

Економічні науки

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SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE FITNESS INDUSTRY

Summary. *The article explores the development of social entrepreneurship within the fitness industry, highlighting its significance in promoting public health and encouraging an active lifestyle. Attention is given to innovative business models that integrate commercial objectives with social goals, such as supporting vulnerable groups, facilitating rehabilitation, and preventing disease. Successful instances of social fitness initiatives are analyzed, along with the challenges and prospects for their long-term sustainability. The article encourages a deeper understanding of the importance of social entrepreneurship as a significant instrument for social impact in the realm of health and wellness.*

Key words: *fitness, entrepreneurship, social sphere, system management, efficiency.*

Social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry has become increasingly relevant due to the global trend towards a healthier lifestyle and the need to address social issues related to a decrease in physical activity and increase in diseases associated with a sedentary lifestyle.

With the growing demand for affordable and efficient fitness services, social entrepreneurs have introduced innovative approaches to support various groups of people, including those who are socially vulnerable, elderly, and those with chronic conditions.

Studying this area allows us to identify successful models that combine economic benefits with a social mission, contributing not only to the

improvement of society's health but also to the creation of a sustainable business sector. Additionally, analyzing such projects helps us understand how the fitness industry can contribute to addressing large-scale social issues, including adapting to changing demographics and social conditions.

The relevance of this research is determined by the need for effective tools to improve quality of life through physical activity and the formation of sustainable and scalable mechanisms for social impact in the fitness industry.

Social entrepreneurship in this field is a relatively new area that has not been adequately explored. There are few specialized works in the academic literature that focus on integrating social goals with business models in the fitness sector.

The focus of the research is on two aspects:

- The general concept of social entrepreneurship, including its theoretical foundations and examples from various industries, where fitness is rarely mentioned.
- Healthy lifestyle and fitness as a social phenomenon, exploring the impact of physical activity on public health, without focusing on business processes or social projects with an entrepreneurial structure.

Some practical cases of social startups in the fitness industry are featured in media and business reviews, but there is still a lack of systematic academic research and comparative models. Renowned economist and social entrepreneurship researcher Gregory J. Dees emphasizes in his article, "The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship", that "social entrepreneurship involves enthusiasm for a social mission, business discipline, innovative approaches, and determination". He also points out the characteristic features of a social enterprise as an intermediary for implementing radical changes in social services.

Therefore, the level of research is at an early stage, creating an opportunity for in-depth theoretical and applied studies, especially in integrating social impact with effective business strategies in the fitness sector.

Research methods for the topic of social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry involve several key approaches. First, analyzing literature and documents allows us to explore the theoretical foundations, current business models, and regulations related to social entrepreneurship and the fitness industry. Second, a case study or analysis of specific examples of successful and unsuccessful projects helps to understand practical mechanisms for implementing social initiatives within business.

Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, provide an opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of participants' motivations and barriers, as well as the impact of projects. These methods allow us to explore the experiences and perspectives of entrepreneurs, experts, and clients in more detail.

Quantitative methods, on the other hand, such as surveys and questionnaires, help us collect statistical data about the perception and effectiveness of fitness enterprises. This data can be used to identify dependencies and the scale of impact, as well as to compare different models and initiatives.

Experimental methods and pilot projects allow us to test new approaches in the fitness industry and evaluate their economic and social impact. By combining these methods, we can gain a comprehensive understanding of social entrepreneurship in this field.

Gregory Dees, director of the Center for the Development of Social Entrepreneurship at Duke University, introduced social entrepreneurship as a profession and field of study. He emphasized that social entrepreneurship is characterized by its focus on social change and its goal of achieving results related to a mission.

Since 1998, social entrepreneurship has gained recognition from the public sector and there has been an increase in scientific interest in the field. This is due to its alignment with the ideology of information society and its rapid growth in recent decades. Experts believe that it is time to use entrepreneurial methods to solve social issues. They believe that these methods will create new behavior patterns, and social entrepreneurs play a crucial role in creating these models.

Social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry began to emerge in the late XX and early XXI centuries as a response to growing social and health challenges in society. Initially, fitness focused primarily on commercial goals, but with the rise of the concept of sustainability and social responsibility, businesses began to incorporate social initiatives into their models.

During the 1990s, the first projects aimed at supporting vulnerable populations through sports and fitness emerged, such as programs for seniors, people with disabilities, and children from low-income families. In the 2000s, social entrepreneurship in fitness became systemic with the establishment of specialized organizations and social fitness clubs that offered affordable and personalized services (see Figure 1).

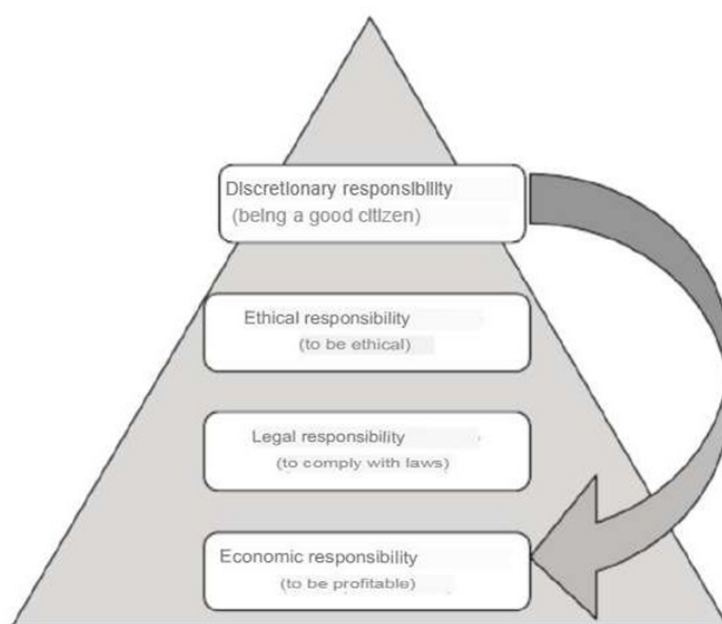


Fig. 1. Social responsibility of a business entity (corporate social responsibility) [1]

The key stage was the integration of fitness with social goals - the fight against obesity, promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and rehabilitation of marginalized groups. Social entrepreneurial practices have begun to include not only educational programs and training, but also job creation for socially vulnerable populations.

Recently, with the rise of digital technologies and increased interest in health, social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry has grown in areas such as online platforms, interactive programs, and partnerships with non-governmental organizations. Thus, the history of social entrepreneurship in fitness reflects a shift from a purely commercial approach to a more integrated model that combines business goals with social impact.

The basic principles of social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry involve several key aspects. Social entrepreneurship is a process aimed at addressing social issues through business models that balance financial viability and positive social impact. Within the fitness industry, this can be seen in the creation of products and services that contribute to the health and well-being of different population groups.

The core element of social entrepreneurship is the social purpose, which goes beyond profit and focuses on achieving social outcomes such as increased physical activity, improved mental health, and integration of vulnerable populations.

A social fitness business typically targets elderly individuals, people with disabilities, those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, and children from underprivileged families who may face challenges accessing quality fitness services.

Business sustainability is an essential aspect, and social programs should run smoothly without constant reliance on external funding. Innovative

strategies include personalized training, digital solutions, rehabilitation programs, and customized customer engagement.

The social impact of our initiatives is assessed by measuring changes in participants' health, activity levels, and quality of life. We work closely with government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other stakeholders to expand opportunities and enhance the effectiveness of our social initiatives in the fitness industry.

Our partnerships with these organizations allow us to create innovative programs that address the needs of diverse population groups, including vulnerable communities such as the elderly, people with disabilities, and those from low-income backgrounds. Through these programs, we aim to promote healthy lifestyles and improve the physical and mental well-being of these individuals.

Social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry has been growing rapidly, reflecting a global trend towards a more responsible and inclusive business model. The focus is on integrating social missions with commercial models to create sustainable and impactful initiatives that benefit society as a whole.

Technological innovations such as mobile apps and online training platforms are significantly expanding the reach of services and making them more accessible. These technologies are also helping social entrepreneurs to collaborate with government organizations and non-profit groups to attract resources and enhance the effectiveness of their programs.

The financial sustainability of these projects is ensured through a combination of income sources, including paid services, grants, and donations. At the same time, a growing emphasis is placed on measuring the social impact of these initiatives through specific indicators, such as improved physical health, increased motivation for a healthier lifestyle, and greater social inclusion for clients.

Thus, social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry is currently characterized by innovation, sustainability, and a focus on making significant social changes while maintaining economic efficiency. However, there are challenges in this field.

One of the main problems is financial difficulty, as social projects in the fitness industry often lack investment and rely on grants and donations. Balancing the social mission of providing services to vulnerable groups with the need for commercial viability is a significant challenge. Additionally, the low level of awareness and trust in social entrepreneurship in this field makes it difficult to attract customers and partners (Table 1).

Table 1

The main motives of social entrepreneurs [3]

Level	Entrepreneur's motives
First	Work for the benefit of society and the desire to make others happy. Personal interest in entrepreneurship and the desire to create new projects using innovative technologies.
Second	The desire to meet, first, the needs of society by creating additional jobs, addressing social issues, implementing innovations, and ultimately generating profit.
Third	Self-realization, assistance to society, charity organization, focus on results, and proximity to social problems.
Fourth	Altruism, passion for doing business, desire to make a meaningful contribution to society, creation of innovations and volunteering.

There is also a lack of infrastructure: adapted playgrounds, specialized equipment, and trained professionals for working with specific target groups are not always readily available. Regulatory obstacles related to an unclear legislative framework make it difficult to register, report, and receive benefits.

Additionally, scaling up these projects requires significant financial investment and carries the risk of compromising the quality of services or social focus. All of these challenges require a holistic approach, including government support and the involvement of investors.

In our opinion, there are several ways to solve the challenges of social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry. First, we need to attract a variety of financing sources, such as investments, government grants, and crowdfunding. We also need to create mixed income models that combine paid and free programs for different population groups.

Secondly, it's important to develop a balanced strategy that harmoniously combines the social mission with economic efficiency. This can be achieved through training entrepreneurs in modern management and marketing techniques. By combining these approaches, we can create a more sustainable and successful social enterprise in the fitness sector.

The third aspect is to raise public awareness through information campaigns, partnerships with public organizations, and active media presence. This helps build trust in social fitness projects and creates a positive image of the industry.

The fourth area is the development of infrastructure and human resources. Investments in specialized equipment and the training of trainers are essential to working with various groups of clients, including those with disabilities.

In addition, government support is essential in the form of simplified regulatory procedures, tax incentives, and the creation of a supportive legal framework. Furthermore, it is crucial to establish quality standards and monitoring systems for scaling up projects without compromising efficiency or social focus. The comprehensive implementation of these measures would help make social entrepreneurship in fitness more sustainable and accessible to a broader range of individuals.

Therefore, social entrepreneurship within the fitness industry represents a valuable tool for addressing significant social issues, such as enhancing public health, including socially disadvantaged groups, and fostering an active lifestyle.

By combining commercial goals with a social mission, these projects contribute to the development of sustainable and affordable fitness models. To achieve success, however, an integrated approach is required, including attracting funding, government support, professional development, and active engagement with society. This can lead to social entrepreneurship in the fitness industry becoming an important driver for positive change, creating more opportunities for high quality, inclusive fitness in modern times.

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