

Sphere

ISSUE 26

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF THE HUTCHISON WHAMPOA GROUP



The Boutique Vibe

It's what makes these hotels so special



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Welcome

IN THIS ISSUE we introduce a new feature – Team Players – which focuses on members of staff who have

done something remarkable outside the office and how this helps them in the work place.

Our first team player is Henry Tang Hon-sing, who has raced against some of the world's best 110 metre hurdlers, including China's Olympic gold medalist Liu Xiang. He now works at the Watsons Athletic Club in Hong Kong.

If you have a colleague who excels at a sport, has an interesting hobby or generally makes the world a better place, please nominate them by contacting SphereE@hwl.com.hk so we can feature them in a future issue.

Elsewhere in the magazine, we look at why boutique hotels have become so popular, explore the world of social networking and discover how a medicine company has become a trusted brand in southern China.

We hope you enjoy the magazine.

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COVER AND COVER STORY ILLUSTRATIONS: BERNARD CHAU

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JUST GRAND

HONG KONG

The five-star Harbour Plaza Hong Kong has

been rebranded as Harbour Grand Kowloon. This follows the opening of Harbour Grand Hong Kong and means there are now two Harbour Grand hotels in Hong Kong, one on either side of the harbour. **H**



Global Expansion on Target

HONG KONG

The A S Watson Group (ASW) is on course to meet its target of reaching 10,000 stores worldwide within the next two years. Rossmann opened the 400th store in Poland recently. ASW is the world's largest international health and beauty retailer, with a portfolio of more than 8,600 stores across 34 markets in Asia and Europe. **R**

Winning Ways

INDIA **3** Global Services

volunteers in Mumbai turned out in force to help children's charity Akanksha at its annual sports day. They were on hand to organise races for the 400 children that took part. The beaming smiles on the faces of the winners as they stood on the podium to receive their medals showed that a good time was had by all. **T**





SIGN HERE

UNITED KINGDOM 3 UK is taking part in the Terminate the Rate campaign to lower mobile termination rates in the UK. In all, some 114,259 people signed the petition that was handed in to Ofcom, the telecom regulator. **T**

On Song

AUSTRIA 3 Austria

sponsored a concert by French singer David Guetta at the Austrian ski resort of Schladming, attracting more than 13,000 fans. **T**

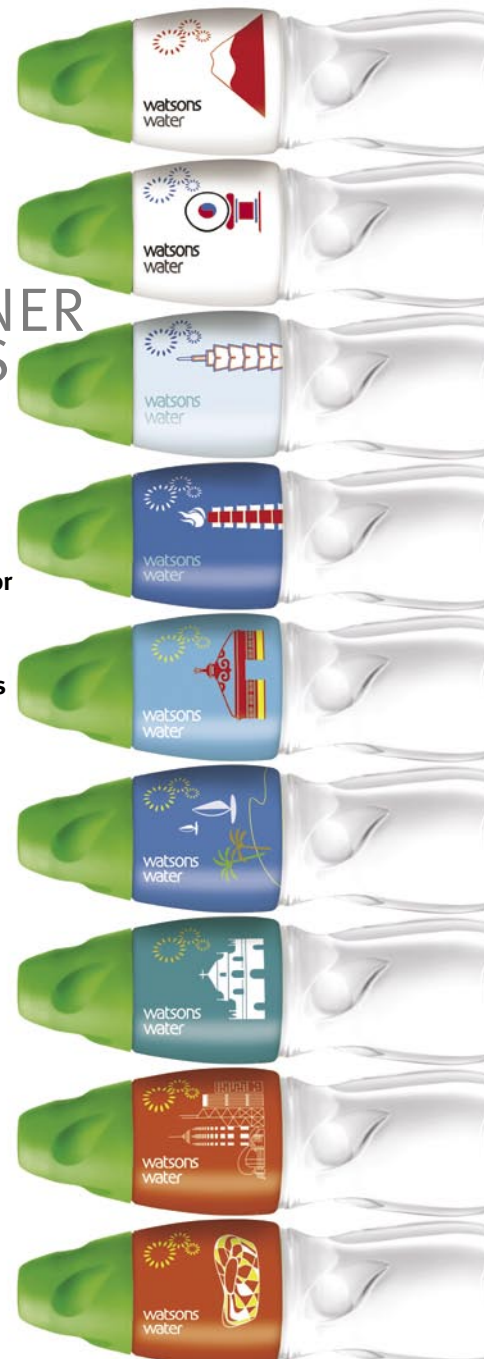
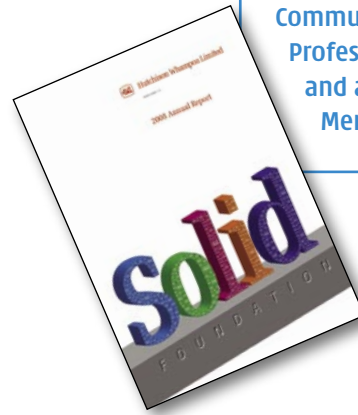


Team Spirit

HONG KONG More than 100 HWL staff and family members took part in a group orienteering competition in Hong Kong. **C**

APPLAUSE!

The 2008 HWL annual report won five prizes in the League of American Communications Professionals Awards and another in the MerComm Inc Awards.



DESIGNER LABELS

HONG KONG

Watsons Water commissioned a special limited edition collection of memorabilia for sports fans who attended the East Asian Games in Hong Kong. The collection featured nine different designs to represent the countries and territories that were competing for glory. **R**



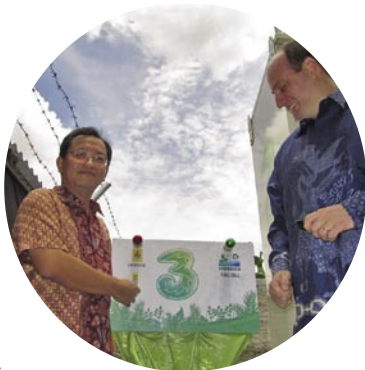
Joining the Social Club

HONG KONG INQ Mobile has launched two new 3G social mobiles complete with Internet-based Twitter capabilities. The INQ Chat 3G is the company's first QWERTY-style phone, while the compact INQ Mini 3G provides an entry-level social mobile option for the price-sensitive pre-pay market. INQ is also making a push into the Greater China region, recently appointing Kinson Loo as the President of INQ for the Greater China region. Mr Loo was recently included in a Top Ten list of the most influential people in the Chinese mobile phone industry by the *People's Daily* newspaper. **T**

GOING GREEN

INDONESIA

PT Hutchison CP Telecommunications (HCPT) is switching to using hydrogen fuel for its back-up power supply at 210 base stations in Sumatra, Java and Bali. HCPT is the first telecom provider in Asia to operate hydrogen-run base stations on such a large scale. **T**



THE BIG VOTE

HONG KONG Online awards organised by **ESDlife**, Hong Kong's leading wedding media, to identify outstanding wedding service providers attracted more than 190,000 votes. **I**



CONGRATULATIONS!

HWL won the Best Deal Award (Hong Kong) in The Asset Triple A Country Awards 2009, North Asia.

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→ APPLAUSE!

Harbour Plaza Metropolis was named Best Hotel Wedding Banquet Kowloon (Smart Choice) by the ESDlife and Hong Kong Q-Mark Service Scheme Licence.



New Look

HOLLAND

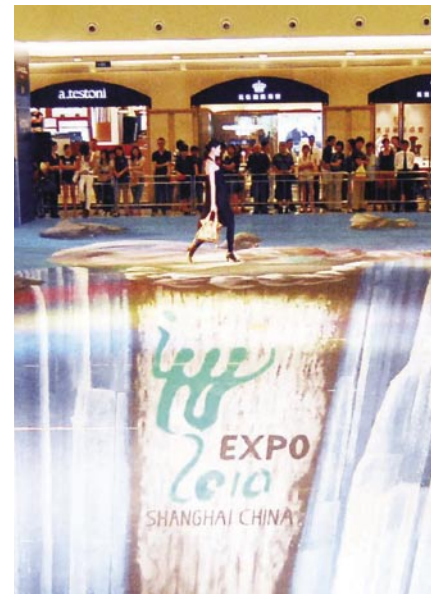
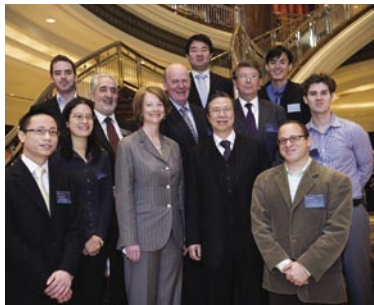
Trekpleister has celebrated its 30th anniversary by introducing a new look. While retaining the brand's image as a friendly neighbourhood chemist, the revamp has also gone down well with customers and staff alike. **R**



STUDENT EXCHANGE BOOST

AUSTRALIA

The Endeavour Australia Cheung Kong Awards have been extended for a further 10 years. The awards represent a partnership between the Cheung Kong Group and the Australian Government to promote educational exchange opportunities between Australia and Asia. **I**



THE BIG PICTURE

CHINA With the 2010 Shanghai World Expo as the main theme, renowned artist Edgar Müller's 300 square metre 3D painting, the world's largest, went on display at the Westgate Mall in Shanghai over the summer. **H**

Husky Increases Retail Network

CANADA Husky Energy is buying a retail network of 98 petrol stations in Ontario from Suncor. This increases the company's network of petrol stations to 571. **I**





CHINA GAS DISCOVERY

CANADA Husky has made two more significant gas discoveries in the South China Sea. Husky Oil China announced that the West Hercules deepwater drilling rig discovered gas in commercial quantities near the Liwan Gas Field. **I**



CONGRATULATIONS!



Savers has been named the UK's best value for money personal care retailer in a consumer survey. It was voted No.1 in the "Price for Personal Care" category in the 2009 Verdict Retail Research Report.

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YEAH!

The new Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees was named "The Best Designer Hotel 2009" at the Guangzhou Travel Fair.

Platform Launch

TAIWAN TOM, through Cite Publishing, has launched POPO, the first digital platform in Taiwan to link publishers, writers and readers. POPO enables writers to sell their work to readers directly or through publishers. **I**



STEPPING ON THE GAS

UNITED KINGDOM Cheung Kong Infrastructure and HK Electric have increased their investment in NGN, a company that supplies gas to homes and businesses across northern England. Their combined stake has risen from 75.1 per cent to 88.4 per cent. **I**



500th Watsons Store in China

CHINA The 500th Watsons store in China opened its doors in Shanghai recently, marking an important milestone in ASW's plan to reach 1,000 stores in the Mainland. ASW Group Managing Director Dominic Lai issued an upbeat message at the opening ceremony. **R**

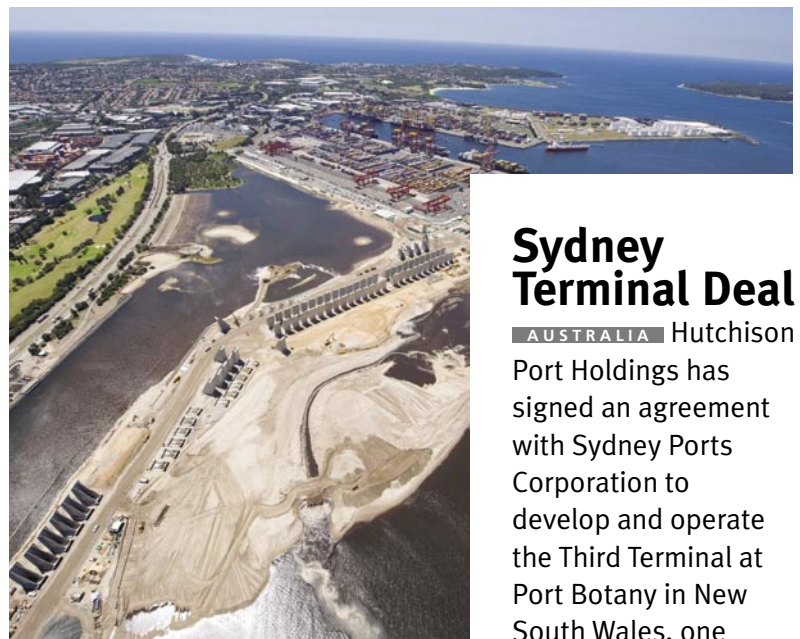


FOREVER YOUNG

HONG KONG Students at the University of 3rd Age (U3A) showed that age is only a number at their Fun Day when they took part in stage performances, games and handicraft workshops. HK Electric and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service have run U3A since 2006. **I**

IN SEASON

CHINA Guests enjoyed a night of jazz, Broadway musicals and a Hermès fashion show at the Seasons Rendezvous at the Shanghai Shangri-la Hotel to promote Hutchison Whampoa Property Limited's Seasons Villas development. **H**



Sydney Terminal Deal

AUSTRALIA Hutchison Port Holdings has signed an agreement with Sydney Ports Corporation to develop and operate the Third Terminal at Port Botany in New South Wales, one of Australia's major international container ports. **P**

MEETING OF MINDS

HONG KONG Victor Li, the Managing Director and Deputy Chairman of Cheung Kong (Holdings) Limited, was recently invited to share his thoughts with 30 students from the University of Hong Kong. The talk was part of the Meet the Entrepreneurs programme run by the think tank Economic Synergy. **C**



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Community Spirit

UNITED KINGDOM 3 UK has become the first UK mobile operator to open a store specifically catering for the Chinese community in London. The store, located at the entrance to Chinatown, employs staff who can speak English, Mandarin, Cantonese and Taiwanese. **T**

School's In

CHINA The new school at The Greenwich, Xian, was officially opened at a ceremony attended by government officials, education professionals and senior Hutchison Whampoa Property executives. **H**



WORKING TOGETHER

HONG KONG Hutchison Telecom Hong Kong and its partners in the Conexus Mobile Alliance have teamed up with NTT Communications to deliver smartphone solutions for multinational corporations. **T**



How 3 is helping residents of remote and rural parts of Ireland enjoy the benefits of broadband

By Jon Marsh



Windswept cliffs on the Aran Islands.

Ireland Calling

THE RUGGED, WINDSWEPT ARAN ISLANDS along Ireland's west coast are home to a population which has long grown used to doing without many of the amenities of modern life. The three islands, situated at the mouth of Galway Bay, enjoy a long cultural history going back centuries; even today, Gaelic is still widely spoken.

The total number of residents is counted in hundreds and they are often outnumbered by day-trippers in summer. During winter, howling gales sweep over the rugged cliffs and rocky fields. The economy relies on tourists who come across on the ferry to visit the Iron Age forts, down a pint of Guinness or two at the local pub and buy souvenirs at the handful of local shops. The islands' most enduring symbol is the hand-knit fisherman's Aran sweater and the patterns incorporated in traditional Aran hand knitting have been handed down from mother to daughter for generations.

It's a place for hardy folk whose many might say lead lives that are more than a little isolated. But things are changing, and 3 Ireland is helping to keep the people of Aran connected with the outside world through the National Broadband Scheme (NBS), a government-backed service to provide remote and rural parts of Ireland with affordable broadband services.

Local businesses are now able to make the most of high speed Internet, e-mail and additional services,

giving them much-needed access to local and global markets. At home, residents can use enhanced voice, data and multimedia services to meet all their Internet needs, whether it's downloading music, surfing the Web or booking flights online and making free Skype calls abroad.

The service was officially launched at a ceremony attended by Éamon Ó Cuív, Ireland's Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Damien Gallagher, 3's NBS Project Director, along with members of the community and local school children.

"I wholeheartedly welcome this major and exciting development for the Aran Islands," said Mr Ó Cuív. "Improving access for the island communities has always been my priority and over the years my department has been to the fore in progressing the physical and social development that is so necessary for the islands' future. The extension of the NBS to the Aran Islands is a huge step forward that will bring enhanced economic and social benefits to these communities."

Cathy Ni Ghoill, Manager of the local co-op and development centre, was thrilled. "We were delighted when the National Broadband Scheme was announced and we feel this is a very important infrastructure for all islands," she said. "This is a necessary part of modern telecommunications infrastructure that places Aran on a par with the rest of the world."

3's Mr Gallagher echoed her comments, saying: "It has never been a more important time for people and businesses on these islands to be connected, as we strive to remain competitive during tough economic times. 3 has played a leading role in driving the delivery of broadband services in Ireland."

Aran is just one of many places which is benefitting from the NBS. In Waterford, in the southeast of the country, the NBS has been welcomed with open arms by the small business community.

"The National Broadband Scheme provided by 3 is a significantly positive step in the right direction in supporting the local economy," said Michael Garland, the Chief Executive Officer of the Waterford Chamber of Commerce. "SMEs (small and medium enterprises) and rural enterprises across Waterford can now target international markets and compete with businesses in urban areas that, up to now, have had a distinct competitive advantage."

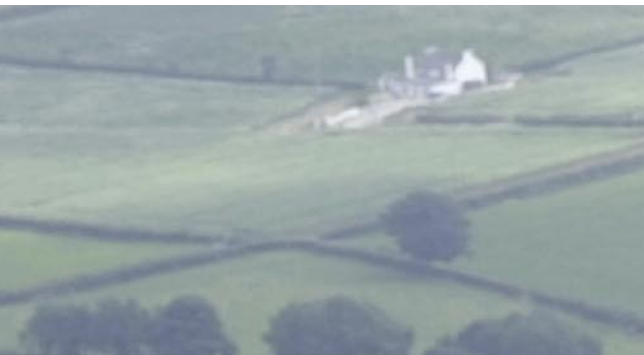
The NBS will eventually supply broadband connections to approximately 223,000 residential, commercial and business addresses in more than 1,000 electoral districts throughout the country. The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of the year.

Eamon Ryan, Ireland's Minister of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, said: "It is imperative that we have universal broadband coverage in Ireland, for foreign investment, for competitiveness and for our own businesses and householders. Broadband availability will be central to our economic recovery."

3, Ireland's fastest growing telecom network, is fast approaching 500,000 customers in the country, with some 200,000 of them already enjoying the benefits of broadband. 



Above: Minister Ó Cuív (left) with Damien Gallagher at the launch.



It has never been a **more important time** for people and businesses on these islands **to be connected**



A Journey Back in Time

The three Aran Islands – Inis Mór (Big Island), Inis Meáin (Middle Island) and Inis Óírr (East Island) – are situated at the mouth of Galway Bay. There are about 900 inhabitants on Inis Mór, making it by far the most populated of the islands. The main village, Kilronan, has a harbour that handles most of the tourist trade.

Inis Meáin boasts two forts that date back to the fourth and fifth centuries, while Inis Óírr, the smallest island, features a castle built in 1585 and the ruins of a ninth century church.

The landscape of all three islands is harsh, with steep, rugged cliffs and windswept, rocky fields divided by stone walls. In the past, people made a precarious living from fishing and farming, and that the islands remained inhabited is a tribute to the tenacity and resourcefulness of the inhabitants.

For many visitors, the desolate beauty and remote location of the islands make them an ideal location for quiet contemplation. While tourism has brought more money into the local economy, today's islanders balance membership of the global community with preservation of their unique cultural heritage.





the Boutique

vibe

Why the personal touch makes all the difference

By Mark Redvers

THE GENERALLY-ACCEPTED DEFINITION of a boutique hotel used to be fairly straightforward: small, funky, quirky, or a combination of all three, a property that was instantly recognisable as somewhere that took the opposite approach to the major international hotel chains' proclivity for uniformity.

In today's market, where the major brand players are also launching city properties that are trumpeted as boutique hotels, the definition has become broader, and the boundaries a little more blurred, but industry professionals all agree that the key component is personalised service, the kind of name-knowing approach that makes guests feel they are in a small, family-owned place even if the reality is rather different.

For larger hotels aspiring to achieve boutique chic it has meant abandoning the instinctive formality that comes with corporate-run operations – funky lobbies instead of cavernous entrances with marble pillars, uniforms in colours other than black, and encouraging staff to express their personalities and act on instinct rather than sticking to a set of rules.

Not that finding individuals with a people-pleasing attitude towards service has ever been a problem in Asia. But in many ways the region has taken its time to meet the increased demand for boutique-type hotels; travellers from the so-called Generation X, now in their 30s and 40s, are particularly receptive to the idea of spending the night in a less formal place, one that does not have scores of identical twins in other parts of the world.

After a late start, the Asian boutique-hotel boom is truly on its way, with properties



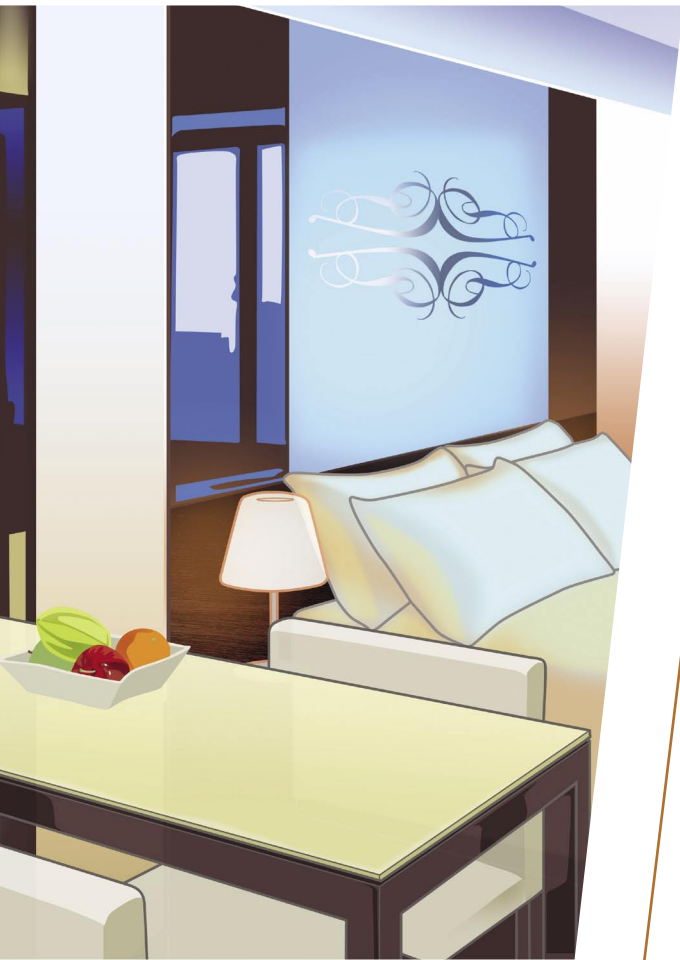
A funky design twist also helps. In the case of the **Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees** people entering the lobby get a feeling of being slightly off kilter, **eight degrees in fact**

now opening at warp speed. The past few years have seen Hong Kong – a city that already has more than its fair share of world-beating hotels – open a whole slew of individualistic properties geared towards the more discerning traveller. Among them is the new Hutchison Whampoa Limited hotel, Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees, located closed to the old Kai Tak airport.

“I think a boutique hotel is all about personality,” said General Manager Christina Cheng. “I like to stay in smaller hotels when I travel; you see the same staff the next morning and they begin to know you. I like that feeling and I want to encourage that in this hotel – an intimate environment. For me a boutique hotel is where you come in to be recognised and that people will recognise you. Warm and competent staff are important.”

A funky design twist also helps. In the case of the Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees people entering the lobby get a feeling of being slightly off kilter, eight degrees in fact, thanks to a clever optical illusion created by designer Patrick Leung, an effect that has been likened to looking at the famous Leaning Tower of Pisa in Italy.

Tampering with the traditional lobby design was one of the key tenets of designer American Ian Schrager, generally regarded as the creator of the modern-day boutique hotel. Mr Schrager, who was involved in the wild and wacky Studio 54 New York nightclub, whose patrons included Andy Warhol,



Michael Jackson, Elton John, Jackie Onassis, Bette Midler and Elizabeth Taylor, also claims credit for inventing concepts such as the hotel positioned as home away from home, the hotel as theatre, lobby socialising, the indoor-outdoor lobby, the urban resort and the urban spa. The very first Schragger venture was the Morgans Hotel in New York, in the mid 1980s, followed by the Royalton and the Paramount, where guests were encouraged to chat and drink in the lobby.

If Mr Schragger invented the boutique hotel, then Adrian Zecha can most certainly claim credit for founding its ocean-side equivalent in Asia, in the shape of the chic and casual Aman resorts. The first, Amanpuri, dispensed with any kind of conventional check-in area or, indeed, any kind of central building at all; guests were housed in fabulously

New Hotel's Winning Formula

Hong Kong's latest boutique hotel, the Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees, is proving to be a popular choice among discerning travellers. Since the 702-room property opened late last year close to the old Kai Tak airport, occupancy levels have been high and it has already won a prestigious industry award – Best Designer Hotel at the Guangdong Travel Fair.

Hotel General Manager Christina Cheng says the eye-catching design – its lobby is an optical illusion that gives the impression of being slightly off-centre – comfortable rooms and tip-top service have made it a hit with travellers looking for a quality boutique hotel at affordable rates.

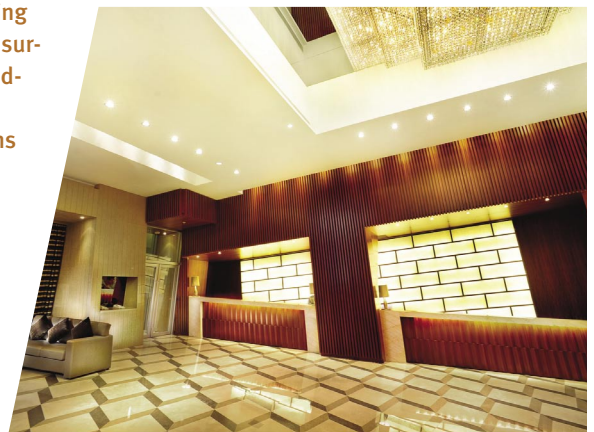
“I think people love boutique hotels because they give you a good feeling, once you try one, you want to go back,” she explained. “As well as the design, it is also about quality and service. Coffee, for example, is not in a big jar, it is made freshly, and the bread also is fresh. I think it is a worldwide trend – people want to get away from huge conventional hotels.”

The Harbour Plaza 8 Degrees is located just 20 minutes from the popular Tsim Sha Tsui shopping area via the hotel's luxury shuttle buses. Ms Cheng, an industry veteran who has worked in top hotels in Macau and Hong Kong, was heavily involved in the staff selection: among her hires was a Nepalese working at her local coffee shop who had impressed her with his affable manner and efficient service.

“I think we have opened a happy hotel with really quality service,” said Ms Cheng. “Our food is really good and international. We focus a lot on quality and the buffet counter plates are not flooded with food as we keep constantly putting out fresh food. For desserts we have more choices rather than big pieces of chocolate cake and cheesecake. The sushi is freshly made and our beef noodle soup has proved to be very popular already. We make our own XO chilli sauce.

“You need to have an angle for a boutique hotel and 8 Degrees means people remember it very quickly. It sounds like baht which is Cantonese for getting rich. I think the designers have done a really good job, you walk in and it is a great feeling.”

The hotel has a banquet room, two stylish restaurants, a business centre, a fitness centre and an outdoor swimming pool and whirlpool surrounded by lush landscaping. The hotel's coffee shop has plans to open on to the sidewalk, allowing al fresco streetside dining, a rarity in space-starved Hong Kong. The immediate area is well served by good-value dining options, with some of the city's best Thai restaurants a short stroll away in Kowloon City.



So far, guests have been mostly from Asian countries, in particular China, Taiwan, Korea and Japan. In future, the mix is also expected to include travellers from the United States, Europe, Russia and India.

luxurious individual Thai-style villas and spent their days lounging on the private Phuket beach, doing lazy laps of the Roman style pool, or feasting at the gourmet restaurant.

It was an immediate hit among the jet set, people who valued its exclusivity and privacy and had no problem paying big money for a totally secluded vacation. Amanpuri was followed by similar properties, initially in Asia, later in other parts of the world.

In China, the boom in boutique hotels is hard to miss. In Beijing, there are now boutique hotels galore, including several that have adapted the city's traditional courtyard architecture.

Further south, in the port city of Shanghai, some of the latest offerings have an eco-conscious theme, a trend led by Australian Jules Kwan and American Scott Barrack, young entrepreneurs who have established a successful business, Space Development, converting period-piece houses and offices in the city for modern use.

"One of our core values is to practise what we preach, so all of our employees are well versed in energy-saving practices, such as biking, using public transport and conserving electricity at the office," said Mr Kwan. "We have developed a training programme to educate and instruct our staff in carbon-neutrality and sustainability."

David Jones, an Associate Professor at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University's School of Hotel and Tourism Management, thinks the United States has the best examples of the boutique genre.

"In my opinion Kimpton Hotels and Restaurants were the first to develop boutique hotels as a group and they are doing the best job of defining a boutique hotel today, although they prefer to call it a lifestyle hotel," he says. "Another boutique operator, which also happens to be based in San Francisco, is Joie de Vivre hotels.

"What makes boutique hotels different? Well, if you take the 'lifestyle' hotel concept, then it is about customising the guest experience, a one-to-one experience if you will. You need to know each customer and know what they need, which means a very good database system.

"However, it is not just about knowing amenity preference that has become commonplace with all brands today, it's more about knowing what the entire lifestyle of the guest is and matching what you have to them, as best you can. Kimpton has many different types of hotels and the key for them is 'every hotel tells a story.' "

Smaller boutique hotels, which do not have the budget for marketing or

advertising, have the option of joining organisations that specialise in promoting such niche properties, whether it is a game lodge in Africa, a resort in Thailand or a hotel in central London.

The human touch is hugely important for Brad Cocks, the Senior Vice President for Asia Pacific of the travel website, the Kiwi Collection, who spends much of the year checking out quality hotels, including numerous boutique properties.

"I think in most cases boutique hotels offer an enhanced experience, usually incorporating a new trend such as design or technology and also escapism from cookie-cutter offerings," he said. "An experience that delivers on its promise: simple, easy, efficient, fun, generous.

"The basics are always taken for granted now – flat screen television and so on – it is the human touch that makes the difference. I think simply based on the economy of scale, in a boutique hotel the ratio of staff to guests is much higher and allows for a more intimate relationship.


"The Establishment Hotel in Sydney is a great example of a boutique hotel, offering unique rooms with a very long room configuration, beds removed from the wall on a slant, enhanced room technology and access to some of the city's best restaurants and bars."

The Hong Kong Polytechnic University is also planning to provide hospitality training to tourism students with the help of a boutique hotel, to be run by the school.

"There needs to be a careful balance of commercial reality and the ideology of nurturing the students in a subtle and real way," explained General Manager Richard Hatter, who stressed that students will be in a minority and will be supervised by experienced staff.

"We have training restaurants and bars run by professionals – think Jamie Oliver's 15 Restaurant in the UK. These will not be simulations but reality situations to which the public can walk in off the street, in addition to the restaurants run 100 per cent by our team for hotel guests.

"What makes a good boutique hotel? I feel that it should be a bespoke upscale hotel with stylish designs, responsive service, confident delivery and passionate staff. It's more about not being a chain mentality but being independent and responsive. The team are empowered to deliver whatever the guest wants."

The relatively late arrival of boutique hotels in Hong Kong and other Asian jurisdictions allows them to offer guests newer buildings equipped with the full technological bag of tricks that 21st-century travellers demand, a high staff-guest ratio and the kind of warm, personalised service for which the region is so famous. 

A **good boutique hotel** should be a **bespoke upscale** hotel with **stylish** designs, responsive service, confident delivery and **passionate staff**



A Real High-Flyer



Welcome to Team Players, a new feature about members of staff who have done something remarkable outside the office and how this helps them in the work place.

'HURDLES KING' Henry Tang Hon-sing, Hong Kong record holder of men's 110 metre hurdles and 400 metre hurdles, has raced against some of the world's best hurdlers, including China's Olympic gold medalist Liu Xiang. He now works at the Watsons Athletic Club in Hong Kong. *Sphere* sat down with him to find out how being a leading athlete has helped him in his personal and professional life.

How did you get involved in athletics?

When I was in Form 1, I participated in the school's sports meet. I got into the 100 metre finals and came eighth, which really meant last. I was quite frustrated and discouraged. Kids like to win. A few months later, there was an inter-school sports meet, so I started doing some training myself. Then in Form 2, I started growing and suddenly ran the 100 metres over a second faster, so sports teachers started to notice me and athletic clubs wanted to recruit me. Then I started training with professional coaches.

Why the 110m hurdles?

At 19, I got injured during an international competition and stopped competing for over a year. When I started again, I wasn't very fast and was really upset. Then I saw some people hurdling. At the time hurdling wasn't popular but I tried and it felt good. The more I trained, the more I liked it.



Clockwise, from left: Henry training; Closing Ceremonies at the Sydney Olympics; with Olympic gold medalist Liu Xiang.

What was it like competing at the Olympic Games in Sydney?

It was very different from what I'd imagined. The scale was much bigger. Inside the Olympic Village, the living conditions were very good, and you could meet people of so many different nationalities. The atmosphere in the stadium was also different – there are no empty seats at the Olympic Games, with 50,000 to 60,000 people watching you compete. The strangest thing was I didn't feel nervous at all once I walked into the stadium. The pressure disappeared. All I wanted to do was run and compete.

What makes 110m hurdles Olympic gold medalist Liu Xiang so special?

He is very disciplined and self-controlled. Many great athletes when they reach a certain level get distracted by fame and success, but not him. He believes in his coach Sun Haiping. They have a very good relationship, maybe because they've been training since Liu was little.

How has the discipline of training and competing helped you in other areas?


It's given me huge motivation and improved my time management and discipline. I'm also more organised. It's also helped me with my personal philosophy on life, because I used to be rather self-centred, just like most kids. I'm now much more pro-active and positive.

I learn while I work. I come across many coaches, local and overseas, and learn a lot of from them. I then use this knowledge to coach my trainees. There are also a lot of management issues that come with being involved with sports. At the Watsons Athletic Club, we have corporate social responsibility programmes, which are meaningful for me and society. And as an athlete I'm very competitive, which also explains why I compare myself to other colleagues. Athletes are rather stubborn, which is both good and bad, but that can also translate into being more persistent and confident.

What's it like being a coach?

As an athlete, I was always receiving, always enjoying something. But as a coach, I give a lot. Coaches are very devoted but are largely unknown to the public. Since I became a coach, I have realised that the coach is responsible for a lot of things, including the athletes' studies, because you need to have a balanced life. Athletes often treat their coaches as someone very close to them and will seek them out to help solve problems. There's a lot of expectations. A good coach has to have good communication skills, understand what to teach athletes and how to convey ideas correctly. Since I became a coach, I've paid much more attention to improving my communication skills.


Hong Kong people work hard – do you think they should play more sport?

Sure – playing sports can help reduce stress. It also makes you more positive. You don't have to play sport for a long time to begin with – five or 10 minutes is enough. Keep it up. If you find you are not interested in that sport, just change to another one. 

Desk Duties

I am responsible for external affairs related to track and field sport as well as some administration work such as arranging courses and sports meet schedules. As I've been an athlete, I know what athletes really need and give them appropriate support. We have good connections with sports companies and try our best to get sponsorship for athletes. For young people in the training classes, we offer them various activities to balance their study and training. For example, we used to give lectures to grade six students in primary school to prepare them for life in middle school. Many schools co-operated with us on that project. We also give lectures to track and field athletes and coaches.



 Do you have a colleague who excels at a sport, has an interesting hobby or generally makes the world a better place outside office hours? If so, please nominate them so they can be featured in *Sphere's* new Team Players section. Contact SphereE@hwl.com.hk and tell us why your friend or colleague is so special.

Making New NCO

You love Facebook and can't stop Twittering, but what's next for social networking?
By Felicity George

IN THE SPAN OF JUST A FEW YEARS, online social networking has rapidly become as ubiquitous an activity as sending e-mail or doing an Internet search. Facebook, which has grown to more than 350 million users worldwide since it was founded in 2004, along with micro-blogging service Twitter, have emerged as the most popular of the many social media sites established during the past decade.



Just as with the trend seen in e-mail and Web searches, access to online social networking applications has made the jump from desktop personal computers to today's Internet-ready mobile phones. "The prevalence of owning a cellular phone over a PC in most Asian countries has directly boosted the popularity of mobile social network sites," says Debbie Swee, a Market Analyst at IDC Asia-Pacific's emerging technologies research group.

According to Facebook, there are more than 65 million active users worldwide currently accessing the site through their mobile devices and people who use Facebook on their mobile devices are almost 50 per cent more active than non-mobile users. Leland Rechis, Mobile User Experience Designer at Twitter, says plenty of people access their Twitter accounts through the online community's mobile Website. Established in 2006, Twitter was reported to have had more than 60 million users worldwide at the end of last year.



nnnections

But this is a market that never stands still, so what's the next step for social networking and what stage are we at in the development curve? It's no longer just about staying in touch with friends and celebrities – business is also catching on to how social networking applications can improve marketing and grow revenue. Applications that will enhance customer relationship management will be at the forefront of this trend.

It was suggested at a recent seminar at Oxford University that the future is not about crowd sourcing but crowd filtering because there are now enough social networks to fill all the obvious niches, but making use of the stream of information that pours into them is something that has only just begun.

At the same seminar LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman, who graduated from Stanford University and Oxford with a Master's degree in philosophy, put it this way: "I actually think we are just beginning to see how people launch the eventualities of social networks into their life," at the same time reminding the audience of the way that mobile phones had grown from being a tool for bankers to being a part of everyone's life. "I think the phenomenon of the online relationship empowers our personal and professional life. You might think 'Who



wants to consume all this useless information?’, but with some information it is like with ice cream. It is not nutritious, but people still eat it.”

Whatever the new direction, it seems that Asian mobile users will play an increasingly important part in the future of social networking. IDC’s 2009 regional survey of social network users aged 15 to 35 found that mobiles have the potential to overtake PCs as the social networking device of choice. In countries such as China, India, Korea, and Thailand, over 50 per cent of the users interviewed have now made accessing social network sites via their mobiles a weekly habit.



That mobile social networking trend is also being aggressively cultivated in other markets by leading telecom network operators. Hutchison Telecommunications Hong Kong Holdings, which operates the 3 brand cellular networks in the city and Macau, prides itself for being a local trailblazer in terms of introducing social networking site access via its mobile phone service.

“In 2006, we became the first operator to deliver both Windows Live and Yahoo messaging services on a range of handsets,” says Raymond Ho, Head of Content Management at 3 Hong Kong. “The following year, we again led the market in offering Skype as a mobile service.”

As the city’s largest 3G network service provider, 3 Hong Kong helped expand mobile social network usage in Asia with the launch of the world’s most advanced mobile phone dedicated to social-networking applications – the INQ¹, which was dubbed the “Facebook phone” by the media. “The most popular social-networking applications in Hong Kong are Windows Live messaging and Facebook,” says Mr Ho.

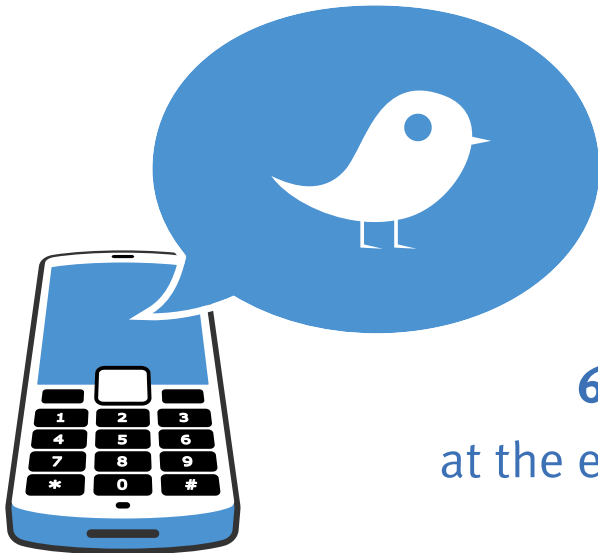
London-based INQ Mobile, a Hutchison subsidiary, designs low-cost cellular handsets that are focused on providing a one-click, “always on” interface to various online social networking, e-mail and messaging functions. Along with Facebook and Skype, the INQ’s other built-in, easy-to-use Internet applications include auction site eBay and search engines Google and Yahoo.

Last October, 3 Hong Kong ramped up its mobile social networking strategy with the introduction of the INQ Mini 3G – a compact handset dubbed as the “Twitter phone” by the press. Users can send their tweets – text-based posts that each measure up to 140 characters – and re-tweet via the Internet rather than blog through their service provider’s short-messaging service. Frank Meehan, the founder and Chief Executive of INQ Mobile, says his company has worked closely with Twitter to develop a programme for its mobile phone that is always connected to the online service.

INQ Mobile, which has already sold more than a million handsets worldwide since launching in 2008, offers advanced social media specifications on its products without the hefty price tag, which helps mobile network operators drive data usage to the mass market. “We pioneered social networking on handsets,” says Mr Meehan, explaining that the key to building the INQ brand is to stick to what it does best and steadily improve on this, which is similar to the path taken by BlackBerry maker Research In Motion of Canada.



According to **Facebook**, there are **more than 65 million** active users worldwide currently **accessing** the site through their **mobile devices**



Established in 2006,
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The range of wireless BlackBerry devices gained much credibility by championing push e-mail, which is used to describe always-on connection to an e-mail system – either based on a user’s a personal account with a service provider or one maintained by a company for its staff.

Mr Meehan says an average of 65 per cent of INQ users are on Facebook, with the majority of users accessing once a day or more. About 30 per cent use their INQ device frequently for e-mail, while Windows Live Messenger activity is three to four times greater than on other 3G handsets.



That level of mass-market data usage on INQ’s network-efficient, low-cost social media device means higher margins and average revenue per user for carriers, who in turn benefit from lower handset subsidies and network load costs. “We have completely broken the hold that high-end smartphones had on great mobile Internet experiences, and made them available to everybody,” says Mr Meehan.


But online social networking applications have now reached the stage where they will be more than consumers’ communications tools. By developing social media programmes into essential capabilities that support automated business applications, such as a customer relationship management system (CRM), telecom network operators can also expect increased data usage from the corporate sector. “There will be many innovations in this market segment,” says Mr Meehan. “You will soon find more localised and specific social-networking functions for the enterprise.”

In November last year, cloud-computing service provider Salesforce.com announced in the United States the high-tech industry’s first known secure enterprise collaboration platform called “Salesforce Chatter”. It will be commercially available this year, providing corporate CRM users with the ability to set up the familiar social media profiles, status updates, news feeds, group affiliations and connections through the service, which is accessible via desktop computer and mobile phone.

In the local market, Mr Ho says 3 Hong Kong is eager to expand use of the INQ social-networking devices into the small and medium-sized enterprises. “This is one of the major reasons why we’re very optimistic about the potential of the new INQ Chat 3G,” he explains.

The INQ Chat 3G was developed in response to consumer and operator demand for a QWERTY-style keypad on an INQ device. It features a generous 2.4-inch display, 3.2-megapixel auto-focus camera, built-in support for Global Positioning System, and an active address book that shows the status of a user’s contacts at the office, home and social networks.

It also contains new e-mail client software created by INQ that incorporates free push Gmail, which removes a cost for push e-mail typically borne by operators or passed on to consumers. In addition, the new model has Facebook, Skype, Twitter and various messaging applications.

Mr Ho expects a steady growth of social media acceptance in Hong Kong, noting that even local politicians and educational institutions are increasingly becoming as active as the young, early adopters in online social networks to share ideas, meet friends around the world and keep up with their interests. 

Below: INQ Mobile has already sold more than a million handsets worldwide.





the **Right** Medicine



How Baiyunshan became one of the most trusted TCM brands in southern China
By Mark Graham

MODERN PRODUCTION METHODS have helped make a traditional Chinese herb, with a healing history going back several thousand years, one of the 21st century's anti-viral drugs of choice. Ban Lan Gen, one of Hutchison Baiyunshan's most popular products, has been flying off the shelves in recent years, its popularity helped in part by the series of epidemics that have hit Asia, including SARS, bird flu and, more recently, swine flu. People in China are fully aware of the anti-viral properties of Ban Lan Gen, a herb known to be hugely effective in remedying colds and flu; health-conscious consumers have been impressed that the Hutchison Baiyunshan version is produced using ultra-modern agricultural methods and strict quality-control procedures.

The sales figures show impressive growth – single herb Ban Lan Gen granules were up almost 30 per cent on 2008, while Fu Fang Ban Lan Gen granules, made from a formula of mixed herbs, reported an increase of nearly 70 per cent.

"It is the highest quality Ban Lan Gen in China, we have put a lot of work into making sure that is the case," said Christian Hogg, Chief Operating Officer of Hutchison China Meditech Limited (Chi-Med), the Hutchison Baiyunshan holding company. "We have an enormous Ban Lan Gen agricultural operation, with high standards. Also, we are able to systemise the profile of the core ingredients so we can make sure that each batch is consistent. This kind of certification method is unique."

The herb, known as woad root in the West, is cultivated in various regions of northern China. The roots are harvested during the autumn and dried and then processed into granules, which are most commonly consumed dissolved in hot water or tea. The Chinese public certainly thinks that the Hutchison Baiyunshan product is a cut above the rest, as shown by the surging sales.

When serious viruses threatened China in recent years, particularly the southern regions, consumers naturally opted for the most trusted and most tested products made by Hutchison Baiyunshan. "It is an extremely good bacterial anti-viral substance, people take it as preventative against colds and flu, much as westerners would take Vitamin C," explained Mr Hogg. "It helps alleviate symptoms very quickly. The main reason it has grown so much has been these horrendous viruses of the last few years that have been affecting the region, SARS and bird flu."

The company was careful not to be seen to capitalise on the natural epidemics, announcing a price freeze during the height of SARS in 2003.

That, in return, produced a wave of goodwill among the public in China, in addition to a renewed curiosity as to how the company was applying contemporary methods to ancient herbal remedies.

People who want to know more can go and see for themselves at a purpose-built museum in the grounds of the company, which has its base in the southern city of Guangzhou (see sidebar). Alternatively, they can listen to the conclusions of the increasingly large body of Chinese and international medical experts who are convinced of the efficacy of Traditional Chinese Medicine, or TCM.

An example of this has been the work of Professor Zhong Nanshan, President of the Chinese Medical Association, who recently reported on the promising anti-viral properties of Ban Lan Gen to a major United States medical conference organised by the prestigious National Institutes of Health (NIH). NIH officials, who have visited the Hutchison Baiyunshan plant, are collaborating with the company on a one-year study, whereby 50 samples of Ban Lan Gen will be screened and tested.

Getting such a prestigious body to look methodically at TCM compounds is a major breakthrough, one of the first steps in helping it to be recognised by the various medical and drug regulatory drug bodies in the United States and Europe. Currently, most TCM remedies are limited in the curative claims they can make when advertising or marketing in these two major international markets; many can only be sold as health-enhancing products.

Co-operation efforts by Hutchison Baiyunshan with bodies such as the NIH are bound to help in gaining proper certification in future. Millions of people in China do not need that documentation to persuade them; the efficacy of Ban Lan Gen, and other age-old treatments, has been shown over many



Traditional Chinese Medicine has played an important role in China for centuries.

thousands of years, spanning many Chinese dynasties, long before hi-tech laboratories and regulatory bodies came into being.

Having said that, the need to provide systematic proof of any drug's effectiveness is mandatory in the modern world, which is why Hutchison Baiyunshan and its parent company Chi-Med devote significant funding to research and development. Indeed, 14 of Chi-Med's drugs were recently added to the Ministry of Health's official New National Essential Medicines List in China. Contemporary scientific methods are used to test and verify ancient medical theories, carried out in Hutchison Baiyunshan's new facilities which look just like modern chemical drug production factories.

Hutchison Baiyunshan also takes a 21st century approach in other areas, ensuring that its patents and trademarks are fully protected and that it sells the products at affordable prices. That socially-responsible approach also extends to encouraging consumers to respect the sell-by date – customers can even replace medicines that have gone beyond the expiry date free of charge. The company also makes corporate donations to worthy causes, such as for SARS research or to help victims of the devastating earthquake in China's Sichuan province.

On a more technical level, the factories have strict sanitary and safety standards. Its four herb-growing sites meet Good Agricultural Practice standards, with no excessive use of pesticides or genetically modified seeds.


It is not just Ban Lan Gen that is enjoying vigorous sales. The company's Fu Fan Dan Shen tablets, used to treat chest conditions and angina, have proved to be strong performers, with sales up 15 per cent in 2008. Kou Yan Qing granules, used for detoxification and treatment of mouth ulcers, and Xiao Yan Li Dan tablets, which help with the proper functioning of the liver and gallbladder, are also selling well.

Overall, Hutchison Baiyunshan's over-the-counter drug sales rose almost 30 per cent in 2008, the kind of growth that has become the norm since Chi-Med took a significant stake in the company five years ago. There are now 1,500 sales and marketing staff covering every city in China with a population of more than one million people.

The company's pioneering work has interested the major global pharmaceutical and food players, who clearly sense that there are business opportunities on the horizon. In October, Chi-Med announced the signing of a joint venture agreement between its subsidiary, Hutchison Organic Holdings Limited, and The Hain Celestial Group, a leading US organic products company, to distribute food products for infants and toddlers. Chi-Med already has partnerships with Merck Serono, Lilly and Johnson and Johnson.

"China is the new frontier for pharmaceuticals in general and we are the pioneers," said Mr Hogg. "At the end of the day, if the drugs pass all the clinical trials, the rewards can be in the hundreds of millions of dollars. It is high risk and needs huge investment in research and development."

To that end, Chi-Med has a facility in the east-coast city of Shanghai, headed by United States-trained scientist Samantha Du. It has been able to lure some of the best scientific talents in the country to conduct research on traditional medicine herbs and compounds. Chi-Med is the first company to conduct such systematic research on such a grand scale.

Breakthroughs can take years, but all the signs so far are positive, with a number of traditional TCM cures at the advanced trial stage. It will only take one positive certification from the American Food and Drug Administration to make the medical world at large sit up and take much more notice of TCM. 

China is the new frontier for pharmaceuticals, and we are the pioneers



Clockwise from above: Today, companies like Baiyunshan take a 21st century approach to the quality of their products; producing medicines at Baiyunshan's headquarters in Guangzhou; various product lines on display; a satisfied customer.





Back to the Future

A museum at the Hutchison Baiyunshan site, which traces the history of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) through the ages, is attracting 200,000 visitors a year.

The 3,600 square metre facility, known as the Shennong Herbal Hall Chinese Medicine Museum, is at the company's headquarters in the southern



Chinese city of Guangzhou, just across the border from Hong Kong. It sets out to educate the public on the theories and culture of TCM which has a history of thousands of years.

"It is a fascinating topic, and we want people to learn more in a more relaxed atmosphere," said company General Manager Li Chuyuan. "It is a great day out, and people will come away very satisfied and enriched, discovering more about their own cultural roots. Everyone knows that China has a long history, and we have focused on one area, traditional medicine, to show just how it has evolved over the years right through to the 21st century."

Mr Li, who has a background in sales, operations and management, also has a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry from Zhongshan University. He has overseen the company's rapid growth in the past five years – and introduced novel ideas such as the company museum.

One of the most striking features is a huge embossment, some 99 metres long and 3.3 metres high, that illustrates how Chinese medicines were developed over the centuries through to the 21st century.

The museum's garden, known as "The Eight Diagrams in Chinese Mythology", explains the concept of yin and yang, so important to Chinese medicine and its culture as a whole, where hot is balanced with cold, sweet with sour.

A library has samples of rare herbs, while a garden has rows of herbs that allow people to recognise which plants are of beneficial use for health and which are poisonous.

Visitors can relax in a tea house, while browsing ancient books on remedies, or study a wall chart that shows pictures of healthy exercises from times gone by. A "water pond" feature tells the story of Ge Hong and Bao Gu, two key characters in the history of TCM in the south of China.



Smile for the Camera

ALTHOUGH THE BASIC IDEA is still the same – capturing an image for posterity – just about everything else in the world of cameras has changed beyond all recognition. The equipment used by early photographers more than a century ago was large, cumbersome and difficult to operate, unlike today’s lightweight digital cameras which started to enter the market in the early 1990s.

Then... The golden age of handcrafted wood cameras lasted from the birth of photography in 1839 to the early part of the 20th century. They were large, cumbersome and worked by placing a sensitised plate or sheet of paper in front of the viewing screen to record the image. As exposure times were reduced, mechanical shutters were introduced and were in common use by the turn of the century.

Now... Today’s digital technology changes with dizzying speed. One of the latest innovations to hit the market is the Ricoh GXR, the world’s smallest and lightest interchangeable digital camera. It integrates the lens, image sensor and processing engine in a single unit which slots into the camera body, allowing users to change lenses to match the change in scene and mood around them. 