

How to develop Hong Kong into a distinctive cruise hub

In the past few years, more and more tourists traveled to or through Hong Kong by cruises. Nowadays, ship tours have become more acceptable and affordable by many people all over the world, thus traveling by cruises is more common and most often, people consider it as an alternative and more relaxed form of vacation.

As the number of ship tours is on the rise, Hong Kong, being one of the world's famous harbor, is inevitably facing pressures to resolve and to cope with the ever increasing demand of berths as a result.

In Hong Kong, we have our limitations though. The Ocean Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui, is currently the only usable berth to handle all the sea traffics into and out of Hong Kong. Some cruises sometimes have to berth at the Container Terminal in Kwai Chung or even at mid-stream. It is obvious that the Ocean Terminal should not have further capacity to help alleviating the problem. In order to capture this growth and to make Hong Kong a successful regional cruise hub, our HKSAR government has been looking for a better site so that more berths can be built. Otherwise Hong Kong is going to miss a lot of precious business opportunities in the future.

As HKSAR government is committed to strengthen Hong Kong's position as a leading cruise hub in the Asia-Pacific region, the first and the foremost task on the development plan is "where" – that is an ideal location or site for building our cruise terminal. The HKSAR government has already proposed to build it at the former Kai Tak Airport. I cannot agree less to this proposal as this site has left idle for years and its geographical location seems to be the best one we can find in Hong Kong at the moment. First of all, geographically, it is situated in Kowloon City, a central part of Kowloon, the existing transportation network is rather convenient, and there are many shops and malls nearby for tourists to walk around. Secondly, making use of the runway is indeed very space-saving as it has remained desolated since the airport had moved to Chek Lap Kok. Thirdly, the open space of the abandoned airport is very large and it can contain a lot more berths than that of the Ocean Terminal.

Next we should start to plan for the logistics and infrastructure of this new terminal. First of all, when tourists disembark, the first thing they need to do is to complete immigration check-in, customs clearance and quarantines. In order to complete these procedures hassles-free to the tourists, immigration terminals must be built there to facilitate check-in and all other entry procedures as required. My innovative idea here is to build a long mobile sidewalk along the airport runway. What the tourists need to do is to land on the mobile sidewalk immediately after disembarking, all servicing counters located by the sidewalk are positioned according to the logistics of immigration, customs, baggage claims and then all connected transport to Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, New Territories, all outlying islands and even for entry to Mainland China and Macau. If tourists are just stopping over Hong Kong, they can be connected by all sorts of traffic to the Chap Lap Kok Airport. The usage of this mobile sidewalk is particularly helpful in guiding all tourists to reach for their destinations.

On the infrastructures side, hotels should be built nearby for those who travel to Hong Kong by cruise but plan to stay behind. In case of any delays which make tourists detained, the hotels can also be a place for them to stay instead of lingering in the terminal. Being known as a shopping paradise, a mega mall should be built for those tourists who do not want to travel out of the hub, and they can still shop crazily without further arrangement on transportation.

Furthermore, as Hong Kong is being named as ‘Pearl of the Orient’, it is famous for her fabulous night scenery across the Victoria Harbor. I will suggest building a helicopter landing field there. This can provide those tourists the facility to enjoy the scenery of Hong Kong on helicopters. For those who do not prefer helicopters, they can go to the rooftop where a Panorama Lookout is built, enabling them to admire the beauty of Hong Kong’s scenery in a cheaper way.

Nowadays, the people taking a cruise to Hong Kong are mostly tourists, for leisure means, and we had to explore the potential market. In order to do so, we need more facilities and services that are suitable for different people and their needs. For instance, the cruise terminal is indeed a very suitable place for building a “East meets West” medical centre. Our medical professionals and state of the art equipments can join force with our traditional Chinese herbal medication and therapy experts to provide unique and world-class services to our visitors. As a result, more and more people will be taking a cruise to Hong Kong and we have moved a big step towards the goal of expanding the potential market.

In order to attract more cruises to berth at this cruise terminal, the HKSAR government can develop more ship repair and maintenance facilities, so that more ships will arrive. But the government had to guarantee a high quality of service at an inexpensive price.

If such a cruise terminal is developed, undoubtedly, more and more cruises will be attracted to berth at Hong Kong and she will be the regional leading cruise hub, with a fast-growing cruise market and economy.