



HONG KONG RETAIL MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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**Hong Kong Retail Management Association's
Submission to the Legislative Council
Panel on Economic Services
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**“Tackling market malpractices associated with
Zero-fare tours from the Mainland”**

1. The Hong Kong Retail Management Association (HKRMA) advocates that the Government should take a strong stance and a more proactive approach to tackle the recent malpractices associated with zero-fare tours from the Mainland and its negative impacts on the overall image of Hong Kong as a world-class tourist destination.
2. The HKRMA is of the view that the malpractices of zero-fare tours cannot be tackled successfully only at the side of Hong Kong. It requires the tourism organizations in Hong Kong and those in the Mainland, including the China National Tourism Authority and the tourism bureaus at provincial and municipal levels, to join force and work closely on the immediate negative effects arising from the recent malpractice episodes, and on long term practical measures to eradicate and prevent the unethical practices.
3. The Government should devise a more effective regulatory framework with reinforcement on punitive measures in regard to the malpractices of the inbound travel agents, tour guides, and the like. On regulatory measures, the HKRMA suggests:
 - to set up a control/punishment system for different levels of malpractices such as warning letter, announcement of "black list", heavy penalty & invalidation of the license;
 - to monitor the operation of the travel agencies and to encourage the set

- up of a basic salary for the tourist guides; and
 - to monitor the advertising/ promotional materials to check if there are incorrect or misleading messages.
4. It is important to elevate the promotion, education and publicity on consumer rights and protection measures both in Hong Kong and China. This can be achieved by providing more travel information via various official and unofficial channels, such as Tourism Board or other travel organizations, so that the Mainland tourists are well informed about the reasonable price for a tour, the merchandises to be bought in HK, the “14-day, 100% Refund Guarantee Scheme”, as well as the complaints channels available.
 5. We appreciate the Government’s immediate measure to launch the “Honest and Quality Hong Kong Tour” to the Mainland tourists right after the Qinghai tour incident. However, this first launch of “pressure-free shopping” package appeared not very attractive to the Mainland travelers (only 63 travelers joined the first tour), probably due to the relatively high price of the tour. It is suggested that the Government should further promote tours of this kind and enhance cooperation with tourism industry related operators eg. airlines, hotels, coach companies for joint promotions or special offers in order to increase the attractiveness and lower the costs of such tours.
 6. Hong Kong’s overall image as an honest and quality “Shoppers’ Paradise” is greatly damaged, especially to the Mainland tourists, as a result of the recent undesired incident. The HKRMA urges the Government to take the initiative to coordinate a large-scale nation-wide campaign to rebuild Hong Kong’s image as a world-class “Shoppers’ Paradise” in the Mainland without delay.
 7. At the international front, the consistent and timely dissemination of positive news about Hong Kong’s tourism industry and its renowned status as the world’s “Shoppers’ Paradise” should be further increased.

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