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## [Hey Bric Spender] Low-cost treadmills for Brazilian joggers

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Brazil is often seen as an image-conscious country whose residents are willing spend lots of time and money to make themselves look toned and beautiful.

Stereotypes are always exaggerated, but in this case a look at the number of fitness gyms confirms that there is definitely something to it. And gyms' traditional status as havens for the moneyed elite may be about to change.

Brazil has 15,521 health clubs, the second highest number in the world behind only the US. The number has doubled since 2007. And Brazil's 4.6m members generated \$1.1bn last year, according to the [International Health, Racquet & Sportsclub Association \(IHRSA\)](#).

But for the average Brazilian - and for the less-than-wealthy foreigner - these gyms are an expensive affair. The membership rates of one company, [A!BodyTech](#), usually start at R\$300 (\$170) per month.

That - and the obvious attractions of sunshine - goes some way to explaining why Brazilians exercise outdoors where they can.

In Rio de Janeiro, the capital of body-conscious aestheticism, joggers on the seafront Avenida Atlantica can even make pit stops at steel frames set up by the local government for doing pull ups and other contortions.

But as millions of Brazilians rise out of poverty, health clubs are expanding downmarket and want to lure the growing lower middle class into their work out rooms.

"In the next 10 years, we will be a major country in the area of physical activity, health, and well-being," said Waldyr Soares of Fitness Brasil, the local chapter of IHRSA. "The segment that is going to grow the most is that of low-cost fitness studios, thanks to the rise of classes C and D [the lower middle classes]."



[A!BodyTech](#) will be launching a new brand, Formula Express, under which monthly membership will cost R\$120 (\$68). That still looks pretty high, even by US or European standards, but the idea is to attract members of 'Class C', which now makes up almost half of Brazil's population, and whose family monthly income ranges from around R\$1,100 to R\$4,800.

Another company, [Bio Ritmo](#), based in São Paulo, is going lower still. They will launch the Smart Fit brand, with monthly prices of R\$90. The plan is to open showcases in the centre of cities and begin to expand towards the periphery, said Soares.

Across the Brazilian economy, companies are paying more and more attention to the rapidly growing lower middle class - especially Class C - and the others ways they can spend money on looking good.

One recent study by Exame magazine showed that when moving up from 'Class D' to C, Brazilians increase spending on hygiene and personal products by 129 per cent, compared to only 68 per cent for food, drinks and cigarettes and 86 per cent for electronics and furniture.

Fitness benefits aside, whether the lower middle classes will pay for gyms too will show how much value they place on the kudos of trading up to an elite playground.

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