



# Manpower Update Report Media and Communications Industry 2022



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Media and Communications Training Board (MCTB) would like to express its gratitude to the members of the focus group for their valuable time and insights on the manpower situation in the Media and Communications industry. Special thanks go to the following organisations which shared with us their database of job vacancies:

- (i) CPJobs ([www.cpjobs.com](http://www.cpjobs.com))
- (ii) Labour Department ([www.jobs.gov.hk](http://www.jobs.gov.hk))
- (iii) JobsDB ([hk.jobsdb.com](http://hk.jobsdb.com))
- (iv) Recruit ([www.recruit.com.hk](http://www.recruit.com.hk))
- (v) CTGoodJobs ([www.ctgoodjobs.hk](http://www.ctgoodjobs.hk))

The views of focus group members and information from major recruitment websites formed an integral part of this report.

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# Introduction

## Background

The Media and Communications Training Board (MCTB) of the Vocational Training Council (VTC) is appointed by the Government of the HKSAR. According to its Terms of Reference, the MCTB is responsible for determining manpower demand of

the industry, 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 this is supplemented by two manpower updates. The MCTB completed its latest manpower survey in 2019. Two manpower updates will be conducted in 2022 and 2023.

The 2022 manpower information update comprises:

(a) a focus group meeting getting the views of industries experts on the latest developments in the industries, manpower and training needs, recruitment difficulties, and measures to tackle the challenges the industries face; and

(b) desk research analysing job advisements including qualifications, experience and skills required, and salaries offered by the principal jobs in the Media and Communications (MC) industry.

## Objectives

The objectives of the manpower update are:

- (i) to examine the latest trends and developments of the industries;
- (ii) to explore the job market situation and training needs;
- (iii) to identify the recruitment challenges; and
- (iv) to recommend measures to meet the training needs and to ease the problem of manpower shortage.

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# Methodology

## Overview

With reference to the 2019 full manpower survey of the MC industry, this update report aims to provide qualitative descriptions of the recent development of the industry through focus group meeting, supplemented by making reference to some quantitative data of recruitment advertisements from desk research.

## Focus Group Meeting

The focus group members are representatives from the following sectors of the media and communications industry:

### Journalism Sector

1. Newspaper
2. Magazine
3. News and Information department in radio / television (TV) stations
4. News agencies

### Digital / new media Sector

5. Digital / new media

### Advertising & PR Sector

6. Public relation (PR) service suppliers
7. Advertising companies, agencies and other advertising services

8. Corporate communications / PR / advertising / marketing department in companies / institutions

### Media Production Sector

9. Production Companies

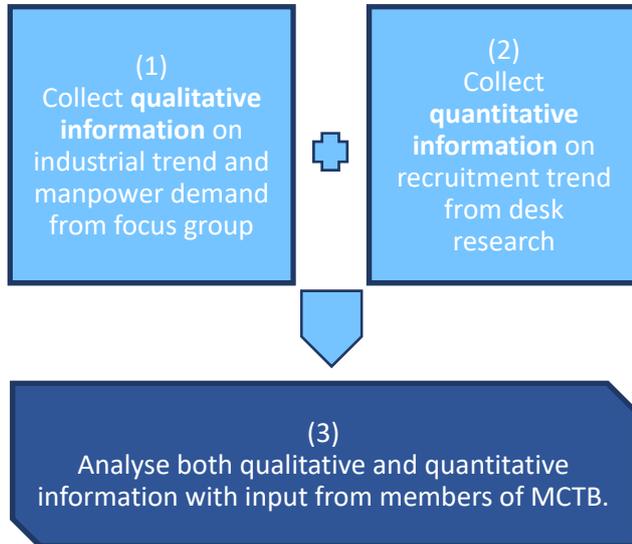
Three focus group meetings were conducted on 16, 21 and 28 February 2022. The discussions were recorded and transcribed to facilitate analysis.

## Desk Research

An information system was developed to capture relevant recruitment data from major online recruitment portals, covering the period between Quarter 4 of 2020 and Quarter 3 of 2021. Collected information was mapped against the list of companies related to the media and communications industry under the Hong Kong Standard Industrial Classification devised by the Census and Statistics Department. After mapping and removal of duplicated records, a total of 7,400 recruitment records were collected during the research period and served as indicative information of the job market trend.

## Data Analysis

The analysis consists of the following three steps:



## Limitations

As this is not a full manpower survey, the findings and recommendations of the focus group meetings are more qualitative in nature and the report focuses mainly on the manpower trends. The information of job advertisements was collected from major recruitment websites and the Labour Department. Other channels, such as head hunting for managerial positions, were not covered. Since the data collected is a snapshot of a particular period without reference to any historical data, this can serve as reference information supplementary to the findings of focus group meetings.

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# Findings

## Factors Affecting the Development of the Media and Communications Industry

### Impact of Covid-19 – Flexible mind for the dynamic environment

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The pandemic has changed the pattern of work globally. The infection rate in Hong Kong's fifth wave of Covid-19 that took place between February and March 2022 surged to the highest since 2020 and prompted the media and communications industry to manage

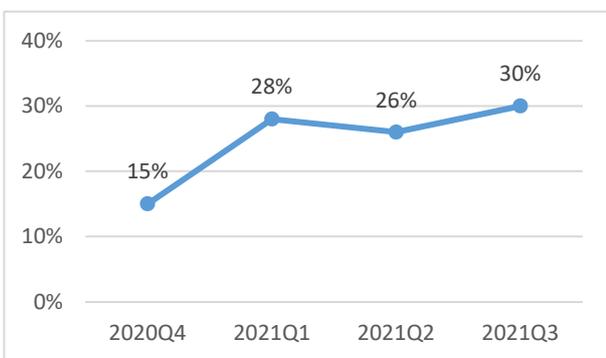
its manpower with greater flexibility. Hybrid work mode was adopted by most journalism, advertising and PR organisations to minimise in personal social activities under the pandemic. According to the focus group, practitioners in these sectors had adjusted well to work partly from the office and partly from home with the use of online meeting tools and cloud software. There were more collaboration and sharing of data, experiences and resources in advertising and PR offices

of different regions as enabled by technology. However, news report or on-site filming from overseas venue became inaccessible due to border control measures imposed during the pandemic and was one of the challenges of news and digital media companies. Moreover, hybrid work could not be applied to the media production sector as filming and professional grade post-production equipment were not easily available in home setting.

As shown in Figure 1, recruitment exercises in the industry increased as economic activities gradually resumed under the new normal in the post-pandemic era.

Figure 1

Percentage distribution of online job ads from 2020 Q4 to 2021 Q3 (Total: 100%)



### Consumption pattern

Consumers had built up a new habit of purchasing online in the post-pandemic era. As e-commerce market continues to expand, so as the demand for digital marketing by brands. There is no doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic widely impacted economic activities, especially travel, catering, and hotel industries, on the

other hand it facilitated the demand for advertising and PR services, and associated media campaign production for industries such as food delivery and healthcare. Online news report from credible media organisations continued to be preferred by the public to receive latest information on the pandemic measures. Live video and news posts in social media platform are also welcome by audiences. While outbound travel was restricted in the past two years, lifestyle digital media switched to provide content on local leisure consumption, for example, local travel tour, local dining, staycation, etc.

### Growing demand for video content

Although cinema screening was suspended most of the time during the pandemic, people turn to online video streaming platform for entertainment. Video production and visual effects (VFX) for online content was in high demand. Border control measures in the pandemic facilitated programmes to be filmed locally. Programmes of live shows and reality shows had become popular.

Online element is also a must in advertising and PR services. Event planning had to be flexible in the pandemic, advertising and PR companies provided hybrid services – for example, the launch of an exhibition would include an online virtual tour and the physical part would be available subject to the

latest announcement of social distancing measure. As for digital media organisations other than TV stations, most of them require reporters to be capable of producing short videos using handy equipment, for posting in social media.

### ESG and empathy marketing

Corporates are putting greater attention on the environmental, social and governance (ESG) strategy amid the pandemic, which is a global crisis to many people and families. Most of the customers had their most challenging time of their lives, physically, mentally or financially. Businesses failed to demonstrate their care and empathy to customers might bring destructive effect to the brand. Advertising, PR and corporate communication practitioners have to help business to rethink their role and reflect their empathy and humanity in their actions and campaigns. For example, the Li Ka Shing Foundation donated about HK\$70 million to fight against Covid-19 which includes supporting private hospitals in Hong Kong to receive non-Covid-19 patients to relieve pressure on the public healthcare system, funding elderly homes to purchase protective materials and helping Food Angel provide meals for the underprivileged during the pandemic.

### Challenge to journalists

The public relies greatly on news organisations to provide accurate

update on the latest pandemic development and relevant policies. However, the journalism sector has experienced dramatic change in the past few years. The imposition of national security law, closure of local news outlets, flood of misinformation, the new political, economic and social environment imposed new challenges to media practitioners. The focus group agreed that editors play a more important role safeguarding news quality in the time of uncertainty and they would require more support to familiarise with the new law and educate public about misinformation. While some journalists decided to enter other industries under the great challenge, those who choose to stay in the industry have to adapt to the new environment and explore the space for further development.

## Technology

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### Metaverse

The immersive virtual world – metaverse, enabled by the advancement in virtual reality (VR), blockchain and 5G technology, is gaining popularity for the new immersive experiences in retail, entertainment, sports and education that it encompasses. People construct virtual identities, participate in activities, create contents, make purchases and interact with peers in the metaverse, an environment where the virtual and physical world converge.

The metaverse provides an

opportunity for brands to engage consumers. Fashion brands are one of the earliest sectors to step into the metaverse and engage consumers by launching non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and digital wearable items in virtual fashion exhibition and games. The way to devise the right marketing strategies that drive value in the metaverse remains an exploration stage for most brands, according to the focus group. But the group agreed that advertising and PR service providers should begin identifying the capabilities of metaverse, the potential service to offer and the new metrics for measuring marketing performance in the metaverse.

### Arts Tech

The integration of arts and technology has become a new trend in arts development. Immersive technology such as augmented reality, extended reality, real-time animation, etc. are applied in artistic creation to enhance interactive engagement and immersive experience of audience. In the 2020 policy address, Arts Tech has been one of the strategic initiatives that HKSAR government will invest resources to support and promote its development. The focus group believed the public will understand more about arts tech when newly equipped cultural spaces are available for audiences to enjoy immersive experience as relevant technologies are applied in production, performance or

exhibitions.

Although hardware like VR headsets are not widely common among general public, industries such as healthcare, education, art, gaming and retail have already benefitted from immersive technology. Likewise, experiential marketing, the adoption of immersive technology for targeted users to try out promotional VR experiences in pop up booths, showrooms, fitting rooms, gaming or sports events, etc. will be the new focus in the coming years.

### Data analytics

While algorithm and artificial intelligence are widely used in the advertising and PR sector – from programmatic marketing to social media monitoring, customer messaging to e-commerce personalisation, etc. There is a wide spectrum of data analytics tools for marketers to understand their customer and monitor the performance of advertising campaign based on the huge amount of data collected. The focus group considered that human intelligence is always needed despite the application of artificial intelligence. To generate useful insight for optimising advertising efficiency requires not only analytics tools but good understanding of local language and context which cannot be fulfilled by software. In journalism sector, the focus group also observed that data journalism is the focus in recent years. Telling news story based on

the analysis of quantitative data and information integrated from various sources provides more comprehensive perspective to readers.

## Policy

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### National security law

The Hong Kong national security law (NSL) was imposed in June 2020. The focus group reflected that the journalism sector was concerned about the future of news organisation as several media outlets had shut down in two years since the introduction of NSL. The change in the journalism landscape caused outflow of talent to other industries or geographic regions. Some fresh graduates or graduating students decided not to join the field considered the career prospects and limited number of attachment places due to closure of news media outlets. The focus group considered that the role of editors, as gatekeeper for quality of news, should be further strengthened under the challenges of the newly imposed law as well as public's demand for credible, truthful and honest news among the overcrowded misinformation and disinformation.

## Manpower Situation

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### Advanced technology

There is no doubt that media and communications is one of the industries highly adopt technology in its operation and presentation.

Media companies evolve constantly – automate work process, adopt artificial intelligence to offer personalised reading or watching experience, and present stories through technologies of augmented or virtual reality. The brand new experiences enjoyed by readers or audiences are contributed by the creativity and effort of practitioners who strived to embrace technology.

### Manpower adjustment

According to the 2019 update report and survey report, the top five jobs were mostly in the editorial/ production/ executional level, for example, reporters, designers, account executives, etc. as young entrants tend to look for better career opportunities from time to time. In the recent desk research conducted between 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2020 and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter 2021, the top five jobs have shifted to supervisory level or above – i.e. middle level managers or directors. The turnover is probably attributed to the wave of emigration and is coherent to the observation by the focus group. Retention and engaging experienced staff is one of the challenges faced by employers. Apart from the outflow of talent, the closure of media organisations also prompted some journalists to experiment the option as an independent reporter publishing on social media or online subscription platform.

## Employee's expectation

Young people have stronger preference for hybrid work and demand greater flexibility in employment terms. Freelance project or part-time engagement is welcomed by those who needs greater autonomy.

Work-life support is ranked as the top inclusion practices employees want their organisations to improve while young employees (18-34 years old) are more likely to leave the job if hybrid work is not available, accordingly to a survey conducted by McKinsey<sup>1</sup>. However, the focus group pointed out that employment pattern could be made flexible only for positions require less collaboration such as copywriter or creative professional. Freelance or hybrid model are not an option for certain positions such as those handle digital marketing performance data given its confidentiality nature.

## Training Practice

MC practitioners maintain good practice to update their professional skills through webinars, workshops, online international conferences or online tutorial video. The focus group observed that most MC practitioners are eager to learn about new skills or polish their techniques by looking for learning resources

online thus they are able to access to updates on new technologies, new business models and modern marketing approach in the digital age. On the employer side, the focus group discovered that more online knowledge sharing was arranged between regionals office of MC organisations and facilitated more idea exchange during the pandemic.

Despite the wide acceptance of online meeting, webinars, conferences conducted by training providers and the industry since the Covid-19 outbreak, the focus group considered that innovation often originates in the office space where people can get together and discuss their idea with in person interaction.

## Opportunities

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### Journalism

As border control to be eased and the quarantine measures to be lifted when the pandemic situation continues to improve, news media can resume the practice of sending journalists to report foreign news. More career progression opportunities become available to young journalists who stay in the industry under the wave of emigration.

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<sup>1</sup> Dowling, B., Goldstein, D., Park, M., & Price, H. (2022, April 20). *Hybrid work: Making it fit with your diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy*. McKinsey & Company. Retrieved May 9, 2022, from <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/hybrid-work-making-it-fit-with-your-diversity-equity-and-inclusion-strategy?cid=other-eml-onp-mip-mck&hlkid=55e8db702fc54fdfae1624dc95125aba&hctky=13330575&hdpid=7996860d-4738-4397-924d-1a77fd5212ce>

## Digital / New Media

The metaverse offers brand new virtual experience to audiences. It is time for new media companies to extend their presence and explore ways to interact with consumers and create opportunity for business.

## Advertising & PR

Leveraging the metaverse as a new platform for activities to engage public's attention and interact with target customers will be one of the opportunities for the sector. The resumption of travel and social activities will also support the recovery of economy and support the demand for advertising and event services.

## Media Production

Overseas filming will become feasible again as Hong Kong and mainland China border reopen and relevant post-production activities will be resumed. There will also be growing demand for metaverse content production, for example virtual landscape and buildings, avatars, NFT art pieces, digital wearables as well as virtual performance and event.

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# Manpower Demand

## Desk Research

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A total of 7,413 job advertisements were collected between October 2020 and September 2021 on major recruitment portals. The top five hot jobs on demand are listed in Table 1. Compared to the data collected for 2019 Manpower Survey Report, four (out of five) hot jobs were in managerial or supervisory level, contrasting to the vacancies in 2019 which were mostly at executional level.

Table 1 Hot Jobs on Demand

Top 5 Jobs (2020-21)	Top 5 Jobs (2019)
1. Marketing Manager	1. Marketing Executive
2. Assistant Marketing Manager	2. Account Manager
3. Designer	3. Account Executive (PR); PR Officer
4. Marketing Director	4. Production Assistant
5. Advertising Manager	5. Reporter
<b>50.4% of all job advertisements</b>	<b>70.5% of all job vacancies</b>

As shown in Table 2, the top skills required by employers according to the desk research is data analytics as generating insights from audience or customer data is the key to improve performance of organisation and campaign. E-commerce skills is also highly sought after due to the highly dynamic nature of the online commerce market and the strong demand from brands expanding channel to the online market. Both data analytics and e-commerce skills are the key skills of marketing staff.

Table 2 Hot Skills on Demand

Top 5 Skills (2020-21)	Most Associated Jobs
1. Data Analytics	Marketing Executive Marketing Manager Marketing Director Digital Media Strategist
2. E-commerce	Ditto
3. Video Editing	Designer Marketing Executive TV Producer
4. Video Shooting	Designer TV Producer
5. KOL	Account Manager (PR) Account Executive (PR); PR Officer Marketing Executive Marketing Manager

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## Training Needs

Based on the trends and development of the industry coupled with the views from the focus group, the skill requirements of the industry are listed as follows:

### Trade Specific Skills

1.	<b>Data analytics</b> skills for drawing up useful insight from user data as a basis for formulating digital strategies for media organisation or clients to improve traffic or advertising efficiency.
2.	Understanding the <b>national security law</b> and its impact in the context of the operation of journalism organisations.
3.	<b>Video production</b> skills for live streaming programmes – video programmes vary as enabled by emerging technology – for example, music shows that are collaborated by singers and musicians located in different places; real-time production using LED walls.
4.	<b>Arts tech</b> skills is the production competence to apply technology expanding the possibility of artistic creation, interactive engagement and immersive experience – for example 3D modelling for AR/VR, 3D scene creation (unreal engine, unity...)
5.	Mastering the skills of the <b>digital news reporting</b> is crucial for reporters. Video content plays a heavy role in news reporting on digital media. Text, video content and data visualisation should complement with each other to enhance readability of the news report.
6.	<b>Crisis management</b> plays an important role in the post-pandemic era in order to assist client to cope with the varying social distancing requirement as caused by the threats of virus mutants.

## Generic Skills

1.	<b>Project management</b> skill - media production requires cross-team collaboration. Apart from good understanding of industry technology, the project manager should be able to communicate with the teams and ensure the each part of the project is up to standard, within budget and timeline.
2.	<b>Language</b> capability – the media and communications industry demands employees to read, write and create efficiently using English and Chinese, especially in the journalism, advertising and PR sectors.
3.	<b>Problem solving</b> skills – unexpected situation comes around in the post-pandemic era. Industry practitioners should be flexible and creative enough to come up with new solutions.

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## Recruitment Challenges

### Data Talents

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The industry demands talents experienced in data analytics. Data analysts or data engineers who is academically trained in data science or statistics are welcome by digitally transformed industries such as banking, finance, insurance, etc. Media and communication companies found it hard to hire data analytics talents with good experience in local context, according to the focus group.

### Wave of Emigration

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Young people is the major work force of the industry. The focus group observed that the wave of emigration impacted the industry. Turnover increased as a result of young employees and mid-level professionals moved out from Hong

Kong since the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia relaxed immigration pathway. Human capital is crucial to the industry. The group agreed that cross-region collaboration might work in short term (and only for some positions) but the competition for talent around the globe will remain acute. It is expected that the emigration wave would induce higher turnover rate in the year.

### Young Journalists

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The focus group reflected that less young people joined the journalism sector in recent years. Part of the reasons are the great challenges and uncertainties faced by the sector as well as more attractive remuneration offered by other sectors in the industry.

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## Industry Exposure for Realistic Understanding of Industry Practice

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The industry should join hands with educators to demonstrate the latest development of the media and communications industry to young people. There is no doubt that media students are passionate to produce their own work during study. They should also develop realistic understanding to the industry standard and a team work mindset in order to sustain in the industry.

## Attract Data Talents

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The media and communications industry has to compete for data talents with other industries. As science and engineering students are not familiar with the industry, media, advertising and PR associations should extend promoting the industry nature, career opportunities and its future prospect to data science graduates. On employer's side, the remuneration, benefits and work mode of data talent should be reviewed to stay competitive in the labour market.

## Retain Industry Talents

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Hong Kong as a knowledge-based economy, its success greatly hinges on the availability of human capital. To attract and retain the skilled, experienced media and communications talents, the employers and industry might have to review the existing offerings, adopt work mode that is family-friendly, and improve inclusiveness. In broader sense, the quality of living is also considered by talents to decide whether Hong Kong is the right place live, work, study and raise a family. Government policies to improve Hong Kong's liveability<sup>2</sup> especially in dimensions of physical and mental well-being, environmental quality, learning and schooling of young children, will help Hong Kong to regain its competitiveness in the global race for talent.

## Groom Arts Tech Talent

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The proliferation of new devices such as VR headsets and smartglass, the development of metaverse, the application of immersive technology in media production, performance or exhibitions, will open up opportunities

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<sup>2</sup> Legislative Council Secretariat. (2022, June). *Global competition for talent* (Research Brief Issue No. 2 2019–2020). Research Office. <https://www.legco.gov.hk/research-publications/english/1920rb02-global-competition-for-talent-20200601-e.pdf>

for arts tech talents. The new programme “Higher Diploma in Arts Technology” offered by Hong Kong Design Institute targets at the foreseen manpower demand for arts tech talents in two settings of arts and creative industries – (1) virtual production; (2) show and performance. Students will be equipped with artistic sensibility as well as production competence to apply technology (such as augmented reality, extended reality, real-time animation, etc.) expanding the possibilities of artistic creation, interactive engagement and immersive experience.

## Tap into the Metaverse

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As the metaverse evolves and attracts more users, more organisations and brands will tap into this new world of innovation and virtual experience. It will be imperative for the industry, especially advertising and PR companies to have employees keep up with the rapid development of the metaverse and have good understanding on AR, VR, blockchain and data analytics.

Prior to strategically incorporating metaverse into the holistic plan, plenty of testing and learning loops would be required for the industry to provide professional advice that generates the most benefits for clients.

## Legislation and Compliance Training

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Understanding how the national security law (NSL) affects the work of journalists will be crucial to minimise risks to media organisations. Employers and industry associations should invite legal experts to provide training on NSL and media law so that practitioners of all levels, from executive to reporters, can perform their roles professionally without breaching the law. The pre-employment training curriculum for media and communications students should also include relevant information to prepare graduates to carry out duty in the real setting.

## Educate Public on Media and Information Literacy

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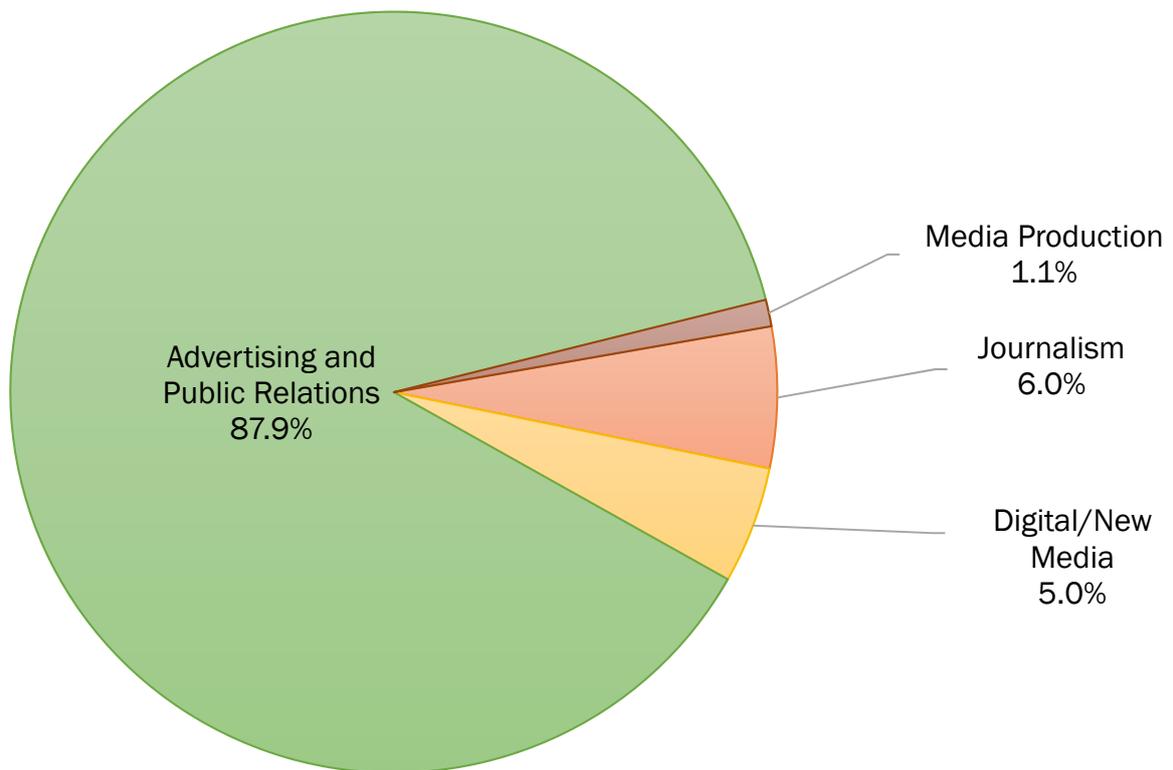
Accurate and impartial news help people understand the world, enable them to make informed decisions and participate in the society. However, as the news landscape changed by the digital and social media platforms, the distribution of the independent, high-quality, trustworthy news and analysis was controlled by algorithms. Audiences have to identify news that is accurate and credible among the flood of competing fake news and misinformation. Finland has included multi-platform information literacy and strong critical thinking as a core, cross-subject component in its primary school curriculum since

2016<sup>3</sup>. Factchecking, thinking critically, interpreting and evaluating the information is how students learn to fight against misinformation and disinformation. In Hong Kong where general public lacks the knowledge to differentiate real and fake news. It is time for the industry to raise the awareness so that the value of credible and reliable news sources can be recognised, the work of journalists can be supported and independent journalism can sustain.

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<sup>3</sup> Henley, J. (2020, February 5). *How Finland starts its fight against fake news in primary schools*. The Guardian. Retrieved May 9, 2022, from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/28/fact-from-fiction-finlands-new-lessons-in-combating-fake-news>

Percentage Distribution of Advertisements from Popular Recruitment Media  
(2020 Q4 - 2021 Q3) by Sector



Percentage Distribution of Advertisements from Popular Recruitment Media  
(2020 Q4 – 2021 Q3) by Job Level

