

**EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING-MIX STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMERS OF FITNESS ESTABLISHMENTS. PILOT AND PRELIMINARY STUDY IN THE CITY OF YAOUNDE (CAMEROON)**

**EFFICACITE DES STRATEGIES DE MARKETING-MIX SUR LA CLIENTELE DES ETABLISSEMENTS DE REMISE EN FORME. ETUDE PILOTE ET PRELIMINAIRE DANS LA VILLE DE YAOUNDE (CAMEROUN)**

**DJOUBEROU Jean-Louis,**

Teacher-researcher,

University of MAROUA, Faculty of Economics and Management

Laboratory of Human and Social Sciences (LSHS) of the National Institute of Youth and Sports of Yaoundé,  
Cameroon.

**jeanlouisdjoubrou82@yahoo.fr**

**SAIDOU Victor,**

Teacher-researcher,

National Institute of Youth and Sports of Yaoundé,

Laboratory of Human and Social Sciences (LSHS) of the National Institute of Youth and Sports of Yaoundé,  
Cameroon.

**victor.saidou@yahoo.fr**

**FOUDA OMGBA NSI André Landry**

PhD student

Faculty of Educational Sciences

University of Yaounde I

Laboratory of Human and Social Sciences (LSHS) of the National Institute of Youth and Sports of Yaoundé,  
Cameroon

**nsilandry@gmail.com**

**Date submitted :** 21/01/2022

**Date of acceptance :** 07/04/2022

**To cite this article :**

DJOUBEROU. J L et al. (2022) «EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING-MIX STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMERS OF FITNESS ESTABLISHMENTS. PILOT AND PRELIMINARY STUDY IN THE CITY OF YAOUNDE (CAMEROON)», Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion «Volume 5 : Numéro 2» pp : 150 - 171

## Abstract

The rise of concerns related to maintaining the health of populations through the regular practice of physical and sports activity is at the origin of a meteoric proliferation that has tipped fitness establishments into an increasingly competitive field rougher in major Cameroonian urban centers. In this context, the development of strategies to capture and retain customers is essential for the promoters of said establishments. This pilot and preliminary study aims to analyze the effectiveness of the marketing-mix strategies on the clientele of fitness establishments in the city of Yaoundé. To achieve this, a qualitative case study approach was favored, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants sampled randomly in 7 cases. The qualitative analysis of the adopted marketing-mix policies was carried out using Sphinx IQ software. In addition to the availability of fitness seekers to pay when they are satisfied with the services offered to them, the results show that a cross between pull and push strategies, an increase in the number of rooms available 24 hours a day, as well as a product offer corresponding to expectations have a positive impact on attracting and retaining customers. Thus, by making it possible to understand the strategic aspects on which fitness establishments will have to rely in order to be more competitive, these preliminary results mark out avenues for reflection on applications of the marketing-mix in a new economic sector and in boom in fitness in Cameroon.

**Keywords:** Marketing mix; customer base; Fitness; Marketing strategy; Fitness room

## Résumé

La montée en puissance des préoccupations liées au maintien de la santé des populations par la pratique régulière de l'activité physique et sportive est à l'origine d'une prolifération fulgurante ayant basculé les établissements de remise en forme dans un champ concurrentiel de plus en plus rude dans les grands centres urbains camerounais. Dans ce contexte, le développement des stratégies pour capter et fidéliser la clientèle se révèle primordial pour les promoteurs desdits établissements. Cette étude pilote et préliminaire a pour objectif d'analyser l'efficacité des stratégies de marketing-mix sur la clientèle des établissements de remise en forme de la ville de Yaoundé. Pour y parvenir, une approche qualitative par étude de cas a été privilégiée et, des entretiens semi-directifs ont été menés auprès des participants échantillonnés de manière aléatoire dans 7 cas. L'analyse qualitative des politiques de marketing-mix adoptées a été effectuée grâce au logiciel Sphinx IQ. Outre la disponibilité des demandeurs de remise en forme à payer lorsqu'ils sont satisfaits des prestations qui leur sont offertes, les résultats révèlent qu'un croisement des stratégies *pull* et *push*, une multiplication des salles disponibles 24 heures sur 24, ainsi qu'une offre de produits correspondant aux attentes ont un impact positif sur l'attrait et la fidélisation de la clientèle. Ainsi, en permettant de comprendre les aspects stratégiques sur lesquelles les établissements de remise en forme devront s'appuyer pour être plus compétitives, ces résultats préliminaires balisent des pistes de réflexion sur des applications du marketing-mix dans un secteur économique nouveau et en plein essor qu'est la remise en forme au Cameroun.

**Mots clés :** Marketing-mix ; clientèle ; Fitness ; Stratégie marketing ; Salle de remise en forme.

## Introduction

The 1800s will have been marked by a growing sensitivity of the world population about the benefits of sport on the human body. The growing concern for health and well-being therefore pushes people towards the regular practice of sport. Indeed, this trend is fully benefiting from the birth of the fitness sector, which offers a diversified and flexible offer, adapted to the requirements of sedentary and urbanized lifestyles. Indeed, it was in 1847 that a "gymnasium" was opened to the public in Paris by a certain Hippolyte Triat. However, according to Scott (1996), it was in 1947 that the first "health club" as we understand it today was born in Santa Monica, California. The globalization of fitness rooms is therefore felt. According to the annual survey conducted by the leisure database carried out in 2011, fitness rooms in Europe, for example, increased by 4% from 2008 to 2009. With the proliferation of fitness rooms, we can see the creation on a global scale of a veritable indoor sports leisure market marked by a strong commodification of practices.

On a global scale, in 2010, this market announced a turnover of 67 billion dollars. The European and North American markets alone accounted for 80% of this global market with respectively 31 and 23 billion dollars. For the rest, it can be noted that in Asia it is Japan that dominates the market and that Oceania and South America both have roughly equal markets with around 2 billion dollars. Emerging markets in the Middle East and Africa have grown the fastest in terms of new gym establishments. Thus, the practitioner of indoor sports activities is considered as a customer, a consumer or a prospect. However, the consumer, imbued with sports images transmitted by many media and by urban culture, is today looking for quality services. The consumer remains, as stated by Rouchdy et al. (2021), a human being influenced by his tastes, his emotions, his ethics and his culture. The only weight room no longer attracts crowds; from now on, any club must offer complementary activities to attract a much wider clientele (men, women, seniors, etc.) with very diverse aspirations (relaxation, well-being, but also back pain, stress, obesity, etc.). Indeed, nowadays, no one can deny the important role of technologies in society as they increasingly influence people's lives (Labti & Belkadi, 2019). It therefore appears necessary for these sports industries to set up appropriate marketing strategies in a changing world.

The marketing culture of indoor sport has in fact spread to the entire professional body in the desire to integrate consumer expectations, create product ranges and change the forms of services offered. Faced with increasingly strong competition between sectors and sports

professionals, quality has become a fundamental resource for establishing itself on the market. In this marketing game, the consumer is not left out, demanding attention and products adapted to his expectations. His power of action increases in this desire to obtain more refined services that can fit into his universe and allow him to meet his expectations. In Cameroon, for ten years now, the world of fitness rooms has been transformed. Thus, the number of fitness rooms has increased considerably. In this movement, competition appears between these different sports industries. The attractiveness of a fitness room could therefore be explained by the adoption of appropriate marketing tools in such a context. Faced with this situation, it seemed important to us, as part of our research, to analyze the effectiveness of the marketing-mix strategies used by fitness establishments. It will therefore be a question of answering the question of knowing: What are the marketing-mix strategies that would encourage an effective enhancement of the brand image of a fitness establishment?

To answer this question, we will first present a brief review of the literature. Secondly, we will present the methodology adopted and finally, we will present the results and discussions of this study.

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1.1. The origins of work related to sports marketing**

For an appropriate presentation of the origins of work on sports marketing, we first propose to show the originality and uniqueness of sports marketing (1.1.1), and then to highlight the will of marketing researchers of sport to develop in a field that is still little exploited (1.1.2).

#### **1.1.1. Sports marketing: originality and uniqueness**

According to Desbordes (2004), sports marketing is a recent field of research, both in management sciences and in the Sciences and Techniques of Physical and Sports Activities (STAPS). Indeed, in the period from 1988 to 1992, Desbordes et al. (1999) asked themselves the following question: is sports marketing specific? To this question, they answer in the affirmative in a book published in 1999 which will be a reference in the wider field of sports management. The will of Desbordes et al. (1999) was to appear as original within the STAPS where the social sciences remain under the influence of sociology, by developing a strong corpus around management sciences, while not denying their belonging to a sporting environment, because it is this environment that has nourished their theoretical reflection for several years. They were therefore not in opposition to the “classical” social sciences developed

in the STAPS in particular by Christian Pociello (1981, 1995), Georges Vigarello (1988). Their analyzes are complementary, since sports marketing undoubtedly needs sociology to understand the consumer. In this sense, Ohl (1995) represents a good link between the two disciplines. The reasons for the specificity of sport marketing are multiple and partly linked to the organization of sport itself. According to Desbordes (2004), sport is not an activity like any other, it is part of a mixed field where market and non-market coexist. It identifies the specificities that justify the existence of sports marketing.

From a product point of view, a sports product, and in particular that intended for instrumented and outdoor activities, ultimately requires the same qualities as a "classic" product, but in higher proportions. It must be a little more technical than average (because the demands of practice lead athletes to seek lightness, rigidity or resistance to bad weather), a little more "trendy" than the average (because sport is often synonymous with progress and innovation in our society), with stores ahead of time (Hertzel, 2002). In the end, the marketing of sports products ultimately remains quite classic, with some characteristics exacerbated compared to other products. The marketing of services, unlike the sports products sector which is exclusively the responsibility of merchant companies, which all seek more or less to maximize their profit as in the neoclassical theory of the firm, sports services evolve in a kind of "mixed magma" where commercial firms rub shoulders with non-profit associations, federations with delegation from the ministry to develop their sport, schools or local communities. The situation then becomes much more complex to manage and leads stakeholders to ask themselves multiple questions: who are their competitors? What resources can we count on? Who is the regulator of this system? Who has the power to sell what is produced? These questions are rich and require marketing to be backed up by organizational theory, law or strategy.

### **1.1.2. A desire of sports marketing researchers: to develop in a field that is still little exploited**

The work in sports marketing shows a desire: to develop beaten paths, to develop a field of research almost virgin 10 years ago (Desbordes 2004). At that time, the literature review was relatively easy to carry out. The unique work in sports management is that coordinated by Alain Loret in 1993 "sport and management" Dunod edition. Indeed, it has enormous merit insofar as this document provides an overview in 36 chapters on the management of organizations, marketing, human resources, events, the management of volunteers, the financing of sport, etc. Six chapters concern marketing, one on demand, one on the relationship between marketing

and sociology, one on marketing strategy and three on communication. This weakness of the French-speaking literature has led to a broadening of the vision of things.

We cannot therefore be satisfied with looking at French-language literature, as Americans and Canadians took a head start in sports management in the 90s. Indeed, their system developed in the 60s when the teaching and research programs have gradually been set up in universities. They were established either in sports science faculties, or in management or business schools. Even today, we find this "mix" between two worlds, that of sport and that of management science. Likewise, the growing interest in sport is creating great needs in the organization, the marketing of teams, the negotiation of TV rights, in short, the organization of the economy of sport as a whole. This, in order to collectively generate more money (Bourg and Gouguet, 1998). Quite naturally, driven by pressure from the professional sports world, which needs sports marketing tools, researchers set out to produce quality books. We can cite, for example, the work of Stotlar (2001a, 2001b), Pitts (1998), Pitts and Stotlar (1996). Thus, we see that sports marketing is at the interface of several disciplinary fields while having its own specificities: this is what makes it of scientific and epistemological interest.

### **1.2. The main lines of work in the field of sports marketing and their limits**

In terms of sports products, Desbordes thesis (1998c) marked a breakthrough in the field of sports marketing. This doctoral work in management science was entitled "Material Diffusion, Technological Change and Innovation: Analysis and Case Study in the Instrumented Sport Industry". The logic was to analyze innovation issues by applying them to the instrumented sport industry. From the outset, this was multidisciplinary work that could be a source of wealth: it was necessary to mobilize knowledge of industrial economics. This, to address new sectors of management, technology studying the phenomena of innovation and internal diffusion, marketing allowing to understand the consumer and the sociology of sport whose sporting object is not consumed for its utilitarian side, but much more for symbolic aspects that highlight the individual in his social interactions.

Indeed, the initial work on sports products was the preferred field of engineers or economists. Desbordes (1998c) had chosen to focus on the relationships between innovation and sports products, seen from the point of view of management sciences, that is to say of the management of innovation, because it was an almost virgin domain at the time. The work that existed on innovation in sport was very different from the view he wanted to adopt. Internationally, it is arguably the work of Sheffield University professor Steve Haake that has contributed the most

to the field. He was able to federate around learned society a current of Japanese (Suzuki, Sugimoto, Tada, Hirano, etc.) and Anglo-Saxon (mainly American and English) researchers. While this field of research is interesting from a scientific point of view, its concerns remain focused on mechanics, testing, engineering, biomechanics, resistance of materials or plastics applied to sports products.

Hillairet's work (1992, 1993a, 1993b, 1999) was more focused on patents, that is, on the notion of invention. Indeed, one criticism made of this research was that of saying that the analysis focused on the patent absolutely does not take into account, for example, the resounding commercial failures that certain products are experiencing vis-à-vis the consumer, while their technical characteristics are exceptional. The research carried out by Chantelat (1993) concerned innovation seen from a meso-economic angle, i.e. between the macro (the economy as a whole) and the micro (the structure) economic: this work was applied to the sports industry. Its analysis made it possible to define the contours of the most interesting industrial sectors to investigate. On the other hand, this analysis remains at a meso-economic level which does not allow conclusions to be drawn on innovation practices in the company.

The work of Gaillard (1997) and Miller (1997) is concerned with the marketing of new products. Indeed, these two authors make the link between marketing and research and development. How do you sell what does not yet exist? In the review of the literature, the thesis of Salles (1997) is very fruitful because the latter carried out a fairly exhaustive survey on the behavior of consumers of sports products. This pioneering work made it possible to grasp part of the sociological meaning of sports consumption. It is from this thesis that Ohl and Marijke (2008) built some of his research on sports consumption. Indeed, according to Holt (1995), there are different ways of consuming the same good or service: he speaks of “consumption practices” in which the subjective dimension can play an important role. Holt (1995) in fact specifies that consuming is not only about using objects, but at the same time interactions are created with other people. Thus, sports consumption is no exception to this rule: going to a fitness room for a gymnastics session is to put on a show, put your body forward, assert a social status, show off an outfit, interact with a group, and not just sweat (Bessy, 1993; Tribou, 1994). These various works constitute in fact the basis of the new visions which are being developed around the sports product. Indeed, this literature is generally associated with the mass of generic research on consumption in academic journals such as *Journal of Consumer Research* or *Journal of Marketing*. Likewise, general and strategic reviews in organizational management are very

useful for laying the foundations for sports marketing applied to products and services. Regarding the limits of the various works, if the Anglo-Saxons have taken an indisputable head start, as we have underlined above, their works nevertheless remain marked by an enormous limit: they remain totally linked to their needs., that is to say to produce knowledge to manage spectacle sport and not the marketing of sport as a whole. In fact, in 2001, at the traditional NASSM congress in Virginia Beach, VA, USA, a paper was presented on innovation strategies in the sports industry (Desbordes, 2001a). The latter was the only one to deal with sports products, and therefore the practice of sport on a daily basis, on a hundred communications. In general, 80 to 90% of the papers presented relate to sports entertainment (television, arrangement of speakers, ticketing, pricing, relationship between results and stock market listing, brand labeling, etc.).

The literature review of the prestigious JSM (Journal of Sport Management) carried out by Danylchuk and Judd (1996) confirms that spectacle sport occupies a preponderant place in the themes of researchers and that the products are extremely neglected. The practice of sport, and in particular the products, are completely obscured, which made it necessary to explore this field in the 90s. Only televised sport and its ramifications (sponsorship in particular) are studied: this partisan choice linked to an American context left so plenty of leads for someone interested in marketing the sport as a whole. This is the position adopted from the 1990s: how to present in a coherent way a complete approach linked to the marketing of sport, from products to events and services? Thus, the idea of the research trend that developed in France from the 1990s (Hillairet, 1992, 1993a, 1993b; Desbordes, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2001a, 2001b, 2002a, 2002b; Ohl, 1995; Salles, 1997; Tribou, 1994) is therefore to propose an alternative to the American model, too focused on spectacle sport, while complementing the French sociological approaches essential to understanding the phenomena of sports consumption. This "clearing" of new ground is also focused on an area that speaks very little of the need for marketing in structures such as fitness rooms. This work is very often concerned with product marketing that ignores sports services and even products offered by the fitness industry.

To understand the factors affecting consumer attitudes towards sports-related marketing, our research has identified theories that form the basis of sports service acceptance and adoption. We have thus retained four major theories on which we can dwell in order to carry out this study. Indeed, we have had recourse to theories which can shed light not only on the behavior of the fitness establishment but also on the attitude of the consumer. Thus, we mobilized the



institutional theory, the theory of Fishbein, the theory of reasoned action and the theory of planned action.

### **1.3. Supervision of fitness activity in Cameroon**

The supervision of the fitness activity is the responsibility of the Cameroonian Federation of Sport For All (FECASPT). Indeed, FECASPT was created in 1999 by decision N ° 24 / MJS / CAB of April 1, 1999, following the official creation of a Sport for All Commission within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in 1983. Affiliated with the African Union of Sport for All (UASPT) and the International Federation of Sport for All (FISPT) since 2009, the FECASPT has several missions among others the sensitization of the populations to the practice of APS for the improvement of their health, the creation of regional and departmental leagues. According to Law N ° 20011/018 of July 15, 2011 relating to the organization and promotion of physical and sports activities in its title II chapter III (article 13 paragraph 3), public or private persons can set up and finance sports clubs. responsible for organizing, developing and promoting the practice of local APS. Likewise, FECASPT organizes training courses open not only to instructors or not in a club or fitness structure but also to PE or youth and animation executives from the INJS or the various CENAJES.

In the collection of texts of the FECASPT relating to the decisions of affiliation or membership to the FECASPT (decision N ° 005 / FECASPT / CAB / PT of November 14, 2003) it is noted that the fitness clubs are subject to to an obligation of affiliation (article 2). For this, they must constitute a file in accordance with the provisions of articles 6, 7, 8 and 9 of the decision N ° 005 / FECASPT / CAB / PT of November 14, 2003. Indeed, the FECASPT like any federation is governed by texts before be applied by those in charge of the fitness rooms (Batamacke, 2017). According to the study carried out by this author, however, we note that only 51.5% of club managers in the city of Yaoundé, more precisely in the commune of Yaoundé VI, are aware of and apply the texts in force. This work allows us to see that there are many texts governing the operation of fitness rooms, but their application remains very limited.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Implementation of a qualitative approach by case study**

In this research, we proceeded by a qualitative approach and by case study. This interpretive approach consists in studying in depth the problem posed through carefully chosen cases and, has the advantage not only of presenting a strong dose of contextualization, but also of giving voice to the different actors. For this work, we collect primary data through interviews and

secondary data through document analyzes. Based on an interview guide developed after an exploratory phase, the aim was to collect a set of information relating to the research theme. Semi-structured interviews were thus carried out with the heads of structures and customers on the marketing aspect and underwent an elaborate transcription. The information obtained at the end of these interviews is checked and supplemented by the analysis of the documents, in order not only to be able to understand the implementation of the marketing-mix strategies, but also to identify the most effective of them.

The research methodology used for this work assumes that the selected cases are chosen in a justified manner, so that they meet the predefined criteria of the research (Eisenhardt, 1989). With regard to this study, the population consists of all the fitness rooms, small, medium or large in the city of Yaoundé. During the selection of the different cases, we took into account the following aspects:

- Accessibility of the fitness room: Indeed, it is not easy to access the room and collect data. Maintenance to be performed is generally not accepted.
- The health club must have a specific room, an enclosure. It seemed to us that the information sought will be delivered to us in such an environment unlike the fitness clubs exercising in the open air.
- Seniority of at least 6 months: this constraint makes it possible to eliminate clubs that have not really engaged in long-term activity and therefore cannot offer us the answers to our concerns.

In fact, the inclusion of a new case of establishment in our sample was interrupted when the data was saturated (if the transcription of new interviews and the analysis of documents no longer bring anything new on the subject treated). This is how we were able to get the seven (07) cases of fitness rooms. This information collected during the field investigation is analyzed using the Sphinx IQ software to bring out a number of facts that may lead us to formulate proposals.

## **2.2. Presentation of cases under study**

Case A: located in the MESSASSI district, this structure was created on October 1, 2018 by Mr. x who takes care of the management of the structure himself. His role is to take care of staff recruitment and also acts as a coach thanks to his training in animation, level I and II of the FCSPT. This fitness room has the slogan "passion for professionalism" and is made up of four

spaces reserved for bodybuilding and one space reserved for gymnastics (gym). This structure currently employs 03 people including 02 coaches and 01 receptionist.

Case B: This is a room located in the so-called Shell Nsimeyong district. It was created in 2010 by Mr. Y and is made up of three compartments which allow exercises to be carried out on machines (two spaces) and on an empty space (gym). The structure currently employs 07 people including a receptionist and 06 coaches.

Case C: created in 2016 by Mr. YY. This structure consists of 08 employees including a manager, 05 coaches, 01 maintenance agents and 01 secretary. Located in the Etoug-Ebé district at a place called the handicapped center.

Case D: located in the Biting district in Yaoundé. The structure has four employees including two coaches, 01 secretary and 01 permanent guard. Privately owned, it offers its sports services to a fairly varied clientele.

Case E: created in 2011 by Mr. AZ, the structure has a staff of 10 coaches with 3 interview agents. It is located in the heart of the administrative center of the city. It was originally created to allow a specific group of people to be healthy for greater profitability at work. She then gave free access to whoever wants it for a payment.

Case F: located in the Biyem-Assi district, this structure is a private property which was created in 2008 by Mrs. XX. This structure not only employs 02 people permanently for the satisfaction of the practical needs of their customers and 01 secretary. Our structure was initially reserved for a category of client (women of a certain age) but with the demand that was being felt more and more we had to open the doors to all social strata.

The G case: the structure representing the G case was created by Mr. TZ on December 17, 2018 in homage to his mother. This room has two compartments, one of which is reserved for machines and the other for group handling. It is a private property which employs 04 people including 03 coaches (including the owner) and a receptionist.

Case F: located in the Biyem-Assi district, this structure is a private property which was created in 2008 by Mrs. XX. This structure not only employs 02 people permanently for the satisfaction of the practical needs of their customers and 01 secretary. Our structure was initially reserved for a category of client (women of a certain age) but with the demand that was being felt more and more we had to open the doors to all layers.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1. Marketing-mix strategies adopted depending on the case

**Table 1: Existing marketing-mix strategies**

Case study	Communication strategy	Pricing strategy	Distribution strategy	Product strategy
Case A	Pull	Alignment	Exclusive part-time	Tailored
Case B	Pull	Skimming	Exclusive part-time	Tailored
Case C	Pull et push	Skimming	Exclusive part-time	Tailored
Case D	Pull et push	Penetration	Exclusive part-time	Tailored
Case E	Pull et push	Penetration	Exclusive part-time	Tailored
Case F	Pull	Alignment	Exclusive part-time	Tailored
Case G	Pull	None	Exclusive part-time	Tailored

**Source: Our analyzes**

The table above shows the marketing-mix strategies that can be found in fitness rooms in the city of Yaoundé. Indeed, the interpretation of the different verbatim suggests that most clubs have adopted the same communication strategies so far. With the exception of cases C, D and E where the clubs, in addition to using the same strategy as the others, have opted to combine it with another strategy by pushing its product towards customers through the organization of free sports sessions in its neighborhood or sports walks. This is reflected when the person in charge of Case C affirms that "In our club, we frequently organize sports sessions for the neighborhood" and that of Case E when he affirms that "We offer to the clientele quite varied services such as massages, relaxations, bodybuilding, sports walks, dances and aerobic gymnastics. "

Likewise, in terms of price, those responsible for Cases A and Case F offer a price similar to that of the market. They therefore apply an alignment strategy. Indeed, this allows them to eliminate the criterion of differentiation. However, in some cases it is noted that the prices offered are either above or below the market price. This is how Cases B and C charge a price well above the market price. The latter therefore implement a skimming strategy seeking to increase their profit or justify the quality of their offer. They demonstrate through these high prices not only the quality but also the multitude of products available to customers. Regarding Case D and Case E, they charge prices below the market price. They therefore apply a so-called

penetration pricing strategy in order to gain market share in a sector where there are competitors with enormous potential.

In terms of distribution, if we only consider the analysis of the different working hours of the different cases, it is not done full time. In fact, there are usually hours when the activity is stopped. Likewise, it was noted that not all establishments have other places where the product is made available in the city. Thus, the distribution strategy adopted within the different case studies is the exclusive part-time distribution strategy insofar as they have only one place of provision of their product in the city and that they don't work 24 hours a day.

Regarding the product policy, in all cases (cases A, B, C, D, E, F and G) the managers seem to have the same products offered to the customers. In general, this refers to the offer of fitness, weight training, cardio and relaxation. Thus, all cases set up a tailor-made product strategy. Indeed, in all cases it is the customer who chooses the offer formula that suits him best. However, the difference is felt in the quality of the different products offered. As the manager of Case C asserts, "There is a real climate of trust between our employees and customers as we ensure that everything is made available to the customer so that he can be satisfied. "

### **3.2. Effectiveness of the various marketing-mix strategies**

For an analysis of the effectiveness of the different marketing-mix strategies implemented in the different study cases, we grouped together the cases that adopted the same marketing-mix strategies. This grouping was carried out on the basis of Table 1 above in order to facilitate the interpretation of the data.

#### **3.2.1. Effectiveness of the marketing-mix strategy of cases A and F**

Case A and Case F apply the same communication (pull strategy), pricing (alignment strategy), distribution (part-time exclusive distribution strategy) and product (tailor-made strategy) policies. So, it is at this level to judge the impact of this marketing-mix strategy on loyalty and attracting new customers in these cases. The analysis of verbatim results from interviews with clients of these two structures allows us to identify the effects of this marketing-mix strategy. Thus, with regard to the communication policy adopted, we noted that the means adopted do not always provide the desired effect. In fact, clients in both cases believe they are informed of the existence of the club by means not put in place by them. Thus, we were able to note the following verbatim: "it was thanks to a friend in the neighborhood that I discovered this room" Case A; "I learned about this fitness center from my brother" Case A; "I was made aware of the

existence of this gym by an acquaintance" Case F; "I was informed by a colleague and I live in the neighborhood" Case F; "I saw this room just by chance while walking" Case F; "It was through my husband that I was informed of the existence of the fitness center and I am from the neighborhood" Case F. However, a few clients claim to have "been informed of the existence of this structure when they saw the banner, view that a room was looking for not far from my place of residence" Case A.

On analysis, the managers of rooms A and F do not put enough resources into the implementation of their communication policy. Going in this direction, we noted the following verbatim: "The structure must make more leaflets to make itself known" Case F; "The center must distribute the traces throughout the area" Case F; "Facebook is one of the most effective means of communication, I suggest creating a Facebook page to reach as many people as possible." »Case A; "The room can make advertising displays and radio and television advertising, organize gala ceremonies to try to bring together as many people as possible" Case A; "Place displays of different sizes across town and make radio or television appearances to talk about the structure." Case F. Regarding the pricing policy (alignment strategy), all customers seem to be satisfied in both cases. This is how they claim: "the cost of services remains attractive" Case F; "The prices offered are very good" Case F; "The monthly price is awesome" Case F; "The services are well worth the price" Case A; "We are fully satisfied with the price of the services" Case A; "The prices are affordable" Case A. In terms of distribution (exclusive part-time distribution strategy), the majority of customers reside in the neighborhood or are not far from the club, as one customer affirms "Proximity" of this structure with my place of residence is one of the assets which motivated me to register, it is always economical to go to sport without paying a taxi." Case A. This does not pose a problem for them. to product availability. However, the clientele of the structures is limited only to that of the district where it is located. They would benefit from "increasing the number of rooms in the city because distance is a brake for many people" Case A and moreover, "By increasing the number of rooms in the city, you would allow a lot of people to take advantage of it" Case A. however, "The follow-up should be the same in all rooms" Case F.

For the product strategy (tailor-made strategy), customers are fully satisfied with the services tailored to their needs. Thus, as they assert: "There is a friendly and fraternal climate in the structure." »Case A; "I am satisfied with this job and I have results." »Case F; "I'm very satisfied, frankly nothing to say it's perfect." Case A. Overall, the marketing-mix policy adopted by these

two structures, although there are gaps in the communication and distribution policy, however, has very poor results in terms of customer loyalty. This insofar as the clients we meet are for the most part former clients and state "As long as I am in the city I will always come here. »Case F; "I see a lot of good things in the future with this structure. "Case A. This is why officials say," The trend in the number of customers remains low. »Case A; "We have some new client but that's not really what we would like to have. »Case A; "There are new faces, but they don't come back for a long time. »Case F; "The evolution is quite low, we don't really have a new permanent customer. » Case F

### **3.2.2. Effectiveness of the marketing-mix strategy in case B**

Case B implements a marketing-mix strategy therefore the communication policy is based on the pull strategy, the pricing policy on the skimming strategy, the distribution policy on the exclusive part-time distribution strategy and the product policy based on the tailor-made strategy. Thus, unlike the pricing policy adopted, Case B applies the same other policies as those applied by Cases A and F. The analysis made on the interviews of the case shows at the level of the communication policy that customers are not really directly impacted by the means implemented by the structure. This is how we have the following illustrative extracts: "It was through a friend that I learned about this structure"; "The structure to make itself known must display advertising images on its building"; "We must raise awareness and organize the marching sessions"; "It was thanks to other members who were happy that I got to know this club." Regarding the pricing policy (the skimming strategy), we noted that customers are not against a price that is above the market price. This is thanks to the following illustrative verbatim: "I am very satisfied with the prices insofar as health is priceless"; "The prices for me are quite legitimate"; "I find the prices affordable for the quality of the service". In terms of distribution and product, we noted the same remarks made at the level of Cases A and F. Thus the marketing-mix strategy adopted in this structure seems to be bearing fruit despite the shortcomings in its communication policy insofar as we met not only the new but also the old customers. And the same as the manager says, "The retention rate in our room can be estimated at almost 90% as we have almost no withdrawals. "And further" The increase in the number of customers is dazzling ". "We have a lot of new ones coming here to find out what they heard about our existence through the old ones. "

### 3.2.3. Effectiveness of the marketing-mix strategy of case C

Case C implements a marketing-mix strategy therefore the communication policy is based on the combination of two strategies, namely the pull strategy and the push strategy. Regarding the other aspects of its marketing-mix strategy, it applies the same policies as the previous case, i.e. its pricing policy is based on the skimming strategy, its distribution policy on the distribution strategy part-time exclusive and its product policy based on the tailor-made strategy. Thus, the analysis of the interviews with the customers allowed us to note at the level of the communication policy that the combination of these two strategies bears fruit although the pull strategy still has some shortcomings. In this sense we have the following illustrative verbatim: "The existence of this structure was revealed to me not only by a friend but I also had the opportunity to participate in an outdoor session organized for all"; "It was thanks to the advertising plaque at the entrance that I discovered the existence of this room." As a failure, the structure must "have more online presence especially in social networks to make itself known"; she will also have to "open a website and make videos on YouTube"; "Promote broadcasts by local television channels for more visibility. "On analysis, the push strategy complements the limits of the implementation of the pull strategy. Thus, the structure wins by implementing this combination. Regarding the pricing policy (the skimming strategy), the distribution policy (the part-time exclusive distribution strategy) and the product policy (the tailor-made strategy) we did not notice any difference. Indeed, the policies applied are in line with customer expectations. In this sense we have the following illustrative verbatim: "The managers are respectful and always attentive and at the service of the expectations coming from us"; "I am very satisfied with the prices of the services offered to me"; "I would not be against a multiplication of rooms of this type in the city".

In general, all customers therefore see a future in this structure. Likewise, the manager estimates that "Despite the competition, we can have 30 to 100 permanent members per month. "And affirms that" We can say that our numbers remain quite stable. ". This clearly reflects the effectiveness of this marketing-mix strategy.

### 3.2.4. Effectiveness of the marketing-mix strategy of Case D and Case E

The main difference between the marketing-mix policy implemented in Cases D and E and those implemented in Case C is the implementation of a pricing policy based on the penetration strategy. Indeed, the structure offers low prices which are generally appreciated by members: "In my opinion, I think that the offers are accessible to all"; "The prices are good because



elsewhere we do not find these prices"; "I am very satisfied with the prices offered in this structure". However, the same difficulties appear at the level of their communication policy (based on the pull and push strategy). In fact, clients have also been noted to admit: "The existence of this room was revealed to me through the friends who live near the room" Case D; "The structure must insist more on the distribution of leaflets and on its presence in social networks" Case E; "I discovered this fitness center by just passing by" Case D; "The fitness room must go door to door but also a lot of leaflets" Case E. Similarly, the other policies put in place have the same impact as in cases A, B, C and F. This is how the following verbatim were noted: "The care corresponds to my needs and I have no problem at this level" Case D; "I think the offers are well suited to my needs" Case E; "The climate which reigns between the persons in charge of the structure and us is a friendly and fraternal atmosphere" Case E; "My home is not far from the structure" Case D; "I can not wait to see this structure in other districts of the city" Case E. Thus, most clients think they will continue in this structure as illustrated by this statement: "As long as I am in the city of Yaoundé, I will come to this fitness room". In this sense, the managers state that: "We can estimate the retention rate of our customers at 95%, since apart from the new ones there is a good majority that we see almost all the time. »Case D; "The membership has grown dramatically for quite a while. »Case E; "It's been quite a development since we've been going out, people already come to the club quite regularly. » Case D.

### **3.2.5. The effectiveness of case G marketing mix strategy**

Unlike the other cases, this structure has not opted for any pricing strategy. Indeed, the prices are fixed by mutual agreement between the parties. This reflects the fact that all the customers questioned are mostly satisfied with the price: "I am completely satisfied with the price". With regard to the pull strategy, the exclusive part-time distribution strategy and the tailor-made strategy adopted in this structure, the same weaknesses and similar effects on customers were noted. Thus, the discourse of customers remains identical to those encountered in cases that have implemented these same strategies.

In summary, these results obtained present quite varied marketing-mix strategies. In each of the strategies adopted, the communication policy implemented in all cases still poses a problem. These results therefore confirm the thinking of Olivier & Mari Court (1990). Indeed, for the latter, it is not enough to have a good product at a satisfactory price and distributed correctly in

order to sell, it is also necessary that the product be known. And that only happens with good communication.

## **Conclusion**

The objective of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of marketing-mix strategies used by fitness establishments in the city of Yaoundé. Following all of the above, the results above show, in addition to the fact that fitness seekers are willing to pay when they are satisfied with the services offered to them, that a combination of the pull and push, as well as a distribution through the multiplication of rooms available 24 hours a day, and the establishment of products corresponding to expectations constitute the most effective marketing strategies, that is to say having a positive impact on the attraction and customer loyalty in a fitness room in the city of Yaoundé.

Based on these results, we can derive a set of theoretical and practical implications. Indeed, on a theoretical level, our research completes the lack of previous work (Afthinos et al., 2005; Kim & Kim, 1995; Alexandris et al., 2004, Garcia-Fernandez et al., 2014; Judge & Erez , 2007) and thereby sheds more light on the mechanism of integrating marketing data in fitness rooms. As far as practical implications are concerned, we have offered a set of suggestions for fitness studios.

As suggestions made to fitness structures, we define a set of necessary elements in the development of deep and long-term marketing actions, these are: to integrate the aspects of the marketing-mix into the strategy of the structure, to provide sufficient human and financial resources, to involve staff in the implementation of policies related to the marketing mix, to ensure consistency between the different aspects of the marketing mix and to put marketing managers in place.

However, this study has limitations that should be noted. It is then a question for us of emphasizing those inherent to the phenomena studied and to the methodology. Indeed, the research would have been more interesting if we had also studied the influence of factors external to the structure on the implementation of a marketing-mix strategy.

However, we should point out the methodological limits relating to our geographical research area. Indeed, our study was limited to one city in Cameroon, namely Yaoundé. However, extending our field of study to other cities would have made it possible to obtain a more representative sample of cases and more convincing results.

Far from undermining the credibility of this research, and therefore of the results obtained and the ensuing implications, these limits are an excellent justification for the need to extend this research. However, the answers to these limitations could be found in the future axes of this research.

Indeed, this work opens interesting research perspectives. Thus, the study can be oriented in the same direction, but by highlighting the factors external to the fitness room influencing the implementation of a marketing-mix strategy. In this sense, researchers will be able to focus on studying the impact of financing on the implementation of a marketing-mix strategy. We can address other aspects such as:

- longitudinal analysis of the implementation of a marketing-mix strategy in a fitness structure: it would be interesting to study the changes in the integration of marketing data over time, depending on elements of context internal and external to the structure. This would require continuous monitoring of the structure over a minimum period in order to detect the main changes in its practices and values.

- the development of tools to help integrate the marketing aspect: taking into account the elements that have been highlighted by research, and what has been observed at the level of fitness rooms, the integration of marketing data is not easy and requires synthetic and effective management support tools that can be easily and quickly handled, thus limiting the time investment for the structure.

## REFERENCES

- Afthinos, Y., Theodorakis, N., & Nassis, P. (2005), « Customer' expectations of service in Greek fitness centers », *Managing Service Quality: An International Journal*, Vol. 15, N°3, PP. 245-258.;
- Alexandris, K., Zahariadis, P., Tsorbatzoudis, C., & Grouios, G. (2004), « An empirical investigation of the relationship among service quality, customer satisfaction and psychological commitment in a health club context », *European Sport Management Quaterfly*, Vol. 4, N°1, PP.36-52;
- Batamacke F.F. (2017), « *fonctionnement des clubs de remise en forme dans le Mfoundi : l'exemple de Yaoundé VI* », mémoire présenté en vue de l'obtention du certificat d'aptitude au professorat d'éducation physique et sportive ;
- Bessy O. (1993), *Les stratégies marketing des centres de remise en forme*, sport et management, éd. A. Loret, Paris, Dunod ;
- Bourg J.F. & Gouguet J.J. (1998), *Analyse économique du sport*, Edition PUF, Paris ;
- Chantelat P. (1993), *Processus d'innovation technologique et dynamique des marchés : des trajectoires aux itinéraires technologiques ; une approche méso-économique du marché des sports-loisirs*, Thèse de doctorat en STAPS, université de Lyon I ;
- Danylchuk K.E. & Judd M.R. (1996), *Journal of Sport Management: readership Survey*, *journal of Sport management*, Vol.10, N°2, PP.188-197;
- Desbordes M. (1998a), « Management de l'innovation dans l'industrie du sport : variations autour du cas Salomon », *Annales des Mines- Gérer et comprendre*, PP.14-25 ;
- Desbordes M. (1998b), « Facteurs clés de succès dans le management et la diffusion d'une innovation : analyse de cinq cas dans l'industrie du sport », *International Journal of Design and Innovation Research*, PP.35-52 ;
- Desbordes M. (1998c), *Diffusion des matériaux, changement technologique et innovation : Analyse et étude de cas dans l'industrie du sport instrumenté*, Doctorat en science de gestion de l'université Louis Pasteur (Strasbourg I) ;
- Desbordes M. (2001), *Stratégie des entreprises*, Éditions Economica ;
- Desbordes M. (2001a), *Innovation management in the sports industry: lessons from the salomon case*, 16th Annual Conference of North American Society for sport Management, Virginia Beach, VA, USA;

Desbordes M. (2001b), « Le marketing technologique dans l'industrie du sport ou la nécessité de gérer une double complexité des produits », *Revue Gestion (Canada)*, Vol.26, N°2, PP.27-36 ;

Desbordes M. (2002a), « Empirical analysis of the Innovation Phenomena in the Sport Industry », *Technology Analysis and Strategic Management*, Vol.14, N°4, PP.481-499;

Desbordes M. (2002b), « Etudes de cas : comment manager efficacement une innovation dans l'industrie du sport ? », *Management et Conjoncture Sociale*, N°616, PP.83-89 ;

Desbordes M. (2004), « *Les spécificités du marketing du sport en France vues sous l'angle d'une revue de la littérature anglo-saxonne* », Troisième journées Normande de la consommation, colloque « société et consommation » Roen ;

Desbordes M., Ohl F. & Tribou G. (1999), *Marketing du sport*, Editions Economica, 1<sup>ère</sup> édition, Paris P.507 ;

Eisenhardt R.M. (1989), "Building Theories from Case Study Research", *Academy of Management Review*, vol. 14, N°4, PP.532-550;

Gaillard J.M. (1997), *Marketing et gestion de la recherche et développement*, Paris, Economica ;

Garcia-Fernandez, J., Bernal-Garcia, A., Fernandez-Gavira, J., & Velez-Colon, L. (2014), « Analysis of existing literature on management and marketing of the fitness centre industry », *South African journal of research in sport, physical education and recreation*, Vol. 36, N°3, PP.75-91;

Hetzel P. (2002), *Planète conso : marketing expérientiel et nouveaux univers de consommation*, les éditions d'organisation, P.300 ;

Hillairet D. (1992), *le système PISTE (Prospective et Innovation des sport à Technologie Elevée)*, Thèse de doctorat en STAPS, université Paris Sud-XI ;

Hillairet D. (1993a), « Technique et forme des objets à vocation sportive : les grandes tendances », *Design/Recherche*, N°4, PP51-69 ;

Hillairet D. (1993b), « Comment l'analyse des brevets d'invention peut-elle contribuer à définir les tendances futures des objets sportifs ? » *Revue STAPS*, N°32, PP7-18 ;

Hillairet D. (1999), *Entrepreneur pour gagner*, Paris, L'Harmattan ;

Holt D.B. (1995), « How consumers consume: a typology of consumption practices », *Journal of consumer Research*, Vol.22, PP.1-16;

Judge T. A. & Erez A. (2007), « interaction and intersection: the constellation of emotional stability and extraversion in predicting performance », *personnel psychology*, Vol.60, N°3, PP.573-596;

Kim D., & Kim S. (1995), « QUESC: An instrument for assessing the service quality of sport centers in Korea », *Journal of Sport Management*, Vol.9, N°2, PP.208-220;

Labti O. & Belkadi EZ. (2019) « comportement du consommateur en ligne : revue de la littérature », *Revue Internationale des Sciences de Gestion*, «Numéro 5; Octobre 2019/Volume 2 ; Numéro 4 », PP : 649-674 ;

Miller D. (1997), *Stratégie et marketing de l'innovation technologique*, Paris, Dunod ;

Ohl F. & Marijke T. (2008) « la consommation sportive : état de lieux », *Revue Française du Marketing*, 219 (4-5), PP. 27-46 ;

Ohl F. (1995), « Consommations sportives et interactions sociales, Sport, relations sociales et action collective », *Talence, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme d'Aquitaine*, PP.675-684 ;

Olivier, A. & Mari Court, R., (1990), *Pratique du marketing en Afrique*, Ed Paris, Edicef, Paris, P.45

Pitts B.G. & Stotlar D.K. (1996), *Fundamentals of Sport Marketing*, Fitness Information Technology Inc, Morgantown, WV, USA, 290P;

Pitts B.G. (1998), *Case studies in sport marketing*, Fitness Information Technology Inc, Morgantown, WV, USA, 182P;

Pociello C. (1981), *Sports et société : approche socio-culturelle des pratiques*, Paris Vigot ;

Pociello C. (1995), *Les cultures sportives*, Paris, PUF ;

Rouchdy M., Ahlam Q., & Mounir J., (2021), « L'économie comportementale : de l'investigation à l'analyse neuronale », *Revue Française d'Economie et de Gestion*, volume 2 ; Numéro 12, PP : 195-212 ;

Salles J.C. (1997), *Consommation d'articles de sport, modalités d'achat et groupes sociaux*, Thèse de doctorat en STAPS, université Pris Sud-XI ;

Scott R. (1996), *The business of personal training*, human kinetics;

Stotlar D.K. (2001a), *Developing successful sport sponsorship plans*, Fitness Information Technology Inc, Morgantown, WV, USA;

Tribou G. (1994), « Le marché de la remise en forme : stratégies marketing », *Revue Française de Marketing*, N°150, PP.33-42 ;

Vigarello G. (1988), *Techniques d'hier et d'aujourd'hui*, Paris, Edition EPS.