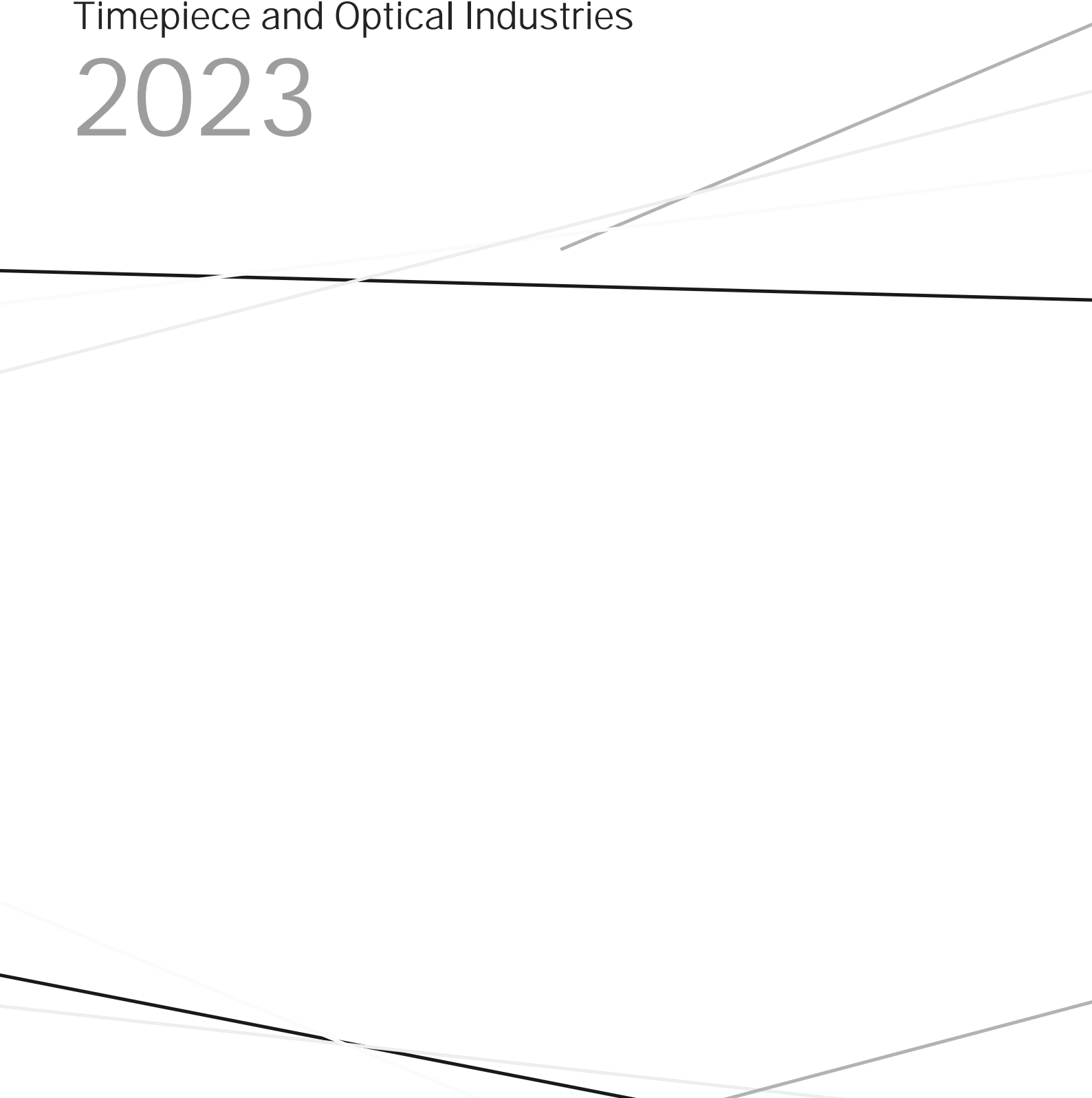


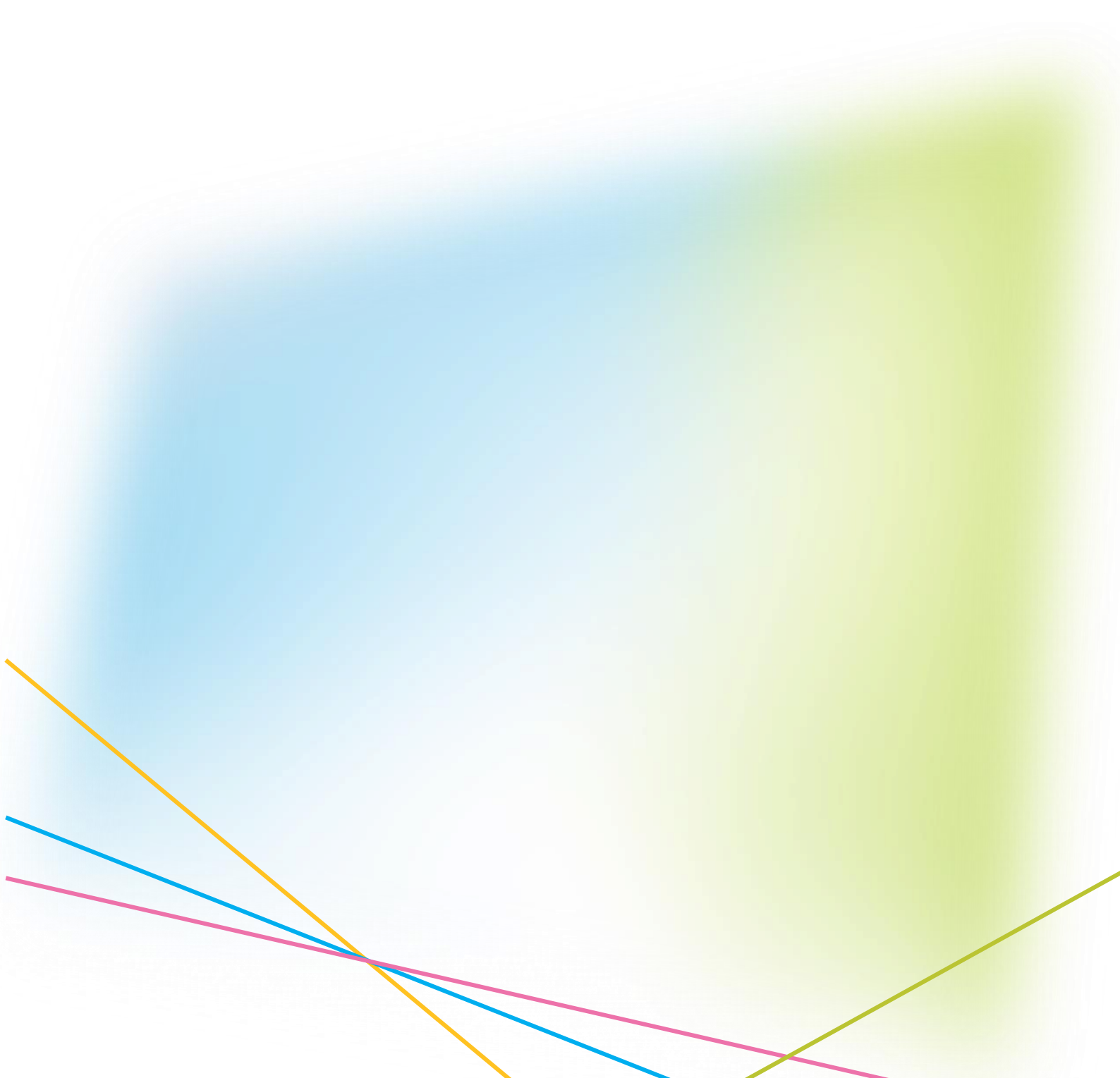


Manpower Update Report  
Timepiece and Optical Industries  
2023



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Jewellery and Timepiece Training Board would like to express its gratitude to the members of the Focus Groups for their valuable time and insights on the manpower situation of the Timepiece and Optical Industries. Special thanks also go to CPJobs and CTgoodjobs which shared the database of job vacancies. The views of Focus Groups and Training Board members and information from major recruitment websites formed an integral part of this report.



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# Introduction

## Background

The Jewellery and Timepiece Training Board (JTTB) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) is responsible for ascertaining the manpower situation in the relevant industries, assessing whether the manpower supply can meet the demand, and recommending to the VTC for the development of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) facilities to meet the assessed training needs.

To better reflect the dynamics of the

manpower situation, JTTB conducts one full manpower survey every four years supplemented by two manpower updates with the latest manpower information collected.

Following the Manpower Survey in 2020, JTTB published a manpower update report focusing on the Jewellery Industry in 2022. This second manpower update report in the four-year cycle will focus on the Timepiece and Optical Industries.

The 2023 manpower information update comprises:

- (i) focus Group meetings to gather views from industry experts on the latest developments in the Timepiece and Optical Industries, manpower situation and training needs, recruitment challenges and proposed measures to address the challenges faced by the industries; and
- (ii) desk research to analyse job advertisements related to the Timepiece and Optical Industries.

## Objectives

The objectives of this manpower update report are:

- (i) to examine the latest developments and trends in the industries;
- (ii) to explore the changes in manpower demands for principal jobs and the factors behind them;
- (iii) to understand recruitment situations, challenges and solutions;
- (iv) to explore training needs, emerging skills/jobs; and
- (v) to recommend measures to address the manpower needs.

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# Methodology

## Overview

This update report aims to provide a qualitative description of the latest developments in the industries through views collected from Focus Group meetings, supplemented by quantitative information from job advertisements obtained from desk research; and also makes reference to the Manpower Survey of the Jewellery, Watch & Clock and Optical Industries conducted in 2020.

## Focus Group

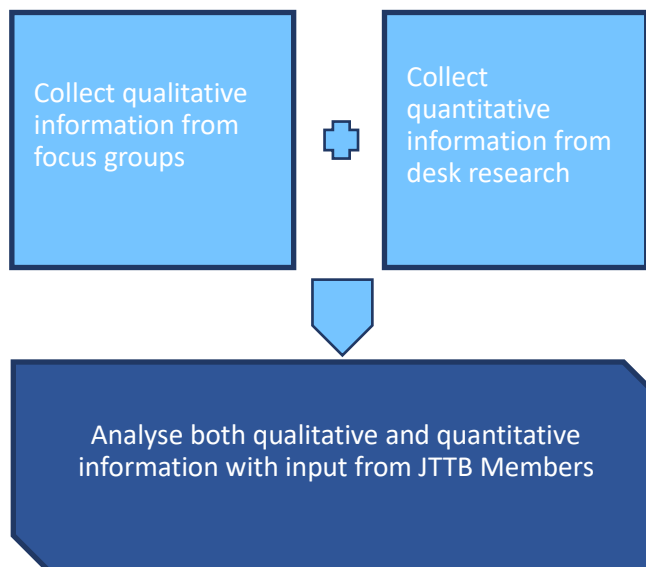
Focus group members represent different sectors of the Timepiece and Optical Industries. The Focus Group of the Timepiece Industry includes representatives from manufacturing and export trading as well as online/offline sales of timepieces. The Focus Group of the Optical Industry includes representatives from manufacturing and export trading and online/offline sales of eyewear, as well as eye examination. Meetings of the two Focus Groups were held on 25 July and 9 August 2023 to discuss in depth the topics identified by the Working Party on Manpower Survey of the JTTB. In addition, telephone and online interviews were conducted respectively on 13 and 29 August 2023 to collect insights from Focus Group members who were unable to attend the meetings.

## Desk Research

The desk research was conducted between July 2022 and June 2023 to collect job advertisements of the Timepiece and Optical Industries from major online recruitment portals through an employment information system. During the said period, the system collected a total of 478 recruitment records, which reflected the vacancy situation in the industries. The information was matched against the relevant company listings in the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification and duplicate records were removed.

## Data Analysis

The analysis consists of three steps:



## Limitations

As this is not a full manpower survey, the findings and recommendations of the Focus Groups are mainly qualitative in nature and the report focuses on the analysis of manpower trends. The information of job advertisements was collected from major recruitment portals and the Labour Department. Other channels, such as social

media platforms and industry referrals, were not covered. Since the data collected is a snapshot of a particular period without reference to any historical data, this can only be served as supplementary information to the findings of the Focus Group meetings.

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# Findings

## Latest Developments and Trends in the Timepiece and Optical Industries

### Post-pandemic retail performance

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After the full resumption of normal travel between Hong Kong and the Mainland, there was a brief period of revenge consumption in local retail. However, the Timepiece Industry forecasts that the sales of timepieces will hardly return to their peak for the time being. As the sales data of “Jewellery, Watches and Clocks, and Valuable Gifts” released by the Census and Statistics Department (C&SD) shows, the average monthly sales in the first six months of 2023 rose sharply to \$5 billion, still a slump compared with the average monthly sales of over \$7.1 billion during the peak period of 2018.

As regards the Optical Industry, with the

increase number of tourists, there has been a significant increase in local sales, especially for popular brands, since the full resumption of normal travel across the borders. The sales data of “Optical Shops” released by the C&SD shows that the average monthly sales of eyewear in the first half of 2023 climbed to over \$250 million, near the average monthly sales of \$280 million in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

Comparing with the Timepiece Industry, Members of the Optical Industry are more optimistic about their industry’s prospect. They expect their business to further improve with the increase in the number of tourists. Members of the Timepiece Industry on the other hand take a more cautious attitude and believe that the recovery would take time amid intense competition. For example, Hainan has launched the world’s largest single duty-free store, which sells

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<sup>1</sup> Census and Statistics Department. Table E089 : Retail sales by type of retail outlet (August 2022) <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/tc/EIndexbySubject.html?scode=530&pcode=D5600089>

timepieces and other well-known branded products<sup>2</sup>. In the future, Mainland tourists will not necessarily choose to shop for watches in Hong Kong. Authorised retailers of timepiece brands have also noticed that more brands are starting to operate their own outlet stores and sell limited varieties, making it more difficult for official dealers to stay in business.

## Changes in consumers' preferences and needs

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Over the recent years, there has been a significant shift in consumers' preferences. With respect to timepieces, smart watches are gaining popularity among customers. A quarterly survey conducted by the well-known international research firm Counterpoint Research shows that the smart watch market grew by 30% year-on-year in the third quarter of 2022, mainly attributed to the launch of new models of watches by two market leading brands and the growth in demand in the Indian market<sup>3</sup>. Priced on a similar level, smart watches have had an enormous impact on traditional mid and low-priced watches. To increase the competitiveness, many mid-priced watch brands have not only enhanced the functions of their watches, but also cut down on the number of their watch models and switched to launch more premium lines.

Regarding traditional watches, according to the annual Swiss watch industry report jointly released by Morgan Stanley and LuxeConsult, the export of Swiss watches and clocks reached a record high of CHF23.7 billion in 2022. The quantity of the exported watches priced at over CHF 100,000 made up only 0.2% of the total export, but the value of them accounted for up to 12.5% of the total export, which indicates that Swiss watches and clocks (especially high-priced watches) are still highly popular in the market<sup>4</sup>.

Apart from brand new high-end watches, the demand for second-hand high-end watches has increased in recent years, mainly because many top brands are limiting their annual production and some popular watch models are in short supply or have even been ceased production. Many watch enthusiasts or collectors have turned to the second-hand market to buy their desired watches. Many new comers of the high-end-watch market also choose second-hand watches which are more affordable to them. A prestigious Swiss watch brand has entered the second-hand watch market since the end of 2022, launching a certification programme for vintage watches and selling second-hand watches certified officially in designated countries/regions<sup>5</sup>. Some luxury watch brands have also partnered with famous auction houses to provide certified second-hand luxury watches and after-sales

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<sup>2</sup> Hong Kong Wenweipo Website. World's Largest Duty-Free Store – Hainan International Duty-Free City Opened (28 October 2022)

<https://www.wenweipo.com/a/202210/28/AP635b3f3fe4b016f20c80878d.html>

<sup>3</sup> Counterpoint Research. Global Smartwatch Shipments by Model Quarterly Tracker, Q1 2018-Q3 2022

[https://report.counterpointresearch.com/posts/report\\_view/iot/3482](https://report.counterpointresearch.com/posts/report_view/iot/3482)

<sup>4</sup> Federation of the Swiss Watch Industry FH. Statistics of the Watch and Clock Industry – Press Release on Export of Swiss Watches (24 January 2023)

[http://www.fhs.hk/pdf/communique\\_220112\\_a.pdf](http://www.fhs.hk/pdf/communique_220112_a.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Rolex. Buying a Rolex – Rolex Certified Pre-owned Watches

<https://www.rolex.com/zh-hant/buying-a-rolex/rolex-certified-pre-owned>

maintenance to global consumers<sup>6</sup>. This indicates that quite a few major brands are optimistic about the future of second-hand high-end watches.

As for the Optical Industry, the demand for optical services has been increasing steadily, mainly attributed to the continuous expansion of local myopic population. A tracking study conducted by CUHK from 2015 to 2021 shows that the rate of myopia in young school children in Hong Kong reached a new high after the pandemic<sup>7</sup>. Another reason contributing to the increasing demand for optical services is the severe aging problem of the local population. It is believed that there will be a great potential for further development of myopia management and progressive lenses.

Meanwhile, consumers are more concerned about eye health and tend to expect more professional services, rather than simply buying eyewear. Owing to their uncompromising pursuit of quality services, some people who have already moved overseas would only go to their usually-visited eyewear shops or optical centres to get/replace their eyewear when they return to Hong Kong. To meet the needs of consumers, some eyewear chain groups have established ophthalmic medical centres managed by ophthalmologists that provide diagnosis and treatment of eye diseases, transforming from eyewear retail to one-stop eye health and care service centres. In addition, considering that senior citizens often have auditory problems

besides eye care needs, their business has even expanded to include auditory examinations and hearing aid fitting. Traditional eyewear shops have also begun to provide more value-added services, such as offering comprehensive optical examinations at concessionary prices, with a view to increasing the annual number of visits per customer.

Another group of customers, the younger ones, who do not have special eye care needs often view eyewear as fashion accessories and usually look for diverse styles. Therefore, chain stores specialising in young and popular eyewear have also been well-received by consumers in recent years.

Furthermore, the Timepiece and Optical Industries have noticed that many consumers prefer niche brands or limited crossover designs in recent years. A number of brands have tried to reach out to new customer groups through cross-brand collaborations.

## Shift in promotion and sales channels

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The current timepiece and eyewear markets are highly transparent, and consumers can easily obtain information about different products through websites or other social media. Besides, many customers spend a lot of time using social media. Comparing with traditional advertising, Key Opinion Leader

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<sup>6</sup> Sotheby's  
<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/luxury/watches/watch/bucherer-certified-pre-owned>

<sup>7</sup> CUHK News Centre Press Release - CUHK study reveals prevalence of myopia in children has reached record high in Hong Kong (30 August 2023)  
<https://www.cpr.cuhk.edu.hk/tc/press/cuhk-study-reveals-prevalence-of-myopia-in-children-has-reached-record-high-in-hong-kong/>



(KOL) and Key Opinion Consumer (KOC) have a greater influence on consumers. Many brands have employed KOL/KOC for marketing purposes. KOLs usually promote products through soft advertising, rather than direct sales promotion. They integrate products into their daily lives, and consumers who identify with their lifestyles would also pursue the watches or eyewear they wear. KOCs are even more natural and down-to-earth than KOLs. They share their experiences/views on the products with customers in a way as if they were friends, aiming at winning public praise. In addition to media such as Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, Xiaohongshu's influence is constantly expanding, and besides the Mainland consumers, local consumers have also started to use this platform. Moreover, the new generation of consumers can access plenty of new products online. They are usually low in brand loyalty, and they may not even have any preferred brands. When they make a shopping decision, they often consider whether the brand or product concept aligns with their own values. A product which can evoke their emotional resonance can trigger their desire to purchase it more easily. Therefore, many brands are committed to creating brand/product stories so as to impress the consumers.

Consumers are also placing more emphasis on the shopping experience than ever before, expecting more timely services, as well as more diversified and convenient shopping modes. While online sale is prevalent today, high-end watches as luxury goods are still less likely to be sold directly online. Those sold online are still confined to mid and low-priced watches. As the sale of eyewear requires examinations and adjustments, glasses sold online are mostly

limited to sunglasses and contact lenses. However, the industries have realised the importance of online marketing, and many retailers have transformed their operation from purely brick-and-mortar stores to O2O (online to offline) sales model. For example, through online promotion and by leading those online customers to brick-and-mortar stores for consumption, a business can expand its customer base. Some retailers may also model their brick-and-mortar stores as showrooms or experiential stores to allow customers to experience their products in person; and then further strengthen customers' intention for purchase through online promotion. Connecting online and offline operations seamlessly, creating more interaction with consumers, and optimising their shopping experience have become a prevailing trend.

## Extensive application of new technologies

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A lot of advanced technologies have already been employed in the manufacturing of timepieces as well as eyewear, such as computer-aided design (CAD), computer numerical control (CNC) technology and automatic/semi-automatic production lines (including optical inspection, automatic lens grinding equipment, etc.). In addition, with the use of new technologies such as big data and 3D printing, designers can make reference to past design parameters and other statistical data (such as head circumferences, facial features, consumer behaviour surveys, etc.) to shorten the time from design to production significantly and bring diversified (including customised) products to consumers.

New technologies have also been widely used for retailing and brand promotion. For example, many companies have started using artificial intelligence (AI) to assist in processing online inquiries, providing virtual eyewear or watch try-on services online, launching exclusive apps to provide product information, online shopping functions, and increasing interaction with consumers. Some brands have also ventured into Non-fungible Tokens (NFTs) by launching physical watches in conjunction with digital art. Famous auction houses have also applied blockchain technology, allowing those who have successfully bid designated classic watches to obtain unique NFTs featuring design manuscripts and smart contracts.

Deloitte's 2022 Swiss Watch Industry Study Report also recorded that 57% of watch brands plan to launch NFTs in the coming year, mainly for product certification purposes<sup>8</sup>.

In order to provide more precise eye examination and care services, optical centres and eyewear stores have also brought in advanced optical and ophthalmic instruments, myopia control and progressive lenses in recent years.

## Emphasis on product and enterprise sustainability

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Environmental protection has become an issue of concern in recent years. To fulfil social responsibility and enhance brand image, timepiece and optical brands have begun to focus on the sustainability of their products as well as the sustainability of their enterprises as a whole. The Association of Italian Optical Manufacturers (ANFAO) has launched a certification programme on sustainable development. With Certottica, the Italian Optical Certification Association as the certification body, ANFAO hopes to encourage more Italian optical products to adopt environmental friendly certification labels<sup>9</sup>. According to the Deloitte Swiss Watch Industry Study 2022, the number of timepiece brands that take sustainable development as part of their corporate strategy increased by 8% compared to 2021<sup>10</sup>.

Most local companies achieve sustainability of their products through the selection of raw materials' sources, control of carbon dioxide emissions during production and product packaging. For example, the Hong Kong Optical Manufacturers Association is working with the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) to explore the use of recycling metal waste to create raw materials for optical products<sup>11</sup>. Timepiece

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<sup>8</sup> The Deloitte Swiss Watch Industry Study 2022 (P.28)  
<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ch/Documents/consumer-business/deloitte-ch-en-swiss-watch-industry-study-2022.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Eyecare Business. News - ANFAO Annual Meeting Unveils Sustainability Certification Project (30 June 2022)  
<https://www.eyecarebusiness.com/news/2022/anfao-annual-meeting-unveils-sustainability-certif>

<sup>10</sup> The Deloitte Swiss Watch Industry Study 2022 (P.34)  
<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/ch/Documents/consumer-business/deloitte-ch-en-swiss-watch-industry-study-2022.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Hong Kong Optical Manufacturers Association Yearbook 2022 (P.9)  
<https://www.hkoptical.org.hk/news/yearbook2022.pdf>

brands are also developing renewable or biodegradable materials to manufacture watches, especially for the straps, such as recycled PET and imitation leather made of natural plant fibres. Many manufacturers have also reduced energy use by optimising their production processes. Looking forward, a greater emphasis will be placed on Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance (ESG). Timepiece and optical enterprises will shift their focus from merely environmental protection to a broader scope covering social responsibility and corporate governance, such as issues of labour rights and business ethics.

## Manpower Demand

### Focus Groups

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In respect of sales, both industries have a significant demand for frontline sales and middle-level management personnel. An eyewear retail representative even pointed out that the shortage of manpower had affected the company's operations and plans to open new stores.

In terms of production, due to cost and talent issues, the vast majority of the production lines of the two industries have been transferred to Mainland China or other Southeast Asian regions, with few of them recruiting relevant personnel in Hong Kong. However, the Focus Groups believe that if

there are relevant local talents, companies in the two industries will be most willing to hire them. In order to diversify risks and reduce costs, some optical companies are establishing new production lines across ASEAN, and these optical companies are eager to have local talents to assist them in managing the new production bases.

In terms of design, both industries appreciate the standard of locally trained design talents, considering that they are more creative and more sensitive to the trend than Mainland designers. However, as local designers are not familiar with the production processes, both industries are eager for local designers with basic production knowledge.

Due to the continued popularity of high-priced watches and the growth of the second-hand watch market, the Timepiece Industry has a strong demand for after-sales and repair professionals. Considering that most of the current watch technicians are in advanced age, there is a pressing need for new talents to join the industry. In addition, owing to the increasing myopia and ageing population, the Optical Industry also has a growing demand for optometrists. According to the projection of healthcare manpower made in 2020, the shortage of optometrists in 2030, 2035, and 2040 is 366, 480, and 654 respectively<sup>12</sup>. The Government has also acknowledged the shortage of optometrists and included the post in the Talent List.

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<sup>12</sup> LC Paper No. CB(4)600/20-21(05)

<https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr20-21/chinese/panels/hs/papers/hs20210324cb4-600-5-c.pdf>

## Desk Research

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The desk research was conducted in the period between July 2022 and June 2023, with 240 and 238 job advertisements related respectively to timepiece and eyewear collected. The top three jobs for which there were the most job advertisements in these two industries are listed below:

### Timepiece Industry

	Figure in ( ) denotes the proportion of the total advertisements^
1	Repairer (Watch and Clock)/Watch Technician / Assembler (37.1%)
2	Salesperson / Sales and Marketing Executive / Manager (14.2%)
3	Merchandiser (12.5%)

## Training Needs

Due to the difficulties in recruiting proper talents, companies in the industries have to hire individuals who lack experience or relevant training, and then arrange internal training for them. Many companies hope that training institutions can offer courses on timepiece and eyewear covering the following areas so as to cultivate more local talents for the industries.

### Basic knowledge on production processes

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Although most of the production processes of timepiece and eyewear are not carried out

### Optical Industry

	Figure in ( ) denotes the proportion of the total advertisements^
1	Salesperson / Senior salesperson (53.4%)
2	Designer (12.6%)
3	Optometrist (11.3%)

As the Manpower Survey in 2020 was conducted when the pandemic was very severe, there were only around 10 vacancies in total recorded for the two industries at that time, which was insufficient for comparison with the desk research findings.

The data from desk research in general conforms to the opinions of the Focus Groups, indicating that the positions in high demand in recent years include watch and clock repairer, eyewear designer, optometrist, and retail/sales personnel in the two industries.

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locally, the industries believe that many types of work still require basic production knowledge. Taking design as an example, the industries agree that there is local supply of design talents, but most of them lack training in production and have few opportunities to access production lines. As a result, they are unable to take into consideration the limitations in material and production processes when they design the products. Since timepieces have a more complex structure than eyewear, it is even more necessary for those engaged in timepiece design to have watchmaking knowledge.

Apart from designers, the industries believe that practitioners engaged in retail, wholesale, and export should also receive basic training on production knowledge. The knowledge will help them explain the characteristics of different products in detail to customers. For example, by invoking the complexity of the production processes, they can explain to customers the unique value of a product and the reasons why it can hardly be imitated by other similar products. All these are greatly helpful in promoting sales.

## Digital marketing skills

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The pandemic accelerated the transformation of the buying habits of consumers. Even those consumers who are not accustomed to online shopping would spend a lot of time browsing product information online or on social media platforms before planning to shop in physical stores. Therefore, those engaged in promotion and sales must master digital marketing skills.

Many local companies engaged in the export of timepieces and eyewear regard Mainland China as one of their major markets. Personnel engaged in relevant promotion work must be familiar with sales/publicity platforms popular in the Mainland, such as Xiaohongshu, Tiktok, Tmall, etc. Local retail personnel should also enhance their online sales skills, familiarise themselves with social media applications, and understand the operation of their company's online platforms/apps, so as to effectively maintain customer relationships and promote products.

## Repair of timepiece

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Noticing a strong demand for after-sales service for timepieces, the industry suggests strengthening training in related areas. At present, some local programmes, such as the Diploma of Vocational Education (Watch and Clock) offered by VTC, focus more on training about the entire manufacturing process, covering product development, design of parts and manufacturing, etc. It is recommended that the focus of relevant programmes be shifted to repair and maintenance, such as identifying common problems and solutions in watches and clocks, and skills for replacing parts. Trainees who are interested in making the parts of watches may enrol in more advanced manufacturing programmes on need basis.

## Optics and ophthalmic care

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In addition to general retail knowledge, eyewear retail personnel must possess specialised knowledge in eyewear and ophthalmic care in order to provide customers with preliminary advice on the selection of lenses and frame, and identify cases that require referrals to optometrists.

At present, the Hong Kong Polytechnic University is the primary optometry education provider in Hong Kong. It offers a five-year Bachelor of Science in Optometry programme, upon the completion of which students may become a registered optometrist. However, there are very few short-term optometry or optics courses for beginners. The industry hopes that training institutions can offer relevant short-term pre-employment and (or) in-service training courses, to provide basic knowledge in



optometry, optics, contact lenses wearing and maintenance, ophthalmic care, etc., so as to equip the newcomers with sufficient knowledge to serve the customers.

## Emerging markets

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In the past, the main export markets for timepiece and eyewear were Europe, the USA and Mainland China. However, ASEAN has gradually developed as an important emerging market, and many companies would like to expand their presence there. Therefore, those engaged in the two industries are expected to have market acumen and a better understanding of the characteristics of the emerging markets, including their cultures, preferences, and shopping habits.

## Recruitment Challenges

The Focus Groups consider that recruitment is generally difficult for the industries. In addition to common recruitment channels, many companies would also resort to internal referrals, social media platforms, etc. to recruit talents, but the results have not been satisfactory. The main reasons are specified below:

### Decline in overall labour force

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The emigration wave and ageing population have led to a decline in the overall labour force of Hong Kong. According to data from the C&SD, the working population of Hong

Kong in the fourth quarter of 2022 was approximately 3.769 million, a decrease of over 200,000 people from 3.971 million in the first quarter of 2019<sup>13</sup>. Meanwhile, among the loss of labour force in the emigration wave, there are quite a few middle-level management personnel in the retail industry. As a result, the Timepiece and Optical Industries have reported difficulty in recruiting such employees.

### Young people prefer flexible work

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In the Timepiece and Optical Industries, especially the retail sector, working hours are typically long and usually cover public holidays. Production-related jobs may require regular stationing or frequent commuting to factories in Mainland China or other Southeast Asian regions. These jobs are often not appealing to young people who pursue flexible work. It would be difficult to recruit young people unless employers can offer favourable employment terms or flexible work arrangements.

### Lack of relevant professional training

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Currently, there is relatively little specialised training related to timepiece or eyewear, making it difficult for the industries to find talents who have received relevant training. Employers can only relax the entry requirements and provide in-house training to new employees.

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<sup>13</sup> Census and Statistics Department. Statistics -Labour Force, Employment and Unemployment <https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/tc/scode200.html>

## Lack of clear career ladder in the industries

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Many jobs in the industries are highly professional. Watch repair and maintenance, for instance, involves a lot of complicated knowledge. Retail personnel in the Optical Industry also need to master certain knowledge in optometry and ophthalmic care. However, the professionalism of these jobs has not been recognised. There is also a lack of clear career ladder in the industries, discouraging job candidates from entering the industries.

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# Recommendations

To attract talents and to support the sustainable development of the industries, the Government, employers and training providers must work together to nurture young people's interest in the Timepiece and Optical Industries in an early stage, and to provide appropriate training and recognition of qualifications for employees and students in the industries. The specific measures proposed are set out below:

### Establish a certification system to recognise practitioners' qualifications

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The Qualifications Framework (QF) has been implemented in the Watch and Clock Industry for more than a decade. Over 800 industry practitioners have obtained QF recognition through the "Recognition of Prior Learning" mechanism. However, participation in the mechanism is voluntary and has not been linked to remuneration package or promotion system. It is recommended that the Government should strengthen the promotion of QF, encourage employers to recognise QF qualifications to a greater extent, and enhance social

awareness of relevant qualifications. In the long run, a certification system should be established so that employees can be remunerated and provided with promotion opportunities corresponding to their qualifications. It is believed that this will help reshape the image of the industry and attract more people to join it. Meanwhile, the "Specification of Competency Standards" (SCS) of the Watch and Clock Industry should also be regularly updated to ensure that the latest competency requirements of the industry have been included for reference by in-service practitioners who wish to continuously improve their professionalism.

In addition, a certification system could

help establish the professionalism of local timepiece after-sales and repair personnel. It would give confidence to Mainland tourists to buy luxurious watches in Hong Kong and thus help promote local timepiece retail business.

Regarding the Optical Industry, optometrists already have a strict licensing system in place. However, as the demand for local optometry services continues to grow, there is a shortage in the supply of optometrists. Whilst not compromising quality, the Government should consider recognising more overseas optometry programmes so that those who have completed relevant programmes could register and practise in Hong Kong. In addition, it is recommended that the Government should consider introducing a licensing system for assistant optometrists so that those assistant optometrists or frontline salespersons currently working in optical centres or eyewear stores can obtain professional qualifications by completing designated courses and accumulating certain experience. On the one hand, these people can share the work of optometrists, allowing optometrists to focus more on their profession. On the other hand, it can also provide a career ladder for serving frontline staff, which will be helpful in retaining talents and attracting new blood for the industry.

## **Enhance young people's interest in the industries through providing and supporting more experiential activities**

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Young people can access a great deal of

information about different industries online. Traditional career talks or industrial visits can hardly arouse their interest in the Timepiece and Optical Industries.

At present, the Education Bureau (EDB) provides different career exploratory activities for secondary school students through the “Business-School Partnership Programme” (BSPP), allowing them to learn about different industries and explore their career aspirations. It is recommended that the industries should actively support the Programme and provide more career exploratory activities to students. The industries should also properly plan these activities to make them more interesting and engaging for students, so as to enhance students' interests in the industries in a more effective way. The Government and the industries may also consider joining hands to organise territory-wide design or repairing competitions, as well as Mainland or overseas exchanges, so that young people can explore the fun of the industries through these kinds of engaging activities.

In addition, people who are interested in design may not necessarily turn their interests into careers, as they often lack the platforms to showcase their works and convert them into products with commercial value. The Government or the industries may provide corresponding support to these people, such as assisting young winners of large-scale design competitions to identify factories for production of their designs and channels for product sales. It will greatly enhance their intention to enter the industries.



## Subsidise training institutions to offer courses

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At present, there are very few courses specialised in timepiece and eyewear. It is probably because only a limited number of people are interested in these fields, making it difficult for training institutions to gather sufficient students to run a course. To encourage diversified development, the Government may consider subsidising some courses to ensure that people interested in timepiece and eyewear can successfully enrol in relevant courses and need not turn to the courses of other industries due to limited choices.

With limited contact hours and other constraints in resources, training institutions can only provide trainees with basic training. The industries should actively support the course delivery of training institutions, by serving as guest lecturers, offering advice on course content, and providing internship opportunities, etc., to broaden the horizons of young people, allow them to have a clear understanding of the prospects of the industries, and strengthen their intention to join the industries concerned.

## Enhance Earn and Learn Scheme

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The Timepiece Industry began implementing the “Earn and Learn Scheme” in 2014, aiming to cultivate new talents for the industry. Through tripartite cooperation among the Government, the industry, and VTC, students can receive systematic combined classroom learning and on-the-job training, while earning a

stable income and receiving government subsidies.

However, according to the provisions of the Apprenticeship Ordinance, trainees participating in the Earn and Learn Scheme cannot receive on-the-job training outside Hong Kong. Owing to this restriction, most timepiece employers, whose factories are in the Mainland, cannot provide suitable on-the-job training post to trainees and thus fail to participate in the Scheme. It is recommended that the Government should review relevant regulations in due course and explore whether there is any room for relaxation so that more employers could cultivate talents through the Scheme and trainees could also learn the latest watchmaking technology in the Mainland.

## Offer more flexible and diverse working modes to employees

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While young people prefer to work with high autonomy, the working modes in most workplaces are still not flexible enough. The industries may need to reflect on the way they work with young people. The industries should also expand recruitment targets and open the door to people of different age groups.

The Focus Groups did share different methods to cope with manpower shortage. For example, some optical centres would effectively arrange their manpower by implementing an appointment system. Some retailers would collaborate with non-profit making organisations to hire students to work as interns at their stores. Some factories would hire retired colleagues to work temporarily for them

during busy periods. And many retail stores would hire part-time sales/store assistants, including university students, middle-aged people, housewives, and those of ethnic minorities; and some of these part-time jobs are on a stable, long-term basis. Employers in the industries are advised to actively take into consideration different options and offer more flexible ways of work to attract talents.