

“I.T. is the Key”: Hong Kong As a Distinctive Cruise Hub

As a place of lively blend of Chinese and Western culture, Hong Kong is certainly one of the top choices in Asia for travelers around the world. However, other thriving cities like Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Shanghai threaten to muscle in on the tourism business in Hong Kong.

To reverse the situation, one of the best solutions, without a doubt, is to develop Hong Kong into a distinctive, unique cruise hub since most tourists from cruises are big spenders with deep pockets. With effective infrastructure, cultural diversity and most important of all, a foremost deep water harbor in Asia, Hong Kong definitely has lots of potential to attract cruises all over the world. And it is also my belief that these attractions should all be made accessible to the world through the use of information technology.

Let's begin with the current existing situation in Hong Kong. Most cruise-ship visitors who make their way here are concentrated in urban, bustling districts of Hong Kong. They are missing out on a lot as few tourists have the opportunity to catch a glimpse of the natural, quiet side of Hong Kong. Therefore, I think that the Hong Kong tourism board can add some green element to the itinerary of cruise passengers.

After the long, monotonous days and weeks of staring at the same old sea and jumping into chlorine-filled swimming pools on deck, tourists coming off of a cruise would surely want something natural and refreshing, yet invigorating. There is no better way to introduce them to Hong Kong than by taking them to view the unique rock formations and ancient, much-loved temples set alongside the shores of friendly, remote places like Kau Sai Chau and Sai Kung.

Another place that could be developed into a hot spot for passengers on cruises is Cheung Chau. Brimming with unspoiled, unique traditional Chinese culture, Cheung Chau has many attractions like the famous Cheung Po Tsai Cave, the Tin Hau Temple and the Beitao Pavilion, which offers enviably stunning views of Hong Kong. The island itself is small in size, making it easier for tourists to travel around the whole of it.

Those who love to experience the vibrant liveliness in Hong Kong can go touring and adventuring at the urban heart of the city. Presently, tourists mainly visit Tsim Sha Tsui as it offers pulsating shopping districts and colonial architecture. However, I think that the tourism board should develop tourism in other places like Wan Chai and Causeway Bay in order to spread out the number of tourists in one place. The crooked market in Wan Chai has a unique array of goods, ranging from plastic trinkets to Chinese dry scallops.

For foodies around the globe, I suggest the tourism board develop a modern, local market place near the Ocean Terminal so that tourists can taste traditional Hong Kong food like curry fish balls and take-away dim sum easily. One of the characteristics of cruise tourists is that there may already be a large variety of food on the cruise ship. Would it not be better if the food sold at the market is distinctive Hong Kong snacks like grid cakes, yuan yang, and eggettes, and Hong Kong style roasted duck. This will surely be a delightful surprise for food lovers! It will be something visitors will regale upon when they arrive back home!

There are many ways of actually developing Hong Kong into a popular cruise hub. But I think the key to success is communication. As technology becomes a necessary, vital part in everyone's life, a blog can be set up in a centre right next to the docking pier, so that cruise tourists can world share their personal experiences and stories with friends and people all over the instantly. A net café could fit this purpose, so that with just a click, tourists can upload photos and post

traveling diary to the web. Both young and old alike could write about their wonderful day in Hong Kong, thus getting details out to the rest of the world in an instant!

Famous Asian and international celebrities could be invited to tour Hong Kong and share their travel experiences with their fans on another blog called, "I Love Hong Kong Celeb Blog". This would certainly act to promote Hong Kong as a cruise hub as fans around the world often keep track on their favourite star's traveling post.

Furthermore, I think that all students and schools in Hong Kong should be involved in promoting Hong Kong as a cruise hub. Students and youngsters could share their favourite restaurants with visitors around the world on a blog that could be called "Rice is Nice Blog". Since tourists from cruises usually have a limited period of time to tour Hong Kong, they could refer to the blog to try out some of the best places to chow down or grab a quick drink out with their new-found friends on the ship.

Competitions could be held in order to absorb more new, innovative technologically-enhanced ideas from local students on how to develop Hong Kong as a cruise hub. Since the future of Hong Kong tourism and Hong Kong's economic success lies in the hands of the younger generation, students could have the chance to get involved in the development of Hong Kong tourism directly instead of putting every single decision in the hands of adults.

On weekends, student volunteers called "Young Tourist Ambassadors" could even lead local tours for cruise passengers. The genuine excitement a youngster brings to such an activity would be enticing and contagious. This might also work to expose young people to the local tourism industry, as well as enhance their skills of communication and exposure to other cultures. Everyone wins! Ultimately, tourists would have the luxury of exploring the city with a local guide. This would save them time as their guide would introduce them to some of the top, extraordinary places in Hong Kong. The students could then, in turn, write about their experiences on a blog called 'My Experiences as a Tour Guide' so that everyone could read about them from a totally refreshing, angle.

In addition, the Hong Kong tourism could provide an app that could introduce the best shopping and hiking destinations in Hong Kong as well as providing an interactive, 3D map of every district. This would help cruise-ship tourists to tour around Hong Kong, with an accessible informative 'guide' of sorts, thus ensuring they not waste a precious moment getting lost in the concrete jungle of tall buildings and alleyways.

As a place where East mixes with West, Hong Kong is a place of intrigue and excitement. We all know it. And now cruise passengers can too! There are lots of attractions like the Big Buddha, Ocean Park, the cluttered tiny shops, the amazing food, as well as the convenient transportation system which includes the MTR, the star ferry and the double-decker tram. There is a little something for everyone. Nature lovers, shopping lovers and food lovers can surely enjoy the best of what Hong Kong, and the people here, both young and alike, have to offer.

In conclusion, the main area that can be further developed to bring in cruise passengers and their spending power is communication. As mentioned, blogs promoting Hong Kong is ideal for introducing the city to the world. Cruise passengers can make instant observations, comparing their experiences in different places and help promote Hong Kong to friends and strangers on the other side of the globe. Making good use of technology is definitely an efficient, quick way to attract tourists and at the same time, develop Hong Kong into a distinctive cruise hub! Cruise passengers no longer have to wait till they get home to regale friends on their wonderful experiences in Hong Kong. They can do so instantly through the use of technology!