility and confidence; promotional offers provide a swift means of reaching price-sensitive prospects; and certain managers telephone former members and those who dropped out. Social media carry influence because they deliver immediacy and anonymity. Marketing should additionally target inactive individuals who have not yet taken up sport. Conventional instruments such as newsletters, mailings, flyers and posters are not regarded as essential. The notable under-representation of this category in the chi-square test (-4.52) aligns with this low managerial priority and points to an unexploited opportunity.

### **6.5 Pre-requisites for members**

The monthly fee is seen as the main determinant of gym choice. Low-cost centres prioritise price over service quality; mid-market centres aim for fees consistent with the service delivered; premium centres target specific profiles, offering exclusivity. Location is a key factor because gyms are viewed as proximity-based businesses, and on-site parking depends on public-transport access and neighbourhood. Wide opening hours (about 7 a.m. to 11 p.m.) are preferred by some managers, while others argue members adapt to the centre's schedule.

## **7. Findings and Observations**

- Staff form the foundation of sustainability: Manpower/Staff emerged as the most frequently reported code and a statistical outlier, with instructors, reception and loyalty programmes reinforcing this.
- Emphasis is spread unevenly across practice areas ( $\chi^2$  tests), yet the typical code within each category attracted comparable attention (ANOVA and Kruskal-Wallis), meaning all five areas are important.
- Compact centres focus on individual interaction, while large low-cost centres depend on

digital platforms and standardised operating procedures.

- Conventional group programmes are declining in Pune, though managers anticipate wider technological adoption, including within group programmes.
- Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter serve to circulate information and enhance brand perception; marketing nonetheless remains the least emphasised category.
- Cleanliness, particularly in changing areas, is vital. Members seek out specific core facilities rather than optional additions like swimming pools.
- Monthly charges and location exert a strong influence on customer choice and profitability.
- The post-COVID-19 era presents openings for digitisation while continuing to require rigorous hygiene standards and welcoming customer service.

## 8. Recommendations

**Table 7: Recommendations linked to statistical evidence**

| Practice area                   | Recommended action                                                                                                                                                     | Supporting evidence                                            |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Retention and people management | Invest in staff training, stable staffing, motivated certified instructors, trained reception, scaled complaint handling and loyalty plans with senior-member rewards. | Manpower/Staff: 118 responses (19.9%); category residual +5.01 |
| Services and technology         | Build a strong group-class timetable as both a retention and acquisition tool; adopt apps for booking and engagement as traditional group formats decline.             | Group Classes: 45 responses (rank 2)                           |
| Facilities and hygiene          | Prioritise locker-room cleanliness, preventive maintenance and communication of upkeep over optional extras.                                                           | Locker Rooms: 39 (rank 3); Hygiene: 18; Maintenance: 20        |
| Marketing: online and offline   | Combine referral programmes, local events and social media with a positive in-person experience; reach inactive prospects and lapsed members.                          | Marketing under-represented (-4.52); Recommendations: 21       |
| Price and location              | Set fees in line with the delivered service and market trend; locate within about 15 minutes' round-trip travel with good public-transport links.                      | Price: 29 (rank 4); Location: 22 (rank 7)                      |
| Post-COVID resilience           | Use contactless check-in and virtual sessions while sustaining strict hygiene standards.                                                                               | Findings and interview narratives                              |

Long-term viability depends on balancing technology with hygiene and service quality, adapting to changing demand, and emerging more efficient from the challenges the pandemic created.

### 9. Limitations and Future Research

This study depends on 20 managers drawn through convenience sampling from a single city, and with just four premium centres represented, statistical generalisation is not achievable. The statistical procedures are applied to counts of coded responses, which do not constitute independent observations, and with only 30 codes available, statistical power is constrained. Member viewpoints were not gathered directly but instead inferred from what managers perceived. Subsequent research could adopt a longitudinal approach, incorporate member surveys, examine links between practices and measured outcomes such as retention rate and profitability through regression or structural equation modelling, and broaden the investigation to additional cities and countries.

### 10. Conclusion

By combining qualitative and quantitative methods, this study pinpoints the managerial practices regarded as essential for the long-term viability of fitness centres in Pune. Statistical findings reveal that managers' focus centres on people-related elements – staff, instructors and customer service – followed by group classes, locker-room cleanliness, pricing and location, whereas marketing attracts relatively limited attention despite the potential it holds. Nevertheless, the lack of significant differences in mean code frequency across categories demonstrates that services, facilities, customer service, marketing and access conditions together constitute a single interconnected sustainability system. Centres that combine trained and motivated staff with hygienic facilities, appealing group classes, loyalty schemes, social-media promotion, reasonable pricing and a convenient location are best positioned to keep members and stay viable. The study offers managerial insights for those running fitness services and helps close the divide between theory and practice in the sector.

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