
The Peculiarities Of Fitness Culture And Health In Pakistan

Introduction

The society of Pakistan is rapidly inclining towards fitness and health in the past few years. Fitness is a state of being physically healthy, active and particularly performing in physical exercises, sports, work and daily activities. The fitness industry of Pakistan has not been damaged by political instability or recession but, is growing instead, according to a study conducted by the BBC (The Express Tribune – 2011). The western media has played an essential role in this cultural change. It has influenced the society to an extent where this culture is part of our lives.

Through the mass media, the western culture has spread its roots all over the world, which is also known as Americanization. Historically it has been debated that American media power has an impact upon cross cultural influences (D Biltereyst – 2002). The American content, trends and culture is promoted on the mass media all around the globe and it leaves its mark wherever it is witnessed. Over the years, Pakistan has developed cultural behavior change in many aspects and trends. Even a behavior change in Family planning has been influenced by cultural and social factors from the west (S Agha – 2010).

One aspect of this influence is fitness. The western media has emphasized on fitness in such a manner that it has spread all over the world as a trend and cultural change. The American media has made looks and body ideals because of which the people adopt fitness and health measures (CS Warren – 2013). Started off in the US, this culture managed to make its way in Pakistan and, it's spreading vastly. People are concerned about their health and fitness with a motive of an ideal body image.

Rationale

Just a few years back, this culture was close to non-existence. People who were into fitness or health concerns were a minority. Nowadays, people take necessary steps to achieve fitness. To achieve fitness, we need to know how it is done and what steps are compulsory. A well-balanced diet, "Intensity, duration and frequency of exercise" (WL Haskell, HJ Montoye, D Orenstein – 1985). These measures are observed in the lives of the Pakistani society and not only do these people keep it to themselves but motivate and encourage others to adopt this culture. CrossFit, an intense American workout developed in 2000 by Greg Glassman and Lauren Jenai, in Santa Cruz, California, which aims to ensure physical and psychological fitness (G Glassman – 2007).

In Pakistan, the CrossFit trend spread abruptly and swiftly. In almost every new and existing gym, CrossFit area is available. CrossFit has influenced many people to perform various sports and workouts in a designated area in order to achieve fitness (M Ruuskanen – 2017). The western media played a significant role in this process, through different mediums, especially social media. It promoted this culture in a way which seemed attractive and necessary for a healthy lifestyle. CrossFit created and developed a community through their website, visuals and the social media. "CrossFit culture has become a tour-de-force in the health and fitness

industry over recent years, where individuals come together from all walks of life to connect to others through a health and fitness-centric focused community” (MK DeChristopher – 2019).

Moreover, the trend of Boxing, MMA and UFC can also be observed in Pakistan. Dedicated gyms and training centers have opened and more are on the way because people are showing interest and the numbers are increasing day by day. This trend is not just being adopted by the male community but also females are stepping forward and participating in this. Boxing was always considered as a sport for men but there is a rapid rise in the participation of women and girls from low income countries such as Pakistan (P Schneider – 2016). This can be linked with Women Empowerment and equal rights which also came from the western media and, is growing here immensely.

The Western Media consists of many strong mediums which have created a great influence amongst the population of the world. For instance, Hollywood Films and TV shows are watched and appreciated all around the world and are considered very impactful and impressionable. A national cultural policies discussion indicates that film policy helps in the success of national films but does not allow them to go against US dominance (D Crane – 2014). Another medium of influence and culture spread can be stated as the social media. People all over the world follow Hollywood celebrities, models, pages and blogs. Famous movie star and former wrestler Dwayne ‘The Rock’ Johnson is known to be a fitness enthusiast who promotes and motivates individuals to develop an interest for fitness. Almost every celebrity nowadays is into fitness. Not just in the US but even celebrities of Pakistan. This motivates the Pakistani society to indulge into this trend which came from the western media. The social media is a source of awareness which has portrayed fitness in a way which cannot be ignored.

Analysis

Keeping all these factors in mind, it can be observed that the western media has come a long way to create an influence on the world to spread its culture and bring about a change in cultural behavior of others. Moreover, many theories fit in this situation. The Accumulation theory, which shows how the mass media focused on this existing situation in a consistent way and the public started becoming aware of this fitness trend. More and more information is being provided by the mass media which is changing behaviors, beliefs and attitudes of the general public and with time, individuals change to accumulate and become new forms of orientation.

Another theory known as the Adoption theory fits in well with this situation. It consists of five stages. The awareness stage, in which people got to know about the fitness culture through western media. Interest stage, in which people started developing an interest for fitness from the provided information. Evaluation stage where individuals use the information to analyze the importance of fitness in their lives. Then comes the Trail stage in which the individual motivates him/herself to start working on fitness. Lastly, the Adoption stage. By this stage, the individual has adopted the fitness trend on a continuous full scale.

The Modelling theory also fits to an extent, in this situation. The theory focuses on individuals who think that this specific behavior is appealing and worth imitating. This theory also consists of five stages, similar to the Adoption theory. Observation, where an individual observes an action performed by a model or celebrity. Identification, in which the individual identifies as the model and relates to them. Imitation stage where the individual reenacts and gets encouraged.

The Reproduction stage where the individual is rewarded by reproducing the activity. The last stage is Adoption. In this, the positive impact increases the probability of the individual to repeat the activity.

These theories help analyze the boom faced by the fitness industry in Pakistan which is created by the influence of western media. The Accumulation and Adoption theories refer to the mass media and especially social media which has changed this cultural behavior by portraying fitness in an interesting, attractive and healthy activity. On the other hand, the Modelling theory refers to the models and celebrities who use the mass media as a stage and a channel of communication to motivate the people into adopting and imitating trends and cultures. The people who follow US celebrities and models are highly influenced by them and adopt the trends and cultures they promote. Fitness being one of them, is a highly practiced, commonly followed and somewhat compulsory for the celebrities and models, motivates people all over the globe and this has been witnessed to grow in Pakistan.

Conclusion

In light of these critical analysis, it is quite evident that the fitness culture has been adopted by the society on a large scale and the reason behind this cultural behavior change is the western media. The western media has influenced and made a huge impact on the whole world, including Pakistan, through the international news networks, social media, films and television. These mediums made the people of Pakistan aware about fitness and provided all the necessary information such as, the pros and cons, the benefits of health, body image and ideals and created a perception of fitness as a necessity and self-satisfaction.

This has attracted, motivated and interested the society of Pakistan to adopt this culture of fitness, take the steps necessary to achieve fitness and make it a part of their lives. The people made fitness a daily life activity in order to achieve the desired outcome of a perfect body image, to enhance themselves and build a healthy lifestyle. All credit goes to the western media for bringing about a change in the cultural behavior, not only in Pakistan but all over the world.