

SME1 Asia Awards 2011

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A lot to smile about

Smile Inc stays true to its vision and keeps up with the latest technologies to remain on top, writes **LYNN SEAH**

SMILE Inc Dental Surgeons was set up in 1997 with a dream to turn a visit to the dentist from a dreaded event into a pleasant experience.

And it has remained true to that vision.

Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, the company's co-founder and managing director, says: "The Smile Inc model and branding has remained the same and is consistent because we had a clear direction and vision from the start of what we wanted and what would work, and indeed, time has proven so."

The chain currently has three clinics, all in prime locations.

Starting with Smile Inc's first stylish outlet in Suntec City Mall, which was featured in international design magazine Trends, Mrs Chong-Tan, 43, and her husband, co-founder and director Dr Ernest Rex Tan, a dentist, have always strived to offer quality specialist and general dental services using the latest technologies in a patient-friendly setting.

Smile Inc's other two outlets are at One Raffles Quay and Mandarin Gallery.

One of the most difficult periods the company had to go through occurred in its early days when it took the Singapore Dental Board to court over accusations that a magazine feature on Smile Inc was constituted as advertising. It won the case by "staying firm to one's belief, and fighting for what is right and just", Mrs Chong-Tan says.

Notwithstanding these setbacks, Smile Inc has flourished and broken new ground along the way. It was the first clinic in Asia, outside Japan, to offer the chair-side Laser Teeth Whitening technology in 1997.

It was also one of the earliest dental practices to computerise its entire operations, and among the first private practices to start using hospital standard equipment for sterilisation.

Not surprising then that Smile Inc is among the top winners in the Distinguished SMEs category at the inaugural SME1 Asia Awards 2011.

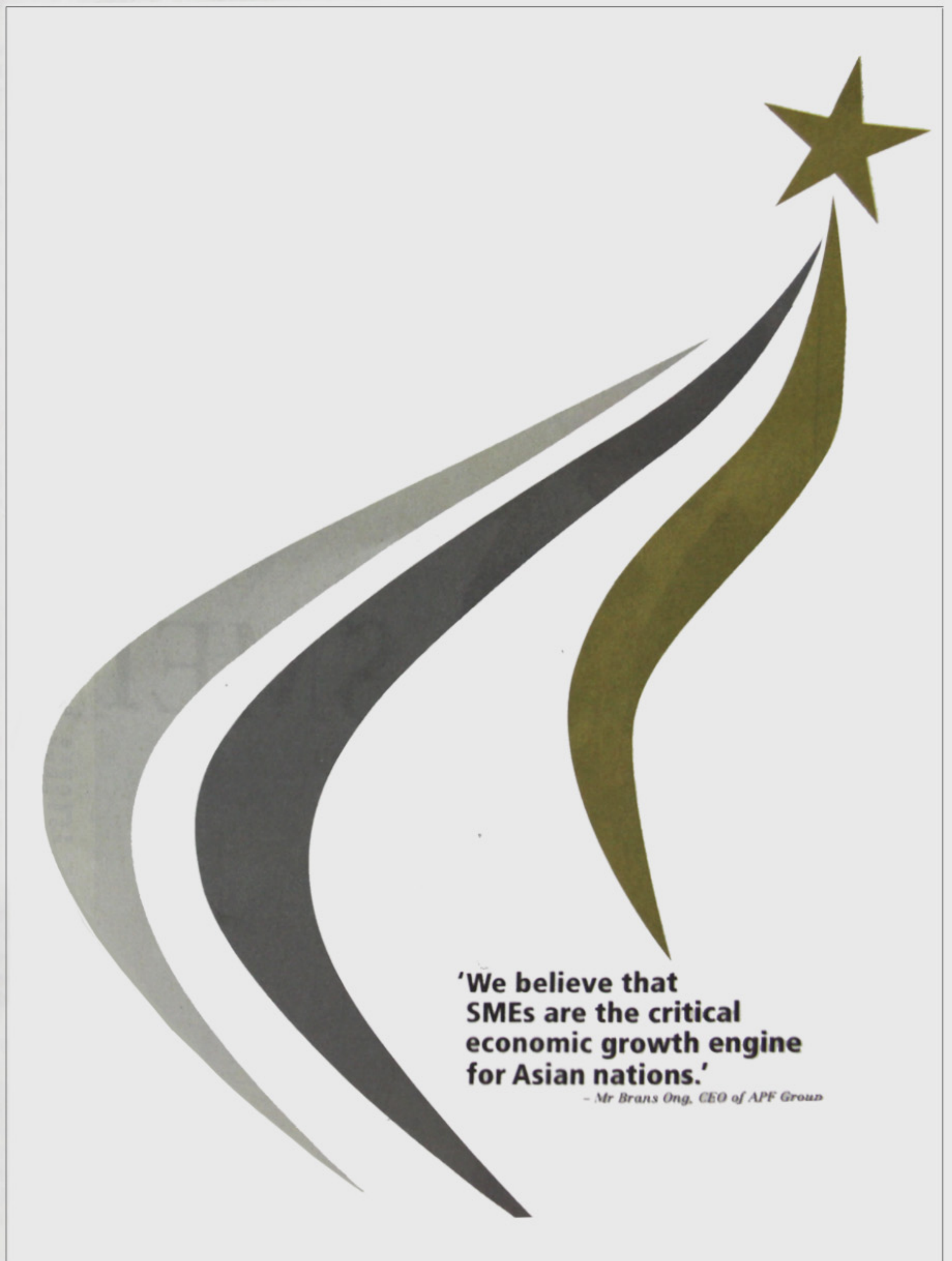
Mrs Chong-Tan says: "In every field, it is important to be at the forefront of development and technology and to distinguish one's brand from the others in the industry."



Clear vision: When Mrs Grace Chong-Tan (above) co-founded Smile Inc Dental Surgeons in 1997, the company's dream was to make a visit to the dentist a pleasant experience, and it has stayed true to that vision.

Photos: Smile Inc. Dental Surgeons, APF Group

REWARDING ENTREPRENEURSHIP



'We believe that SMEs are the critical economic growth engine for Asian nations.'

- Mr Brans Ong, CEO of APF Group