

GENESIS

Start from here.



illustrated by Bunnie Shen

Migrant Workers

| Porcelain

| Gun Games

Letter From the Editor

GENESIS represents the start of a new era. It marks the embrace of rapidly evolving times with new perspectives and ideas.

Not forgetting the Hong Kong roots, we explore some of the city’s oldest corners, the most enduring and classic materials used daily, and the everyday essentials that quietly hold urban life together. You’ll also find the forces reshaping the city: AI transforming human behaviour, societal issues demanding our attention, cultural phenomena that spark conversations and games that bring people together in ways you might not expect.

With the world progressing like rapid river waters, we crave stillness. GENESIS is an invitation to pause and rediscover the city through the unique birds that you can spot in our parks.

The team behind GENESIS has poured genuine care into every story here. As editor, it has been a privilege to shape this publication alongside them. We hope something in these pages sparks something in you.

– Clarisse Choo

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HONG KONG

by the NUMBERS

Hong Kong is described, more often than not, by its density. These numbers describe a city that is also vertical, edible, analog, ancient, mechanized, miniature - and quietly green.

written & illustrated by Bunnie Shen

484m



Source: Wikipedia

Tallest in HK ICC & World's 13th

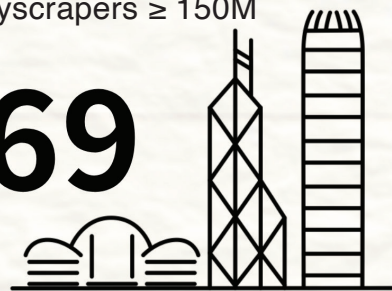
75%

Total Natural Land
Source: Wikipedia



Number of Skyscrapers $\geq 150M$

569



more than any city in the world
Source: Wikipedia

40%

Protected country park
Source: HK Gov Country Parks Brief



Octopus

15M

Daily Octopus Transactions

Source: Octopus Cards Ltd



Number of Buildings ≥ 14 floors

9000+

Source: Wikipedia



50M

Tourist Arrivals in 2025
Source: HK Tourism Board



77

Number of Michelin-Starred Restaurants since 2026

Source: Michelin Guide HK Macau 18th Edition

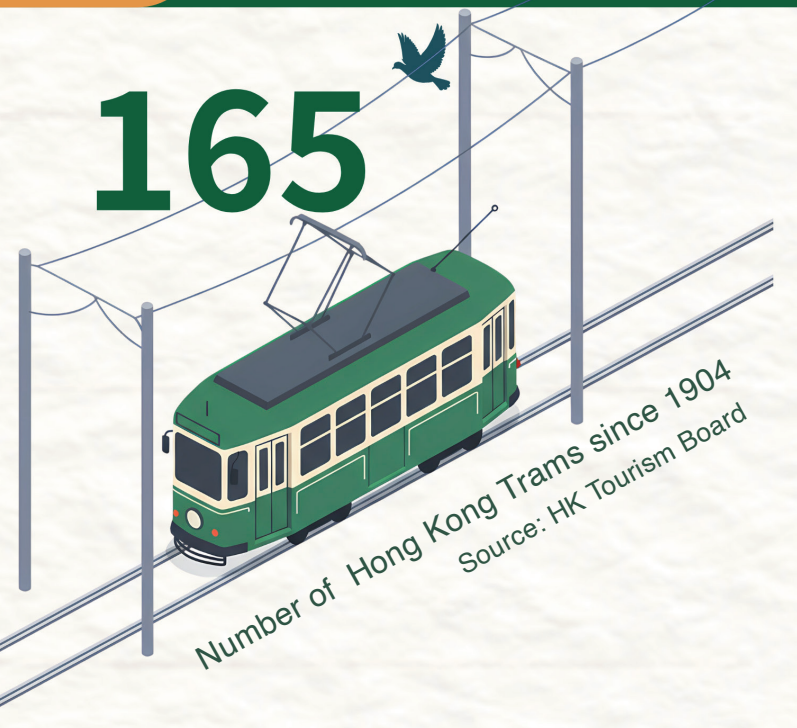


800m

World's longest outdoor escalator
Source: Guinness World Records

Central-Mid-Levels Escalator

165



Number of Hong Kong Trams since 1904
Source: HK Tourism Board

172 ft²



Median per capita living space

Source: HK Census 2021

Shot on Film

3 Cafes That Have Fed Hong Kong for Decades

written & photographed by Clarisse Choo



Cha chaan tengs are often romanticized for their frenetic energy: the shouted orders, the clatter of ceramic mugs and steel cups, the cup of hot tea to wash your utensils that is set down right after you're seated.

This rush is what most people picture, but its soul also exists in the quiet hours, when the rush fades. In a city that is constantly evolving, a handful of cafes have stood rooted in its time. This is a pilgrimage to three of them, captured through film.

Mido Café

Yau Ma Tei

Set meals from the set on screen

Established in 1950, Mido Café is iconic as one of the filming locations for Stephen Chow's beloved comedies *The Lucky Guy* (1998) and *King of Comedy* (1999).

It is a picturesque establishment that gives you the retro and rustic old Hong Kong feel that you would expect to immerse yourself in.

Situated in Yau Ma Tei, it sits within an easy reach of Mongkok, Jordan and Tsim Sha Tsui, where many iconic tourist hotspots are, making it a great spot to stop over for a meal – to experience the local fast food in an authentic cha chaan teng.

It's a historic cha chaan teng that holds fond memories for many Hongkongers. Its French toast is a popular choice, the bread sliced into two triangles, topped with butter and condensed milk makes it a comforting warm sweet treat.

Around the premises, there are several signs that read 'No Photos'. This cha chaan teng has gained a lot of internet attention for its retro aesthetics, and many tourists have visited the place for the sole purpose of getting photos for their travel logs. This can be disruptive for the business, especially during busy mealtimes.

However, during off-peak hours, the owners are happy to allow for photos as long as it's not disruptive and you make a minimum order of HKD35, paid in cash only.

The quiet hours reveal a calmer energy that such an old establishment can have as it holds decades worth of memories and service to the people of Hong Kong.

Opening Hours:

10.30am to 7.30pm. Closed on Wednesdays

How to get here:

-5-minute walk from Yau Ma Tei Station

-7-minute walk from Temple Street



Entrance to Mido Café is situated at the corner, where it gets most foot traffic is near the end of Temple Street Night Market, where many fortune tellers set up tents.



The interior of the second floor of the cafe is the most popular spot for photos as the stained glass panels and wall decor make it a perfect retro Hong Kong background.



Triangle French toast from Mido, a popular item on the menu.

Lam Yuen Restaurant

Diamond Hill
Meals that feel like home

Further out from the city, tucked in the humble residential quiet of Fu Shan Estate in Diamond Hill, Lam Yuen Restaurant has fed the neighborhood since 1978 – established the same year the public housing estate itself was built.

The bakery counter at the entrance displays pineapple buns and old Hong Kong pastries under warm light, a classic window display of most cha chaan tengs.

At non-peak hours, the hum of the city feels genuinely far away, replaced by regulars who need no menu. Apart from the lingering feeling of nostalgia, the structure and décor of the establishment make you feel what dining in the 1970s would've been like.

A key iconic feature of this cha chaan teng is their dark green cushioned seats for its booths, which date back to the golden era of bing sutts (ice rooms) from the 1950s to the 1970s, an era where cha chaan tengs were on the rise.

The staff are unhurried and greet every customer with warmth; most have aged with the restaurant and have accumulated decades of service to Fu Shan Estate and anyone else who finds their way in.

The French toast arrived thick-cut and generously filled with peanut butter, striking the right balance of savoury and sweet. In place of the condensed milk on the cha chaan teng classic, honey was offered as a topping – a subtle but welcome variation.

Lam Yuen Restaurant doesn't ask to be discovered. It has simply been here, serving the people of Fu Shan Estate, and the people who make the trip down.

Opening Hours:

6am to 10pm daily

How to get here:

- Located in Fu Shan Estate
- 16-minute walk from Diamond Hill Station, exit C2
- Nearest bus stop: Grand View Garden



Everything is within reach of this kitchen counter. As the steam from the kitchen dissipates into the air, the food is already on its way to you.



The green leather booth seats are the key feature that invokes a sense of nostalgia, it embraces the past and takes you back to the 70s.



Traditional French toast served at Lam Yuen Restaurant.

Yuen Wah Bingsat

Kwun Tong
Off the beaten path

Established in 1962, this Hong Kong Café is tucked away in Cha Kwo Ling village. A small and humble café has found its way onto the radar of those willing to make a detour.

The walk to the café, known as a bing sutt (ice rooms) in its time, takes you down a narrow alley lined with longstanding old stores. As you walk, the elderly proprietors of the surrounding shops may look up from their work as you pass. Once you arrive, it looks like a small shed from the outside; its interior sends you back to the sixties.

The menu is written on the board on the wall accompanied by many printed photos and personal memoirs of the owner's family spanning several decades.

The air is quiet, and the patrons are a mix of locals who know the owner personally and tourists who made the trip specifically for its aged aesthetics and authentic cha chaan teng food.

When you order the French toast, it comes sliced up into bite-sized pieces, a small gesture most places wouldn't bother with – it felt like an added element of care in the food he served.

The village of Cha Kwo Ling is one of the last of its kind in Kwun Tong, a district that is undergoing heavy redevelopment. Yuen Wah sits in the middle of it all, unchanged and untouched by the city's urgency.

Opening Hours:

7am to 5pm daily

How to get here:

- 12-minute walk from Lam Tin Station, exit D1
- A downhill walk from the MTR station passes the new establishments into Cha Kwo Ling Village



The interior of Yuen Wah has worn down over the years, exactly which makes it so special because it holds decades of service to the people of Cha Kwo Ling village.



A wall of personal photographs from the owner and his family that have faded with years. As most photographs are stored digitally, the printed ones are testament to the long-standing history of this bing sutt.



French toast sliced into bite-sized pieces.

Red Looks Better

How a plastic market lamp turned Red A into a Hong Kong icon

written by Andy Huang & photographed by Clarisse Choo



Fish are displayed on ice under Red A lamps at Wan Chai Market.



A vendor works beneath Red A plastic lamps at a meat stall in Causeway Bay Market.

On the fish-and-vegetable floor of Wan Chai Market, the red lamps illuminate the space. The red lights cast a warm glow across the white tiles, the foam boxes and the vendor's hands. Silver fish turn pink at the edges. A customer points, bargains, pays and leaves. The red lamp did its part in selling the fish.

Candy Chong has used the same kind of red plastic lamp for about 10 years at her fish stall. She bought it because it worked. "The ingredients look more beautiful under the lamp, and it attracts customers," said Chong.

The lamp is manufactured by Red A, a Hong Kong plastics company. These household goods have moved through markets, kitchens and crowded flats for decades. Its history shows how these everyday products became a Hong Kong icon.

Star Industrial Co., Ltd. founded Red A in 1949, when Hong Kong was rebuilding after the Chinese civil war and demand for low-cost household goods was rising. Red A became known for its plastic objects that were cheap, and durable: buckets, basins, chairs, containers, baskets, food boxes, school cases and lamps.

Hong Kong's plastic toy industry dominated the city's manufacturing in the 1950s and plastic flowers in the early 1960s, Red A found its place in the home. It imported machines from Japan and made household products that ordinary families could afford.

In the 1960s, Hong Kong households needed containers to store water, especially during the water shortage crisis that struck the city from 1963 to 1964. Government records showed that water was supplied for only four hours every fourth day.



Red household objects are displayed at Hak Dei on Shanghai Street in Mong Kok.



A stack of red plastic stools sits beside other red household goods.



Red plastic containers and buckets made by Red A sit on a shelf at Hak Dei.

At the time people were using heavy metal buckets. Red A offered a lighter alternative: red plastic buckets. The plastic buckets held water for drinking, cooking and washing.

Another significant Red A product was the school briefcase. It advertised that it could be stepped on, used as a small stool and is waterproof. It was what postwar Hong Kong consumers needed: strong, cheap, portable and ready for crowded living.

The market lamp belongs to that same family of inventions. Its shape is plain: a rounded plastic shade, hard, light and bright. But in a market, it changes the color temperature of the stall. Fish look warmer. Meat looks redder. Eggs look richer. Stall owners are able to make their products more enticing.

Red A catalogs show the lamp shade was sold by the late 1960s in red and white. The white version was rare and was used mainly by pawnshops. The red version spread through markets because it made food look more appetizing.

A functional choice became a visual symbol for old Hong Kong: red light, wet tiles, plastic baskets, handwritten price signs, vendors calling out prices. You know where you are before anyone tells you.

Red A items aren't just functional, they're also collectibles. On Shanghai Street in Mong Kok, Hak Dei, a shop that sells vintage household objects, places Red A goods on shelves of tableware. Food boxes, plastic lamps and small red objects sit among ceramics, storage boxes and old kitchenware. Here, the same material that is staple infrastructure in markets and kitchens becomes something residents and tourists alike can buy, pick up, examine and buy again.



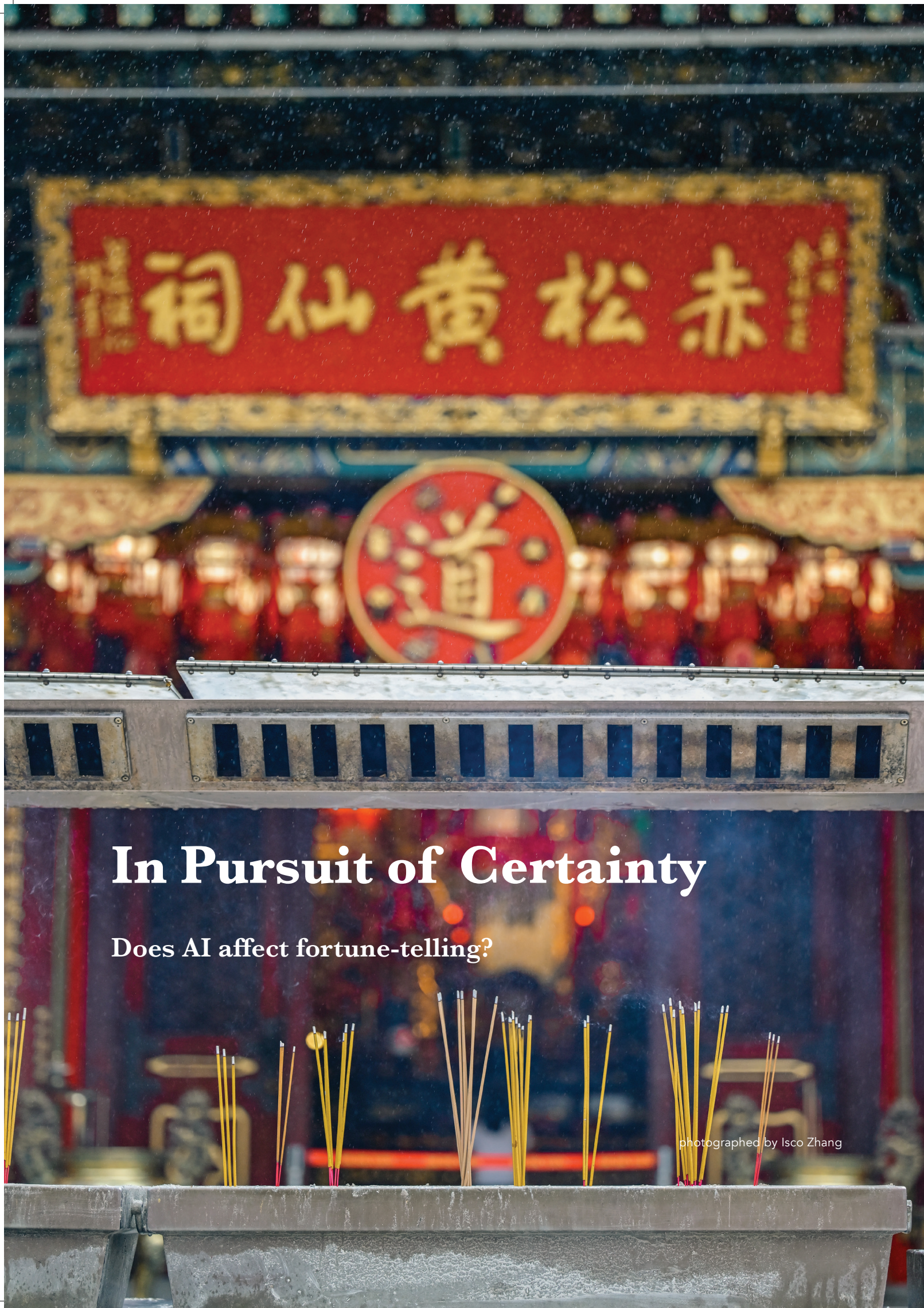
Abby Lam, who works at Hak Dei, said the appeal is broader than a youth trend for “retro” objects.

“Not only young people, many middle-aged and older customers come too,” Lam said.

Some shoppers are drawn by the memories associated with Red A objects. Others are drawn by durability, color or familiarity. Lam emphasized another reason the objects still matter: Red A is “made in Hong Kong” and is treasured for being a traditional local brand.

Red A objects were made for crowded flats, wet markets and restaurant kitchens, and that is why “made in Hong Kong” carries weight here. It names more than a place of production. It points to a time when the city made the things people touched every day.

Red A objects have become more than just plastic. The red lamps keep working. The old-school items have become a core memory. Hong Kong does not remember itself only through skylines, ferries or neon. Sometimes it is remembered through plastic.



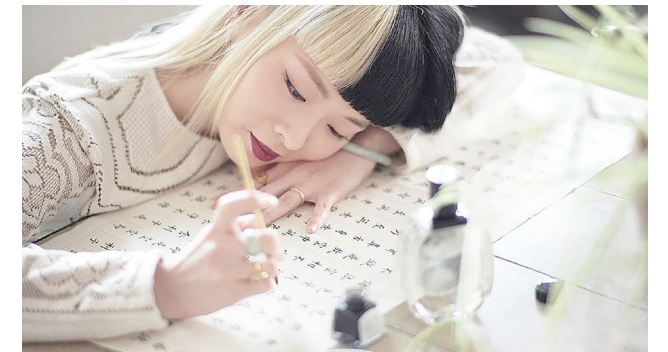
In Pursuit of Certainty

Does AI affect fortune-telling?

photographed by Isco Zhang



Lanterns light up Temple Street Night Market as a steady stream of people weaves through the stalls. (Isco Zhang)



A portrait of Thierry Chow (Provided by Thierry Chow)

As night falls and the city grows quiet, Temple Street starts to come alive. Along the path near the Tin Hau Temple, rows of red tents light up one after another. Fortune tellers take their seats, read palms, interpret tarot cards or charts for customers. The pages of tarot cards and ancient fortune-telling books are turned, and an interpretation of destiny unfolds.

Fortune-telling, Feng Shui reading, divination and tarot reading, all of these time-honored metaphysical practices remain rooted in ancient rituals in places like Temple Street or Wong Tai Sin Temple, attracting a steady stream of customers seeking guidance on love, career, and future choices. However, beyond these traditional venues and settings, many new forms are also emerging.

Modern development of fortune-telling

Thierry Chow is a second-generation Feng Shui master who entered the metaphysics industry under the influence of her father, Chow Hon Ming, a well-known traditional feng shui master. On her Instagram account, she reinterprets traditional Feng Shui concepts through modern contexts like fashion and everyday outfit, attracting over 12,000 followers. Having studied illustration and fine art at university, she said she is now seeking to integrate

her long-standing interest in art, color, and fashion into her work.

Mentioning the growing use of AI in fortune-telling and Feng Shui readings, Thierry Chow said she is open to it, as long as a balance is maintained. She also believes that AI's overall impact on the industry is positive. "It makes more people understand what Feng Shui is and learn about the basic philosophy behind it," she said.

"I do encourage clients to learn how to use AI and understand the basics of Feng Shui," she added. "But I also advise them to be cautious, as the information is not always fully up to date."

Young people's practice of fortune-telling

In a survey of 61 young people conducted for this report, 92% of respondents indicated that they had engaged in at least one form of metaphysical practice, with traditional Chinese fortune-telling, divination, and Feng Shui ranking among the most common.

However, except consulting masters in traditional hubs like Temple Street and the Wong Tai Sin Temple, the younger generation is also highly engaged in digital fortune-telling, using AI tools or divination apps for metaphysics practices.

Fortune Telling

Emily Wang, a 28-year-old student from Hong Kong, said she has gradually replaced going to temples with apps and AI fortune-telling. "Since AI came along, I go to temples less often," she said. "It's convenient and always provides more information than a real fortune teller."

She now uses a variety of apps, from those offering instant divination results to those generating interpretations based on personal information. She also feels less restricted using AI or apps for divination, as she doesn't need to worry about whether the questions are "proper to ask." Some users described different appeals. Lin Yong Xi, a 23-year-old student at Hong Kong Baptist University, said face-to-face readings can feel intrusive. "In-person divination requires a spiritual exchange, which sometimes makes me uneasy," she said. "I don't want my future completely exposed."

Another interviewee, 22-year-old Lam Wing-kwan, said she prefers astrology websites and apps for similar reasons, adding that consulting a human fortune teller can feel as though "they see through you too much." In this case, she feels her life "is being frozen into a fixed path."

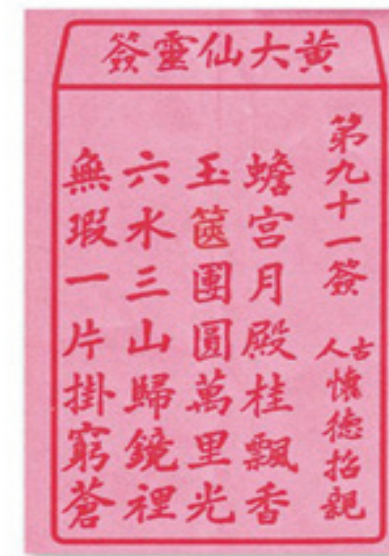
Online platform trends are also influencing how these practices are being conducted. Lin likes to

watch tarot card reading videos and follows discussions about AI fortune-telling in her daily life, often trying prompts shared by other users. "I'll copy the prompts into my AI chatbots with my own questions for fortune-telling," she said, "if I write the prompts myself, the results might not be what I expect."

As of May 15, on social media platform RedNote (also known as Xiaohongshu), the hashtag #deepseekfortuentelling has garnered over 55,600,000 views and 351,200 notes; related topics on Weibo have received 5,475,000 views.

AI fortune-telling in fortune tellers' eyes

At Wong Tai Sin Temple, fortune-telling follows a ritual that has remained largely unchanged for over a century. Visitors begin by silently reciting their names, birth dates, and the questions they want to ask in their minds and kneel to pray, and then shake a bamboo cylinder filled with numbered sticks until one falls out. Each number on the fortune sticks corresponds to a written fortune, which are mainly classic Chinese poems. The slip that falls out is believed to offer guidance or an answer to the question.



A example of Wong Tai Sin Oracle Sticks

Master Ken, a fortune teller at the temple, said interpreting the written fortune requires more than simply translating the text. In his view, AI-generated readings often remain too broad to capture the nuances of an individual's situation. He gave an example: for the fortune slip titled "Tao Yuanming Admiring Flowers," AI might interpret it broadly as "happiness and bliss," categorizing it as a good sign. However, in reality, the meaning can vary depending on the question posed by the seeker.

Master Joseph has been working in the fortune-telling industry for over 30 years. He believes that though AI possesses basic fortune-telling knowledge, its accuracy can only reach 60-70% of that of a real fortune teller.

He explained, "For example, if I ask an AI what my fortune will be like based on my birth chart, it can only consider the birth chart itself, without taking into account my palmistry or facial features." He said, "It cannot provide a comprehensive view of one's fortune."

Like Thierry Chow, Lilian Yuen is among a new generation in the metaphysical field. She developed an early interest in tarot and joined the divination field after graduating from university. She is now a certified tarot master by the China Tarot Association.

In contrast to Chow, Yuen takes a more cautious view of AI. "AI responses tend to cater to users' preferences and habits," she said, explaining that such readings "cannot truly address problems or improve one's situation." Also, she expressed that current AI interpretations are too conventional to capture the deeper relationships between tarot cards.

But as the technology is evolving, she believes AI has the potential to improve. "AI models will continue to absorb more knowledge, which could make interpretations more refined," she said. "So I think the future development is promising."

In addition, Lilian mentioned the impact of AI on the industry, namely its use as a tool to optimize works, making their content more attractive and influential. However, she also stated that while AI's dissemination of divination has attracted some clients, it has also led to the loss of some offline clients.

"And the immaturity of AI interpretation technology might create a negative perception of divination," she said, "which may affect the industry's reputation."

Young generation's perception on fortune telling

Master Joseph has encountered many young clients. In his view, the younger generation's perspective on fortune-telling differs from that of the older generation.

"They have acquired a lot of knowledge. Thus, when they come for palm reading or fortune-telling, they do not regard it as superstition, but rather as a form of statistical analysis," Master Joseph observed. "When they come to ask questions, they assess whether the insights they receive align with their own expectations, thereby utilizing them as a point of reference."

A survey done for this article found that, about 93% of respondents have trusted in fortune-telling results to some extent. And among reasons for engaging in fortune-telling, the most commonly selected were “stress relief”, followed by “feeling lost or uncertain about life” and “just for fun” among young respondents.

“My expectation before the divination is to get some kind of guidance,” Emily Wang said. “But generally, I turn to fortune-telling out of a sense of uncertainty. I am actually looking for a kind of certainty, a sense of direction in life from these practices.”

**“I am looking for
a kind of
certainty,”**

said Emily Wang.

For the past three years, she has visited Wong Tai Sin Temple or Man Mo Temple annually to draw fortune sticks. What surprised her is that she had the same fortune slip on all three occasions. As someone with a long history of scientific education, she finds this difficult to explain.

Wang said that consistently drawing this fortune slip gave her some confidence, especially during a difficult period when she needed to bury herself

in work, she always used this slip to encourage herself.

A similar sense of psychological comfort is also expressed by Yongxi Lin, who approaches fortune-telling in a more conditional way. She participates in fortune-telling mainly for psychological comfort, especially during periods when she feels lost and uncertain about her direction in life.

“But it depends on whether the answer really resonates with me or convinces me, I then decide whether I take it seriously,” she said. “Whether the suggestion makes me feel actionable, whether it is creative, and whether it fits my expectations, I take all of these into account.”

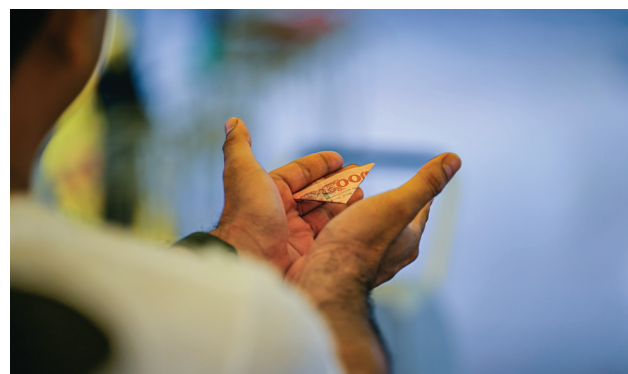
Professor Ng Siu Man from the Department of Social Work and Social Administration at the University of Hong Kong, said contemporary fortune telling connects with psychological needs such as stress relief. He noted that uncertainty exists across all stages of life, from childhood to old age.

“Science cannot explain all uncertainties, and there is often a gap between people’s abilities and their expectations. So many people engage in fortune-telling,” he said. “Therefore, this culture will continue.”

He encouraged young people not to bottle up their stress, suggesting that communicating with friends and family can be helpful.



Under a light drizzle, worshippers offer incense in front of the main hall at Wong Tai Sin Temple. (Isco Zhang)



Outside the God of Wealth Shrine, Thai tourists pray for fortune with “blessing triangles” folded from Thai baht notes. (Isco Zhang)

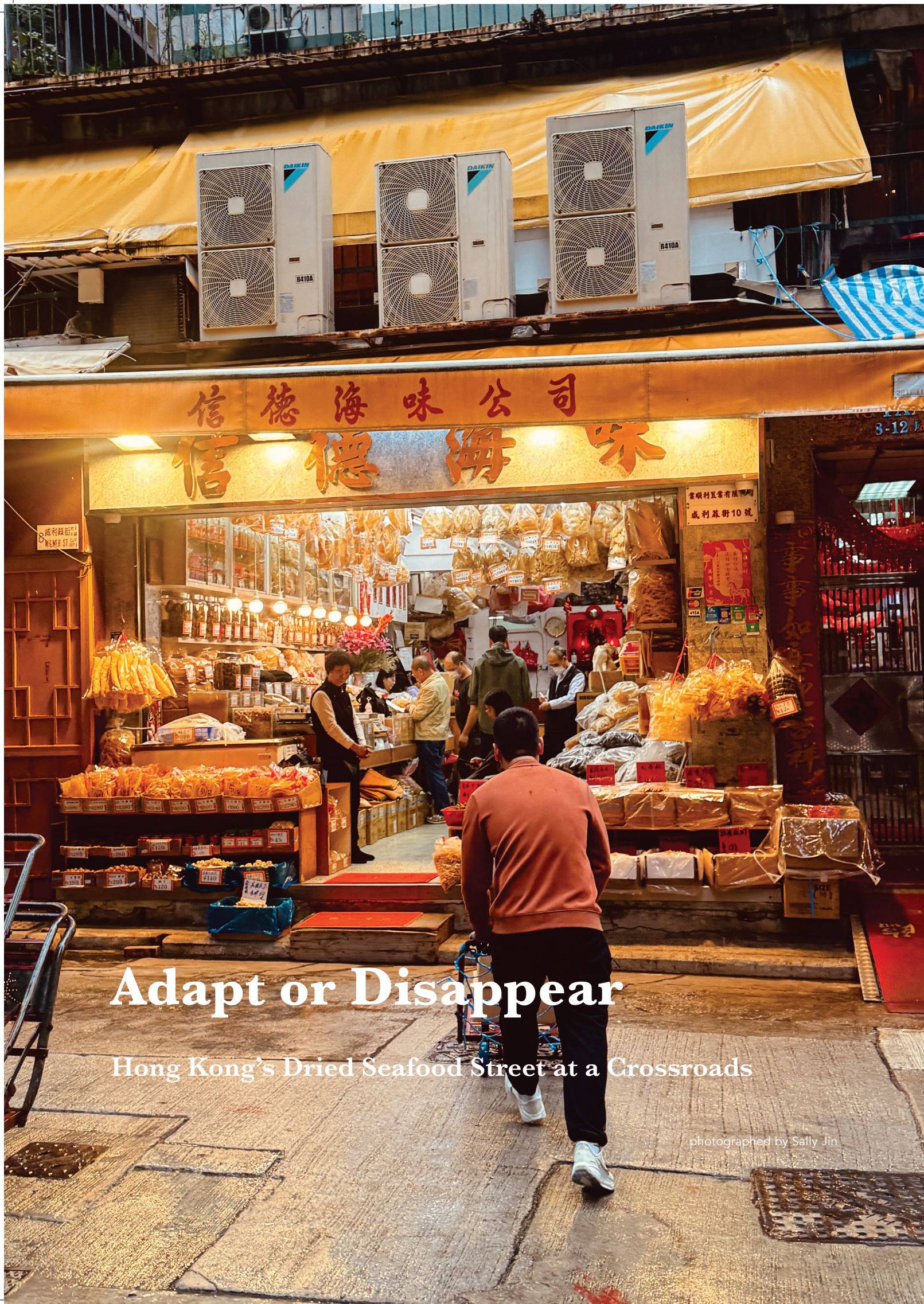


The red tents on Temple Street. (Wendy Wu)

However, he also warned against excessive involvement in fortune-telling and similar activities, as there are potential risks, such as encountering scams. He also pointed out the psychological impact of excessive fortune-telling. “It could lead to obsessive-compulsive disorder, an inability to stop repeating a behavior,” he said. “It could also lead to escapism, avoiding facing what one should be facing.”

As night deepens, the lights of Temple Street continue to glow as usual. Some patrons sit

beneath the red tents, listening intently as masters interpret their palm lines or fortunes. Yet among the waiting crowds, some young people lower their heads over their phones, scrolling through apps and typing prompts into AI chatbots in search of guidance. Although the methods and forms of fortune-telling continue to evolve, the desires and expectations behind them remain unchanged. Whether seeking counsel from a traditional master or answers from AI, people are still searching for the same thing in this uncertain world: certainty, comfort, and a sense of direction in life.



Adapt or Disappear

Hong Kong's Dried Seafood Street at a Crossroads

photographed by Sally Jin



In China, a bowl of slow-simmered soup cooked with fish maw and sea cucumber costing thousands of yuan per catty, soaked and cooked over one to three days, is not just food. It is dietary therapy, an ancient practice passed down through generations.

But this dried seafood culture is under threat because of evaporated price advantages, tougher customs controls, and a generational shift in taste and time.

Hong Kong's dried seafood street, once a global epicenter for the trade, is facing a historic unravelling. By the 2026 Lunar New Year, the cross-border shopping logic that sustained the industry for decades has been dismantled by a "perfect storm": the evaporation of price advantages over mainland e-commerce, the tightening of customs enforcement, and a generational shift in consumer habits. For the first time in a century, the tradition of simmering dried delicacies is struggling to find a place in the fast-paced life of 2026.

Central to this decline is the closing of the "gray area" that once facilitated the flow of premium goods across the border. A new biosafety law has strengthened controls on bringing animal products — including dried seafood — into the mainland, and high-tech surveillance has significantly increased the risk of confiscation. For mainland tourists, what was once a bargain hunt in Sheung Wan has transformed into a high-risk gamble involving potential confiscation and legal penalties.

Beyond the border, the rise of e-commerce and livestreaming has delivered a decentralizing blow to Hong Kong's retail monopoly. According to a 2025 HKTDC survey, 73% of Chinese consumers now use cross-border e-commerce platforms like Tmall Global to buy overseas products — bypassing Hong Kong's traditional retail streets. As Shenzhen's Nanao market outcompetes on price and mainland logistics leapfrog traditional channels, Hong Kong's century-old shops must now decide: adapt or disappear.

The fate of the dried seafood industry is not singular but split. On the quiet alleys of Sheung Wan, the signs tell one story: "Final Clearance Sale." Decades-old shops are closing, unable to

“Operating a dried seafood business now is asset-heavy and low-turnover; it’s better to rent out the storefront,”

said Chen Yinghou.

bear the weight of high rent, low turnover, and a generation that no longer cooks. But not all are giving up.

“Operating a dried seafood business now is asset-heavy and low-turnover; it’s better to rent out the storefront,” said Chen Yinghou. He has lived on Sheung Wan Dried Seafood Street for 15 years and has witnessed the street transform from crowded and noisy to its current desolation.

“When I lived with my parents, the weekends always smelled like slow-simmered stews. They’d be downstairs buying more two or three times a month,” Chen recalled, “But now, look at my kitchen. These things hardly ever appear here. Honestly? It’s just too much work.”

For property-owned shops like “Tai Hing Hong”, an financial choice lies before them: continue to invest millions into slow-moving inventory and expensive master craftsmen, or close up and collect stable rent.

Global Expansion, Local Contraction

According to global market data from Intelmarket Research, the global salted fish market was valued at US\$12.5 billion in 2024 and is projected to grow at a CAGR of 5.7% through 2034. However, the CAGR of Hong Kong’s local dried seafood market is only 3.5%. Hong Kong’s dried seafood street accounts for just 0.03% of the global market.

“What supports this street has never been the dried fish that people eat just to fill their stomachs,” said Mr. Chan, a sales associate at Tai Hing Hong, a century-old shop. “It’s a dietary culture that is passed down through generations. And that core chain is breaking.”

“Among today’s youth, who would still spend three days soaking a dried abalone?” Chen Yinghou lamented.



Common snacks sold at the entrance of Ming Xing Hao. (Sally Jin)

Young consumers simply “don’t know the goods,” according to Liang Binglin, the owner of Hing Fat Hong, and when they walk into a shop with indifferent staff and vague prices, they don’t feel cultural heritage. They feel a disconnect. “This gap has caused Dried Seafood Street to lose an entire generation of potential customers,” he said.

Across the border, in contrast to Hong Kong’s street, the Dried Seafood Street in Nanao, Shenzhen, presents a different scene, driven by transparent pricing and hyper-specific health marketing.

“Many Hong Kong people also come here with trolleys to buy. Now our quality is just as good, and our service is better,” said Mr. Zhang Diecheng of “Xiangrun Hong”, a shop he has run for over 30 years in Nanao.

Zhang argued that Hong Kong’s high costs push some shops to quietly substitute lower-grade products – selling Beihai or Min Maw as premium White Flower Maw. In his shop, White Flower Maw sells for over 30,000 yuan per catty; equivalent quality in Hong Kong exceeds 50,000 yuan. The difference, he explained, stems not from greed but from high rent and inventory costs.

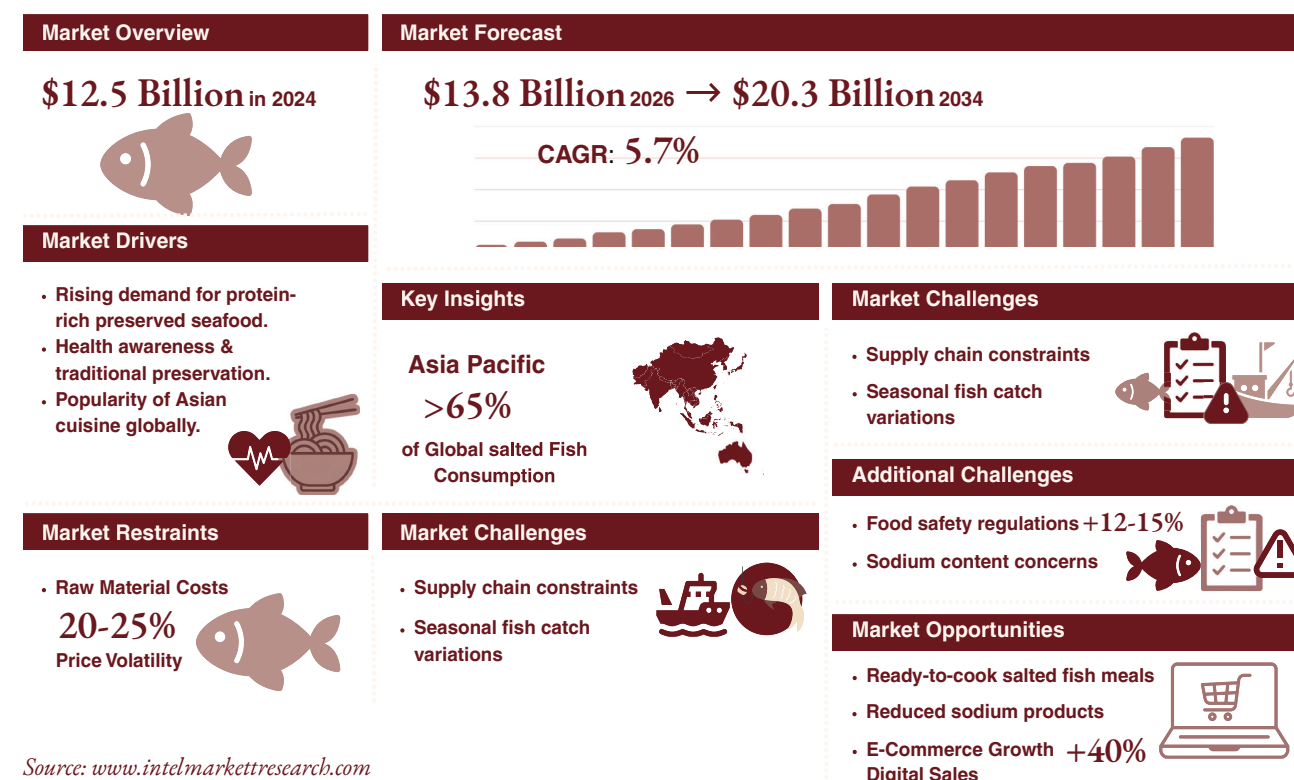
“Dried Seafood Shops” Starting to Resemble “Convenience Stores”

Those who remain are no longer betting on high-end products alone. Shop owners are diversifying into low-priced, high-frequency items such as snacks, drinks, dried fruits – to generate foot traffic and cash flow. Others are pivoting to live-streaming on platforms like WeChat Video Channel. The dried seafood shop is reinventing itself not as a luxury cabinet, but as a neighbourhood hub.

Man Hing Hong, a family business that has operated out of a rented shopfront for 50 years, embodies this balance. On its counter, a premium Hokkaido sea cucumber at HK\$7,200 per catty sits alongside HK\$15 packets of fried dough twists and HK\$20 per pound of melon seeds.

“If we only sold high-end products, we might go days without a single customer,” a staff member explains.

The same model appears in Shenzhen. Ms. You Youtao, owner of “Ting Hai Chuan Shuo,” stated bluntly that dried seafood is a high-unit-price, low-frequency product, and the market is shrinking.



Source: www.intelmarketresearch.com



You's pricing strategy in Ting Hai Chuan Shuo. (Gloria Gao)

She has shifted toward a “convenience store” model, placing drinks, snacks, and seasonings at the entrance. With labor costs at 5,000 yuan to 6,000 yuan per month, her business is consistently operating at a loss.

“Some customers first buy snacks, then gradually transition to high-end supplements,” she said.

“A convenience store generates more consistent cash flow than waiting for dried seafood regulars,” she said. “And I have two children to raise.”

She has also devised a “price code”: a shelf label might display 5,600 yuan, but a hidden number reveals the true transaction price – say, 3,620 yuan. This cultivates a “loyalty economy,” rewarding returning patrons with unlisted discounts to turn one-time visitors into lifelong clients.

High-End Positioning: Persistence and Challenges

At “Shun Tak Seafood,” 33-head White Flower Maw is priced at HK\$68,500 per catty, and 23-head Min Maw at HK\$98,500. But these “special prices” no longer excite consumers.

“Eight or nine years ago, Hong Kong had an absolute advantage. Now? Mainland online prices are even lower, and crossing the border is too troublesome,” said a Shenzhen tourist, who bought only a small bag of dried figs from Xin De Dry Sea Products.

With high-speed rail and bus-to-metro connections, travel from Hong Kong to Shenzhen’s markets is now under an hour — turning a “shopping pilgrimage” into a daily commute.

Deeper obstacles lie in technology. Following the Biosecurity Law of 2021, customs have shifted to AI-powered surveillance. Equipped with CT scanners and X-ray algorithms, authorities can identify fish maw and sea cucumber with clinical accuracy. Offenders face confiscation and fines — a risk that has sealed the “gray area” for good.

From Traditional Hawking to Live-Streaming

According to a 2025 HKTDC consumer survey of 2,200 middle-income consumers across mainland China, 43% of respondents have bought fresh produce and food online — but only 14% have purchased Hong Kong fresh produce and food through digital channels. When shopping for cross-border products, consumers overwhelmingly turn to mainland platforms: 73% use Tmall Global and 63% use JD Worldwide. The same survey found that online orders arrive in an average of 3.2 days — faster than the one-to-three-day preparation cycle of dried seafood.

In contrast to Hong Kong’s persistence in traditional hawking methods, Liang Binglin of Hong Kong’s Hing Fat Hong stated that online goods are a mix of real and fake, making it impossible to determine quality. “You can’t see it, you can’t touch it. There’s no way to be sure of the quality,” he said.



The phone and stand used for live streaming in the store at Xingji Dried Seafood. (Gloria Gao)



Shenzhen tourists with suitcases outside the store at Xin De Dry Sea Products. (Gloria Gao)

Ms. Zhang Weixia, the owner of “Xingji Dried Seafood,” spoke more directly about digital transformation. She chose WeChat Video Accounts over the more competitive Douyin — its older user base maps directly onto dried seafood’s core demographic.

No bundle deals, same prices online and in-store, and even stopping broadcasts on weekends for her children. This “casualness” has won the trust of customers.

“All products in the shop are clearly priced and genuine. If customers feel the goods are not good or the dryness is not up to standard, they can return them. But I believe in our shop’s quality, so they are all regular customers and recommendations from acquaintances.”

When “Xingji Dried Seafood” sold “Golden Oysters” at the end of 2025, they stock over a hundred thousand at once and sell them all out, becoming one of the best-selling merchants on the entire street.

A second visit to You, the owner of “Ting Hai Chuan Shuo,” came on a warm Sunday afternoon. She sat on a low plastic stool outside her shop. The storefront behind her had been renovated once more: a cooler filled with bottled soft drinks blocked one side of the entrance. Next to it stood a cardboard box packed with spicy tofu snacks and shrimp-flavored crisps. The high-priced fish maw and sea cucumber remained — tucked away behind the snacks, visible only to those who stepped inside and looked.

She looked up from her phone and said, “I think I’m gonna close this door and open a small convenience store like 7-Eleven.”

Gloria Gao & Sally Jin
SFM 高婷杉 金穎 2026

The Last Brushstroke

Hong Kong's Last Hand-Painted Porcelain Factory
Fighting to Survive

photographed by Isco Zhang

Porcelain



Stepping out of the elevator onto the third floor of Kowloon Bay Industrial Centre, a strong, musty, and oily smell hits you first. At the end of the corridor, behind a half-open metal door, stacks of porcelain bowls, plates, and vases rise from floor to ceiling. Under dim fluorescent lights, several artisans in their sixties sit hunched over their desks. The soft scratch of brushes against glazed surfaces is the only sound in the room.

This is Yuet Tung China Works — Hong Kong’s last remaining hand-painted Cantonese porcelain factory.

Fourth-generation inheritor Martina Tso, in her forties, stands beside her father, Tso Chi Hung. They are, flipping through a yellowed photo album. The images show the factory in the 1980s, when more than 300 painters worked shoulder to shoulder under a large shed, each surrounded by blank porcelain and paintmoving brushes.

“Back then, we had branches in Peng Chau and Cheung Chau — even one in Singapore,” Tso Chi Hung says, setting down his magnifying glass and glancing at the workshop before him. “Now, only a handful of us are left.”

At 77, when asked who will take over in the future, he pauses for a few seconds.

“We’ll see,” he says quietly.

Two Worlds, Close but Far Apart

Half an hour away, in a laboratory at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Henry Duh, a professor of the School of Design, is testing a generative AI

system called “The Beauty of Canton Porcelain” with his team.

In stark contrast to the dim and crowded factory, the lab is bright and silent. Screens flicker with algorithmic structures and vividly colored Canton porcelain patterns, while two PhD students in their twenties sketch designs on a touchscreen.

“AI can reshape how traditional crafts are taught,” Duh says. “Even young people without years of painting experience can freely create Cantonese porcelain designs here.”

This seemingly distant technological solution points directly to Yuet Tung’s most pressing problem — almost no one wants to learn anymore.

“We run workshops weekly,” Martina Tso admits. “But most people just come for fun. Almost none of them intend to become a real inheritor.”

Still, change is happening. In recent years, social media — especially Instagram — has drawn a growing number of young visitors. On this day, a young Hong Kong couple spend two hours in the workshop, learning to paint a porcelain bowl.

“We saw videos online and thought it was appealing and beautiful,” says Priya Wong. “We’re not good at it, but the process itself is healing.”

They are not successors, but Martina Tso notices something different — at least people are paying attention.

Keeping the Kiln Burning

To stay afloat, the factory has transformed what it produces. With fewer artisans, mass production is no longer viable. Custom orders now dominate, mainly from Hong Kong, Europe, and Japan.

“The market has changed,” says Tso Chi Hung. “Canton porcelain has gone from daily use to collectible art.”

Yuet Tung is also part of the government’s preservation efforts.

As the Hong Kong government pushes the “Hello Hong Kong” initiative post-pandemic, the factory has been invited by the Hong Kong Tourism Board to act as a brand ambassador for the city.

In 2023, the factory co-organized the “Inheritance of Cantonese Porcelain Exhibition” at the Hong Kong Cultural Centre with support from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Funding Scheme. A year earlier, under the scheme’s Community-led Project, the factory helped run two rounds of “Inheritance of Cantonese Porcelain Training Courses.” It reached more than 100 participants who learned glazing and painting techniques.

But after the short-term promotion and initial excitement faded, few are willing to dedicate years

to mastering repetitive foundational skills. The gap in transmission remains stark.

And yet, Yuet Tung continues to adapt. Since 2020, it has partnered with Eslite Bookstore to offer workshops under the brand “Hong Kong Porcelain Art.” In 2024, it co-organized exhibitions with Wong Tai Sin Temple and collaborated with a local craft beer brand on custom beer glasses. In 2025, the company launched heritage-themed phone cases with the Hong Kong Tourism Board and CASETiFY.

Online stores, social media, cross-brand collaborations — this century-old factory is trying to make itself visible to a younger generation.

A young Indian couple, drawn by Instagram videos, has travelled to the factory to commission a customized hand-painted plate for their wedding anniversary.

Nearby, Chen Ming, a designer from Shenzhen, searches for suitable pieces among the shelves.

“I’m not after a specific size or pattern,” Chen says. “The hand-painted aesthetic is the thing I appreciate.”

Tso Chi Hung has noticed these changes. To retain younger audiences, the factory has begun experimenting with images. He recalls a U.S. client in 2025 who ordered a set of tableware decorated

“It’s not about whether it looks similar. It’s about what gets lost in the process. AI-generated Cantonese has no soul.”

said Martina Tso.

with cartoon animals for his daughter.

Now, alongside traditional motifs like chickens and dragons, cartoon versions of them — even cheerful Santas — have appeared.

“The craftsmanship hasn’t changed,” Tso Chi Hung says. “But the pattern does.”

The Promise of AI

In Henry Duh’s university lab, his AI system has gone through multiple iterations. Users can sketch simple outlines on a touchscreen, and the system generates complete Canton porcelain-style patterns. With mixed reality (MR) technology, these designs can even be projected onto real porcelain plates.

The Hong Kong government has encouraged such digital approaches, promoting the documentation and dissemination of traditional crafts. Duh’s project has received multiple research grants aimed at lowering barriers to entry.

Jayden Chai, the PhD student leading development, says future expansion will follow two directions—one web-based, where users design patterns that manufacturers then produce and ship; and one mobile-based, using augmented reality (AR) to visualize designs.

Some publishers have suggested placing the system in schools and libraries as an educational tool.

“Let young people encounter it first,” Chai says. “Reducing resistance is important.”



An artisan uses mineral pigments for overglaze painting, detailing a koi fish pattern on a porcelain piece. (Isco Zhang)



The entrance to the Yuet Tung China Works, located in the Kowloon Bay Industrail Centre. (Isco Zhang)

When AI Meets the Workshop

When Tso Chi Hung first heard that AI could design Cantonese porcelain, he considered the university’s AI system, then he paused.

“We had no idea about this project,” he says, frowning as he works on a red-glazed dragon plate. “If a machine designs it, how can it still be called Cantonese porcelain?”

Nearby, artisan Chan Mei Ling, also in her sixties, spends hours painting a peony motif.

Without looking up, she responds: “Does it know what gives a pattern its spirit? Does it understand colour harmony?”

Martina Tso understands the craft’s high threshold. She was formally trained in painting to carry on the tradition.

To improve efficiency, the factory has started using pre-designed decals, allowing workers without painting skills to apply patterns.



Finished ceramics, including Canton enamel and blue-and-white porcelain, on display inside the Yuet Tung China Works shop. (Isco Zhang)

But she points out that decal products are far less valuable than hand-painted ones.

“These designs up there,” Martina Tso says, pointing to a row of porcelain on a shelf, “will never be reproduced — because no one knows how to paint them anymore.”

This tension between efficiency and soulfulness becomes sharper with AI.

Chai acknowledges the limitation, “For high-end, personalized pieces, we still rely on human artisans.”

Martina Tso agrees. “It’s not about whether it looks similar. It’s about what gets lost in the process. AI-generated Cantonese porcelain has no soul.”

Yet younger visitors see it differently. A student from the Chinese University of Hong Kong stands by the shelves.

“AI designs are beautiful too,” he says. “People like me with no artistic talent can finally have a try.”

The Last Light

At 5 p.m., the lights in Yuet Tung are turned off.

Tso Chi Hung locks the door and glances back at a row of unfinished plates. On one of them, Chan has just completed a dragon scale — each one carefully outlined with the finest brush.

At the same time, in the university lab, Chai drags an AI-generated dragon across a touchscreen. Within seconds, five variations appear.

The distance between factory and lab is not a 30-minute drive, but two different answers to the same question:

Should tradition be preserved intact — or redefined?

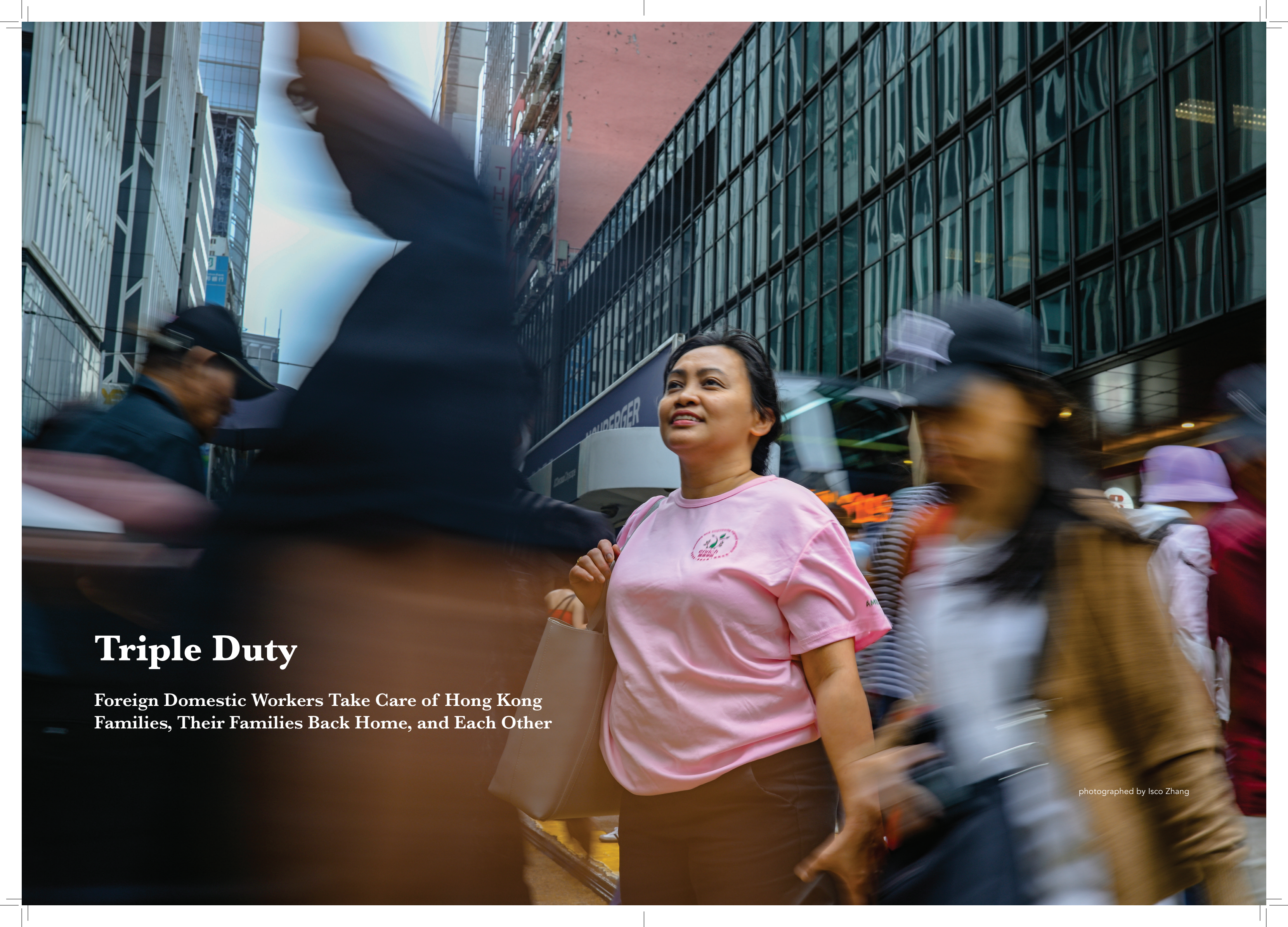
Tso Chi Hung offers no answer.

Before he steps into the elevator, he switches off the last light at the doorway. The workshop falls into darkness. Only then does he leave.

As he steps into the elevator, he says only:

“Tomorrow, we keep painting.”

Zixuan Shang & Jingjing Li
SFM 尚梓譚 李菁菁 2026

A woman in a pink t-shirt is walking through a busy city street. She is looking up and to the right with a slight smile. The background is filled with tall buildings and other people, some of whom are blurred, suggesting motion. The lighting is soft, possibly from the setting or rising sun.

Triple Duty

Foreign Domestic Workers Take Care of Hong Kong Families, Their Families Back Home, and Each Other

photographed by Isco Zhang



Migrant domestic workers gather on Chater Road in Central on Sundays to socialize, share meals and pack parcels for their families back home. (Isco Zhang)

On Chater Road in Central, luxury brands shine from glass towers above rows of cardboard mats and colorful blankets spread across the pavement.

“Do you want to become rich? Do you want to take free courses?” shouted Rosalie Ancheta, an ambassador for Enrich. Enrich is a Hong Kong non-governmental organization that offers financial literacy and personal development courses for migrant domestic workers.

Ancheta has worked in Hong Kong for 15 years. Most days she works six days a week. In the last year she started working seven days a week. When she’s working as a domestic worker she wakes at 5:30 a.m. to prepare meals, takes children to school, cleans apartments and does laundry before finishing work near midnight.

On Sundays, she helps migrant domestic workers understand their rights, access health services, training courses and support networks. Lizz Natividad, who first arrived in Hong Kong in 1996, spends Sundays visiting gathering places such as Sha Tin, Central and Victoria Park.

“We go where domestic workers gather,” Natividad said. “We talk to them one by one, casually, like everyday conversations. We explain that if they have problems related to pregnancy, PathFinders is somewhere they can go.” PathFinders Hong Kong is an NGO that supports migrant domestic workers through shelter, healthcare and legal assistance.

“As Filipinos, we know our fellow Filipinos,”



Rosalie joins an Enrich workshop on the 21st floor of Chun Wo Commercial, where migrant domestic workers exchange knowledge about financial management. (Isco Zhang)

Natividad said with a sigh. “We can tell from the way they look at us or answer us whether they want to talk. Many people don’t.”

Despite rejections, Ancheta and Natividad continue to share important resources to their peers. They are part of a small network of migrant domestic worker ambassadors trained by non-governmental organizations in Hong Kong, turning their only day off into a lifeline for fellow workers in crisis.

In Hong Kong, there are 368,000 migrant domestic workers providing full-time childcare and elderly care to Hong Kong families. This enables many local families to earn multiple salaries.

Hong Kong’s live-in policy requires domestic workers to live with their employers, blurring the lines between work and life. This policy creates long working hours and mental stress for migrant domestic workers.

A 2019 survey by the Chinese University of Hong Kong found that more than 61% of migrant domestic workers reported more than 13 hours a day while nearly 9 percent worked more than 16 hours a day.

“You cannot go to bed as long as your employers do not go to bed,” Ancheta said. Even after falling asleep, she said she may be woken again whenever her employer needs something. Chronic sleep deprivation has become part of her life. During lunch breaks, she often relies on 10 to 20-minute naps to regain enough energy to continue working.

Buried Under Debt

Many domestic workers work in Hong Kong because they can’t find jobs in their home country. They have no choice but to leave their families to earn a living. But to get to Hong Kong, many have to borrow money just to pay the recruitment agencies, training, and medical examination fees. They arrive already burdened by debt. Dofredo has three children in the Philippines, ages 24, 22 and 9. Every month, she sends half of her salary home. Under Hong Kong government regulations, the minimum allowable wage for migrant domestic workers is HK\$5,100 per month.

A 2019 survey by Enrich found that 83 percent of Hong Kong migrant domestic workers were in debt. On average, workers needed 19 months to repay what they owed.

For workers trapped in severe debt, Enrich staff also provide counseling and connect them with legal aid organizations. Ira Azwar recalled one worker who borrowed HK\$30,000 through illegal lenders. Within a year, the debt ballooned to HK\$150,000 including interest. With Enrich’s guidance and financial planning support, the worker was eventually able to repay the debt gradually.

It is common for unemployed family members to ask for money. “When someone asks for your help, you just give. You don’t set boundaries,” said Ancheta.

Enrich’s “Money Wise Migrant” program teaches workers how to budget, build emergency funds and rethink the habit of spending before saving.

Azwar also warned that scammers increasingly target migrant workers in Hong Kong, sometimes using AI technology to impersonate relatives or investors.

“Only with Enrich, they taught us how to first build an emergency fund, then save, then invest,” Ancheta said. “That’s when I stopped living in



Rosalie on her way back to work after finishing training at a migrant worker training association. (Isco Zhang)

Longing for home

For Dofredo, the hardest part of working in Hong Kong is being away from her children. Long working hours leave little time for video calls home. As she spoke about her children, her eyes filled with tears.

Trina Federis, a volunteer with Mission for Migrant Workers shares a story from a former client. “One night, she dreamed about her children back home,” Federis recalled. “She woke up crying and realized she was holding the toilet bowl.”

A 2021 survey by Mission for Migrant Workers found that more than 60 percent of migrant domestic workers do not have a separate or private room.

Unexpected Obstacles

A vast majority of Many foreign domestic workers are women in their prime child-bearing years. Filipino domestic workers come from conservative Catholic communities where abortion remains illegal and contraception is often criticized, leaving pregnant domestic workers with few options when pregnancies occur unexpectedly.

“We are only half a worker here,” said Beberly Lauresta, who has worked in Hong Kong for a decade. Under Hong Kong’s minimum labor requirements, many domestic workers can return home only once every two years. “Every time I went home, I told my husband not to get me pregnant because I was scared,” Lauresta said. “If a domestic worker became pregnant, employers would often terminate her, and she had very few rights.”

One pregnant worker she supported left for the Philippines after working for months and saving money, Lauresta said. “The experience was very stressful for her.”

Crystal Yip, who employs two domestic workers for more than ten years, said she knew little about the legal protections covering migrant domestic workers. She said most of her understanding came only from contract renewals and insurance paperwork, and she was unaware of the government’s upcoming measures targeting debt problems among domestic workers. “We never really received systematic information from the government,” Yip said. “I actually don’t know much about these policies.”

“Employers also have their own challenges,” said Stephanie Kwok, a senior case worker at PathFinders. “Many of them don’t know enough about the maternity rights that apply to migrant domestic workers. Both the employer and the workers are kind of caught in this situation.”

Speaking Up

Like many domestic workers, Lauresta once believed employers could do whatever they

wanted to her. She endured mistreatment in silence.

That changed in 2025 when a friend introduced her to PathFinders. At first, Lauresta thought the workshops would not matter to her. “I’m not pregnant anyway,” she said. But after attending training sessions about workers’ legal rights, her perspective changed completely.

“I had never spoken up before,” Lauresta said. “I never even knew I had so many rights.”

**“I had never
spoken up before.
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said Beberly Lauresta.

When her employer delayed her salary for the third time, she finally confronted her.

“You know, ma’am, if you delay my salary for almost two weeks, that is illegal,” Lauresta told her employer. “I can leave because everybody needs money. I need to support my children and my family.”

Lauresta said this was the reason she became an ambassador. “I want to become a bridge between NGOs and domestic workers,” she said. “I want to pass the right information to them.”

Structural Problems

Beyond organizations like Enrich and PathFinders, other groups focus more directly on the structural problems migrant workers face. Annie Agravante, who has worked in Hong Kong as a domestic worker for 15 years, regularly spends Sundays



Wearing an Enrich T-shirt, Rosalie watches the Flores de Mayo celebrations in Central on 17 May 2026. For many Filipinos like her, the festival is an important expression of home culture and community. (Isco Zhang)

helping organise community events and supporting fellow workers in Mission for Migrant Workers.

For workers burdened by debt, the Hong Kong government has recently moved to tighten regulation of money lending. In March 2026, the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau announced stronger controls on loans targeting domestic workers and low-income groups.

The first phase of measures, which will take effect on August 1, 2026, includes caps on repayment-to-income ratios for lower-income borrowers, restrictions on loan referral systems, and mandatory risk warnings in advertisements.

A second phase beginning in June 2027 will require lenders to report personal loan data regularly to credit platforms and conduct debt checks for high-risk borrowers.

Azwar welcomed the changes.

Her organization also joined the International Labor Day protest on May 1, calling for improved working conditions and stronger protections.

Under the Hong Kong government’s two-week policy, workers generally must leave Hong Kong within two weeks after a contract ends unless they have found a new employer to extend their contract.

And it is precisely those structural problems unfinished struggles that continue to drive ambassadors forward.

“I’m not happy with the situation,” Agravante said. “But I’m happy that people are more aware.”

“There is hope.”

Charlie Zhou & Coco Yang
SFM 周馳昱 楊欣高 2026

Gun Games

Mainland Tourists Come to Hong Kong to Play Combat



photographed by Isco Zhang

At Hong Kong's Gulf War Area, Zeng Chaoqun crouched behind a wrecked car as plastic pellets flew across the battlefield. The 37-year-old property agent from Changsha visits Hong Kong once a year for one reason: to play airsoft freely.

Airsoft is a live-action combat game in which players use realistic replica guns that fire plastic pellets in military-style battles. Matches are usually played in teams across indoor arenas or outdoor battlefields, with players completing combat missions such as eliminating opponents or capturing objectives.

Due to public safety concerns, mainland China enforces strict controls on realistic model guns. Therefore, mainland enthusiasts have become increasingly integrated into Hong Kong's airsoft scene, hoping that short trips will give them access to a more open and immersive airsoft culture than anything available on the mainland.

As a veteran gel blaster player, Zeng's fascination with replica firearms started in middle school in the early 2000s. "For a 12-year-old boy, guns and

military gear held an irresistible appeal," said Zeng.

But a few years later, tightening regulations on airsoft in mainland China and the pressures of working life forced him to shelve the hobby. However, nothing excites him more than his annual trip to Hong Kong for an authentic outdoor wargame, a ritual he started in 2023. He even stores a full set of gear at a local friend's home for his once-a-year visit to the local airsoft scene. Returning for this year's trip, Zeng said, made him feel like "a fish returned to water."

Hobby-driven tourists like Zeng have been making their cultural trips for the past decade, but many of them ventured no further than Kwong Wah Street in Mong Kok, also known as "Gun Street" because it's long been home to more than 20 airsoft shops.

But anyone who wanted to actually experience shooting these replicas had to either draw on their own knowledge of Hong Kong's niche airsoft culture or rely on the help of local friends, which was a huge barrier for visitors.



Allen Lui (middle) introducing one of the signature items for mainland tourists, the E&L 191 gas blowback rifle, a replica of China's PLA's latest standard-issue weapon. (Stark Yang)



Local players firing behind a cover in the Gulf War area, dressing in the camouflage of China's PLA soldiers. (Isco Zhang)

Things began to change last June, when Ember Tactic, the city's first indoor airsoft venue catering specifically to mainland tourists, opened in Kwai Chung. Its arrival signaled that airsoft tourism in Hong Kong had entered a new phase.

Beyond offering a standard indoor wargame arena, Ember is also the first venue in Hong Kong to provide a shooting range with rental services for more than a hundred Gas Blowback models. To cater to mainland customers, all staff are required to speak Mandarin.

According to owner Allen Lui, Ember has averaged around 100 mainland visitors a month over the past year, with numbers doubling or tripling during school holidays. Most visitors are students and young adult gel blaster players drawn by the realistic recoil that electric gel blasters cannot match.

For Larion de Almeida, an award-winning local marketing consultant, who is also known as a veteran airsoft player with more than 30 years of experience, making Hong Kong attractive to airsoft tourists also means making wargames more beginner-friendly. He argued that traditional "one-hit-out" rules can frustrate newcomers, and suggested faster-paced formats with respawn mechanics and narrative-driven gameplay.

Chen Guanlin might be exactly the kind of airsoft tourist that de Almeida would like to see in the local scene.

The 16-year-old gel blaster enthusiast from Wuhan has 16,000 followers on Douyin. Just before the

Lunar New Year holiday, he traveled to Hong Kong alone and went to the Landing Zone, the Kwun Tong-based largest indoor wargame venue in the city. He documented the cross-cultural challenge in his vlog and posted it on Douyin and Bilibili.

In the video, he handles airsoft guns lent by local players at the range, praises the Gas Blowback engineering, weaves through a maze of barricades, and duels with another player, each trying to eliminate each other in a limited time with only a limited number of pellets. They end the battle with an appreciative high-five.

Chen's vlog represents another way that once-niche wargames have reached the consciousness of mainland players who may have never tried it before, with his detailed reviews from shooting range experience to actual wargaming.



In an outdoor wargame held on January 10th, more than 30 players from mainland China and Hong Kong pose with their favourite military costumes. (Isco Zhang)

However, posting airsoft content on the mainland platforms is always a double-edged sword: for venue owners and players, while it can attract enthusiasts, it also runs up against strict content censorship.

About two years ago, de Almeida had considered promoting his airsoft team to mainland gel blaster players. But right after he uploaded wargame footage to RedNote and Douyin, the videos were taken down by moderators for containing "controlled weapons" and "violent content." After repeated failed attempts, he gave up the idea on the mainland platforms and turned to Youtube and Instagram for regular promotions.

For Chen, he includes a fake gun disclaimer at the corner of every video, to guard against firearm-related censorship or video removals. The trick is commonly seen in the airsoft contents on the mainland platforms.

Zeng takes an even more cautious approach. No matter how much he loves the sport, he never posts airsoft-related content on social media for fear of drawing censorship from cyber police.

In the mainland gel blaster community, this kind of attention is known as "checking the water meter." It commonly happens when a post about model guns or an online purchase of replica triggers a real-life visit from law enforcement under the pretext of a mundane checkup. The consequences can range from confiscation of toy guns to administrative detention or even criminal imprisonment up to 7 years. Indeed, in 2017, a 23-year-old student from the City University of Hong Kong was sentenced for 7 years imprisonment after crossing the border with 12 replicas.

De Almeida has suggested that compulsory courses for airsoft players to learn safety rules as well as local licenses to own replica guns in Hong Kong would be the ideal solutions. "The best way to break down public stereotypes is to establish effective industry standards," he said. "That's how we earn the government's trust."

He also pointed out that unlike Taiwan and Japan, Hong Kong's airsoft operators remain in a phase of "fragmented fiefdoms." But this may be Hong Kong's strength as a tourism destination, even for subcultures like airsoft.

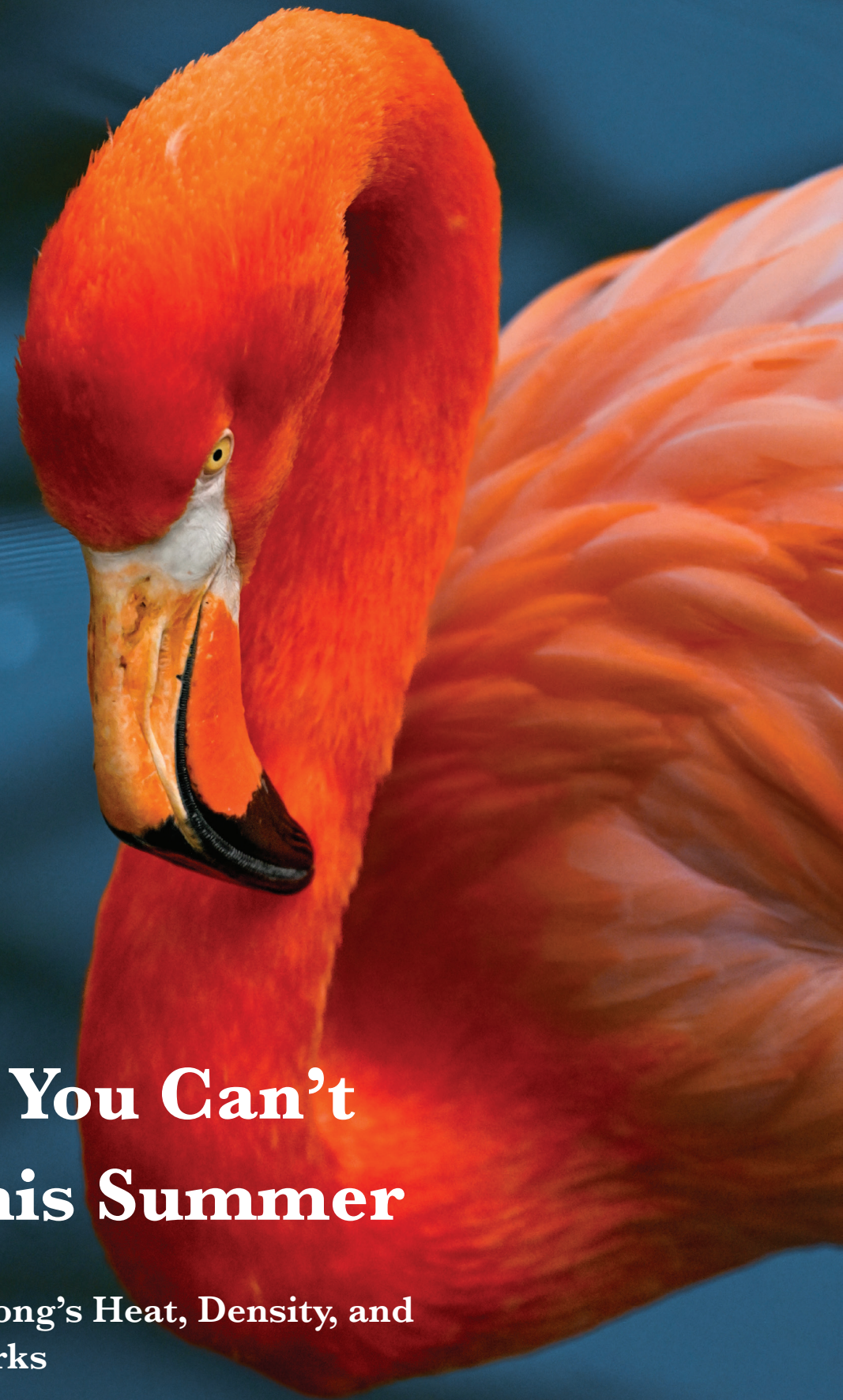
For newcomers, venues like Ember Tactics offer a first taste of airsoft shooting. For veterans, well-known indoor sites such as Landing Zone and Warzone provide full-contact gameplay. And for those seeking an authentic outdoor experience, Gulf War Area is the final destination. In the end, everyone can find a place that fits them most in the city.

"Diversity can also be seen as a feature of Hong Kong airsoft," de Almeida said. "As long as the mainland can't legalize the sport, there will always be a business opportunity."

5 Parks You Can't Miss This Summer

Escape Hong Kong's Heat, Density, and Speed in the Parks

written by Grace Yu & photographed by Isco Zhang



Location: Chater Rd, Central
Open: 24 hours

Chater Garden (formerly Hong Kong Cricket Club) is a lush environment with over 11,000 trees, shrubs, and flowering plants. It serves as a pocket of green space for office workers during their lunch break and tourist attraction on weekends. This garden is one of the landmarks of Hong Kong's Central District. In summer, the glass fountain, waterfalls, and pools provide a refreshing respite from the heat. You can also enjoy the iconic sculpture works in the nearby Art Garden of The Henderson, experiencing the artists' interpretations of life. One of the most famous works is Anatomy of Time, a 3-meter-tall kinetic optical sculpture; its creator was inspired by cosmology and the spiral geometry of galaxies. Through the power of nature, these spaces help soothe the anxiety and loneliness of urban life.



This sculpture is Anatomy of Time by Petroc Sesti.

HK Zoological and Botanical Gardens

Location: Albany Rd, Central
Open: 6 am–7 pm

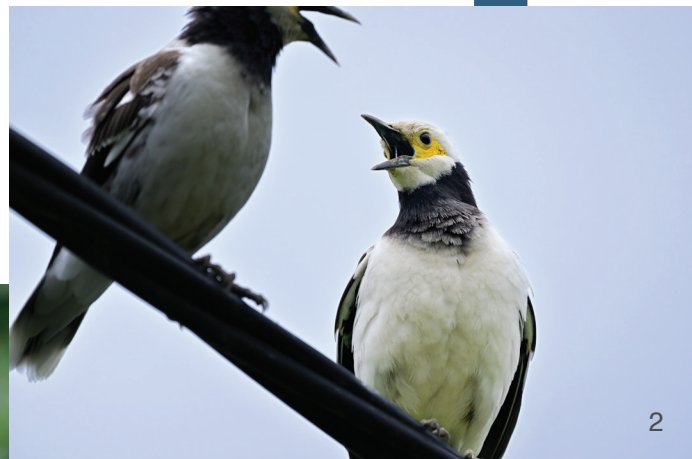
The Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens, established in 1864 is an oasis that boasts a diverse collection of flora and fauna. The official website updates its list of seasonal blooms monthly, making it easy for visitors to plan their flower-viewing trips. In summer, visitors can admire seasonal plants such as the *Dichroa febrifuga* (Hydrangeaceae) and *Trachelospermum jasminoides* (Star Jasmine). It's okay if you don't recognize them—there are detailed signs throughout the park. The garden is also the home to various species of monkeys, as well as otters, meerkats, wallabies, flamingos, and a massive aviary. Even better, this place is free and requires no reservations, but if you visit during the summer, be sure to bring mosquito repellents.

Flowering plant in May: Hydrangea (*Dichroa febrifuga*)

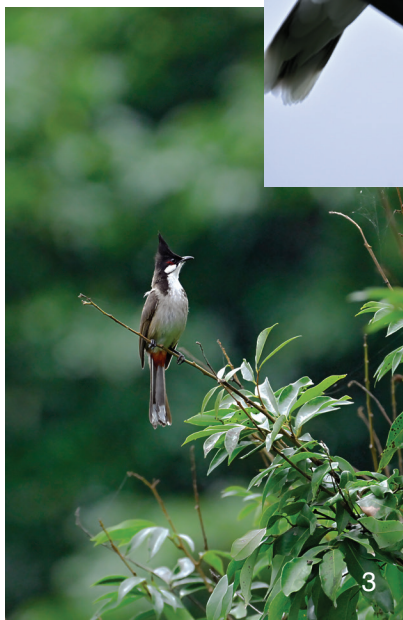




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- 1 Yellow-crested Cockatoo
- 2 Black-collared Starling
- 3 & 5 Red-whiskered Bulbul
- 4 Masked Laughingthrush
- 6 Little Egret

Location: Yin Kong Tsuen, Sheung Shui
Open: 9:30 am–5 pm (except Tuesday)

As Hong Kong's largest agricultural wetland, Long Valley Nature Park is a unique bird-watching destination. It's a bit of a trek, about 40 kilometers from central Hong Kong, or a 1.5-hour trip by public transportation. While summer might be quieter for migratory birds, the park's expanded wetlands are teeming with local wildlife and cultivated plants like lotus and water lilies. It's an ideal destination for nature lovers seeking tranquility and wishing to gain a deeper understanding of Hong Kong's ecological conservation. Opened in 2024, the park has been equipped with special bird-watching cottages for visitors to see birds in the wild.



Lotus blooming in the wetland park.

Tamar Park

Location: Harcourt Rd, Admiralty
Open: 24 hours

Tamar Park offers an escape from the urban bustle, especially during the summer. With its green lawns, this spacious waterfront park is an ideal setting for residents to enjoy strolls while taking in panoramic views of Victoria Harbour and the Kowloon skyline. The gentle sea breeze and tree shade provide great conditions for picnics, making it a popular spot for friends and family to unwind. The park also features accessible toilets and the Tama Café, which serves snacks and beverages. Its open design makes it a perfect venue for hosting various outdoor activities and yoga sessions, adding a dynamic touch to your downtown experience.

Long Valley Nature Park

People having picnics in front of Central Government Offices.





The miniature bronze model of the Walled City, which was torn down in 1993.

Location: Carpenter Rd, Kowloon City
Open: 6:30 am–11 pm

Step back in time at Kowloon Walled City Park, which was built on the historic site of the Kowloon Walled City, the infamous no man's land. It wasn't until 1995 that the Hong Kong government converted it into a park. It has preserved some historical landmarks, such as the South Gate ruins and Yamen.

This park blends traditional Chinese garden aesthetics, such as moon gates and lattice windows, with relics. During the warmer months, the park's lush greenery, shaded pathways, and traditional pavilions offer a cool retreat, inviting visitors to wander and reflect in peace.

You can also discover the area's history through its well-preserved artifacts and volunteer guide. The 'Kowloon Walled City: A Cinematic Journey' exhibition, which opened in 2025, brings the scenes of the former Walled City to life through recreations and will be open to the public free of charge until 2028. If you're a fan of the film 'Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In,' this is an experience you won't want to miss. Kowloon Walled City Park has become an excellent destination for a historical and cultural journey within the city.

Kowloon Walled City Park



This Chinese-style gate was designed with inspiration from the gardens of Jiangnan in the early Qing Dynasty.



Remnants of the South Gate; they were declared monuments in 1996.



Scene outside Exhibition Room 4: Dental Clinic.



Scene in Exhibition Room 6: Narrow Alleys and Hidden Streets.

Things we carry everyday



■ Keychain

"My keychain is very flashy and colourful. The most important part is the little bell – it helps me find my keys easily, and I never lose them."



■ Hair claw clip

"When I need to get things done, I just clip my hair up. Simple but essential."



■ Earphone case

"An earphone with a chain full of charms. It looks cute and helps me spot it easily. There's a 'magical girl' charm whose braided hair I can play with when I'm bored."



■ Mouse pad

"This makes me feel so much happier at work. It's from one of my favourite cartoons – very spring-like, fresh and cheerful."



■ Hat

"A small purple hat – breathable, good-looking, and perfect for hiding my face."



Xufan Kim
Fine Arts Student

Eunice Xu

Journalist



■ Notebooks and pen

"I write for a living, and my hands sometimes hate that."



■ Eye drops

"I also read for a living, and my eyes sometimes hate that."



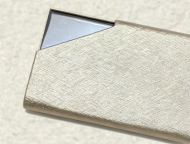
■ Voice recorder

"Part of my second brain."



■ Card holder

"I still keep my physical business cards ready because you never know who you'll meet."



■ Heels

"When I want to, I can be 6'."



Five Essentials

by Syrena Jin



Boney Ye

Hiking Guide

■ Walkie-talkie

"On the trail, my phone doesn't always work. The walkie-talkie helps me stay in touch with the team, so I can keep the group moving at a safe"



■ Ultraman

"This is my travel mascot. He brings me good luck and reminds me to wish for a safe, joyful journey."



■ First aid kit

"Hiking always comes with risks. I carry this kit just in case – better safe than sorry."



■ Drone

"I use it to capture the beautiful scenery and the team's best"



■ Trash bag

"I always bring a trash bag to pick up any litter on the trail. It's a small way to protect nature."



■ Insulated bottle

"I teach a lot of classes every day. This lets me drink warm water anytime and take care of my throat."



■ Throat lozenge

"I also talk so much that my throat gets dry and hoarse easily. A lozenge soothes it nicely."



■ Presentation clicker

"With this, I can stand anywhere in the classroom and flip through slides, so teaching is much easier."



■ Portable microphone

"With a crowded classroom, a portable mic gives clear sound and saves my voice."



■ Black and red pens

"The black pen is for everyday lesson prep; the red pen for marking homework."



Yaozhang Ma

Primary School Teacher



Beyond the Page

In an age of AI, the art of the interview is becoming a specialized practice. We still believe in the power of a good soundbite to deliver impact. The words of interviewees remain one of the firmest sources of journalistic storytelling. These voices form some of the powerful moments in this year's capstone stories.

by Andy Liu

“As AI Actors Take the Stage, Audiences Long for Human Imperfection”

Story by Yunqi Tang & Jiale Zhu

“The AI micro dramas can be stiff. There's no real emotion. Some details are still not as natural as a real actor...I'll try to adapt. After all, there are fewer chances for real actors now.”



Amy Chen
Micro Drama Actress

“Inside Hong Kong's Growing E-Waste Problem”

Story by Lan Bao

Pamsy To Ka-bo
Officer at ALBA
Integrated Waste
Solutions



“The future of our waste is actually in our own hands...If we choose to throw it away, there will be consequences, but if we choose to handle it properly, then that value can continue.”

“Gig Workers Feel Unprotected in New Labor Law”

Story by Chi Li & Yining Zhang

“Getting sick is hard to avoid...I'm working every day, but legally, it's as if I don't even exist.”



Kiki Ling
Part-time Service
Assistant

“AI Toys in the Era of Modern Loneliness”

Story by Yushan Wu

Wang Weijun
AI Pet Owner



“If you ignore it, it will make sounds, cry, or show expressions to get your attention...It's quite clingy, like a real pet.”

Read the full stories on the GENESIS website: <https://jmsc6110a.com/capstone2026/>

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