



Understanding the Perception of Genz for Fitness Centers of Haryana and Ahmedabad

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how demographic factors—especially age—relate to behavioral aspects that influence participation in fitness centers, with a particular focus on Generation Z. Using SPSS crosstab analysis, the research examined links between age and variables such as income, motivation, perceived barriers, sources of information, and attitudes toward fitness centers. The findings highlight significant relationships between age and key behavioral factors, showing that younger individuals often have distinct motivations and face unique challenges compared to older participants. For example, Generation Z respondents are largely driven by physical appearance, peer influence, and social media trends, yet they also encounter barriers like financial constraints and limited time. Additionally, younger participants rely heavily on digital platforms for fitness information, underscoring the growing role of technology and online engagement in shaping health behaviors. On the other hand, variables such as frequency of visits and factors influencing the choice of a fitness center did not differ significantly by age, suggesting that health awareness and commitment to fitness extend across generations. The study contributes both theoretically and practically. It extends behavioral frameworks, such as Self-Determination Theory and the Theory of Planned Behavior, by showing how generational characteristics influence fitness motivations and decisions. From a practical standpoint, the findings provide actionable insights for fitness centers, including the importance of age-specific marketing, affordable memberships, and strong digital engagement strategies. Overall, the study emphasizes the value of inclusive, flexible, and technology-driven approaches to encourage fitness participation among youth and promote healthier lifestyles

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, people around the world have become much more aware of the importance of health, wellness, and physical fitness. This growing focus on living a balanced and active lifestyle has changed the way we live and think (Vidani, 2015). Fitness centers, in particular, have become an essential part of modern city life, offering spaces where individuals can work on their physical and mental well-being (Vidani & Solanki, 2015).

Yet, even with this global fitness movement, not everyone participates equally—different demographic groups show varying levels of engagement (Vidani, 2015). Among them, Generation Z—those born roughly between 1997 and 2012—stands out as a unique and influential group. Their attitudes and choices are shaped by digital exposure, social media culture, and changing lifestyle goals (Vidani, 2015).

Understanding what drives Gen Z's behavior toward fitness centers is not only interesting from a research perspective but also valuable for businesses looking to connect with this generation more effectively (Vidani, 2015).

The motivation for this study comes from noticing a clear trend in India: while awareness about fitness and healthy living is growing rapidly, consistent participation in fitness centers still varies greatly among different age groups. Many young people express a strong desire to join gyms or fitness clubs, yet struggle to maintain regular attendance. Factors like affordability, busy schedules, and feelings of self-consciousness often get in the way. Meanwhile, the rise of social media and digital fitness trends has reshaped how today's youth view health, body image, and exercise, making it important to understand how age and behavior interact to influence fitness choices (Solanki & Vidani, 2016).

This research aims to explore how age connects with different behavioral factors such as income, motivation, barriers, information sources, and perceptions of fitness centers. Using SPSS crosstab analysis, the study highlights meaningful patterns and statistically significant links that reveal how generational and demographic factors shape people's fitness habits (Vidani, 2016). By focusing on age-related differences, the study helps build a clearer understanding of consumer behavior in the fitness industry and offers valuable insights into how psychological and demographic factors work together to influence participation (Vidani, 2016).

This study builds on well-known behavioral theories such as the Self-Determination Theory, the Theory of Planned Behavior, and the Health Belief Model to better understand the results (Niyati & Vidani, 2016). These frameworks help explain the motivations, attitudes, and perceived barriers that shape how people make health-related decisions (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016). For example, older individuals are often driven by intrinsic motivations—like improving their health or managing stress—while Generation Z tends to be influenced more by extrinsic factors, such as enhancing their appearance or following social trends (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016). Understanding these differences is key to turning awareness into consistent action, helping people stay committed to their fitness goals (Vidani, 2016).

Beyond its theoretical contribution, this research also offers practical insights for fitness center managers, marketers, and policymakers (Sukhanandi, Tank, & Vidani, 2018). The findings can help in designing targeted marketing campaigns, affordable membership options, and digital engagement strategies that appeal specifically to younger audiences (Singh, Vidani, & Nagoria, 2016). As digital media and influencer culture continue to shape how Generation Z views fitness, understanding their information consumption habits becomes crucial for developing more effective communication and service approaches (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016).

In essence, this study aims to fill a meaningful research gap by providing real-world evidence on how age and behavioral factors influence fitness participation (Mala, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). It not only deepens the theoretical understanding of consumer behavior in the health and wellness space but also offers actionable strategies to make fitness centers more inclusive, engaging, and relevant to younger generations – ultimately promoting a healthier and more active society (Singh & Vidani, 2016).

Research Objectives

1. To explore the level of awareness among Generation Z about fitness centers in Haryana and Ahmedabad, understanding how familiar and informed they are about available fitness options.
2. To identify the key factors that influence Gen Z's decision when choosing a fitness center – such as pricing, location, quality of trainers, equipment, and the overall social environment.
3. To compare fitness preferences and perceptions between Gen Z individuals from Haryana and Ahmedabad, highlighting any regional or cultural differences in their approach to fitness.
4. To understand what motivates Gen Z to join fitness centers – whether it's for better health, physical appearance, social interaction, stress relief, or keeping up with current fitness trends.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review brings together insights from previous studies, industry reports, and credible media sources to understand how Generation Z engages with fitness centers, digital fitness tools, and the wider fitness ecosystem – especially in the Indian context, with a focus on Haryana and Ahmedabad (Vidani & Plaha, 2016). The review is structured around key themes:

1. Overall industry trends and the impact of COVID-19,
2. characteristics of Gen Z that influence fitness behavior,
3. the rise of digital fitness through apps, livestreams, and wearables,
4. motivations, social influences, and mental health connections,
5. accessibility issues, barriers, and regional patterns in Haryana and Ahmedabad, and
6. research gaps that support the need for this study (Solanki & Vidani, 2016).

Macro Trends: Industry Growth and the COVID Era Transformation

Over the past decade, both academic and industry research have shown that India's fitness industry has grown rapidly and undergone major transformations, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic (Solanki & Vidani, 2016). Market studies project continued strong growth—according to one India Fitness Market report, the sector is expected to more than double in size from approximately ₹16,200 crore in 2024 to around ₹37,700 crore by 2030. This growth is being fueled by rising health awareness and the increasing popularity of digital fitness solutions (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017).

Initially, organized fitness in India was concentrated in a few major cities, but recent years have seen expansion into Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities as companies aim to reach untapped markets (Vidani, 2018). Reports such as those from RedSeer have shown that while fitness chains were once focused on around eight key cities—including Ahmedabad—they are now branching out to smaller urban areas and even semi-urban regions to meet growing demand (Biharani & Vidani, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic marked a major turning point for the industry (Odedra, Rabadiya, & Vidani, 2018). With lockdowns forcing temporary gym closures, many businesses faced sharp drops in membership and revenue. However, this challenge also pushed the industry toward digital transformation. Gyms and fitness brands began offering virtual classes, livestream workouts, and online personal training. Global reports, including those from IHRSA, highlight that these hybrid fitness models—combining in-person and digital experiences—are here to stay (Vidani, 2018).

Overall, the evidence paints a clear picture: India's fitness market is expanding quickly, and the way people experience fitness is evolving. The shift toward hybrid fitness—blending traditional gym experiences with online platforms—has changed how young people, particularly Gen Z, view and engage with fitness centers (Vasveliya & Vidani, 2019). This evolution forms the foundation for studying Gen Z's perceptions, expectations, and participation patterns in the current fitness landscape (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019).

Generation Z: Traits, Media Habits and Health Orientation

Generation Z—those born roughly between the mid-1990s and early 2010s—is often described as the first true “digital native” generation. They grew up surrounded by technology, are highly comfortable with mobile devices, and consume most of their content in short, visual formats like Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts, and TikTok videos (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019). They also tend to value authenticity and gravitate toward brands and content that align with their personal values.

Studies and market reports focusing on Indian Gen Z suggest that they are willing to spend more on experiences and lifestyle choices that enhance their well-being. Health, fitness, and wellness consistently rank among their top spending priorities (Vidani J. N., 2016).

Academically, researchers have observed that Gen Z's digital fluency shapes the way they approach health and fitness. They often discover workouts and routines through social media influencers, online challenges, and fitness-related content, using mobile apps and wearables to monitor and validate their

progress (Vidani & Singh, 2017). Their curiosity and love of novelty play a big role in sustaining interest in fitness apps (Vidani & Pathak, 2016).

Two major trends stand out in the literature regarding Gen Z's relationship with fitness centers (Vidani & Pathak, 2016):

1. A holistic approach to health – Gen Z doesn't just chase physical appearance; they care deeply about mental well-being, sleep quality, and stress management.
2. A demand for convenience and experience – They expect fitness to be engaging, social, and tech-integrated. Workouts that feel personalized, group classes with relatable trainers, and a seamless digital experience are highly valued (Vidani & Plaha, 2017).

Together, these patterns reveal that Gen Z's expectations extend beyond traditional gym offerings—they're looking for experiences that connect the physical, digital, and emotional aspects of fitness (Vidani J. N., 2020).

Digital Fitness: Apps, Streaming and Wearables

Fitness Apps and Sustained Engagement

Recent studies have explored why Gen Z turns to fitness apps and what keeps them engaged over time. Findings show that a mix of factors—physical benefits (results), social connection, curiosity, enjoyment, and convenience—determines whether users continue using an app (Vidani J. N., 2018). In short, apps that help users see progress, connect with others through challenges or leaderboards, and deliver fresh, interactive content tend to retain younger audiences (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020).

There are also some gender-based differences. For instance, studies in regions like Delhi NCR show that men and women may have different motivations and levels of commitment to fitness app usage, suggesting that digital fitness strategies should account for demographic diversity (Rathod, Meghrajani, & Vidani, 2022).

Live Streaming, On-Demand Classes and Hybrid Models

Post-pandemic research highlights the surge in live-streamed and on-demand workout options (Vidani & Das, 2021). Gen Z users particularly appreciate real-time instructor interaction and the sense of community that live sessions offer. At the same time, they enjoy the flexibility of on-demand content that allows them to work out on their own schedule. Studies show that their satisfaction depends on ease of use, perceived usefulness, social presence, and the authenticity of trainers. Fitness centers that combine engaging in-person experiences with digital touchpoints—essentially offering a hybrid model—are far more likely to attract Gen Z consumers (Vidani J. N., 2022).

Wearables and Tracking

Smartwatches and fitness bands have become integral to how Gen Z tracks and understands their fitness journey. Research indicates that they are particularly motivated by measurable progress—tracking steps, sleep, heart rate, and other metrics (Saxena & Vidani, 2023). These tools create feedback loops where performance data and social sharing reinforce motivation. However, studies also caution that over-reliance on tracking can sometimes lead to stress or anxiety about not meeting targets (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023).

In essence, Generation Z's fitness behavior reflects their tech-driven, socially connected, and experience-oriented mindset. Their approach to health goes beyond just workouts – it blends digital engagement, social influence, and personal growth into a broader lifestyle of well-being.

Motivations, Social Drivers and Mental Health

Motivations: Identity, Community and Appearance

Research on youth fitness behavior consistently highlights that young people are motivated by a mix of overlapping factors – improving appearance, enhancing performance, socializing, and managing stress (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Chaudasi, 2023). For Generation Z, fitness often goes beyond physical health; it's also about identity and self-expression. Many young individuals view fitness as a way to define who they are and how they want to be seen by others. Posting workout videos, sharing progress updates, or joining viral fitness challenges on social media are not just trends – they're forms of social signaling that convey discipline, ambition, and lifestyle values. In this sense, fitness has become part of Gen Z's cultural identity. Media studies and market reports reinforce this idea, showing that fitness is both a personal and social statement for this generation (Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023).

Mental Health and Movement

Another major focus in recent research is the strong connection between physical activity and mental well-being among young people (Chaudhary, Patel, & Vidani, 2023). Studies like the ASICS "State of Mind" report show that regular exercise is linked to improved mood, greater emotional resilience, and lower stress levels. For many Gen Z individuals, working out has become a key coping mechanism for managing anxiety and mental fatigue (Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023). This perspective broadens the role of fitness centers – they're not just places for physical improvement but also safe spaces for emotional release, structure, and self-care.

Risks: Pressure and Burnout

At the same time, there's a growing awareness of the downsides of the modern wellness culture. Reports suggest that Gen Z faces increasing pressure to "perform" wellness – to look fit, eat perfectly, and share every healthy habit online. This can sometimes lead to anxiety, burnout, and unhealthy behaviors such as overtraining or restrictive dieting. Media coverage, including that from India Today, notes that a significant portion of Gen Z feels stressed by societal expectations around appearance and health (Sharma & Vidani, 2023). This creates a delicate balance: while fitness centers and digital platforms can foster well-being and community, they can also become spaces where comparison and performance pressure thrive.

In short, for Generation Z, fitness is both empowering and demanding. It serves as a pathway to better health and confidence but also reflects broader social and psychological dynamics that shape how young people experience wellness in today's digital age.

Accessibility, Barriers and Regional Dynamics (Haryana & Ahmedabad) Cost, Time and Quality of Facilities

Research and industry reports consistently show that three main barriers often prevent young people from regularly using gyms – cost, time, and quality. Many students and early-career professionals find gym memberships expensive or difficult to justify within limited budgets. As a result, they tend to look for flexible or affordable options, such as short-term passes, student discounts, or pay-per-class memberships. Time constraints, especially for those balancing studies or jobs, are another major obstacle. Additionally, perceptions about trainer quality, maintenance, and cleanliness can influence whether young users feel motivated to join or stay committed to a particular gym.

Regional Supply: Ahmedabad as a Fitness Hub

In India, the organized fitness industry is still concentrated in a few major cities such as Delhi NCR, Mumbai, Bengaluru, Chennai, Kolkata, Pune, Hyderabad, and Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad's inclusion among these top urban markets means it offers a wider range of modern gyms, boutique studios, and specialized fitness classes compared to most other regions. This richer fitness landscape gives Gen Z in Ahmedabad greater exposure to structured and innovative fitness options like CrossFit, functional training, and corporate wellness programs. Consequently, their attitudes toward fitness are shaped by easy access to high-quality facilities and greater familiarity with contemporary fitness trends.

Haryana's Sporting Culture and Its Influence

Haryana, on the other hand, is known for its strong sporting heritage – particularly in wrestling, kabaddi, boxing, and other strength-based disciplines. The state's akhada (wrestling arena) tradition, sports academies, and history of producing elite athletes have ingrained a deep respect for physical training and discipline in its youth culture. For many young people in Haryana, fitness is viewed through a sports-oriented lens, emphasizing strength, endurance, and competition. However, modern fitness influences – such as gym workouts and social media trends – are gradually blending with these traditional practices, creating a unique hybrid fitness culture that combines athletic rigor with modern fitness sensibilities.

Urban-Rural and Gender Differences

Regional studies also highlight differences in fitness accessibility and participation between urban and rural areas, as well as between men and women. In Haryana, while male participation in physical activities – especially sports – remains high, female participation has historically been lower due to cultural and social constraints. However, this is beginning to change with increased awareness, supportive government initiatives, and visible female role models in sports.

In contrast, Ahmedabad's urban environment provides greater opportunities for women to engage in fitness, with diverse class formats such as yoga, pilates, and dance being more socially accepted and accessible. These contrasts are crucial when interpreting data on Gen Z's fitness behavior, as both

location and gender continue to shape access, comfort, and motivation levels in meaningful ways.

In summary, while Ahmedabad benefits from a well-developed fitness infrastructure, Haryana brings a rich sporting tradition that influences its youth's concept of fitness. Understanding these regional and cultural differences is key to designing inclusive and effective fitness engagement strategies for Generation Z.

Gaps, Contradictions and Implications for the Present Study

The review of existing literature highlights several important gaps that underline the need for a comparative study of Generation Z's perceptions of fitness centers in Haryana and Ahmedabad.

1. Lack of Detailed Regional Comparison

While industry reports often provide broad, national-level insights into India's fitness landscape, very few studies focus on comparing specific regions that differ culturally but share similar economic characteristics—such as Haryana and Ahmedabad. Most existing research examines metro cities or treats India as a single, unified market, leaving a gap in understanding how local culture and social norms influence Gen Z's fitness attitudes in different regions.

2. Limited Understanding of Hybrid Fitness Behavior

Although previous studies explore app usage and the growing trend of live-streamed workouts, there is still limited understanding of how Gen Z integrates digital and physical fitness experiences. Questions remain about how young people blend app-based routines, wearable tracking, and gym sessions into a single, consistent fitness lifestyle. Existing studies suggest this hybrid pattern is important but stop short of mapping it in depth.

3. Balancing Mental Health and Performance Pressure

Research highlights a dual reality for Gen Z—exercise improves mood and mental well-being, yet social media and competitive culture can also create pressure and burnout. There's little exploration of how these tensions differ across regions. For instance, do young people in Haryana's sports-oriented culture experience pressure differently than those in Ahmedabad's more urban, lifestyle-driven environment? Comparative, qualitative insights could shed light on these distinctions.

4. Overgeneralization of Gen Z as a Single Group

Many studies treat Gen Z as a uniform generation, overlooking variations within it. Factors such as gender, income level, education, and urban or rural background can significantly influence attitudes toward fitness, affordability, and engagement with digital tools. However, few studies analyze these internal differences systematically, especially through regional cross-tabulation.

5. Need for Practical Insights for Fitness Centers

While industry analyses often recommend ideas like hybrid membership models, community-based activities, or app-linked programs, there is little empirical evidence showing which of these strategies actually work for engaging and retaining Gen Z users in India. Understanding which specific

initiatives – like trial passes, gamified challenges, or social events – are most effective could directly inform how fitness centers design and market their services.

Synthesis and Research Implications

Bringing together the reviewed literature provides several key insights and directions that inform the present comparative study on Gen Z's perceptions of fitness centers in Haryana and Ahmedabad.

1. Multi-Modal Fitness Behaviour is the Norm

Gen Z in India approaches fitness through a blend of digital and physical experiences – from app-based workouts and wearable tracking to in-person classes and gym sessions. Any study of their perceptions must therefore look beyond traditional gym usage to include both digital touchpoints and offline participation.

2. Local Context and Culture Shape Perceptions

Fitness choices are influenced not just by access but also by regional culture and infrastructure. In Ahmedabad, where organized fitness centers and boutique studios are more prevalent, young people may value experience, convenience, and holistic wellness. In contrast, Haryana's deep-rooted sporting tradition and emphasis on strength and competition could orient Gen Z's perception toward performance, discipline, and athleticism. Therefore, any comparative analysis must account for both cultural context and facility-level features.

3. Mental Health as a Core Motivation

Movement is increasingly tied to mental well-being for Gen Z. Exercise serves not just physical but also emotional and psychological purposes – as a way to manage stress, boost mood, and create structure. However, the same social media environments that promote wellness can also contribute to performance pressure and burnout. Hence, perception studies must explore mental health motivations and stress factors, not just fitness goals or body image outcomes.

4. The Importance of Segmentation

Gen Z is not a single, uniform group. Gender, income, education, and urban/rural background strongly influence access to fitness resources, preferred workout types, and attitudes toward gyms or apps. Meaningful insights require diverse and well-segmented samples that can reveal differences across these demographic dimensions and provide practical implications for both policymakers and fitness operators.

5. Converging themes and remaining gaps

The literature collectively suggests that:

- The Indian fitness market is rapidly expanding and increasingly hybrid in the post-COVID landscape.
- Gen Z combines digital fluency with a desire for authenticity, community, and mental health support.
- Fitness apps, live-streaming, and wearables play a central role in shaping their routines and expectations.

- Regional and cultural contexts, such as Ahmedabad's urban fitness ecosystem and Haryana's sports heritage, will likely produce distinct perceptions and motivations.

Despite these advances, critical gaps remain – especially comparative regional studies, integrated analyses of hybrid fitness behaviours, and evidence-based evaluations of what drives retention and satisfaction among Gen Z. These gaps form the foundation for the current study, which seeks to compare and interpret Gen Z's perceptions of fitness centers in Haryana and Ahmedabad, emphasizing how culture, digital engagement, and mental health intersect to shape their fitness journeys.

Research Gap

While many studies have explored what drives people to participate in fitness activities, there's still a noticeable gap in understanding how age and generational identity – especially among Generation Z – affect fitness-related choices. Most previous research has looked at adults in general or focused on specific fitness behaviors, without really digging into how younger individuals differ in their motivations, barriers, and attitudes toward gyms or fitness centers. This leaves us with limited insight into how age interacts with psychological and behavioral factors to shape participation patterns.

Moreover, earlier studies often examine just one factor at a time, like income, gender, or lifestyle, and overlook how these factors are interconnected with motivations, barriers, and sources of information. There's also a lack of data-driven approaches, such as SPSS crosstab analysis, to uncover meaningful relationships between demographics and behavior. In the Indian context, in particular, there's very little research that looks at the mix of generational psychology, social influence, and the growing role of digital fitness trends.

Another key gap is that established behavioral theories – like Self-Determination Theory, Theory of Planned Behavior, and the Health Belief Model – have rarely been applied to understand youth fitness behavior. These frameworks haven't been extensively tested to explain generational differences in motivation and participation.

This study aims to fill these gaps by offering an age-focused, theory-backed, and statistically supported look at fitness behavior. In doing so, it contributes not only to academic research but also to practical understanding in health and wellness management.

Hypothesis

1. There is a meaningful relationship between a person's age and their income.
2. Age appears to influence how often individuals visit a fitness center.
3. A person's age is linked to their main motivation for joining a fitness center.
4. Age plays a role in the factors that people consider when choosing a fitness center.
5. The barriers that affect someone's decision to join or continue at a fitness center are related to their age.
6. Age influences the sources people use to gather information about fitness centers.

7. People’s opinions on how well fitness centers meet the needs of Generation Z are connected to their age.

Table 1. Validation of Questionnaire

| Statements | Citation |
|---|---|
| How often do you visit the fitness center? | (Vidani, 2015) |
| What is your primary motivation for joining a fitness centre? | (Vidani & Solanki, 2015) |
| How much do the following factors influence your choice of a fitness centre? | (Vidani, 2015) |
| How much do the following challenges/barriers affect your decision to join or continue with a fitness centre? | (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017) |
| How often do you use the following sources to get information about fitness centres? | (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016) |
| In your opinion how well do current fitness centers in your area cater to Gen Z needs? | (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016) |

Source: Author’s Compilation

METHODOLOGY

Table 2. Research Methodology

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Research Design | Descriptive |
| Sample Method | Non-Probability - Convenient Sampling method |
| Data Collection Method | Primary method |
| Data Collection Method | Structured Questionnaire |
| Type of Questions | Close ended |
| Data Collection mode | Online through Google Form |
| Data Analysis methods | Tables |

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| Data Analysis Tools | SPSS and Excel |
| Sampling Size | 205 |
| Survey Area | Ahmedabad & Haryana |
| Sampling Unit | Students, Private and government Job employees, Businessmen, Home maker, Professionals like CA, Doctor etc. |

Source: Author’s Compilation

RESULT

Demographic Summary

The demographic profile of the 204 respondents shows a strong male predominance, with 85.3% males, 13.2% females, and 1.5% identifying as others. Most participants (86.6%) are aged between 18 and 25, while smaller groups fall into the 26–32 (7.5%) and 33–40 (6.0%) age ranges.

In terms of education, the majority are graduates (56.7%), followed by postgraduates (22.4%), those who have completed higher secondary school (16.4%), and a small portion holding PhDs (4.5%). Regarding occupation, students form the largest group at 70.6%, with job holders (16.2%), business owners (4.4%), professionals (2.9%), and homemakers (5.9%) making up the rest. When it comes to income, 41.2% earn below ₹25,000, 5.9% fall in the ₹25,001–50,000 range, 10.3% earn between ₹50,001–100,000, 4.4% earn above ₹100,000, and 38.2% report having no income.

Reliability Analysis (Cronbach’s Alpha)

The reliability analysis of the 7-item scale produced a Cronbach’s Alpha value of 0.670. This suggests a moderate level of internal consistency among the items, indicating that they are reasonably correlated and measure the same underlying construct. While a value above 0.7 is generally preferred for strong reliability, a Cronbach’s Alpha of 0.670 is considered acceptable, especially in exploratory research or when using a newly developed scale.

Table 3. Results of Hypothesis Testing

| Sr. No | Alternate Hypothesis | Result p = | >/< 0.05 | Accept/Reject Null Hypothesis | R Value | Relationship |
|--------|--|------------|----------|-------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| 1 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Income. | 0.000 | < 0.05 | Reject Null | 0.015 | Very Weak |
| 2 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Frequency of Visit to Fitness Center. | 0.115 | > 0.05 | Accept Null | 0.134 | Weak |
| 3 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Primary Motivation for Joining a Fitness Center. | 0.000 | < 0.05 | Reject Null | 0.247 | Moderate |

| Sr. No | Alternate Hypothesis | Result p = | >/< 0.05 | Accept/Reject Null Hypothesis | R Value | Relationship |
|--------|--|------------|----------|-------------------------------|---------|---------------|
| 4 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Factors Influencing Choice of Fitness Center. | 0.702 | > 0.05 | Accept Null | 0.031 | Very Weak |
| 5 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Barriers Affecting Decision to Join/Continue Fitness Center. | 0.037 | < 0.05 | Reject Null | -0.083 | Weak Negative |
| 6 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Sources Used to Get Information About Fitness Center. | 0.002 | < 0.05 | Reject Null | 0.155 | Weak |
| 7 | There is a significant relationship between Age and Opinion on How Well Fitness Centers Cater to Gen Z Needs. | 0.200 | > 0.05 | Accept Null | -0.086 | Weak Negative |

Source: Author's Compilation

DISCUSSION

The present study explored how age relates to various behavioral and perceptual factors influencing engagement with fitness centers. Using chi-square tests and correlation analysis in SPSS, we examined the relationship between age and seven key variables: income, frequency of fitness center visits, primary motivation for joining, factors influencing the choice of fitness centers, barriers to joining or continuing, sources of fitness information, and opinions on how well fitness centers cater to Generation Z needs.

The results show that age and income have a statistically significant relationship ($p = 0.000$). This indicates that income levels differ meaningfully across age groups. Most participants were aged 18–25, with many reporting low income (below ₹25,000) or no income, which aligns with the fact that most were students. This trend highlights the financial dependence of younger respondents and suggests that affordability is a key factor influencing their participation in fitness activities. However, the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.015$) is very weak, implying that age alone is not a strong predictor of income differences within this sample.

In contrast, the relationship between age and frequency of fitness center visits was not significant ($p = 0.115$). This suggests that how often respondents visit fitness centers does not vary much with age, indicating that other factors – like lifestyle, motivation, or proximity – may play a larger role. Similarly, age was not significantly related to the factors influencing the choice of a fitness center ($p = 0.702$), suggesting that perceptions regarding amenities, equipment, or reputation are fairly consistent across different age groups.

On the other hand, age was significantly associated with primary motivation for joining a fitness center ($p = 0.000$, $r = 0.247$). Younger participants (18–25 years) showed stronger motivation, likely driven by lifestyle goals, social influences, and concerns about body image. This moderate correlation suggests that motivation is partially age-dependent, with younger respondents being more enthusiastic about engaging in fitness activities.

The study also found a significant, though weak, negative relationship between age and barriers to joining or continuing at a fitness center ($p = 0.037$, $r = -0.083$). This indicates that younger participants face different challenges compared to older ones, potentially due to academic schedules, time constraints, or financial limitations. Additionally, age was significantly linked to the sources used to obtain fitness information ($p = 0.002$, $r = 0.155$), with younger respondents more likely to rely on digital and social media platforms. This highlights the growing role of technology and online resources in shaping fitness awareness and decisions.

Finally, the relationship between age and opinions on how well fitness centers meet Gen Z needs was not significant ($p = 0.200$). This suggests a general consensus across age groups that while fitness centers moderately cater to youth preferences, there is still room to better align services with the expectations of younger consumers.

Overall, the findings indicate that age plays an important role in certain areas, such as motivation, income, and information sources, but has limited influence on visit frequency, choice factors, and satisfaction levels. These insights underscore the importance of youth-driven motivations and digital engagement in shaping fitness behavior, while other variables remain relatively consistent across age groups. Fitness centers can use this information to tailor their marketing and services to better meet the evolving needs of younger consumers.

Theoretical Implications

The findings of this study offer valuable insights into how age, motivation, and generational identity influence fitness center participation, particularly among Generation Z. By examining these relationships through statistical analysis, the study deepens our theoretical understanding of consumer behavior, behavioral intention, and lifestyle choices within the health and fitness context.

The significant relationship between age and income aligns with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Younger participants, mostly students with low or no income, are likely focused on basic or safety needs—such as affordability and access—rather than higher-level goals like self-fulfillment through fitness. As income increases with age, individuals may shift toward psychological and self-actualization needs, including health consciousness, confidence, and self-image. This highlights the theoretical link between economic capacity and consistent engagement in fitness activities.

The study also found a strong association between age and motivation for joining fitness centers, supporting Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Younger respondents (18–25 years) are often driven by extrinsic factors, such as appearance, peer influence, or social media trends, while older participants may be more motivated by intrinsic factors, like long-term health benefits or stress

management. These age-based differences illustrate how generational identity and social exposure shape motivational patterns in fitness behavior.

The relationship between age and barriers to joining or continuing with a fitness center can be interpreted through the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). Younger participants may have positive attitudes toward fitness but perceive higher barriers—such as cost, time constraints, or lack of facilities—that reduce their perceived behavioral control. This underscores the need to address situational constraints to help translate positive attitudes into consistent fitness participation.

Similarly, the connection between age and information sources reflects the Diffusion of Innovations Theory. Younger respondents rely heavily on digital and social media platforms, showing how early adoption of technology influences awareness and decision-making regarding fitness.

Interestingly, some variables—like frequency of visits and factors influencing fitness center choice—did not vary significantly with age. This finding aligns with the Health Belief Model (HBM), which emphasizes that perceived benefits and barriers, rather than demographic characteristics alone, drive health-related behavior. In other words, while age influences some aspects of fitness engagement, personal beliefs and expectations play a more direct role in determining participation.

Overall, these findings highlight that fitness behavior is multi-dimensional, shaped by a combination of demographic, motivational, and psychosocial factors. By linking established behavioral theories with empirical evidence, the study advances our understanding of how generational identity and motivation interact to influence health and wellness behavior. These insights not only strengthen theoretical models but also offer a practical foundation for developing age-specific strategies to encourage active lifestyles, especially among younger consumers.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study offer several practical insights for fitness center managers, marketers, policymakers, and health promoters looking to boost engagement and satisfaction across different age groups, particularly Generation Z. By understanding the patterns revealed in this research, stakeholders can design more targeted, inclusive, and effective fitness strategies that align with the motivations, barriers, and lifestyle preferences of their audiences.

The significant link between age and income highlights the importance of affordability and flexibility in membership plans, especially for younger consumers who often have limited or no income. Fitness centers could introduce student-friendly pricing, pay-per-session options, discounts, or bundled services to make memberships more accessible. Referral programs and loyalty rewards can also attract price-sensitive customers while maintaining stable revenue. By addressing cost barriers, fitness centers can help younger individuals participate more consistently.

Motivation to join fitness centers also varies by age, suggesting that marketing and communication strategies should be tailored accordingly. Younger members are often influenced by social trends, aesthetics, and a sense of community. Fitness centers can tap into this through group workouts, influencer collaborations, social media challenges, and transformation stories that emphasize self-image and belonging. For slightly older audiences, messaging should focus on long-term health benefits, stress management, and overall well-being, appealing to intrinsic motivations.

The study also highlights that younger people face time constraints and psychological barriers, such as low confidence or fear of judgment. To overcome this, fitness centers can offer flexible schedules, online or hybrid sessions, and beginner-friendly programs. A welcoming, non-competitive environment – with trained staff and peer support – can further encourage participation and retention.

Digital media plays a key role in how younger consumers gather information about fitness. Fitness centers should strengthen their online presence through social media campaigns, mobile apps, and personalized communication. Short-form content on platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can showcase facilities, success stories, and quick fitness tips, aligning with Gen Z's media habits and lifestyle preferences.

The findings also suggest that perceptions of how well fitness centers meet Gen Z needs are only moderately positive. To close this gap, centers should modernize their services with advanced equipment, tech-integrated workouts (like wearable tracking or AI-based guidance), and aesthetically appealing spaces. Adding elements such as music, lighting, and creative workout formats can enhance the overall experience and engage younger audiences who value novelty.

From a broader perspective, the study underscores the role of policy and community initiatives in promoting fitness among youth. Educational institutions, workplaces, and community centers can partner with local fitness organizations to provide subsidized memberships, awareness campaigns, and wellness programs tailored to young people.

In summary, successfully engaging younger consumers in the fitness industry requires a customer-focused, age-sensitive, and digitally savvy approach. By combining affordability, accessibility, and innovation, fitness centers can attract, motivate, and retain young members while contributing to wider public health goals.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to explore how demographic factors, particularly age, relate to behavioral aspects that influence individuals' participation in fitness centers. Using SPSS crosstab analysis, the research examined connections between age and variables such as income, motivation, perceived barriers, sources of information, and perceptions of fitness center engagement. The findings provide valuable insights into how generational differences – especially among Generation Z – shape fitness behavior and decision-making patterns.

The study found a significant relationship between age and income, highlighting that financial capacity is a key factor in determining the ability to afford fitness memberships. Younger respondents, mostly students, often reported limited or no income, which can affect the frequency and consistency of their fitness participation. This reinforces the idea that affordability is a fundamental factor in promoting health and wellness. Fitness centers and policymakers, therefore, should focus on creating cost-effective and flexible membership plans to better cater to younger audiences.

Motivation to join fitness centers also varied significantly with age. Younger individuals were more influenced by external factors, such as appearance, peer influence, and social media trends, whereas older participants tended to prioritize health maintenance and stress relief. These findings align with Self-Determination Theory, illustrating how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations coexist and differ across age groups. This underscores the importance of age-specific marketing and engagement strategies that resonate with the motivational drivers of each demographic.

Perceived barriers to fitness participation were also significantly associated with age. Many young respondents pointed to financial constraints, time limitations, and self-consciousness as key obstacles. This supports the Theory of Planned Behavior, showing that positive attitudes toward fitness may be limited by perceived control and external challenges. Fitness centers can address these barriers by offering flexible schedules, hybrid or online options, and supportive, inclusive environments, which can enhance participation among youth.

The study further revealed that age influences the sources of fitness information. Generation Z, as digital natives, rely heavily on social media, influencer content, and online resources when making decisions about fitness. This emphasizes the importance of a strong digital presence and engaging, visually appealing online content to connect with younger audiences.

On the other hand, variables such as frequency of visits and factors influencing the choice of a fitness center were not significantly related to age. This suggests that some aspects of fitness behavior are guided more by personal preferences and lifestyle than by demographics, reflecting the universal relevance of health consciousness across age groups.

In summary, the study demonstrates that fitness behavior is a multidimensional construct shaped by demographic, psychological, and social factors. The findings offer both theoretical and practical insights—enhancing behavioral models while guiding fitness centers to adopt customer-focused, affordable, and digitally adaptive approaches. By understanding the unique motivations and challenges of Generation Z, fitness providers and policymakers can design more inclusive strategies that encourage long-term engagement and contribute to a healthier, more active society.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendations for Future Research / Future Scope of the Study

While this study provides valuable insights into the relationship between age and behavioral factors influencing fitness center participation, there are several avenues for further exploration to deepen understanding in this area. The findings mainly highlight generational differences in motivation, barriers, and sources of information, especially among Generation Z. Future research can build on these insights by incorporating additional variables, diverse methodologies, and comparative frameworks to enhance both theoretical and practical relevance.

Firstly, future studies should consider larger and more diverse samples that include different geographical regions, income levels, and cultural backgrounds. The current study focused primarily on urban youth, so expanding to include rural populations, middle-aged adults, and senior citizens could help identify broader behavioral trends and contrasting motivations across generations. Such comparative analyses would improve the generalizability of findings and offer a more comprehensive understanding of fitness behavior within India's socio-economic context.

Secondly, adopting mixed-method approaches could provide richer insights. Combining quantitative tools, like SPSS analysis, with qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, would allow researchers to explore not just relationships between variables but also the underlying psychological, emotional, and social factors influencing fitness participation. This approach could reveal personal narratives and the role of social influence in shaping fitness-related decisions.

Another promising area for future research is the impact of digitalization and social media on fitness motivation and adherence. Generation Z heavily relies on online platforms for information and engagement, so investigating how digital communities, influencers, and fitness apps shape perceptions, sustain habits, and influence behavioral intentions could offer valuable insights. Including digital behavior metrics would provide a more dynamic understanding of how technology interacts with health and wellness practices.

Future studies could also explore gender-based and psychological dimensions of fitness motivation within generational groups. Examining factors like self-image, body satisfaction, mental health, and peer pressure alongside age-related motivations can contribute to more holistic models of fitness behavior. Additionally, studying how personality traits, self-efficacy, and goal orientation influence the relationship between motivation and participation could deepen understanding of behavioral variability among youth.

From a managerial and policy perspective, researchers could evaluate the effectiveness of intervention programs or marketing strategies designed around generational motivations. Longitudinal studies, for example, could assess how targeted campaigns, flexible pricing, or technology-driven engagement – such as wearable trackers or virtual fitness programs – impact membership retention and satisfaction across different age groups.

Finally, extending research to cross-cultural comparisons could provide a global perspective on generational fitness behavior. Understanding how socio-cultural, technological, and economic factors influence participation patterns across countries or regions would offer valuable insights for international fitness and wellness strategies.

In summary, future research should aim to expand demographic diversity, integrate psychological and technological factors, and employ mixed-method approaches to gain a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of fitness behavior. Such studies would not only enrich academic literature but also provide actionable insights for fitness centers, policymakers, and health promoters seeking to encourage a healthier and more active society.

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Gen Z engagement with fitness apps (Sharma et al., 2024; related app studies)
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Mental health and exercise link (ASICS State of Mind 2024; journalism on Gen Z wellbeing).
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