

Hong Kong Tramways: Moving a Century of Ding Ding Forward

By Frank W. Ng

“Ding ding, ding ding”—imagine standing on a busy street in Causeway Bay, Central or Sheung Wan. A green double-decker tram rolls past, its bell ringing. Whether or not you live on Hong Kong Island, you may recognise this familiar scene. Every day, these trams carry people to commute, along with visitors exploring the city. They are slower than the railway, and their routes do not cover Hong Kong as extensively as bus routes do. Still, the “Ding Ding” remains one of the city’s best-known forms of transport.

For many Hong Kong people, a tram ride is more than a means of transport. The “Ding Ding” carries memories shared across generations and symbolises the city’s culture and local manufacturing. However, a long history does not mean a business can stand still. As travel habits and lifestyles change, this century-old brand continues to explore new paths of development—even as its trams keep rolling along the established tracks.

Hong Kong’s expanding railway network, extensive bus and minibus routes, and the emergence of mobile apps are changing how people travel. With so many ways to get around, passengers consider not only fares but also speed, convenience and access to real-time information. The slower-moving tram may not always be their first choice, especially when every minute counts.

Meanwhile, young passengers have different expectations for transport services. They are used to checking service schedules and real-time traffic updates on their smartphones. They also value fresh, creative experiences worth sharing on social media. These pose a challenge for Hong Kong Tramways Limited (“Hong Kong Tramways”)—how can it use branding, technology and new businesses to attract more young passengers and tourists while preserving its iconic heritage?

From ‘Made in Hong Kong’ to ‘Loved in Hong Kong’

Established in 1904, Hong Kong Tramways has a history of more than 120 years. It is one of the world’s oldest tram systems. Over the years, it has witnessed the development of Hong Kong’s engineering and manufacturing industries and has been part of daily life for generations of Hong Kong people.

Today, Hong Kong Tramways mainly serves the urban areas of Hong Kong Island. Its routes extend from Kennedy Town to Shau Kei Wan, covering about 30km (see Exhibit 1). More than 120 closely spaced stops make it convenient for passengers to get on and off. Tram fares are relatively low compared with other forms of transport. Trams also run on electricity, making them an eco-friendly option.

Despite their slower pace, trams remain popular with residents and tourists because they offer a distinctive way to experience the city. From the upper deck, passengers can enjoy views of Hong Kong's busy streets. Many tourists consider a tram ride and a chance to take photos a must-do activity during their visit to Hong Kong.

Another highlight is that Hong Kong Tramways continues to design, assemble and repair its trams locally. It is one of the few city tram systems in the world that still retains these skills. At Whitty Street Tram Depot, the engineering team handles tram body design, assembly and repairs (see Exhibit 2). Many engineers and technicians have worked there for years. They have an in-depth understanding of trams from different eras. Through their daily work, they pass on their knowledge and skills to younger colleagues, preserving this heritage of craftsmanship for future generations.

These local manufacturing and repair skills preserve Hong Kong Tramways' distinctive heritage of craftsmanship. Yet heritage alone is not adequate to meet the demands of a changing transport network and passenger needs. The company must continue to innovate.

Rejuvenating “Ding Ding”

In 2017, Hong Kong Tramways began a rebranding programme. It started with a new logo to create a younger, more energetic image.

Green has long been the signature colour of trams. In 2021, Hong Kong Tramways worked with the Pantone Color Institute to create its own colour, “HK Tram Green”, strengthening the brand identity (see Exhibit 3). The company hoped that this shade of green would remind people of Hong Kong's trams, as well as their connections with local communities and the city's culture.

Besides this, Hong Kong Tramways has brought its brand into people's everyday lives. It offers tram-themed products such as model trams, souvenirs and educational products (see Exhibit 4). It also works with other local brands to develop new products. These partnerships promote local manufacturing and culture while bringing in income beyond fares and advertising.

Alongside its new image, Hong Kong Tramways uses technology to improve operations and the passenger experience. It continues to upgrade its information technology and ticketing systems, as well as tram-tracking technology. More than 400 radio-frequency identification (RFID) tags along the routes work with readers on the trams to collect real-time location data. Algorithms analyse these data alongside historical journey data, helping the company coordinate tram services and improve operational safety. In 2026, Hong Kong Tramways also launched an official mobile app so passengers can access service information easily (see Exhibit 5).

Developing New Business

The majority of Hong Kong Tramways' revenue comes from tram fares and advertising. However, slower growth in passenger numbers and increasing competition in the advertising sector have prompted the company to explore new business opportunities, turning the trams' unique features into different products and experiences.

Notably, the company turns trams into tourist attractions, event venues and platforms for brand promotion (see Exhibit 6). Launched in 2016, the "TramOramic Tour" takes passengers abroad an open-top tram in the 1920s style. During the approximately one-hour journey, passengers can enjoy the street views and learn about the history of the city and its trams through multilingual audio guides. The company also offers red and green antique-style party trams and the luxurious TRAM No.18 for private gatherings, company events and commercial filming. Some of these trams offer open-top upper decks, air conditioning and food and beverage options.

Businesses can also rent an entire tram for themed events or brand promotion, decorating its exterior and interior to create a mobile experience venue. In 2026, Hong Kong Tramways and travel platform Klook launched a "Ding Ding Food Tour", combining sightseeing, guided tour and local food in a single journey. Passengers can explore Hong Kong Island while enjoying dishes such as *siu mei rice*, dim sum and egg tarts. Together, these services extend the trams beyond transport, creating space for city experience and brand promotion.

In addition to the tourism and events market, Hong Kong Tramways also integrates its engineering expertise and historical resources into education.

A key initiative is *tramplus*. Hong Kong Tramways aims to go beyond transportation and become a brand that integrates culture, education, technology and everyday life. Its established local capability of designing, building and repairing trams involves engineering, physics, energy, design and information technology. These connect with STEAM learning elements. Offering courses through their real-world experience helps pass on knowledge and culture about trams. Meanwhile it strengthens the brand's image and fulfils the company's social responsibility.

The *tramplus* initiative serves both individuals and schools. Students can join workshops such as building solar-powered model trams and designing tram apps. Schools can select programmes suitable to their students' year levels, abilities and learning goals. Besides teaching students to use technology, these courses develop creative thinking and teamwork skills through activities such as design, problem-solving, prototyping and presentations.

Recently, *tramplus* has expanded its educational activities to innovation competitions. Its “Ding Ding Innovation Competition 2025” focused on urban biodiversity and sustainable living, encouraging students to develop solutions such as ecological corridors, vertical greenery, biodiversity-monitoring apps and sensors. Winning teams later took part in inter-regional competitions. Through these activities, *tramplus* offers more than just innovation and technology curricula: it turns Hong Kong Tramways into a real-world case study that connects schools, universities, engineers, businesses and communities.

Looking Forward

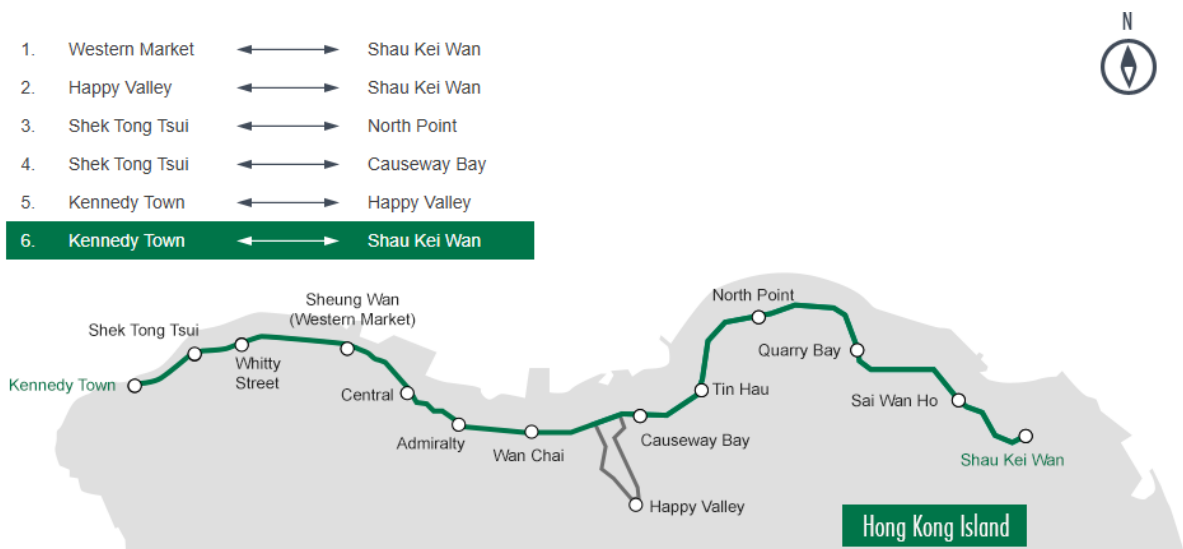
Hong Kong Tramways has been part of life in Hong Kong for over 120 years. Today, it is more than a means of transport: it is an icon representing the city’s history, culture and local manufacturing heritage. Depot craftsmanship, brand rejuvenation, technological application, tourism and education offer different ways to move “Ding Ding” forward through the city for another century.

History and fond memories alone cannot keep this century-old brand vivid. Hong Kong Tramways intends to preserve the distinctive heritage of the “Ding Ding”, while responding to changing passenger and market needs. What services or experiences could it offer to attract more young passengers and tourists? And what other new businesses could it develop to strengthen its image and generate a steady income?

Question:

Hong Kong Tramways intends to preserve the distinctive heritage of the “Ding Ding”, while responding to changing passenger and market needs. What services or experiences could it offer to attract more young passengers and tourists? And what other new businesses could it develop to strengthen its image and generate a steady income?

Exhibit 1 Hong Kong Tramways Route Map



Source: Hong Kong Tramways website
<https://www.hktramways.com/en/schedules-fares>

Exhibit 2 Whitty Street Tram Depot



Photo taken by the author

Exhibit 3 The Creation of HK Tram Green



The Creation of HK Tram Green

A SIGNATURE GREEN SHADE INSPIRED BY THE ICONIC HONG KONG TRAM

Recently Pantone Color Institute collaborated with HK TRAMWAYS to create a new signature green shade that pays tribute to the Hong Kong Tram and its historical and cultural significance within Hong Kong. Leveraging the power of color in design to preserve and celebrate the history and heritage of Hong Kong's rich social and cultural past whilst simultaneously communicating a vision for the future, HK Tram Green showcases this globally renowned first of its kind mobile landmark as a pleasurable mode of transport, one whose ability to bring all people together nourishes our sense of connection to others and creates a welcoming feeling of community.



ABOUT HK TRAM GREEN

HK Tram Green is a vivid and verdant deep grassy green shade that celebrates the heritage and cultural significance of HK Tramways and its unique distinction as a globally recognized iconic mobile landmark.

A refreshing and restorative green tone that alleviates stress and calms the spirit, naturally fertile HK Tram Green inspires relaxation, enabling us to reinvigorate and replenish. Promoting balance and harmony, HK Tram Green enhances our sense of well-being, encouraging connection and community and cultivating our ties to others.

Expressive of the openness and welcoming spirit of Hong Kong people, lively HK Tram Green exemplifies the creativity and innovative mindset upon which HK TRAMWAYS was created.

Embodying the geographical personality of Hong Kong, HK Tram Green fosters our relationship to the environment. Promoting safety and social commitments to the public, HK TRAMWAYS devotion to sustainability paves the way forward, underscoring their ongoing ground-breaking ability to invent a future for Hong Kong transport that will reach beyond the expectations of 21st century passengers.

Source:

Pantone

website

https://www.pantone.com/hk/en-hk/articles/case-studies/the-creation-of-hk-tram-green?srsltid=AU7gw4V67Km8XNF3LNp540bACPE8nNL9CQVINGk6VfTy3Y_M5XAop73C

👁️ Top 5 Trending 👁️



01 Hong Kong Tramways Limited Edition MONOPOLY



02 1/76 Die-cast Model - Green Antique Tram



03 1/250 Scale Key Ring - Green Antique Tram



04 "HK Tramways" Silicone Mug Cover



05 "HK Tramways" Retro Travel Bag



Source: Hong Kong Tramways website
<https://www.hktramways.com/en/tram-souvenirs>

Exhibit 5 Hong Kong Tramways Mobile App

GuidING Your Next Journey

叮叮幾點到？用APP就知道！

為您提供下一班電車資訊
ProviDING You With Next Tram Arrival Time Info

引領您的旅程
LeaDING Your Way By Keeping Track of the Tram Stops Along the Way



3 分鐘後到達

終點站
● 北角總站
● 杜老誌道
✓ 10 個電車站
● 北角總站

8 分鐘後到達

終點站
● 筲箕灣總站
● 杜老誌道
✓ 26 個電車站
● 筲箕灣總站

下載全新香港電車官方應用程式
Download the new Official HK Tramways App

在此下載 Google Play

App Store 下載

Source: Hong Kong Tramways Instagram

Exhibit 6 Party Trams



Hong

Kong

Tramways

Source:
website

<https://www.hktramways.com/tc/book-your-party-tram/>