



# **A Brief Review of Fitness Clubs, Personal Trainers and Fitness Education Providers in Hong Kong**

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## **Introduction**

A variety of physical activities for all adults including healthy individuals, deconditioned people or people with chronic diseases have been recommended by American College of Sports Medicine (American College of Sports Medicine [ACSM], 2010). A recent review conducted by Hui (2004) demonstrated the poor participation in physical activities for people in Hong Kong. Specifically, 40.2% of Hong Kong population were only somewhat active and 36.1% were not active at all (Hui, 2004).

To achieve an active lifestyle, apart from taking part in sport activities such as soccer, basketball, badminton, tennis and swimming, physical conditioning in large scale franchised fitness centers, or in small scale fitness room in residential clubs or fitness studios are alternatives for Hong Kong people. However, in Hong Kong, there are limited published information regarding the growth of the fitness industry such as the number of fitness clubs, club exercise facilities, staff distribution, the percentage of fitness club providing personal fitness training service as well as the education background of personal trainers, unlike in United States (US) that comprehensive profiles of the fitness industry is published by International Health, Racquet & Sportclub Association (IHRSA) every year.

The aim of the present paper was to summarize the information of fitness clubs, personal trainers and relevant education providers in Hong Kong.

Furthermore, the situation of Hong Kong was compared with that of Beijing and Shanghai. To better address on the scope of fitness, the 'fitness club' in the present paper refers to 'an organization that benefits from providing fitness services to the public. It should provide a good environment, professional facilities and trainers who are able to provide scientifically-based instructions to enhance a client's physical health through sports and fitness.' (Asian Academy for Sports & Fitness Professionals [AASFP], 2008).

## **Fitness Clubs in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai**

The comparison of the total numbers and growth rates of fitness clubs of Hong Kong with other countries was demonstrated in Table 1 (AASFP, 2009; 2010; 2011; IHRSA, 2009; 2010; 2011). Both United States and United Kingdom had a steady growth of fitness industry while different Asia-Pacific regions still showed a positive and continuous growth in the recent years. This indicated a large room of potential development in fitness industry in the Asia-Pacific region especially China. To further compare the situation of Hong Kong with other cities in China, Beijing and Shanghai were selected.

**Table 1**

*The number of fitness clubs and growth rate in Hong Kong, China, South Korea, United States and United Kingdom from 2009 to 2011*

	Number of fitness clubs			Growth rate from 2009 to 2011
	2009	2010	2011	
Hong Kong	548	573	600	+9.5%
China	2959	3245	3234	+9.3%
South Korea	6396	6396	6800	+6.3%
United States	30022	29750	29890	-0.4%
United Kingdom	5755	5795	5885	+1.9%

Hong Kong was ranked number one in terms of the number of fitness clubs from 2008 to 2011 in over 60 cities in China (AASFP, 2008; 2009; 2010; 2011) while Beijing and Shanghai ranked second and third, respectively. Both Beijing and Shanghai have demonstrated a positive but unsteady growth from 2008 to 2011 and these two cities have demonstrated a considerable amount of potentials in developing the fitness industry as the number of fitness clubs were still low in comparing to Hong Kong such a small city in China (Figure 1 and Table 2).