

## Fitness clubs in the Czech Republic and their strategies

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The Czech population has become more active than in the past, which is reflected in the range of fitness clubs currently on offer. The number of non-profit sports clubs is decreasing while the new for-profit fitness clubs are emerging. People are looking for options of doing sports, and visiting fitness clubs has become one of the best solutions. The current hectic lifestyle requires a flexible schedule, which made a lot of fitness clubs lengthen their opening hours to 24 hours a day. To be more competitive, fitness clubs need to have a wide range of different sports activities. A lot of new sports have appeared over the past decade, especially fitness activities. Regions with a higher concentration of people enjoy competition between fitness clubs, which puts pressure on competitiveness. The differences between the strategic passion of an organization and its competitors (Hoye, Smith, Nicholson, Steward, & Westerbeek, 2015) is based on performing activities better, satisfying customer requirements by offering the lowest price or the highest added value (Porter, 2008). This competitive struggle is in the form of lower prices or a wider offer and better service quality of sport activities, which leads to two research questions. The first one studies the relationship between the number of inhabitants and the number of fitness clubs, their programme (number of sports), price and opening hours. The other one is looking for the determinants of using low-cost or differentiation strategy regarding the size of the city (represented by the number of inhabitants), the number of competitors and average salaries within the region.

The topic of connecting generic strategies regarding regional affiliation or municipality size has not been studied in management or in sports management. A study by Caslavova and Hercik (2012) analysed the competition in worldwide fitness and wellness club chains within the Prague region. In the capital city of the Czech Republic, competitors have to be very attentive to which services they offer because customers loyalty is lacking, which supports the assumption that the fitness centre market is really dynamic. Managers of fitness clubs have to monitor their competitors and keep on their own competitive advantage. A formulated generic strategy based on the competitive advantage of a club decreases organizational problems and increases effectiveness (Wicker, Soebbing, Feiler, & Breuer, 2015). Current managers of fitness clubs do not usually have a managerial education and make their decision according to their experience and judgment. The competitive environment of a particular fitness club is really narrow and limited by the willingness to travel to do sports activities, as greater distances to other sports facilities decreases people's participation in sport (Anokye, Pokhrel, Buxton, & Fox-Rushby, 2011). This fact helps managers formulate their strategy with regard to what their competitors offer.

The research sample was compiled from fitness clubs operating in the Czech Republic and clubs which are registered at the

sports social network Sportcentral.cz. The list of fitness clubs was checked on the server FitnessPosilovna.cz. Fitness centres not initially included or particular information (data) were subsequently completed. The demographic data were collected from the Czech Statistical Office for 2015 and the research sample is drawn from 620 fitness clubs. The data include the name of the fitness club, its email, website, number and a list of sports offered, opening hours, pricing and customer evaluation and club location, number of inhabitants in the area, average age, salaries of the population and generic strategy. The generic strategy (low-cost or differentiation) of a particular club was assessed according to pricing, offer list, club activities and opening hours. The data will be analysed using regression modelling (logistics and binomial regression) and subsequently shown on the map of the Czech Republic where the differences between particular regions of the Czech Republic are visible. The results are not available, as the data collection process has not yet been finished (particular variables). The results will be presented at the conference. This study serves to describe competitive strategies of fitness clubs regarding their competitors and their offer. The main implication of the results is important for club managers. They can use the results of this study to formulate their club strategy according to competitors' positioning. On the other hand, theorists can become aware of the determinants leading to the choice of generic strategies in the Czech sports environment.

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