

## Preserving Heritage: The Challenges and Prospects of the Star Ferry in Hong Kong



Source: pixabay (2017)

### Background

The Star Ferry has been transporting passengers between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon since 1880 (Star Ferry, n.d.). With almost 150 years of history, some believe that the Star Ferry is more than just a local transport, but a living symbol of Hong Kong's history and culture (Whitehead, 2022). Over the years, the Star Ferry has also been a popular attraction as tourists hop onboard to take in the stunning Victoria Harbour skyline. It is even named one of the "50 places of a lifetime" by the National Geographic of Traveler (HKTB, n.d.).

Despite its cultural significance, the Star Ferry Company has faced ongoing financial difficulties since the early 2000s and was close to closure during the COVID-19 pandemic. Passenger numbers plummeted during the outbreak, severely impacting the company's finances, as fare revenue accounts for more than half its total revenue (Buddle, 2022). Determined to recover loss and avoid closure, Star Ferry relentlessly sought permission from the local authorities to increase its fares since the resumption of international travel activities (Cheng, 2023). The company's effort paid off as government officials finally agreed to a 56% fare increase starting April 2023, bringing the fares up to HKD\$5 on weekdays and HKD\$6.5 on weekends respectively (Cheng, 2023). Recognizing the increasing number of mainland Chinese visitors, Star Ferry also introduced e-payment options such as WeChat Pay, Alipay, and BoC Pay to better accommodate this customer segment (Star Ferry Instagram, 2023).

Furthermore, Star Ferry began seeking alternative revenue streams to reduce its reliance on fare income. The company urged the government to ease the commercial restrictions at its Central and Wan Chai piers, holding the government accountable for underutilizing these valuable public spaces (Hung, 2023). The company believes that hosting events such as holiday markets and live performances regularly, not only could generate revenue up to HK\$1.5 million annually to subsidize its ferry services but also aligns with the government's efforts to boost

the city's nighttime economy (Hung, 2023). The company also revealed its plan to renovate its 65-year-old Tsim Sha Tsui pier to enhance visitor experience. Proposed improvements include the construction of a public viewing deck and the installation of floor-to-ceiling windows to offer better views of the harbour (Hung, 2023).

### **Challenges**

Given its long-standing financial difficulties, there is skepticism about whether the Star Ferry Company is capable to consistently host high-quality events or complete a large-scale renovation project of Tsim Sha Tsui pier. Despite the ferry's deep cultural and sentimental value to the public, some question why no investor has stepped in to revitalize or save Star Ferry (Whitehead, 2022).

Concerns have also been raised regarding the effectiveness of the proposed revitalization plans. Questions remain about how well the Star Ferry's events and pier developments will integrate with other public spaces along the harbourfront (Hung, 2023). Additionally, residents in nearby areas worry that frequent events and performances may lead to noise pollution and other disturbances if the proposals are approved.

### **Discussion Questions:**

1. What are the potential impacts of the fare increase on local commuters and tourists, and how might this affect the Star Ferry's market share?
2. How effective might the introduction of e-payment methods be in attracting more mainland Chinese visitors? What other strategies could the company implement?
3. What factors might be discouraging potential investors from supporting or acquiring the Star Ferry?
4. How can the Star Ferry's proposals be integrated with other public spaces along the harbourfront to create a cohesive and vibrant area?

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## **Keywords**

- Attraction
- Cultural Heritage
- Local Transport
- Pricing
- Income Diversification
- Nighttime Economy

## **Acknowledgement**

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## 保护遗产：香港天星小轮的挑战与前景



Source: pixabay (2017)

### 背景

自 1880 年以来，天星小轮一直在香港岛和九龙之间运送乘客（Star Ferry, n.d.）。拥有近 150 年的历史，一些人认为天星小轮不仅仅是一种本地交通工具，更是香港历史与文化的鲜活象征（Whitehead,2022）。多年来，天星小轮也一直是一个受欢迎的景点，游客登船以欣赏壮丽的维多利亚港天际线。它甚至被《国家地理旅行者》杂志评选为“一生必去的 50 个地方”之一（HKTB, n.d.）。

尽管具有重要的文化意义，天星小轮公司自 21 世纪初以来一直面临持续的财务困境，并在新冠疫情期间濒临停运。疫情期间乘客数量骤降，严重影响了公司的财务状况，因为票价收入占其总收入的一半以上（Buddle,2022）。为了弥补亏损并避免停运，自国际旅行活动恢复以来，天星小轮不懈地向地方当局寻求批准提高票价（Cheng,2023）。公司的努力取得了成效，政府官员最终同意自 2023 年 4 月起将票价提高 56%，工作日票价涨至 5 港元，周末票价涨至 6.5 港元（Cheng,2023）。认识到内地访港游客数量日益增多，天星小轮还引入了微信支付、支付宝和中银闪付等电子支付方式，以更好地服务这部分客户群（Star Ferry Instagram,2023）。

此外，天星小轮开始寻求替代收入来源，以减少对票务收入的依赖。公司敦促政府放宽对其中环和湾仔码头的商业限制，并认为政府对这些宝贵的公共空间利用不足负有责任（Hung,2023）。公司相信，定期举办假日市集和现场表演等活动，不仅每年可产生高达 150 万港元的收入以补贴其渡轮服务，也符合政府提振城市夜间经济的努力（Hung,2023）。公司还透露了改造其已有 65 年历史的尖沙咀码头以提升游客

体验的计划。拟议的改进措施包括建造一个公共观景台和安装落地玻璃窗，以提供更好的海港景观（Hung,2023）。

## **挑战**

鉴于其长期存在的财务困难，外界对于天星小轮公司是否有能力持续举办高质量的活动或完成尖沙咀码头的大规模改造项目持怀疑态度。尽管天星小轮对公众具有深厚的文化和情感价值，但一些人质疑为何没有投资者介入以振兴或拯救天星小轮（Whitehead,2022）。

人们也对所提议的振兴计划的有效性提出了担忧。天星小轮的活动和码头开发如何与海滨长廊沿线的其他公共空间融为一体，仍然存在疑问（Hung,2023）。此外，附近地区的居民担心，如果这些提议获得批准，频繁的活动和表演可能会导致噪音污染和其他干扰。

## **讨论问题：**

1. 票价上调对本地通勤者和游客可能产生哪些影响？这可能会如何影响天星小轮的市场份额？
2. 引入电子支付方式在吸引更多内地游客方面效果如何？该公司还可以实施哪些其他策略？
3. 哪些因素可能阻碍潜在投资者支持或收购天星小轮？
4. 天星小轮的提议如何与海滨长廊沿线的其他公共空间整合，以创建一个连贯且充满活力的区域？

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## 关键词

- 景点
- 文化遗产
- 本地交通
- 定价
- 收入多元化
- 夜间经济

## 致谢

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儘管具有重要的文化意義，天星小輪公司自 21 世紀初以來一直面臨持續的財務困境，並在新冠疫情期間瀕臨停運。疫情期間乘客數量驟降，嚴重影響了公司的財務狀況，因為票價收入佔其總收入的一半以上 (Buddle, 2022)。為了彌補虧損並避免停運，自國際旅行活動恢復以來，天星小輪不懈地向地方當局尋求批准提高票價 (Cheng, 2023)。公司的努力取得了成效，政府官員最終同意自 2023 年 4 月起將票價提高 56%，工作日票價漲至 5 港元，週末票價漲至 6.5 港元 (Cheng, 2023)。認識到內地訪港遊客數量日益增多，天星小輪還引入了微信支付、支付寶和中銀閃付等電子支付方式，以更好地服務這部分客戶群 (Star Ferry Instagram, 2023)。

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每年可產生高達 150 萬港元的收入以補貼其渡輪服務，也符合政府提振城市夜間經濟的努力 (Hung, 2023)。公司還透露了改造其已有 65 年歷史的尖沙咀碼頭以提升遊客體驗的計劃。擬議的改進措施包括建造一個公共觀景台和安裝落地玻璃窗，以提供更好的海港景觀 (Hung, 2023)。

## **挑戰**

鑑於其長期存在的財務困難，外界對於天星小輪公司是否有能力持續舉辦高質量的活動或完成尖沙咀碼頭的大規模改造項目持懷疑態度。儘管天星小輪對公眾具有深厚的文化和情感價值，但一些人質疑為何沒有投資者介入以振興或拯救天星小輪 (Whitehead, 2022)。

人們也對所提議的振興計劃的有效性提出了擔憂。天星小輪的活動和碼頭開發如何與海濱長廊沿線的其他公共空間融為一體，仍然存在疑問 (Hung, 2023)。此外，附近地區的居民擔心，如果這些提議獲得批准，頻繁的活動和表演可能會導致噪音污染和其他干擾。

## **討論問題：**

1. 票價上調對本地通勤者和遊客可能產生哪些影響？這可能會如何影響天星小輪的市場佔有率？
2. 引入電子支付方式在吸引更多內地遊客方面效果如何？該公司還可以實施哪些其他策略？
3. 哪些因素可能阻礙潛在投資者支持或收購天星小輪？
4. 天星小輪的提議如何與海濱長廊沿線的其他公共空間整合，以創建一個連貫且充滿活力的區域？

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- 文化遺產
- 本地交通
- 定價
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- 夜間經濟

## **致謝**

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