

AIDM7420 News and Feature Writing for Digital Media
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800-1500 word feature on any topic of your choice. Please make sure to have a strong lead and apply the principles and techniques we've learned in class.

Fading Glamour: Golden Plaza's Struggle to Retain Its Crown as Hong Kong's Wedding Hub Amidst Changing Times

As the local film *My Princess Edward* suggested, Golden Plaza has witnessed the laughter and tears of countless brides and grooms-to-be in Hong Kong. Nestled in the bustling district of Kowloon, Golden Plaza is locally known as 'Kam Do'. Established in the 1980s and originally selling fashionable clothes, it thrived as an iconic wedding-theme shopping mall in the 1990s and 2000s. However, it has gradually declined and faded over recent years, with the situation worsening after the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Just like Hong Kong is no longer an international financial hub, Golden Plaza is also dying. Only three or four people passed by my shop in an hour, and I haven't made any profits today," said May, the owner of a bridal shop.

Having run the wedding gown business for more than ten years, May shared that nowadays, young people turn to online shopping or rent wedding dresses from upstairs shops. Her shop has managed to survive this long because of renting out gowns for performers. "The situation worsened after COVID-19, as people have become accustomed to online shopping and they prefer not to spend large amounts of money on traditional, big weddings, given the pessimistic economic outlook," she said.

Fashion icon in Hong Kong

Once a shopping and leisure hotspot for residents in the Kowloon, Golden Plaza was completed in 1980. Initially, the shopping center mainly housed shops selling men's and women's fashion, trendy items, and various other types of retail goods, including bridal and evening gowns. Until the early 1990s, shops in the mall gradually relocated to other newly completed trendy shopping centers. Due to the demolition and rebuilding of the nearby Chung Yi Shopping Centre, which primarily housed bridal service shops, most of the businesses operating there relocated to Golden Plaza to continue their operations. Since then, Golden Plaza has become a hub for wedding supplies at affordable prices for the general public.

The five-story Golden Plaza houses over 100 shops. These include services for bridal gown rental, limousine rental, gold and jewelry, makeup, photography and videography, bouquet decorations, and invitation customization, making it one of the largest wedding-themed malls in Hong Kong. In 2005, the mall underwent a major renovation and redecoration, including establishing a basement shopping area that embraced international trendy elements, presenting itself with a renewed vibrant image.

“In the past, when people got married, they would immediately think of Golden Plaza. However, many young people now hardly know what Golden Plaza is. Some even mistakenly believe that it has been demolished,” said May. She sighed deeply over the poor business and expressed that she would consider closing down the shop if the situation continues.

Lack of promotion for Golden Plaza

Stefany, the second-generation owner of a qungua (Chinese wedding dress decorated with dragons and phoenixes embroideries) and traditional Chinese wedding decorations

and necessities shop, expressed her fondness for Kam Do. “I have been helping my dad in our shop since I was a child. In the past, we had two shops here, but now we only keep one because of poor business,” said Stefany. She added that most of their customers now are referred by previous customers and their daughters and sons.

“Golden Plaza has seldom been promoted by the landlord online. People consider the wedding items sold here to be outdated and old-fashioned. A few years ago, the landlord tried to develop a dedicated website for the shopping center, but it has come to nothing,” said Stefany. “The rent in Golden Plaza is not cheap compared to Beverley Commercial Center in Tsim Sha Tsui, a similar wedding-themed shopping mall. However, the landlord here has not put any effort into promoting it to the young generation.”

When interviewing Stefany, a young couple in their early twenties accompanied by their parents came into the shop. “If my mom hadn't brought us here, I wouldn't even know this shopping mall existed in Hong Kong,” said Ryan, a groom-to-be.

“We came here to rent a qungua. When I got married to his dad in 1995, we also came to Golden Plaza to rent the wedding dress and buy wedding items. Now we hope they can inherit this tradition,” said Ryan's mother, who believes that Golden Plaza represents a nostalgia for Hong Kong people.

The Covid-19 pandemic over the past few years has significantly dealt a blow to the wedding industry in Hong Kong, as couples had to scale down their weddings due to stringent restrictions. Although the pandemic is over, the business in Golden Plaza has yet to recover and has actually worsened.

Change of attitude towards weddings in the younger generation

Young people's attitudes towards weddings have changed. They now prefer simpler

weddings instead of lavish, traditional ones. “People in the older generation often hosted banquets with 20 tables, but now, a wedding with 10 tables is considered large. They want simpler weddings with fewer rituals,” said Can, the owner of the wedding decoration company running a business in Golden Plaza for more than twenty years.

In the past, brides-to-be often bought brand-new small wedding items, such as quilts, pajamas, slippers, and flower bouquets. However, young people now don't mind using second-hand items. They view it as inheriting a blessing and consider it environmentally friendly. They prefer to buy or exchange these small wedding items through the popular second-hand platform Carousell.

“I don’t want a lavish wedding and make the things complicated. The Covid-19 pandemic has shown us that long-term planning is uncertain. Life is unpredictable, so why not save the money for more meaningful expenses like traveling?” said Wendy, a bride-to-be in September, who is searching for a simple dress for her wedding registration. She does not plan to host a banquet.

Can expressed that the change in young people’s attitudes towards weddings has significantly affected her business; small bouquets don’t need a backdrop or decorations, and many will use the existing one provided by the hotel to save money, resulting in nearly a 50% decrease compared to five years ago.

Although some shop owners are not optimistic about Golden Plaza's future, Can remains hopeful. “Life isn’t always smooth. Why not view this as a challenge and a learning opportunity? I've spent most of my life here; I will not give up easily. After all, there are still many ways forward, aren’t there?”