



# Manpower Update Report

## Hotel Industry

# 2025



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# Introduction

## Background

The Hotel, Catering and Tourism Training Board (HOTB) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) is appointed by the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR). According to its Terms of Reference, the HOTB is responsible for determining the

manpower situation and training needs of the hospitality industry which encompasses the hotel, catering and tourism sub-sectors, assessing whether the manpower supply matches manpower demand, and recommending to the VTC the development of vocational and professional education and training (VPET) facilities to meet the assessed training

needs.

A new approach for collecting manpower information is adopted to better reflect the dynamics of the manpower situation in the various industries. Under the new approach, one full manpower survey is conducted every four years, and is supplemented by two manpower updates. The HOTB completed its latest manpower survey for hotel industry in 2022. Two manpower updates would be conducted in 2024 and 2025.

The 2024 manpower information update comprises:

- (a) a focus group meeting of the hotel industry was conducted on 25 April 2025 to collect the views of industry experts on the latest developments in the industry, manpower and training needs, recruitment difficulties, and measures to tackle the challenges the industry faces; and
- (b) desk research analysing job advisements, including job market trend and skills required in the hotel industry.

## Objectives

The objectives of this manpower update report of the hotel industry are:

- (i) to examine the latest trends and developments in the industry;
- (ii) to identify the job market situation

- and training needs;
- (iii) to identify the recruitment challenges; and
- (iv) to recommend measures to meet the training needs.

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# Methodology

## Overview

This update report constructs the qualitative descriptions of the recent developments of the industry through a focus group meeting, supplemented by making reference to some quantitative data of recruitment advertisements from desk research.

## Focus Group Meeting

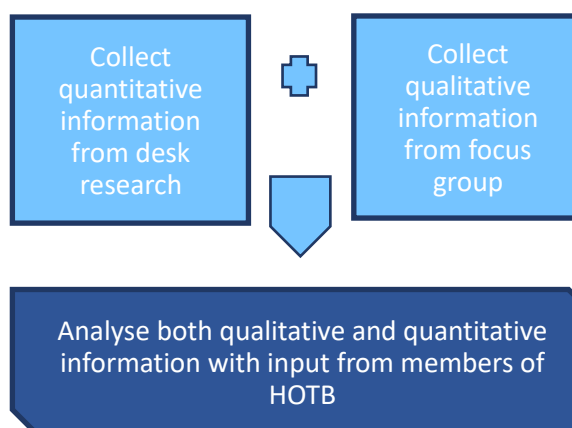
Focus group members from the hotel industry discussed on topics supported by the Working Party on Manpower Survey of the Hotel Industry. The discussions at the meeting were recorded and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

## Desk Research

Manpower information covering the period between March 2024 and April 2025 was collected through desk research. An employment information system was developed to capture the relevant recruitment data from major online recruitment portals. Around 21,000 recruitment records were collected during the research period and served as indicative information of the job market trend. The list of related companies under the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification was mapped to remove duplicated records.

## Data Analysis

The analysis consists of the following three steps:



After the above qualitative and quantitative analysis, the findings and recommendations were augmented and endorsed by the HOTB.

## Limitations

Different from the extensive quantitative manpower survey performed in 2022, this update report aims to discover the emerging themes in the manpower development of the industry. The employment trends and behaviour, recruitment difficulties, insights and observations from the stakeholders' experience were captured through this focus group and desk research. While the update report has adopted the qualitative approach of focus group discussion which covered a controlled selection of stakeholders, it might not be

generalised to the entire population. Desk research that gathered information of job vacancies from advertisements in major recruitment websites also might not be exhaustive without reference to any historical data, those were used as reference supplementary to the observations of the focus group.

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# Findings

## Factors Affecting Development of the Industry

### Global Economic Situation

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The instability of the global economic situation has resulted in fluctuating market conditions and heightened uncertainty in international travel patterns, profoundly influencing the hotel industry in Hong Kong. The repercussions are felt globally as tariffs and economic tensions escalate between major economies. This economic climate fosters a sense of unpredictability, leading potential travellers to reconsider their travel plans. For instance, increased tariffs on goods can inflate prices for consumers, which may lead to a reduction in disposable income. When individuals feel financially constrained, luxury expenditures, including international travel and hotel stays, often take a backseat.

Consumer confidence plays a pivotal role in travel decisions. As travellers become more cautious about their spending, destinations like Hong Kong, which traditionally attract a significant number of international visitors, may see a decline in arrivals. This trend is particularly concerning for the hotel industry, which relies heavily on a steady influx of tourists to maintain occupancy rates. The resulting decline in tourist numbers affects revenue and forces hotel operators to rethink their marketing strategies, pricing

models to attract a more cautious clientele.

The ongoing trade war has created a multifaceted set of challenges for the hotel industry in Hong Kong. The resulting economic uncertainties and shifting consumer behaviours necessitate a proactive approach from hotel operators. By understanding the nuances of the current situation and adapting strategies accordingly, hotels can better position themselves to navigate the complexities of the market. As the industry continues to evolve in response to these challenges, it will be crucial for stakeholders to remain vigilant and innovative, ensuring that they meet the needs of a changing traveller landscape while sustaining business viability in a competitive environment.

### Competitions from Nearby Regions and Countries

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Another crucial aspect impacting the hotel industry in Hong Kong is the highly competitive nature of room rates, particularly when compared to neighbouring regions and countries such as mainland China, Thailand, and Malaysia. These regional markets often boast significantly lower prices for accommodations, which attract cost-

conscious travellers seeking value for their holiday budgets. For instance, cities like Bangkok and Kuala Lumpur offer a range of hotel options, from luxury resorts to budget-friendly hostels, often at lower price points than comparable establishments in Hong Kong. This price differential is particularly appealing to tourists who have limited budgets or are looking for an extended stay, compelling them to choose destinations where they can maximise their spending power.

Moreover, the influx of alternative accommodation options, such as short-term rentals through platforms like Airbnb, further complicates the competitive landscape. In many Southeast Asian countries, these rentals often provide unique local experiences at a fraction of the cost of traditional hotels. Travellers are increasingly inclined to choose these alternatives, seeking both financial savings and a more personalised stay. For instance, in cities like Bali or Chiang Mai, visitors can find charming villas and local homes that offer distinct cultural experiences, making them appealing options compared to standard hotel rooms. This trend puts additional pressure on Hong Kong hotels, forcing them to not only lower their rates but also enhance their service offerings to maintain a competitive edge.

The competitive dynamics are further intensified by the travel behaviour of local residents. As Hong Kong residents become more aware of the appealing travel deals available in nearby regions, many

choose to spend their holidays in places like mainland China or Southeast Asian countries, where they can enjoy luxurious accommodations at lower prices. This trend significantly affects the local economy, particularly the food and beverage sector within the hotel industry. With fewer locals opting to stay in Hong Kong during peak holiday seasons, hotels experience a drop in occupancy rates, which leads to reduced revenue not only from room bookings but also from associated dining and entertainment services. For example, during public holidays or long weekends, many Hong Kong residents flock to popular destinations like Shenzhen, drawn by attractive all-inclusive packages that include hotels, and meals. This shift in spending has a direct impact on hotel restaurants, bars, and event spaces, all of which rely heavily on local patronage during these busy periods. As these establishments see a decline in local customers, they may be forced to adjust their offerings or pricing, leading to a potential decline in quality or service standards as they attempt to attract a dwindling customer base.

The competitive pressures facing Hong Kong's hotel industry are multifaceted and deeply influenced by regional market dynamics. The allure of lower prices in nearby areas and countries, coupled with changing consumer behaviours and the rise of alternative accommodations, necessitates a proactive and innovative approach from hotel operators.

## Convenient Border Transport

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Convenient border transport has significantly transformed tourist behaviour, particularly impacting the length of stays in Hong Kong. The improved connectivity with mainland China and nearby regions has made it easier for tourists to visit Hong Kong for short trips, often opting for day visits rather than extended stays. For instance, the seamless travel options available through high-speed trains and ferries have enabled tourists from cities like Shenzhen and Guangzhou to reach Hong Kong in a matter of hours. This accessibility encourages many visitors to take advantage of day trips to enjoy Hong Kong's attractions, shopping, and dining experiences without the need for overnight accommodations.

As a result of this shift in travel patterns, there has been a noticeable decrease in overnight bookings at hotels. Many tourists, particularly those from mainland China, may choose to stay in lower-priced hotels or accommodations in Shenzhen, where they can find more affordable options. This trend is particularly evident during peak travel seasons when many Chinese tourists flock to Hong Kong for shopping or sightseeing. Instead of booking a hotel room in Hong Kong, they may opt for a quick trip, returning home or Shenzhen the same day after enjoying the city's offerings. This behaviour not only affects hotel occupancy rates in Hong Kong but also places additional stress on local hospitality services that rely on overnight

guests to sustain their operations.

The implications of this trend extend beyond just hotel occupancy; they significantly affect the food and beverage sector within the hotel industry. With fewer overnight guests, hotel restaurants and bars experience a decline in patronage, leading to reduced revenue from dining services. Many hotels traditionally rely on their in-house dining options to supplement income from room bookings, but as day-trippers prefer to eat at local cafes or street food stalls, the demand for hotel dining experiences diminishes. This shift poses a considerable challenge for hotels.

Moreover, the competition from mainland cities is intensifying this dynamic. Cities like Shenzhen have seen a boom in hotel development, with many new establishments offering competitive rates and appealing amenities. These hotels cater to the growing number of domestic travellers who may choose to spend the night in Shenzhen and then travel to Hong Kong for the day. When travelers can find quality accommodations at lower prices in mainland China, they are less inclined to invest in higher-priced hotels in Hong Kong, further exacerbating the occupancy challenges faced by local operators.

Additionally, the availability of a wide range of attractions and experiences in mainland cities also plays a role in diverting potential overnight visitors away from Hong Kong. Shenzhen, for example, offers numerous entertainment and shopping options,

including theme parks, shopping malls, and local culinary experiences that rival those found in Hong Kong. As travellers become more discerning about how they spend their time and money, the appeal of these alternative destinations can detract from Hong Kong's traditional allure, making it imperative for the city to innovate in its offerings.

## Rising Labour and Utility Costs

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The rising labour and utility costs present a significant challenge for the hotel industry in Hong Kong, adding pressure to an already competitive market. As operational expenses continue to climb, hotel operators are compelled to reassess their pricing strategies and service offerings to ensure sustainability. The high cost of living in Hong Kong translates to elevated wages for staff, a critical factor affecting the hospitality sector. For instance, the minimum wage in Hong Kong has increased over the years, reflecting the city's high living costs. This rise in wages, while necessary for attracting and retaining talent, increases operational costs for hotels, which must balance competitive pay with profitability.

Coupled with high labour costs are soaring utility expenses that further strain hotel budgets. The costs of electricity, water, and gas have seen significant increases, especially with the growing demand for energy-efficient solutions and sustainability initiatives. For example, hotels are increasingly investing in energy-efficient

systems, such as LED lighting and smart climate control, to reduce their long-term utility expenses. While these investments can result in savings over time, the initial capital outlay can be substantial, creating a financial burden in the short term.

Furthermore, to tackle high labour costs, some hotels are investing in employee wellness programmes and incentives that promote job satisfaction and reduce turnover. Creating a positive work environment that values employee contributions can enhance service quality and foster loyalty among staff. For example, hotels that offer career development opportunities and flexible working conditions may find that their employees are more motivated and engaged, leading to improved service delivery.

## Manpower Demand

As the hotel industry faces uncertainty over the next 1-2 years, operators are striving to balance costs while retaining permanent staff and supplementing their workforce with part-time or casual employees to meet fluctuating demand, particularly during events. This approach allows hotels to remain agile in response to varying occupancy rates and special functions, such as conferences or weddings, which often require additional manpower. For example, during peak seasons or major events, hotels may experience a surge in bookings that necessitates extra hands-on

deck for housekeeping, front desk operations, and event management. By employing part-time staff, hotels can efficiently scale their workforce to ensure that guest needs are met without incurring the long-term costs associated with hiring full-time employees during quieter periods.

Despite advancements in technology that streamline operations and enhance efficiencies, such as automated check-in systems and AI-driven customer service tools, the essence of the hotel industry remains centered on service and user experience. Many roles within the hotel industry, such as housekeeping and room attendants, cannot be replaced by technology, as these positions require a personal touch and attention to detail that only trained staff can provide. Guests seek personalised interactions that create memorable stays, and high-quality customer service is a critical component of that experience. For instance, while a mobile app may facilitate reservations and room preferences, it is the warm welcome from a front desk agent and the meticulous care of a room attendant that make a lasting impression. Therefore, maintaining a skilled and motivated workforce is crucial for delivering exceptional experiences. Part-time and casual staff play an essential role in addressing peak demands, ensuring that hotels can provide the attentive service that guests expect. This balance is vital for navigating the challenges of the current

market while continuing to prioritise the guest experience, ultimately fostering brand loyalty and encouraging repeat business.

## Desk Research

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Out of the relevant recruitment advertisements captured in desk research, the top five principal jobs with the highest number of recruitment advertisements were identified:

Principal Jobs	
2024	2022
1 Room Attendant; Room Services Butler; Floor Attendant; Housekeeping Clerk; Order-Taker 5.3%	Guest Service Officer/Guest Service Agent; Front Desk Agent; Guest Relations Officer; Welcome Host; Executive Floor Agent; Business Centre Officer 9.4%
2 Steward; Cleaner; Dishwasher 4.8%	Engineering Craftsman 7.9%
3 Waiter/Waitress; Server; Restaurant Receptionist 4.7%	Room Attendant; Room Services Butler; Floor Attendant; Housekeeping Clerk; Order-Taker; Co-Ordinator (Housekeeping) 7.3%

		Principal Jobs	
		2024	2022
4	Captain; Restaurant Supervisor	4.2%	Waiter/Waitress; Server; Restaurant Receptionist 5.2%
5	Front Desk Agent; Front Office Clerk / Receptionist; Guest Relations Officer; Car Park Attendant	3.2%	Reservation Clerk; Guest Services Ambassador/Agent/ Assistant 4.2%

## Training Needs

Under the competitive industry arena, it is considered necessary to update and upgrade industry knowledge and skills as follows:

### In-service Practitioners and Pre-employment

Generic Skills –

a. In the labour-intensive hotel industry, effective communication and strong interpersonal skills are paramount for success. Employees interact with a diverse array of guests daily, making it essential for them to convey information clearly and courteously.

Communication skills enable staff to understand and respond to guest needs, resolve issues promptly, and enhance overall satisfaction. Additionally, strong interpersonal skills foster a welcoming atmosphere, allowing employees to build rapport with guests and create memorable experiences. For instance, a front desk agent who can engage with guests warmly and empathetically can turn a potentially negative situation into a positive one, reinforcing the hotel's reputation. Furthermore, teamwork among staff members is crucial in delivering seamless service; thus, employees who communicate effectively with one another contribute to a collaborative work environment. Ultimately, the ability to connect with guests and colleagues not only improves service quality but also drives guest loyalty and repeat business, making these skills invaluable in the competitive hospitality landscape.

Sustainability awareness –

b. Interpersonal skills, EQ and the patience to tackle problems with an investigative mindset, treasuring challenges as personal development opportunities are qualities to be mastered by young people.

- c. Future-ready graduates should be groomed to possess a globalised vision and equipped with the readiness to explore manpower exchange and career opportunities beyond the local market.

## Recruitment Challenges

The hotel industry has faced considerable recruitment challenges that threaten its ability to attract and retain talent. As the landscape of work evolves, potential candidates are increasingly scrutinising not just job roles but also the overall image and working conditions of the hospitality sector. Long working hours and high-pressure environments may have led many prospective employees, particularly younger individuals, to reconsider their career choices, often leaving internships prematurely or shifting to other industries that offer more appealing environments. This situation presents a pressing challenge for hotel operators as they seek to build a skilled workforce capable of delivering exceptional service in a competitive market. Understanding these recruitment dynamics is essential for the industry to adapt and thrive in the face of changing expectations and economic realities.

## Industry Image

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- a. Many potential candidates perceive the hotel industry as demanding, particularly due to long working hours and high-pressure environments. This perception can be especially off-putting for younger individuals seeking a better work-life balance. Many interns may leave their positions midway through their internships, citing the demanding nature of the work, and the struggle to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Such turnover not only disrupts operations but also reflects poorly on the industry as a whole, making it harder to attract fresh talent.
- b. Some interns are shifting to other industries that offer more appealing working conditions, such as real estate, where flexible hours and improved workplace environments are often more readily available. This trend poses a significant challenge for the hotel industry, as it must compete for talent in a landscape where other industries are perceived as more attractive.

## Parents' Views

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- a. Parents' perceptions of the hotel industry play a role in the recruitment difficulties faced by the sector. Many parents hope their children will pursue careers that are seen as prestigious or

professional, such as medicine, law, or finance. As a result, young people may feel pressure to conform to these expectations, steering them away from exploring opportunities in the hotel industry. This dynamic can exacerbate the existing talent shortage, as potential candidates may overlook or dismiss hospitality roles in favour of more conventional career paths. The perception that hotel work is merely a temporary or low-status job further compounds the issue, making it challenging for the industry to attract the next generation of talent who might otherwise thrive in this vibrant and dynamic field.

- b. Furthermore, the lack of awareness about the diverse career opportunities within the hotel industry exacerbates the recruitment challenge. Many parents and students are unaware of the various roles available, ranging from management positions to specialised fields such as event planning, culinary arts, and marketing. This limited understanding can lead to a narrow view of the industry as solely focused on entry-level service jobs, which do not align with the aspirations parents have for their children. The dynamic nature of the hotel industry, including international exposure and travel opportunities, are often overlooked. Consequently, young people might overlook a rewarding career path that provides personal growth and the opportunity to acquire

valuable skills in a global setting. This gap between perception and reality makes it harder for the industry to attract new talent, resulting in a challenging void to fill.

## Importation of Labour

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- a. While bringing in skilled workers from mainland or overseas can help alleviate immediate manpower shortages, the application hurdles and lengthy processing times will hinder timely access to essential talent. This not only impacts operational efficiency but also places additional pressure on existing staff, who may be required to take on extra responsibilities during the interim. The industry must advocate for streamlined processes that can expedite the importation of labour, ensuring that businesses can respond swiftly to fluctuating demand.
- b. While integrating imported labour into the workforce can enhance diversity and fill skill gaps, it is crucial to address the challenges that may arise from cultural differences and varying work practices. Effective integration programmes are essential to foster collaboration and understanding between local employees and imported workers.

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# Recommendations

To meet the future developments of the industry, it is considered essential for the government, industry and education institutions to provide support and suitable training in the following areas:

## Government

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- a. Initiate comprehensive marketing campaigns aimed at promoting Hong Kong as a vibrant tourist destination. This includes highlighting not only the city's rich cultural heritage and culinary diversity but also the exceptional service standards maintained by the hospitality sector.
- b. Develop new attractions to create a more appealing environment for tourists. To encourage longer stays, the government should conduct unique events that showcase Hong Kong's character, such as cultural festivals, food fairs, and art exhibitions, which can attract visitors for multiple days. Various kinds of events can immerse tourists in the local experience, encouraging them to stay overnight.
- c. Host international conferences and sports events to stimulate interest, drawing more visitors and increasing the demand for hotel services. These efforts will not only boost tourism but also help reshape public perception of the hospitality sector as a thriving and dynamic field.
- d. Promote vocational and professional education training in hospitality, allowing educational institutions to recruit students from more cities of mainland China and overseas through various talent admission schemes, such as the Vocational Professional Admission Scheme (VPAS). This approach will provide a wider pool of entrants to the industry, helping to cultivate a skilled workforce that can meet the demands of a diverse tourist population.
- e. Open apprenticeship programmes for hospitality that subsidise both employers and students. By providing financial incentives, more students will be willing to join the industry, gaining practical experience while easing the burden on employers.

## Industry

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- a. Actively work to enhance the image of the hotel industry by emphasising the diverse career opportunities available within the sector. This can be achieved through strategic marketing initiatives that spotlight the variety of roles, from management positions to specialised areas such as culinary arts, event planning, and hospitality technology.
- b. Highlight the positive aspects of working in hospitality, which is characterised by dynamic teamwork, where employees collaborate to create memorable experiences for guests.
- c. Prioritise improving working conditions across the board to offer competitive salaries that reflect the skills and efforts of employees, along with comprehensive benefits packages that address health, wellness, and job security. Flexibility in work hours, where possible, can promote a healthier work-life balance, making hospitality careers more attractive to younger workers who prioritise personal time and well-being.
- d. Create a culture of recognition and appreciation, where employees are celebrated for their contributions, which can significantly boost morale

and loyalty. Regular training and professional development opportunities should be offered to ensure that employees feel valued and equipped to excel in their roles.

## Education Institutions

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- a. Take proactive steps to expand their recruitment efforts, aiming to admit more students from local, mainland, and overseas backgrounds. This diversity is crucial for fostering a workforce that can cater to a global clientele and bring various perspectives to the hospitality industry. A varied student population not only enriches the learning environment but also prepares graduates to interact proficiently with a wide range of customers, enhancing the overall guest experience.
- b. Design curricula to prioritise training in essential communication and interpersonal skills, which are critical for success in hospitality roles. Effective communication is at the heart of exceptional service; therefore, courses should include modules on verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, and conflict resolution.
- c. Incorporate practical experiences, such as internships and hands-on training, as they are vital for equipping students with the

necessary skills to excel in the hospitality industry. Collaborating with local hotels and restaurants to offer internships allows students to apply their theoretical knowledge in real-world settings, gaining valuable insights into daily operations and customer interactions. Such experiences not only enhance employability but also help students build professional networks that can be beneficial for future job placements.