

3. Seeing is Believing: Strategic Engagement of Global Influencers to Amplify Hong Kong's Appeal



"Seeing is Believing" forms the cornerstone of our strategic approach to showcase Hong Kong's authentic appeal and diverse tourism offerings. To effectively communicate Hong Kong's current dynamism and latest attractions, HKTB has brought over 3,000 selected influential figures from key global markets for immersive, firsthand experiences. This involves crafting bespoke, themed itineraries tailored to each influencer's unique interests and audience demographics, designed to generate authentic, positive narratives and leverage their extensive reach. By harnessing the significant influence of tourism industry leaders, media personalities, celebrities, and social media influencers across various platforms, we aim to amplify Hong Kong's timeless charm and contemporary allure. This influencer-driven strategy not only showcases Hong Kong's multifaceted appeal but also aligns with evolving travel trends and consumer preferences, ultimately driving sustainable tourism growth and reinforcing Hong Kong's position as a premier global destination.

A. International Celebrities' Hong Kong Highlights Tour: Heartfelt Recommendations to Global Fans



Leveraging the star effect can exponentially increase Hong Kong's exposure on the international stage. In 2023, HKTB invited renowned Hollywood actor Henry Golding, star of *Crazy Rich Asians*, popular Japanese actor Takeru Satoh, South Korean heartthrob Jung Hae-in, and Japanese entertainer Shingo Fujimori to Hong Kong. These celebrities filmed travelogue segments, experiencing Hong Kong's diverse offerings from a first-person perspective. Henry Golding, in particular, explored a variety of locations including the Tin Hau Temple in Yau Ma Tei, a traditional Shanghai-style barbershop in Mong Kok, the historic Central district, and a Michelin-starred restaurant at Tai Kwun. The unique blend of Eastern and Western experiences left a lasting impression on him, prompting enthusiastic recommendations to his global fanbase.

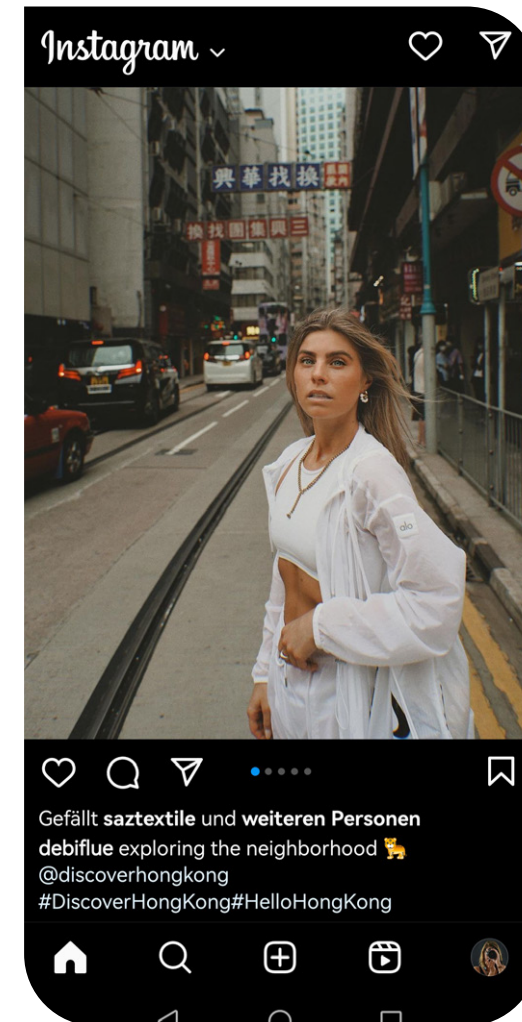
HKTB also invited popular Malaysian actress Lin Min-chen to collaborate on a short film series on her choice of authentic local experiences. She visited iconic Hong Kong-style "cha chaan teng" and "dai pai dongs" to savour authentic local cuisine, and enjoyed singing at Temple Street's karaoke parlors. Min Chen described her experiences as reminiscent of being in a nostalgic Hong Kong film set.

By leveraging these celebrities' personal experiences shared across their social media platforms, coupled with HKTB's promotional efforts and extensive media coverage, we successfully captured the attention of global fans and potential visitors, focusing their interest on Hong Kong.

Social Media Influencers Recommend Hong Kong in Showcasing Diverse Appeal Across Boundaries

The impact of social media continues to grow, with an increasing number of visitors choosing destinations and planning itineraries based on online recommendations. Recognising this trend, HKTb invited over 350 influencers from the Mainland, South Korea, Japan, Southeast Asia, India, Europe and the Americas to experience Hong Kong firsthand in 2023. This initiative aimed to promote Hong Kong's tourism appeal to a broader audience of potential visitors.

Recognising the trend among Mainland visitors for authentic, in-depth experiences, HKTb collaborated with the Xiaohongshu platform in May 2023 to launch a social media partnership by inviting 88 influential KOLs with substantial followings to experience tailored itineraries designed to appeal to young Mainland visitors. These itineraries, covering themes including arts and culture, outdoor experiences, family activities, food and wine, and trendy shopping, allowed influencers to discover Hong Kong's unique activities and innovative tourism offerings. After the visits, the influencers shared their experiences through various engaging formats on social media, including "check-in" tutorials, travel guides, and real-time updates. Leveraging the influencers' social media reach, the campaign achieved over 32 million impressions across platforms like Xiaohongshu and WeChat, effectively positioning Hong Kong as an exciting, multifaceted destination for the new generation of visitors.



In emerging markets, HKTb invited 7 Indian KOLs with a combined social media following of approximately 4 million to visit Hong Kong in June 2023. Their itineraries covered diverse aspects including cuisine, culture, art, nature and events. These influencers published over 200 posts, attracting more than 7 million views and generating inquiries from the travel industry, successfully stimulating interest in Hong Kong tourism within the Indian market. In long-haul markets, German influencer Debi Flügge, who boasts over 700,000 followers, was invited to experience Hong Kong in May 2023. She shared her Hong Kong journey on Instagram, introducing both new and classic attractions such as the West Kowloon Cultural District, Hollywood Road, and Victoria Harbour. Notably, she also showcased Hong Kong's vegan culinary offerings to her followers. Her posts reached 2.5 million users.



HKTb also collaborated with Mainland video platform Bilibili to organise a themed content creation campaign named targeting young travellers. 13 content creators were invited to Hong Kong to visit classic movie and TV shooting locations and famous landmarks, resulting in 21 videos that garnered approximately 60 million social media impressions and views. As GBA's "one-hour living circle" continues to take shape, HKTb invited 25 influencers from the region to regularly visit Hong Kong, introducing festive events, shopping experiences, and culinary delights. This initiative aims to increase the frequency of visits and spending by GBA visitors. These collaborations, alongside the Xiaohongshu campaign, demonstrate HKTb's strategic use of social media influencers to showcase Hong Kong's diverse attractions, effectively reaching millions of potential visitors across various platforms and positioning the city as an exciting, multifaceted destination for the new generation of travellers.

HKTb's collaborations with influencers in overseas markets has also yielded significant results. In October 2023, HKTb invited over 60 Southeast Asian influencers to visit Hong Kong. These influencers subsequently published more than 1,200 social media posts, reaching over 50 million impressions online.



Renowned Chefs and Influencers Explore Hong Kong's Culinary Landscape



Hong Kong's reputation as a "City of Gastronomy" is well-established, with its unique fusion of Eastern and Western cuisines and diverse culinary experiences attracting visitors from around the world. Leveraging this gastronomic advantage, HKTb continues to promote Hong Kong's food culture globally, inviting travellers to "Taste to Believe" and savour Hong Kong's flavours firsthand.

In June 2023, HKTb invited 6 internationally acclaimed top chefs from Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, Australia, and the United States to experience and taste Hong Kong's diverse cuisine. They were accompanied by 12 representatives from renowned international food and beverage media outlets from Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The visitors engaged in in-depth exchanges with Hong Kong's starred chefs, explored the dried seafood street in Sheung Wan, visited numerous starred restaurants and bars in the city, participated in a Hong Kong-style dim sum workshop, and sampled traditional walled village "poon choi". Through their international culinary networks and media influence, the guests helped showcase Hong Kong's unique cuisine and culture to a global audience, reinforcing Hong Kong's position as a "City of Gastronomy" and attracting visitors to embark on gastronomic journeys in the city.

Hong Kong's culinary scene has been gaining international acclaim in recent years, consistently earning accolades in prestigious global rankings such as "The World's 50 Best", "Asia's 50 Best", and the Michelin Guide. In July 2023, HKTb partnered with "Asia's 50 Best Bars", the region's most authoritative cocktail trend indicator event, to host its award ceremony in Hong Kong for the first time. This milestone event attracted over 800 of Asia's finest mixologists and industry elites to Hong Kong, celebrating the impressive achievements of the Asian bar industry while experiencing firsthand the diverse and vibrant charm of Hong Kong's mixology scene. The industry also meticulously organised a series of city-wide, limited-time events, inviting world-class bartenders to craft cocktails, showcasing Hong Kong's thriving bar scene and unique culinary appeal to a global audience.

Additionally, HKTb invited 3 British food influencers and renowned chefs, who are also "Super Hong Kong Fans" with strong connections to Hong Kong, to visit the city. Tailored culinary journeys were crafted for them, encompassing experiences from street food to fine dining. These experiences were then shared with their followers through social media platforms and media coverage, generating over 6.63 million views of videos and posts combined.



B. Inviting Global Industry Partners to Explore Hong Kong's Appeal

HKTb has consistently prioritised building strong relationships with industry partners across various source markets. Over the past year, numerous industry events were organised to continuously enhance global trade partners' understanding of Hong Kong. Additionally, HKTb arranged familiarisation trips, enabling industry professionals to personally experience diverse tourism offerings in Hong Kong. These aim to inspire partners to develop and promote a wider range of tourism products.

Attracting High-End Mainland Visitors to Hong Kong

Focusing on the Mainland market, Hong Kong's primary source market, and particularly aiming to attract more high-spending overnight visitors, HKTb organised several familiarisation trips for Mainland industry partners throughout the year. Notably, in late October 2023, a group of high-level representatives from the Mainland tourism industry visited Hong Kong. HKTb arranged for them to experience selected restaurants participating in the "Taste Around Town" promotion, an extension of the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival, providing them with premium dining experiences. Additionally, HKTb collaborated with numerous Mainland travel agencies to develop and promote various high-end tourism products and packages targeting affluent consumers.



Enhancing Muslim Industry Partners' Understanding of Hong Kong

Recognising the significant potential of the Muslim market, HKTb collaborated with a major travel agency in the United Arab Emirates to invite officials to Hong Kong in May 2023. They experienced Hong Kong's premium tourism offerings, including helicopter tours providing aerial views of the city, rich coffee culture experiences, and thrilling horse racing events. By leveraging the influence of them, HKTb aimed to generate positive word-of-mouth and attract high-end travellers from the region.

Furthermore, in September 2023, HKTb invited Muslim travel agency representatives from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia to Hong Kong. The focus was on showcasing Hong Kong's Muslim-friendly facilities and dining options, with the goal of establishing Hong Kong's image as a Muslim-friendly tourism destination.

European and American Industry Partners Experience Hong Kong's Tourism Excellence Firsthand

To swiftly attract long-haul market travellers to visit Hong Kong after reopening, the HKTb collaborated with European aviation giant Lufthansa to organise two industry familiarisation trips. In June 2023, representatives from Germany's three largest tour operator – DER Group, FTI and TUI – along with white label tour operator Neon Reisen and JournaWay, the biggest booking and comparison portal for packaged tours, Asia-specialist Asian Dreams and luxury travel agent Miller Reisen, visited Hong Kong to experience its offerings. Following this, in November 2023, executives from international cruise brands, including TUI Cruises, MSC Cruises and luxury cruise company Hapag Lloyd Cruises, conducted in-person inspections of Hong Kong. Some other industry partners targeting luxury travellers in the European markets, such as Windrose Finest Travel, and multi-airline booking platform Aerticket, also participated in the familiarisation trip, allowing Hong Kong to explore the potential of expanding the consumer base from these industry partners. Both familiarisation trips received exceptionally positive feedback from our European industry partners.

Targeting the markets of the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, HKTb organised familiarisation trips in November to ensure that industry partners from these regions had the most up-to-date understanding of Hong Kong's tourism developments. These trips showcased Hong Kong's diverse offerings, including its countryside and nature, water village ambiance, and unique horse racing culture. The visits also facilitated networking opportunities between local Hong Kong operators and their international counterparts.

Furthermore, HKTb conducted online seminars for the Australian and New Zealand travel trade. These webinars proved popular, with an average of 200 registrations per session. HKTb also held in-person events in major cities such as Auckland, Melbourne, Perth, and Sydney, enabling direct engagement with local travel agencies and key partners.



Expanding Opportunities in India

India is a key emerging market for HKTb. In April 2023, over 30 industry representatives from markets including Delhi, Mumbai, Bangalore, Pune, and Ahmedabad were invited to Hong Kong. During their visit, they experienced Hong Kong's latest attractions and authentic local culture firsthand, while also meeting with local industry stakeholders to explore business opportunities. The initiative aimed to promote Hong Kong to various segments of the Indian market, including leisure travellers, educational tour groups, and luxury family tours, with a particular focus on encouraging visits during the summer season.



MICE Industry Familiarisation: Exploring Hong Kong's Latest Tourism Resources

The Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions (MICE) sector is a crucial component of the tourism industry, attracting high-value visitors to Hong Kong. Following the full resumption of travel, the HKTb organised various familiarisation trips for about 350 MICE industry representatives, corporate clients and trade association members from the Mainland, as well as short-haul and long-haul markets. These visits showcased Hong Kong's latest MICE resources and event experiences.

Notably, HKTb hosted three tailored trips for the Mainland industry partners, highlighting the new infrastructures, business opportunities, and incentive travel experiences of Hong Kong as a "World's Meeting Place". Similar activities were arranged for key Southeast Asian MICE organisers, introducing them with Hong Kong's latest MICE developments and inviting them to participate in the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival.

In January 2024, HKTb collaborated with Indian airlines and international hotel brands to host key MICE buyers from the National Capital Territory of Delhi, India. They experienced and explored Hong Kong's potential for corporate meetings and incentive travels. HKTb successfully secured several incentive travel groups to visit Hong Kong in 2024/25, with an expected total of over 1,000 visitors.

C. Media's First-Person Perspective: Showcasing New Hong Kong Experiences

HKTB recognises the power of media influence in bringing Hong Kong's exciting travel stories to every corner of the globe. To leverage this, HKTB invited media representatives from around the world to experience Hong Kong's latest tourism offerings and diverse attractions firsthand. A total of 1,500 media professionals from about 360 global media outlets participated in these familiarisation trips. Through their reports and extensive influence, the visits aimed to showcase Hong Kong's new tourism experiences to potential visitors worldwide.



In 2023, HKTB arranged visits for representatives from 44 major national-wide media in Mainland and regional media organisations. These trips included diverse experiences such as participating in the “Asia’s 50 Best Bars” event, savouring Hong Kong’s top-tier international cuisine and wine experiences, exploring the latest MICE tourism products, and joining HKTB-organised events like the Hong Kong Wine and Dine Festival, Arts in Hong Kong promotional activities, and various festive celebrations. For instance, the cultural media outlet *COSMOPOLITAN* produced feature reports on Hong Kong’s local intangible cultural heritage and the West Kowloon Cultural District, introducing Hong Kong’s refreshing artistic ambiance to readers across Mainland. This media engagement strategy aims to showcase Hong Kong’s multifaceted appeal, from culinary excellence to cultural richness, through influential Mainland media channels.

Hong Kong remains a popular destination for visitors from Taiwan. Throughout the year, HKTB arranged visits for various media outlets and influencers. These visits showcased the new Temple Street promotion with the themes “A Taste of Temple Street” and “Captivating Street Decors”. Art and culture media representatives and influencers from Taiwan were also invited to participate in two major art events in the city: Art Basel Hong Kong and Art Central.

HKTB tailors itineraries for visiting media representatives based on travel trends in different source markets. This allows for more precise communication of Hong Kong’s tourism appeal to potential visitors in each specific market.



Recognising the importance of faith-based tourism for Southeast Asian visitors, HKTB hosted 6 Southeast Asian media outlets and 7 influencers on a Muslim-themed tour of Hong Kong in June 2023. This tour included visits to various mosques, theme parks, and Halal-certified or Muslim-friendly restaurants. Similarly, in February 2024, during the Lunar New Year period, HKTB arranged for 10 Thai media representatives to explore Hong Kong’s prayer customs and traditions. Led by a famous Thai fortune teller, the group visited renowned temples and the Wishing Tree in Lam Tsuen, Tai Po. These

targeted initiatives demonstrate the HKTB’s commitment to showcasing Hong Kong’s diverse cultural and religious offerings, effectively appealing to specific segments of the Southeast Asian market.

For outdoor-loving Western visitors, in May 2023, HKTB arranged for a reporter from the UK’s *The Independent* to explore Hong Kong’s urban areas and rural districts, sample street food, and immerse in Hong Kong’s natural beauty. In February 2024, representatives from the German Press Agency (DPA) were invited to experience “island-hopping” in Hong Kong’s outlying islands. Capitalising on Hong Kong’s vibrant spring art scene, HKTB also hosted Japanese media in March 2024, showcasing various arts and cultural activities alongside the city’s trendy bar and culinary scenes.