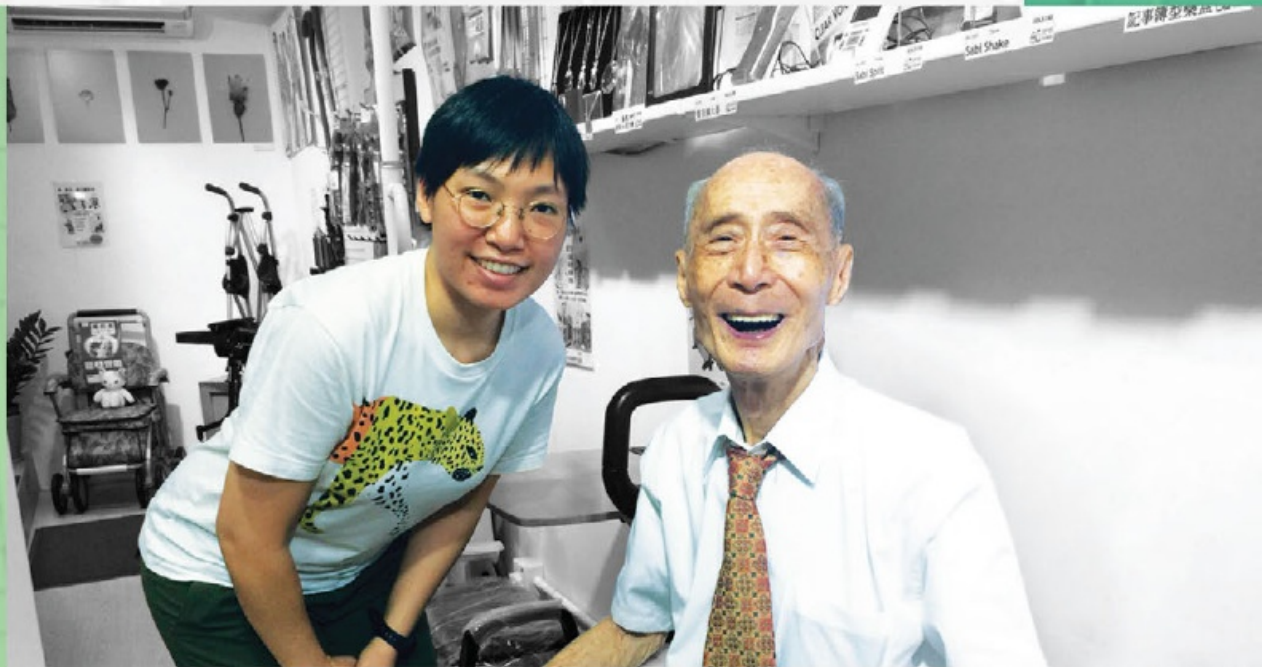


Changing attitudes at Hoholife

Hoholife launched its website and opened the Sai Ying Pun store in 2013. Co-founder Aries Lee explains her philosophy of serving the needs of active seniors who are looking for stylish accessories.



Is your idea new in Hong Kong?

“We are probably the first shop in Hong Kong based on the concept of active ageing. We carry lifestyle products and innovative aids for senior citizens. Everything is handpicked from around the world and our philosophy is that everybody should be able to enjoy retirement with style and dignity. Many brands and products are exclusive to our store so we are quite confident of our competitive edge. Hong Kong has been lagging behind but there are companies like ours in Japan, Taiwan and Singapore.”

In what ways is your stock different?

“Other retailers in Hong Kong with an elderly clientele focus mainly on medical and rehab products so their stock is comparatively traditional, reminding shoppers of disability rather than ability. Our items are fashionable, functional and help make daily life easier. Some examples are good quality, comfortable magnifier necklaces, designer walking sticks and stylish cane umbrellas where the cane element is discreetly hidden but ready to use when needed.

We have introduced many new designs to Hong Kong, lifestyle products and innovative living aids that have never been seen here before. Adjustable focus spectacles, for example, which suit anyone whose prescription is between -6.0 and +3.0. Fall-prevention slippers, which help to stop you tripping up, and MP3-like hearing aids are other items on our shelves.”



How would you say you have been most innovative?

“We are probably the first stylish shop that targets the daily needs of active seniors, focusing on creative ways to maximize mobility, hearing acuity, reading comfort and safety. We also use technology to do business online with social media and e-commerce platforms. Customers can get product information from our website but they also enjoy coming to the store to try out products before buying. We believe that this kind of O2O¹ business model allows us to stand out in a new market. Our end users are aged 45+. Their parents are 75+ but younger people come to us to shop for their parents and grandparents.”

What have been the main challenges?

“Our goal is to promote active ageing and ageing-in-place. That is very new to Hong Kong and being one of the first few players in the market means lots of resources to promote the concept. We use e-commerce because that’s where future growth lies but at present there are only two of us working full-time and two part-time. Our experience and skills include expertise in IT, business development, digital marketing, logistics and design. A new milestone was reached this year with a pop-up booth at the Yata department store in Tsuen Wan.”

Do you have long-term plans?

“We want to introduce age-friendly features around town. These are common in other cities so we hope the retail sector and government will follow our lead. Reading glasses, magnifiers and hearing aids at service counters, for example. More seating in public or common areas and lift lobbies with bigger, clearer signage with good colour contrast. Shopkeepers should also make allowance for the fact that many elderly people have



difficulty reaching up overhead and down to floor level. With thoughtful features like these more senior people would go out. They would also teach everyone to be more inclusive.

We aim to enable people to stay socially active and we want more active seniors as consultants. We believe that their input is crucial. It is the only way a business designed for the silver market can remain viable. Our vision is to break stereotypes and change attitudes to ageing. We are optimistic, not least because we are building a better future for our families and friends, and for the community.” ■



Hoholife founders, Aries Lee and Elis Siu

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Hoholife is one of ten companies supported by the HKFYG Jockey Club Social Innovation Centre. It is also associated with HKFYG's Youth Business Hong Kong entrepreneurship support scheme

1. O2O: online to offline