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**More than skin-deep**

Tattoos have become an art and a secret language **P18**

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# THE YOUNG REPORTER *magazine*

January 2015



FISHERMEN HIT BY  
TRAWLING BAN NEED  
CAREER HELP



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## Letter from the Editor

In this January issue, our cover story features the struggles of local fishermen since the ban on trawling two years ago and their call for alternative forms of government aid.

After looking at the sunset industry, you will see other exciting stories, including the feature on the new business idea connecting smart phones and traditional toys, an inspiring profile of the hat designer to the stars, volunteers who bring Star Wars heroes to life, and more.

Next, we look at the artistic meaning and value of tattoos

beyond the symbol of rebellious, and the reasons behind the popularity of working holidays among young people.

Last but not least, our photo essay brings you to the forgotten corners of Kowloon City and you will hear from those who have witnessed the changes of the community through the years.

Last year was a great one with your support. We are devoted to bringing you more quality stories in 2015. Stay tuned and write to us!

**Carain Yeung**  
Editor

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Cover story of previous issue of TYR explores how illegal discounts in popular taxi apps affect the business of the industry.

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# One Moment

*A*fter 75 days of occupation in Admiralty, protesters pack their belongings with sorrow and frustration. Police arrest 249 protesters who refuse to leave despite repeated warnings and record the identity card numbers of 909 protesters without pressing any charges.

By **The Young Reporter**  
Photo by **Iverson Ng**

COVER STORY

# *Fishermen hit by trawling ban need career help, not just money*

Two years after ban is introduced, only four appeals over compensation have been processed



Photo courtesy of Hong Kong Fishermen's Association

Sixty-five-year-old fisherman Mr Wong Kin-kwong has finally decided to leave the industry and sell his trawler, which has been his companion for more than 30 years.

Born in a fisherman's family, Mr Wong started fishing after finishing primary school. "If I don't work in the industry, what else can I do?" said Mr Wong, who has practiced trawling for 41 years.

In 2012, the Legislative Council passed legislative amendments to ban trawling in Hong Kong waters with a view to saving the damaged seabed and depleted sea resources.

Since then, Mr Wong has tried many means to make a living. He sailed further to fish; he took part-time jobs; he even rented his trawler to fishing enthusiasts and drove them to the fishing waters. Yet his income has failed to cover costs, including fuel.

"Fishermen have to leave Hong Kong waters and sail to the outer sea. They need to face new waters, tougher waves and challenges of new sailing routes," said Mr Cheung Siu-

**"Government 'kills' the rights of trawlers to work in Hong Kong waters. Even if it gives out millions of dollars of compensation, it cannot make up for the fishermen's actual loss."**

**Mr Pang Siu-kei, community director from the Southern Branch of DAB**

keung, chairman of the Hong Kong Fishermen Consortium. Compared to younger fishermen, elder fishermen found it harder to adapt to the new environment, he said.

According to the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, 710 eligible larger

trawler owners and 269 inshore trawler owners are affected by the ban.

The Government pledged to give one-off assistance to the affected trawler owners and deckhands employed by them. Their applications for assistance are assessed according to a vessel's engine capacity, number of deckhands employed and fuel type.

Mr Wong's trawler is regarded as an eligible larger trawler which "generally does not operate in Hong Kong waters". He was given an ex-gratia allowance of \$150,000.

"Financial compensation doesn't make much sense," said Mr Pang Siu-kei, community director from the Southern Branch of the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong who specialises in fishing issues.

"Government 'kills' the rights of trawlers to work in Hong Kong waters. Even if government gives out millions of dollars to compensate, it cannot make up



Photo courtesy of Hong Kong Fishermen's Association



Owners of “eligible larger trawlers” which can sail to outer sea get less money compared to owners of smaller trawlers.  
Photo courtesy of Hong Kong Fishermen's Association

for the fishermen's actual loss.”

Mr Pang said a fisherman could make millions of dollars in a few years.

The Food and Health Bureau has set up an inter-departmental working group to deal with appeals by dissatisfied fishermen. By the end of November 2013, 854 appeals were received, but the first stage of hearing only involved 32 cases, of which only four have been completed by now.

“It took two years for the government to deal with four cases. Will it take 200 years for the government to deal with the other 800 cases?” Mr Wong asked.

Mr Pang said some fishermen could not wait any more and chose to sell their trawlers, but the assessment procedure depends largely on the trawlers. “Fishermen who sold their ship would lose the evidence to show their sufferings. They are in a worse situation during the appeal period.”

**“It took two years for the government to deal with four cases. Will it take 200 years for government to deal with the other 800 cases?”**



**Mr Wong Kin-kwong,  
a 65-year-old fisherman**

Mr Vincent Chan, executive manager of the Fishermen Claims Appeal Board, said the hearings were conducted in stages so that the appeals were processed in a “just, smooth, economical and expeditious manner”.

He said in the first stage, the hearing of 32 cases could develop parameters and formulas for apportioning the ex-gratia payment. In the next stage, the board has pledged to hear all the remaining appeal cases.

Mr Pang suggests the government should provide assistances for fishermen to make career shifts in addition to financial subsidies.

“Fishermen are attached to the sea,” said Mr Pang. “They would never sell their boats if they have other choices.”

## POLITICS

# New law fails to stop overcharging

Consumers still being misled despite the amended Trade Description Ordinance

MISS Ng, 49, once found that the checkout price for a pack of discounted biscuits she purchased in a supermarket was three times higher than the displayed price. She immediately informed the cashier and was given a refund.

Hers is not the only case. The Consumer Council bought 252 discounted items from 15 supermarkets in June and July this year and found price discrepancies for 18 products.

The Council has warned retailers against displaying so-called “strike-through price” – higher prices crossed out on price tags to mislead consumers – as they would be at the risk of violating the amended Trade Descriptions Ordinance, which prohibits the dissemination of any false, misleading or incomplete information on goods or services. The maximum penalty on conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

But Mr Ronny Tong Kah-wah, a lawmaker representing the New Territories East constituency, said the Ordinance cannot protect consumers’ interests at all, as there is no real deterrence and the prosecution rate has been low.

The Customs and Excise Department, Office of the Communications Authority and Council Council received 2,955 complaints from July to December last year, but only six complaints investigated led to prosecutions. This put the rate of prosecution at 0.2 per cent over a 6-month period.

Mr Tong said as the departments concerned do not really treat the breaches as a criminal offence, they have to take a long time to process customers’ complaints. He said a problem of the current Ordinance is that it does not have provisions to monitor the civil compliance-based enforcement mechanism.



*Customers often find that the checkout price of a product is higher than the displayed price.*

While consumers are facing the risks of being misled, the retail industry also confuses the Ordinance with trademark issue.

Last year, Mr Jim Coke, a coffee importer who imports Jamaica Blue Mountain Coffee, filed a complaint to the Customs and Excise Department regarding the allegedly misleading product descriptions of two coffee makers and one retailer, who described and packaged their coffee with the trademarked words ‘Jamaica Blue Mountain’ without actually holding the trademark or obtaining a licence to do so.

Mr Coke said that he cannot believe that the Department only responded to such a “serious complaint” with just a few lines declining to investigate further without explaining why the coffee makers did not breach the Ordinance.

“It indeed affects my business because counterfeit, unlicensed and

parallel products take significant market share due to their pricing structure,” said Mr Coke.

Mr Tong explained that the purpose of the Ordinance is to protect consumers from being misled about products, and it is not designed to protect the holders of trademarks.

He also pointed out that all the enterprises are willing to comply with the Ordinance because most businesses in Hong Kong are finding ways to make money and dodge it.

Echoing Mr Tong, Mr Coke added that for businessmen who run small businesses, it is extremely hard to take advantage of the benefits of the Ordinance as it appears that the interests of bigger players are served instead of much smaller firms.

## BUSINESS

# Smartphone-operated toys the way to go

Hong Kong toy industry has thrived by developing remote-control apps



HONG Kong toy manufacturers may have lost their former clout as the world's biggest player, but the industry's surviving operators have succeeded in using technology to maintain the appeal of their products, from dolls, model tanks to model guns.

E-Supply International Limited is a manufacturer and exporter of various kinds of radio-controlled toys. In 2012, the company attached a camera to one of its products, the quadcopter, which was originally a remote controlled multi-rotor miniature helicopter. Now a user can control the quadcopter and shoot real time videos of 640x480 pixels resolution in the air, with the moving images appearing in real time on the screen of his smartphone.

E-Supply opened a line named i-Toys especially for the application-controllable toys.

"A smartphone is a must-have right now. Toy makers have to stick with the trend and advance with time. So we combine toys and smartphones together," said the company's business development manager Ms Kenes Cheung.

She said the trend of embracing toys that connect with smartphones was "unstoppable" and the company was therefore "actively

producing more user-friendly apps".

"We have thought of building an app that is universally applicable to all of our i-Toys products," Ms Cheung added. "Let's see what will happen".

Although the relevant technology is already quite mature, toy manufacturers still face many difficulties.

Few years ago, AR Attack, a local toy company that made miniature water guns in the 60s, created an alien shooting app calls ARliens. This app incorporates augmented reality technology by overlaying computer-generated content on to a real-life image captured on a smartphone to turn the product AR Gun into a virtual shooting tool.

Players can battle with virtual enemies in the tailor-made app when a smartphone is attached to the toy gun and connected via Bluetooth.

The app offers ten levels of difficulty where players can unlock weapons with animations narrating the game as it proceeds. CEO and co-founder of AR Attack, Mr Kevin Mak, described the app ARliens as "the heart of the toy gun".

The major challenge for producing the toy gun set is the development of hardware and software.

"For the hardware, the electronics components inside the gun must not consume the battery quickly," Mr Mak said. "For the software, the toy gun can be compatible with both Android and iOS apps."

Another toy manufacturer, Toyeast



*"Toy makers should evolve with the technological advancement," said Mr Kevin Mak.*

Limited, focuses on a niche market. Their product, the VsTank, is a remote-controlled tank powered by a mobile app instead of a physical remote control.

Marketing manager of Toyeast Limited, Ms Mariko Ko, said it was "by chance" that the company had made the tanks application-oriented.

Two years ago, at the Hong Kong Toys & Games Fair, an Apple Inc. representative approached it and discussed the possibility of replacing the remote control with an iOS app using Bluetooth connection, she said.

Toyeast had to spend a lot of time during the pre-production process to obtain licenses for developing the app. There were countless discussions between the two parties. Even with the invitation, Toyeast used half a year to obtain the license from Apple and spent another nine months to build the app.

When VsTank became fully smartphone-operated, the controller was not offered anymore. Ms Ko said the company received complaints from customers and retailers because they felt "deprived".

"Some of them were not pleased when they knew the remote control was not included in the package. They felt there should be a price-cut. The fact is that the cost of building the app is almost the same as building the remote control," said Ms Ko.

"Besides, the limited space on the motherboard can only accommodate

**"A smartphone is a must-have right now. Toy makers have to stick with the trend and advance with time, so we combine toys and smartphones together."**



**Ms Kenes Cheung,  
business development manager  
of E-Supply**

the electronic parts of either one control system".

Competition from the toy companies all over the world is also a big challenge to the local manufacturers.

Ms Cheung from E-Supply does not see the smart-tech integrated tanks driving the inventory turnover. Instead,

the uncertain economic environment, particularly in Europe, and the keen competition from the mainland should be taken into account.

London-based marketing intelligence firm Euromonitor International forecasts a slowdown in the annual growth of the European Union toy market, projecting an expansion of about 4 per cent this year as well as in 2016.

According to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council and China Toy & Juvenile Products Association, Hong Kong's toys export, taken together with re-exports, reached US\$8.24 billion last year while that of China amounted US\$24.74 billion.

On the other hand, AR Attack has faith in local production. Mr Mak said although toy manufacturers in the Mainland are quick learners with enormous funding, the factor differentiating Hong Kong toys are safety, high quality, credibility and innovation.

"The app adds value and diversity to the toy. That's why we constantly update the app," said Mr Mak.

"But tech-driven toys will not completely replace conventional toys. As long as a toy stays dynamic and interactive, it will last long. Think of Lego, it's the concept and the execution that matters".



## PEOPLE

## Millinery trailblazer

Hong Kong's sole hat designer talks about her passion for making a piece of clothing not commonly worn by locals

**T**O Ms Jay Cheng, “hats are poems”, as a hat is the piece of clothing that highlights the personality of its wearer. For that reason, those words have adorned the business cards of Hong Kong's only millinery trailblazer, whose clients include many local celebrities, including actress Carina Lau Kar-ling and singer Eason Chan Yik-shun.

“A good hat can make a big difference. It can make a beautiful lady more gorgeous,” said Ms Cheng, showing her love and confidence in hats.

Despite having made a name as a milliner, Ms Cheng still cannot quite explain why she has fallen in love with hats.

She had started as a freelance fashion stylist after studying fine arts and printmaking in Canada. Some years ago, having decided to go back to school, she came across a course on millinery while browsing through the courses of the London College of Fashion. She was instantly hooked and decided to give it a try.

Ms Cheng still remembers how she was impressed by a room full of millinery

**“All the people need are well-designed hats and then attitudes will change. What a hat does is that it makes you feel better.”**

### By Ms Jay Cheng

blocks when she first arrived at the college. “I felt that place was paradise to me,” she said.

After learning the basic techniques of making hats in the seven-day course, Ms Cheng further developed her skills by receiving training from a renowned British royal milliner, Rose Cory.

In 2005, after completing the training, she gave up her job as a stylist and became a full-time milliner. “I would feel sorry for myself if I did not try to be a full-time milliner, as I have developed a strong love for making hats and nobody's doing it in Hong Kong,” she said.

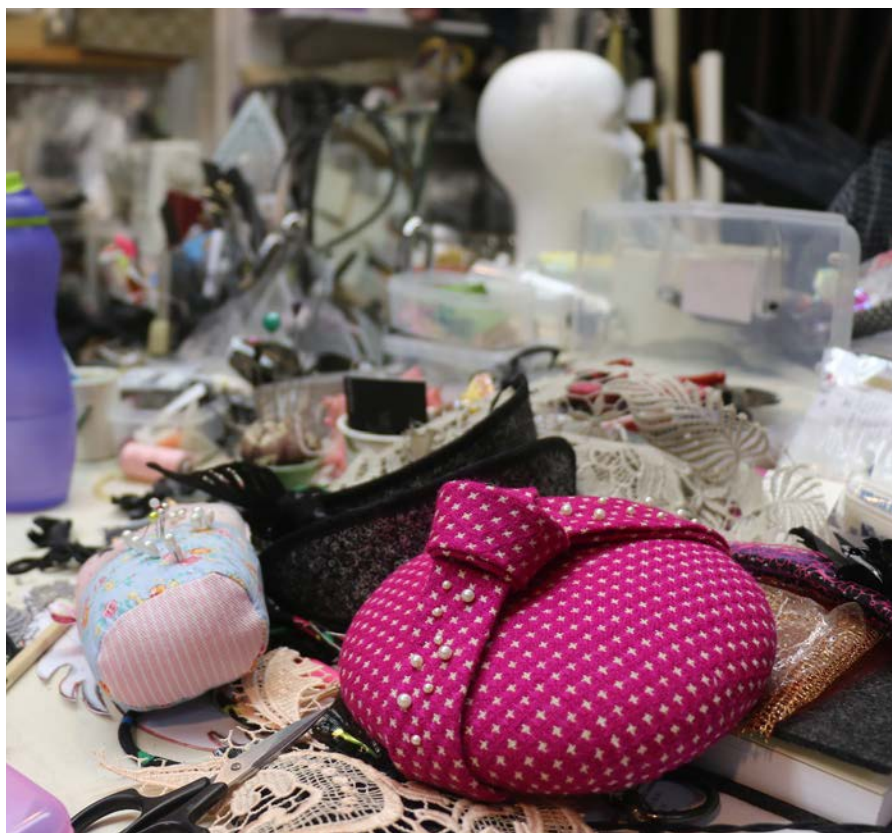
To Ms Cheng, hats have a great power of subliming a person's temperament and the progress is like a story.

Regarding hats as poems, she follows a consisting design idea that is warm, soft and feminine in “writing the poems”, even though there is no fixed element in her design.

Every design starts with a rough idea. She may not clearly know what material she will use and how different parts will be put together. But through sewing and tireless tries, she gets inspirations and ideas.

“Creativity comes from doing,” she said.

Ms Cheng can always balance what a client wants with her own design style. “I am offering a service,” she said. “So I have to take what my clients want seriously. Negotiations always work.”



Knowing the person well is the key to making a good hat for him or her. Ms Cheng will try to know a client's personality, the purpose of the hat he or she wants and the clothes that will go with the hat.

Comfort is another consideration. Besides making a hat look good, Ms Cheng also makes sure that it will not fall down when her client is wearing it.

As things stand, her clientele remains limited as most locals are not used to wearing hats.

But the trailblazer remains optimistic. "All the people need are well-designed hats and then attitudes will change," she said. "What a hat does is that it makes you feel better."

PEOPLE

## Superheroes in town

Star Wars cosplayers bring joy to countless kids



*The Star Wars costumes make the The Rebel Legion Hong Kong Base stand out from other volunteers and enable the team to bring young patients a fun experience to remember. Photo courtesy of Rebel Legion Hong Kong Base*

“MAY the Force be with you.” If you can tell that this classic line is from the spiritual peacekeeping Jedi in Star Wars, and have been fond of helping the needy, you might want to join the Rebel Legion.

The organisation is based in the United States and has spread all over the world. Star Wars costume lovers can team up and form a base in their community as long as they have passed the requirements set by the headquarter. RL members utilise their costume talents and give back to the community by dressing up as Star Wars superheroes for charity and volunteering activities. The quality of their work will be overseen by the headquarters.

“The Rebel Legion Hong Kong Base” (RL) is a force formed by about 20 local members. Among them are Mr Edmund Tong, Ms Carmen Chiang and Mr Chris Chan.

The members did not make a superhero entrance to our interview. They just came in casual wear. All the goodies were stored in the gigantic suitcases they brought with them. They showcased the delicate costumes while telling the story.

“Cosplayers of Star Wars gather as friends to do good things together. This is what the RL aims at,” said Mr Tong. The “good things” they did included visits to hospitals children wards. From the RL’s

point of view, cosplaying for hospital visits made it easier for children to accept them, he explained.

Yet, it is not that easy for the adults.

“Those well-known charitable organisations are used to doing things in a certain way. They have a lot of concerns when someone approaches them wanting to add in new elements to the volunteer programmes as they care very much about their image,” said Ms Enid Lau, who has been volunteering with different organisations for eight years. She added that those organisations are extra cautious when the programmes involve children, and parents’ complaint is the last thing they want to hear.

In other words, the organisations have to take parents’ acceptability into consideration in addition to the children’s feelings.

A few years ago when the society was “less open-minded”, cosplaying was regarded as dressing weird. Ms Chiang recalled the days when the RL was often rejected or requested to drop their superhero outfits for the visits.

“We were only allowed to bring in toys of Star Wars for children to play in casual clothing while other foreign subdivisions would dress up,” she said, accenting the differences between the Western world and the “conservative” local society.

The RL had to cope with disappointment constantly. A charity event in Kwong Wah Hospital about a year ago was a turning point. - the team was finally allowed to enter the children’s ward in their Star Wars costumes, and the feedback was very positive.

This experience was golden, and

with ordinary jobs. But when they gear up, they are the superheroes who save the hearts of the needy (and themselves). Who would have thought a screenplay could have such great impact on people’s lives?

each of the many volunteering events that followed was equally special and delightful to the team.

“We are always overjoyed when we see kids immersing themselves in the atmosphere,” said Ms Chiang, with a big smile on her face. She is thankful that her effort on her hobby makes had brought the kids happiness and comfort.

While the RL gives, it has to take as well.

Mr Chan has learned great crafting skills through cosplaying. He said the swords on the market could not satisfy him and he decided to learn to make his own. “The process of making it requires skills and a lot of patience, but I am glad that my fellow sword-mates are always there,” the proud craftsman added as he showcased his masterpiece.

RL’s experience also shows that cosplaying has the virtue of bonding like-minded people.

“Star Wars is an international language and it pulls people with different backgrounds together,” said Mr Tong. He recalled that he used to spend most of his time reaching out to the international fan community when the local Star Wars fan group was small and the cosplay culture here was not popular. He made some friends with the same hobby around the globe.

“The mutual interest shortens the distance between nationalities. My foreign mates and I often exchange ideas and thoughts, from making costumes to daily life matters,” he said. “It has indeed broadened my horizons.”

This hobby has also pulled Mr Tong and his father closer. His father has even asked to have a photo taken in his Stormtrooper outfit.

The RL team members here are Hongkongers born in the 70s and 80s



*Mr Tong gets core components of his Stormtrooper outfit from eBay and processes them so that it fits; and the gun in his hands is manufactured from an old toy gun with a sound card so that a machinery sound effect can be created when the trigger is pressed.*

By **Jo Lee**  
Edited by **Carain Yeung**

## HEALTH&amp;BEAUTY

# Does DNA dieting work?

*Doubts over losing weight by eating foods that match one's genotypes*

A mouth-swab test developed by Stanford University in the United States to help determine the dietary and exercise needs of the obese has found supporters as well as detractors in Hong Kong.

The researchers took mouth-swabs from 100 women and analysed their DNA for five genes linked to how the body uses fat and carbohydrate.

Their findings allow dieticians to develop suitable diets and workout plans for those who want to lose weight.

The outcome of the study: women who followed the diets matching their genotypes had almost 3 per cent average weight loss more than their counterparts who did not.

This is because every person reacts differently to food intake and exercises, due to varying levels of sensitivity to carbohydrate digestion, saturated fat absorption, fat metabolism, exercise responsive and biological clock.

Accordingly, dieticians will recommend a person with a high sensitivity to carbohydrates to adopt a low-carb diet that emphasises the consumption of protein, fibre and other essential nutrients such as meat, fish and eggs and vegetables.

Ms Joanne Chan, a registered dietician working on this genetic testing programme in Hong Kong, backs this way of dieting.

"The genetic evaluation result would give a clearer picture of your needs and it is backed by science," said Ms Chan. "Most importantly, it prevents you from randomly trying different methods that simply won't work."

Ms Chan especially recommends this DNA diet programme to people who have tried various weight loss schemes but without evident success. According to Ms Chan, these people might have already "messed up" their metabolism.

However, Ms Chan notes the importance of keeping a positive attitude when attempting to lose weight because



knowing the genetic risks does not necessarily guarantee the success of the programme.

However, other medical professionals, including Professor Juliana Chan Chung-ngor, a medicine professor who specialises in epidemiology and genetic engineering at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, have reservations on this method.

"Genetic testing for specific genes to produce a personalised nutrition scheme is still at a very early stage," she said.

But Professor Chan noted that using genetic markers to identify high risk subjects might be able to bring more intensive lifestyle changes and allow early use of treatment to control the development. This includes understanding the biological causes of diabetes and obesity.

Media critics such as Ms Kelly Crowe, a Canadian medical sciences correspondent, and other researchers have argued that the increasing alignment of scientific research with commercial interests raise ethical questions on the credibility and applicability of the studies.

Dr Ahmed El-Sohehy at the University of Toronto was one of those that benefitted commercially from publishing his findings and selling the genetic dieting method in more than 22 countries through registered dieticians.

He has since set up a private company called Nutrigenomix Inc., which provides information for dietitians to counsel their clients according to their "unique genetic profile."

So the question remains — is this all about science or just yet another commercial packaging?

By Hilary Wu  
Edited by Karen Lee

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***The Young Reporter  
run by HKBU journalism students since 1969***



*Tattoo artist, Mr Nigo Chan Ho-yin designs a tattoo for his customer.*

## ARTS&CULTURE

# More than skin-deep

For some, tattoos are a sign of rebellion or simply just a fashion piece. But a growing number of people regard them as art, a secret language shared by a self-chosen community

CHINESE convention has long associated tattoos with gangsters, violating the societal virtue of preserving our bodies out of respect to our parents. But in Hong Kong, tattoos are being redefined as works of art as the city explodes with tattoo shops whose clientele are increasingly young Hong Kongers.

"It is a culture of a long history and a medium of expression," said Mr Vince Yue Chun-kit, a tattoo artist and founder of The Company Tattoo, a tattoo parlour.

People are more accepting of tattoos as more celebrities publicly show them off, he said.

"David Beckham had a Chinese calligraphy tattoo done in Hong Kong, and it certainly has a huge effect on public impression towards tattooing," Mr Yue said.

"Local artist Louis Cheung Kai-chung ... showed his tattoo on television. People still love him, don't they?" said Mr James Lau Chi-long, another tattooist at The Company Tattoo. "The young generation is no longer wary of it."

Ms Mindy Mak Ching-yi, a 21-year-old frequent traveler, gets herself inked every time she travels. None of her friends criticize her tattoos, but she said the older generation may feel otherwise.

"My parents do not know about my tattoos. I think they will be mad if they find out about it," she said.

The first tattoo convention in Hong Kong was held in 2013, where artists from different countries showcased their work and made tattoos on the spot for interested visitors. The tattoos were evaluated by judges of the convention and the best artist was awarded.

Co-organizer of the International Hong Kong Tattoo Convention Mr Jay Foss Cole said in an interview that the convention aimed to challenge "that old-fashioned notion that it's just gangsters and sailors who get tattooed."

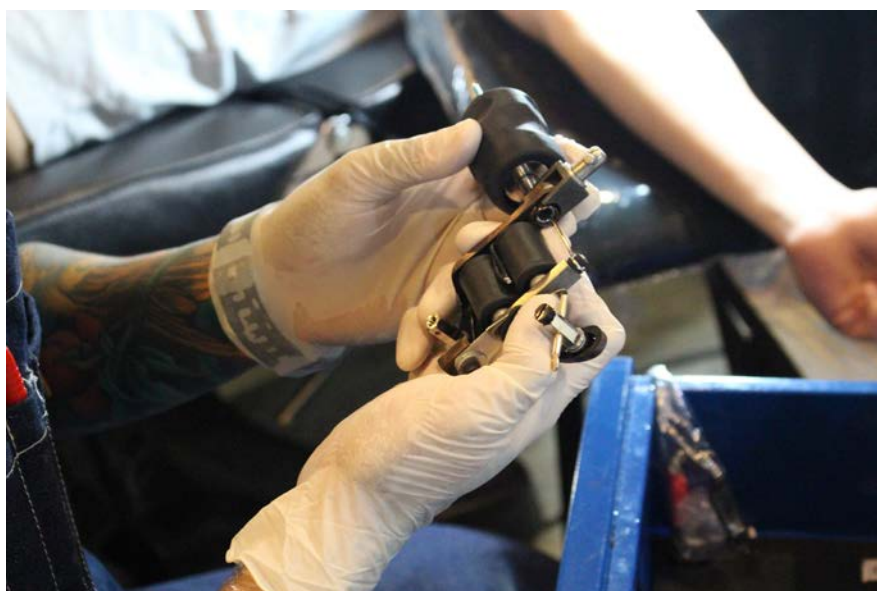
To many tattoo enthusiasts, tattoos are anything but a symbol of triads.

"Tattoo reminds me of my life motto - love the life you live, live the life you love," said Ms Mak.

Some people like Ms Mak think tattoos are messages inked on their skin; others regard it as a form of body art.

Like paintings which have different styles ranging from realism to abstract, tattoos can be classified into a variety of genres: Sketch, schoolwork, black-and-gray, tribal, geometry are some examples of tattoo styles. Generally, the type of stroke defines the type of tattoo, whether

*Tattoo artist, Mr Issac ho Ho-yin tattoos a client.*



*A modern tattoo machine has a motor connected to a needle that pushes ink into the skin.*

it is clean-cut or not, said Mr Lau.

Tattoos bond people of similar interests. Tattoo lovers discuss and appreciate each other's "trophy" within the tattoo community. Mr Yue said that tattoo culture is expanding as the tattoo community tries to spread its passion and to promote tattoos to the public.

"Tattoos make people confident. They symbolize a certain group of people and they feel good about being one of them," said Ms Anubis Lok Hau-kwan, a tattoo artist of another tattoo studio, Solo Tattoo.

However, related regulations in Hong Kong lag behind the pace of promotion. Currently, there is only one law: the Tattooing of Young Persons Ordinance which states that it is illegal to tattoo a minor, unless for a medical reason. Offenders are liable to a fine

of \$1,000 to \$5,000 and three-month imprisonment.

Regulations on the tattoo industry are more developed in other countries. In the United States, tattoo laws vary by state. For example, in Connecticut, a tattoo must be performed under a doctor's supervision, where the industry is regulated by the state's health department. In New Jersey, tattooists have to be authorized by the American Academy of Micropigmentation before they can practice. Many states require a tattooist to be licensed.

"It is certainly a good thing to have tattooists applying for licenses," said Mr Tommy Sierra, a Columbian tattoo artist based in Spain. "There are lots of rules and regulations in America for tattoo artists to follow... and it makes the industry more professional".

"In Hong Kong, it largely relies on the tattooist's professionalism," said Ms Lok. She added that the tattoo industry in Hong Kong is not well organized as "there is no official organization, nor government department to regulate the industry operation."

Some companies, such as Tattoo Temple, advertise health and safety standards, such as disposable equipment and organic inks.

It is not rare for Ms Lok to modify customers' tattoos because of low quality work performed by their previous tattooists.

"It is an individual decision. I am not affecting anyone just because I have a tattoo," said Ms Mak.

By **Mari Chow**  
Edited by **Joyce Wong**

## INTERNATIONAL

# Working holidays expand young people's horizons

Ms Jay Cheng, the only local hat designer, talks about how she falls in love with hats and becomes a hat master

**I**N the past year, 25-year-old Hongkonger Mr Joseph Lee learned to scuba dive, ski and surf, thanks to his year-long working holiday in Australia.

One of 51,000 young people from Hong Kong last year who participated in the working holiday scheme, Mr Lee said he stepped out of his comfort zone and discovered a talent for sports.

A working holiday is a scheme that allows adults aged between 18 and 30 to work and live in a foreign country as a way to supplement holiday funds and acquire a better understanding of the host country.

Hong Kong currently has bilateral agreements with Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Austria.

The Working Holiday Scheme

started in 2001 with the latest agreement with Austria going into effect in April this year, according to the Hong Kong Labour Department.

Before Mr Lee went to Australia, he envisaged seeing koalas, kangaroos and platypus and also relieve his recent heartbreak. But it wasn't always rainbows and butterflies. He said he was struck most by culture shock.

"I was counting my change when a woman cracked a joke about it. At first, I was embarrassed. Then I thought perhaps people are just more outgoing and humorous even with strangers," Mr Lee said.

Many participants take jobs in the hospitality, agriculture or labour industries, such as bartending or picking fruit on farms.

Mr Thomas Ford, a winery owner in Goulburn, Australia said he has

hired working holiday participants not only to meet people from all over the world but also because it is not easy to hire locals to help in seasonal work.

"People nowadays prefer working indoors even for temporary jobs. Third, they have more flexible schedules. Probably because young adults here are either working or going to university so they won't have time for my work," he said.

Not every working holiday participant works hard, said Mr Ford. "I did have the experience of working holiday employees not taking their job seriously; they slacked off, arrived unreasonably late and left early. A few even looked down on what I am doing for a living. Fortunately, they are a small minority out of many," Mr. Ford said.

Mr Ford said he found working



holiday schemes very helpful for people wanting to travel around the world with limited means. With working holidays, now they can fulfill their goals, explore different places and culture and support themselves simultaneously.

“Studies find that participants demonstrate higher intercultural awareness, improved language skills, better social and interpersonal skills due to exposure to a different language environment, socialisation with other participants from other countries as well as local people,” Dr Catherine Lam, associate professor at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University’s School of Hotel and Tourism said.

Despite the benefits, applicants are advised to consider carefully before undertaking the year-long journey to a new country.

Dr Lam, , expects an increase of applicants and partnering countries for the bilateral Working Holiday Scheme in the next two years as the the number of participants has increased by 10 percent over the last four years.

“I would recommend participants to learn the local language or improve their fluency in it before venturing to their host country, this is particularly crucial for countries where English is not widely spoken,” said Dr Lam. “Participants can experience a high level of stress and frustration in addition to difficulties in getting a job if they do not possess sufficient language skills to meet the demands of living and working in those countries.”

“There are also incidents of working holiday participants forced to pay a large amount of security

deposit for lodging at the employers’ premises and not have the funds returned. Travelers should check online regarding the background, reputation and information of employers if possible,” added Dr Lam.

Mr Lee, whose stay in Australia will be over soon, has one last word of advice for those considering going on a working holiday, “You need to think it through because it is a rather serious commitment to put your study or work on hiatus and to move and work in another country you may have little experience in,” he said.

“I miss shopping and eating out. Things are pricier here. I don’t think anywhere does food better than Hong Kong. Though I will need some time to get used to the hustle and bustle of the city again when I am back.” Mr Lee said.

By **Jackson Ho**  
Edited by **Karen Lee**



PHOTO ESSAY

# Forgotten corners

**A**CROSS the streets of Kowloon City, an old urban district, are hidden gems that once shone.

"The whole street was filled with tailors back in the 1990s. Now, there's only me," said a tailor in his eighties who didn't want to be identified.

He has never thought about closing the store despite the meagre sums he earns. When custom tailoring was at its peak, he had clients almost every day. Now, he deems it lucky if he receives more than five clients a month.

Decades ago, men who desired a suit and women a dress would go to a tailor to have it made to fit their bodies. Today, ready-to-wear garments of all kinds and sizes are available from clothing chains and boutiques. The demand for tailor-made outfits has shrunk significantly. People would rather purchase new clothes than spending money to repair a worn out pair of trousers or jacket.

He insists on running the business despite his sons' opposition. "I'm afraid that I would be the last one to do this and no one will pick up my needle."

Just a few blocks away, the Lee Tai Pawnshop has managed to survive by transforming the way it conducts its business. Behind an iron grill that typically separates the customers from the storekeeper, a computerised system for recording trading records and surveillance cameras have been installed.

Mr Hui, who declined to give his full name and has been working at the pawnshop for over 30 years, said that as people's lifestyle changes, it now welcomes digital gadgets including cameras and smartphones as collaterals, in addition to traditional items such as gold bars and jewellery.

"Not everyone has an apartment to mortgage," he added. The shop's clients nowadays are not the poor, but anyone who needs cash right away.

Mr Hui is confident that the pawnshop will stand despite the passage of time. "We will be here for at least five more decades. Pawnshops are just mini-banks and people still need us," he said.

By **Amie Cheng**  
Edited by **Alpha Chan**





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