

MEXICO'S INDOOR FITNESS SECTOR BY 2022: ANALYSIS FROM ITS DIFFERENT REGIONS

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ABSTRACT

The objective of the study is to analyze, compare and reflect on the fitness sector in the interior of Mexico, from different locations located in four of its regions. The study replicates in the Mexican context the methodology of Fitness Trends From Around the Globe and was developed in five stages, adaptation of the methodology to Spanish and local culture, selection of the participating states and liaison with university professionals in the area, analysis of national and participating states' fitness trends, analysis of local contexts, and integration of the outcome document. This collaboration is expected to be strengthened to improve design, expand application and innovate in analysis models, elements that would allow us to observe and respond to the changes in

the fitness sector in Mexico and the particularities of its regions, and thus offer competitive advantages to the sector.



KEY WORDS

local development, training, lifestyle, health.



INTRODUCTION

In 2006, the first global fitness trends survey for 2007 was conducted and published in the journal of the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) with the intention of informing the industry and setting the direction of activity programmes for the coming year, allowing adjustments to be made to business models (1). Currently, the ACSM Health & Fitness Journal publishes annual fitness trends, with the global survey of fitness trends for the year 2020 for 2021 (2), therefore, there are 15 editions that have accumulated over time (1,3-16).

In this sense, the ACSM magazine differentiates between Trend, which is understood as "a general development or change in a situation or in the way people behave" and Fad, which is defined as "a fashion that is taken up with great enthusiasm for a short period" (1), for this reason, they are differentiated, in order to be able to compare over time the changes that have occurred in terms of the activities of the fitness sector.

During 2016, Spain was the first country to replicate the methodology based on the ACSM questionnaire and to see the country's own fitness trends for 2017 with the intention of identifying whether there are any local or local trends that are not reproduced in the global survey (17), making five editions published consecutively by 2020 (17-21). Then, in 2017, China independently launched its own fitness trends survey, which is why ACSM magazine made a comparison between the three countries to observe the similarities and differences (22). Thus, other countries either jointly like Brazil and Argentina for 2020 (23) or independently like Greece for 2021 (24), Colombia for 2021 (25) or continentally like for Europe 2020 (26) independently replicated the fitness trends questionnaire applied to their own context. International awareness of fitness trends around the world is increasing, giving value to the need to know these trends to guide future sector efforts and effective fitness programming (27).

In the case of Mexico, in 2019 and 2020 the National Fitness Trends Survey for Mexico was carried out (28,29); this effort, gives grounds to carry out now, a longitudinal trend study that allows to analyse possible changes in fitness trends in Mexico. On the other hand, with the intention of responding to local needs, but with a global vision, an analysis of fitness trends in the state of Jalisco was carried out from 2020 onwards (30).

The study presented here proposes a new category of analysis of fitness trends in Mexico, based on the review, comparison and reflection on the fitness sector, trends, particularities and challenges of different local contexts (Baja California, Nayarit, Jalisco, Morelos and Veracruz) located in different regions of Mexico, These analyses are carried out by university professors who are experts in the field of physical activity, attached to universities belonging to the Mexican Association of Higher Physical Culture Institutions (AMISCF), the Autonomous University of Baja California, the Autonomous University of Nayarit, the University of Guadalajara (University Centre of the Coast), the Autonomous University of the State of Morelos and the University of Veracruz. See figure 1.



Figure 1. States participating in the study.

On the other hand, in relation to the global context and in particular in Mexico, it is relevant to highlight the effects of the COVID_19 pandemic in the world and the subsequent confinement measures imposed by governments. As a consequence, it caused people to change their lifestyles, decreasing physical activity (31), with Mexico per se being a country with a physically inactive adult population (32), and for this reason many office workers started to work remotely from home, creating a public health problem (33). The confinement and subsequent closure of gyms caused the fitness sector to lose 1,108 million euros in Spain, reducing its turnover by -44% over twelve

months (34). For this reason, gyms had to adapt from face-to-face classes to virtual classes through social networks (35) in order to continue offering the service and thus maintain the population's physical activity levels (36), highlighting the importance of the practice of physical activities in leisure time for the prevention of cardiovascular diseases (37).

The aim of this study is to analyse, compare and reflect on the fitness sector in Mexico, from different localities located in four regions of the country, based on the opinion of university experts in the field of physical activity and supported by the Fitness Trends From Around the Globe methodology.



MATERIALS Y METHODS

The study replicates in the Mexican context the methodology of Fitness Trends From Around the Globe (27). The Worldwide Survey of Fitness Trends (2) was used to collect the data, adapted to Spanish (29), and the main (20) national trends analysed during 2020 were also integrated (27). Google forms were used for its application and social networks (specialised fitness groups), the community of professors and graduates of institutions belonging to the AMISCF and by e-mail to databases of professionals in the sector, with a scope of 52,735 fitness professionals based in Mexico and a participation of 918 respondents.

The Mexican fitness trends survey comprising 46 potential trends was applied for a period of 13 weeks (from 2 May to 5 August 2021); for the analysis of trends within Mexico, the states of Baja California (Northern Region of Mexico), Nayarit and Jalisco (Western Region of Mexico), Morelos (Central Region of Mexico) and Veracruz (Southeastern Region of Mexico) were selected.

To explain the study procedure, it should be noted that the study is part of the Mexican Survey of Fitness Trends project, which has been carried out every year since 2019. The study was carried out in five stages: the first was the adaptation of the Fitness Trends From Around the Globe methodology to Spanish and local culture; the second stage was the selection of the participating states and the linking with university professionals in the area; subsequently, in the third stage, the analysis of fitness trends at national level and in the participating states was carried out; for the fourth stage, each expert carried out their respective analysis of the local context; and finally, in the fifth stage, the final document was compiled.



RESULTS

With regard to the top five fitness trends, it is reported that at national level they are Exercise and weight loss programmes, Functional, personal and strength training, as well as Adaptation of post-pandemic services; with regard to the states, Baja California reports Exercise and weight loss programmes, Multidisciplinary work teams, Functional training, Adaptation of post-pandemic services and Outdoor fitness activities; for Jalisco Exercise and weight loss programmes, Functional, personal, body weight and online training, in Morelos Exercise and weight loss programmes, Strength training, Adaptation of post-pandemic services, Multidisciplinary work teams and Outdoor fitness activities; Nayarit, Exercise and weight loss programmes, Exercise programmes to combat childhood obesity, Functional, personal and strength training; and Veracruz Functional training, Adaptation of post-pandemic services, Exercise and weight loss programmes, Exercise apps and Strength training. See Table 1.

	Nationals	Baja California	Jalisco	Morelos	Nayarit	Veracruz
1	Exercise and weight loss programmes	Exercise and weight loss programmes	Exercise and weight loss programmes	Exercise and weight loss programmes	Exercise and weight loss programmes	Functional training
2	Functional training	**Multi-disciplinary work teams	Functional training	Strength training	Exercise programmes to combat childhood obesity	*Post-pandemic adaptation of services
3	Personal training	Functional training	Personal training	*Post-pandemic adaptation of services	Functional training	Exercise and weight loss programmes
4	Strength training	*Post-pandemic adaptation of services	Body weight training	**Multi-disciplinary work teams	Personal training	***Exercise apps
5	*Post-pandemic adaptation of services	Outdoor fitness activities	On-line training	Outdoor fitness activities	Strength training	Strength training
n	918	93	216	76	144	62

* New activities/ adaptation of post-pandemic services by COVID- 19

** Multidisciplinary work teams (physical activity professionals, doctors, physiotherapists and nutritionists)

*** Exercise applications for smartphones

When analysing the top five fitness trends by state, eleven trends were found to be present: Exercise and weight loss programmes, Multidisciplinary work teams, Adapting post-pandemic services, Functional training, Outdoor fitness activities, Personal

training, Body weight training, Online training, Strength training, Exercise programmes to combat childhood obesity, Exercise apps for smartphones. The top five by state show overlaps and differences, the most significant overlap lies in Exercise and Weight Loss Programmes which is present in the top five of all states and in four of them as number one, other trends present in the top five states (not in all) are Functional Training, Multidisciplinary Work Teams and Adapting Services Post Pandemic; the main differences focus on trends that appear in only some of the states such as Online training (Jalisco), Exercise programmes to combat childhood obesity (Nayarit) and Exercise Apps (Veracruz), the rest of the trends have a greater or lesser popularity in the states. See Figure 2.



Figure 2. Popularity of trends by state.

DISCUSSION

The aim of the study is to analyse, compare and reflect on the fitness sector in Mexico, from different locations located in four regions of the country, based on the opinion of university experts in the field of physical activity and supported by the methodology of Fitness Trends From Around the Globe.

In relation to the analysis and reflection on the local contexts in Mexico, Emilio Arrayales, in the first instance, establishes that the main fitness trends in Baja California are exercise and weight loss programmes, multidisciplinary work teams, functional training, new activities/adaptation of post-pandemic services by COVID-19 and outdoor fitness activities.

Baja California is the State with the largest overweight and obese population in Mexico, and, on the other hand, the universities that train physical culture professionals in the State from 2007 to date have approximately 3,500 graduates, together these populations could be the main beneficiaries, the overweight or obese population will potentially receive the benefits of the programmes. or obesity will potentially receive the benefits as users of the programmes and, on the other hand, the study shows the trends that set the labour pattern for physical culture professionals in the state.

By 2022, as far as COVID19 is concerned, the State is expected to recover with the return of practically all physical and sporting activities to normal, as shown by the process of recovery of educational and social activities that has been carried out so far. In addition, the main fitness trends in the State show the capacity to adapt to the pandemic context.

Luis Aguirre states that the main trends found in the state of Jalisco are encompassed in exercise and weight loss programmes, functional training, personal, body weight and online training. On the other hand, he points out that fitness professionals could be the main beneficiaries of this type of studies, providing competitive qualities and labour reference to generate a tuning and achievement of focused efforts.

In relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, a clear work agenda is outlined where fitness professionals, academics, the public sector and the private sector should work together in a collegiate manner to focus on an effective and safe course that benefits the general population in terms of development and health.

In the case of Jalisco (in spite of its coincidence with national trends), the local particularity of the fitness sector is adapted through activities linked to online training, displacing the trend of new activities and adaptation of services by COVID-19. In this regard, the similarity is striking (three out of five coincidences), but also the substantial difference in the way Jalisco adapts to the pandemic (online services) in relation to the rest of the country.

In summary, the state of Jalisco has a capacity for adaptation of the fitness sector linked to the use and exploitation of technologies to generate new work niches, diversify service offers and allow for the remote aspect suggested in the various recommendations to avoid COVID-19 infections. It should be noted that the permanence and sustainability, as well as the evolution and change of fitness trends point to the capacity of professionals to generate quality services, health promotion and prevention through fitness activities.

In relation to the State of Morelos, Rodrigo Meza states that the main fitness trends according to their relevance are exercise and weight loss programmes, strength training, post-pandemic services, multidisciplinary work teams and outdoor fitness activities. These may be related to the epidemiological situation of the state in relation to overweight and other body indicators.

The information generated in the research could be relevant for fitness professionals and the public and educational sectors, serving as a foundation for public policy, infrastructure development, as well as education and care programmes to address health needs through a physical activity science approach.

The pandemic apparently brought changes for the fitness sector in Morelos. On the one hand, a collective awareness of the importance of physical activity for disease prevention seems to have been generated, while at the same time, this sector was and continues to be hit by the preventive measures designed to address the health situation by the COVID-19. Therefore, Morelos will face challenges in the times to come, having to meet the demand for professionals and quality services while modifying its infrastructure and/or methodology to make way for training outdoors, at home or in spaces adapted to the necessary sanitary measures.

In relation to national fitness trends, Morelos presents two differences: it leaves aside functional and personal training to give more importance to outdoor fitness activities and the integration of multidisciplinary teams, trends that it only shares with the state of Baja California. Outdoor fitness activities seem to be related to the preventive measures adopted during the pandemic by COVID-19 where preference was given to them, as well as to the great diversity of ecological zones and natural areas in the state of Morelos, making it ideal for the practice of multiple physical activities in the natural environment. Therefore, the pandemic seems to have helped the population to become aware of this wealth and opportunities, as well as to generate an emerging market that could grow in the coming years.

On the other hand, Zeus Ontiveros points out that the main fitness trends in the State of Nayarit are exercise and weight loss programmes for both adults and children, functional, personal and strength training. The main benefits that the study could offer at the local level is to have a reference of the specific needs of the local community in relation to the fitness sector, which could generate an opportunity for improvement and growth of the sector. It is also noteworthy that no previous studies of the fitness sector were found in the state of Nayarit.

The challenges related to the pandemic context faced by this sector are associated with the closure of diverse economic activity centres, also because they were practically the last businesses to reopen to the public. Other challenges are the reduction of capacity to 30% in enclosed spaces, the rearrangement of furniture for healthy distance, the avoidance of multifunctional equipment and compliance with the mandatory user regulations set out in the guidelines for health protection measures for gyms and indoor sports centres.

Some differences were found between national trends and those in Nayarit. Programmes and exercises to combat childhood obesity appear exclusively in Nayarit and, on the other hand, in the state trends they were not located among the New activities and adaptation of post-pandemic services by COVID-19, which do appear at the national level and in some of the states.

Finally, the State of Nayarit coincided with the national results in four of the five main trends, so it can be affirmed that the perception of the local population is similar to the perception of the sector at the national level. In relation to the national results, it is interesting to note the trend New post-pandemic service adaptation activities by COVID-19, which addresses the guidelines for the use of the various fitness areas in open and closed spaces, with the intention of improving and increasing the number of users with a safe service that promotes active and healthy lifestyles.

Julio Gómez points out that the five main fitness trends in Veracruz are functional training, new activities/ adaptation of services post COVID-19 pandemic, exercise and weight loss programmes, exercise apps for smartphones and strength training. Also that the main benefits associated with this research could be the favourable health impact on the Veracruz community in general, as well as better prospects and opportunities for physical culture professionals in the state of Veracruz. The main challenge for the fitness sector is the adaptation to new scenarios for the practice of fitness, as well as the use of information and communication technologies for the implementation of new training modalities.

At the national level, similar results have been found, particularly in the categories of strength training, functional training, new activities/adaptation of post-pandemic services by COVID-19 and weight loss training programmes. Interestingly, in Veracruz, the development of fitness Apps for mobile devices is among the main trends, which could show that physical culture professionals in this state are at the forefront in this

area, which also represents the main discrepancy with the national results and compared to the rest of the country. national results and in comparison with the rest of the states participating in this research.

The results and reflections of the research presented here could guide the different actors related to the fitness sector, both at national level and in each of the localities analysed, to make timely decisions. Universities could have access to updated information for the adaptation of their study plans and programmes, as well as for the design of refresher courses or workshops; owners of gyms and training centres could make informed decisions to update their activity agendas, modify facilities, purchase equipment and assess the hiring and training policies of their staff; eventually the information could also be useful to increase the chances of success of fitness sector ventures.



LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE PATHS

The study has some limitations, which subscribe to the potential burden of subjectivity in the responses of the survey participants, the limitations of an online survey application, and the weaknesses of a non-probabilistic sample in terms of the lack of proportion in the number of responses per state.

For future research, other states in different regions of Mexico will be encouraged to participate in the analysis and reflection of fitness trends from their local context, as a means to obtain a more accurate representation of the differences and similarities of the fitness sector within Mexico. It is hoped to strengthen this collaboration between university institutions to improve the design, broaden the application and innovate in the analysis models, elements that would allow to observe and respond to the changes in the fitness sector in Mexico and the particularities of its regions, and thus provide competitive advantages to the sector.



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