

# Eye on Mandarin market

Xinya Media, a new home-grown cable content provider, has lined up plans to create programmes to reach 1.2 billion people

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**T**here are 1.2 billion Mandarin-speaking people in China and the rest of the Asia-Pacific region and new Singapore-based cable content provider Xinya Media wants a slice of this huge audience pie.

The company, in its first media interviews yesterday, said it has raised US\$9 million (\$12.4 million) so far and the money will go towards acquiring programmes as well as producing original content under the Xinya Productions arm.

The investors include the Economic Development Board Investments (EDBI), China-based venture capital firm Gobi Partners, Cheng's Film, a content production and distribution company in China and Hong Kong, and two private investors.

Speaking at the company's new office in Ann Siang Street, Xinya Media chairman and chief executive officer Wee Ah Kee said the company currently has access to almost 3,000 hours of programmes with a "good mix of various genres".

He said less than 10 per cent of that is local content, including infotainment shows such as MediaCorp's *The Food Apprentice*, which takes viewers to Asia's most famous restaurants to discover their history, traditions and trade secrets.

Xinya will also work with established companies to produce original content. These include Azio in Taiwan, producer of hits such as the variety show *Super Sunday*, and China's *Jinyingjia Group*, which has produced TV series such as *The Storm Riders* (2001).

Mr Wee, 53, said: "The company aims to showcase the best of Asia cultures by creating a mix of Pan-Asian content, incorporating materials from all the Mandarin-speaking territories, including Singapore."

Xinya's programmes will be broadcast in eight territories – Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand – early next year and will also reach other Asia Pacific areas such as Japan, Korea and India via satellite.

In Singapore, it will offer different content to pay-TV operators StarHub and mio TV.

The new channel will face stiff competition from



**Led by Mr Wee Ah Kee, Xinya wants to reach out to young, educated Asians who have a growing interest in discovering their roots.** ST PHOTO: SHAHRIYA YAHAYA

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**Xinya Media chairman and chief executive officer Wee Ah Kee**

existing channels offering Mandarin-language content including Hong Kong-based Phoenix Satellite Television Holdings, which provides news, information and entertainment programmes, and Taiwan's Azio TV, also known as Asia Plus, which offers entertainment and lifestyle shows.

These channels are available on StarHub.

But Mr Wee said: "Many channels out there are very focused on their own areas.

"For example, Phoenix carries more stories and issues related to China. I don't see anyone we are competing directly against."

He said that Xinya aims to reach out to a rising group of new Asians. "They are young adults who have a good education and lifestyle. They are beginning to want to know more about their roots and have a better understanding of where they come from, and want to have their voice heard."

This target audience was defined and refined

through a nine-month trial channel, YR Asia Satellite TV, which was offered by Net Leader Holdings, Xinya's previous incarnation, in Hong Kong earlier this year.

EDBI chief executive officer Chu Swee Yeok said: "Xinya fits well with EDBI's investment objective of growing promising media and digital media companies in Singapore by being global leaders and enhancing the local capabilities in this high growth sector."

Mr Wee has over 20 years of experience in investment banking and building listed companies in industries such as construction, mining and aviation in the Asia-Pacific region.

He said: "Media is an interesting industry with exciting developments coming up – moving from analogue to digital space and the opening up of markets such as India and, hopefully, China in due course."

He points to the Government's aim to develop Singapore as a broadcast and media hub and said the company has received good support from EDBI and the Media Development Authority.

He hopes to leverage on the fact that Xinya is the first home-grown regional broadcaster based in Singapore targeted at a Mandarin-speaking audience.

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