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Pastamania, KinderGolf, Secret Recipe win big at FLA awards 2007

By **LYNETTE KHOO**

THREE Singapore companies who have developed business concepts for others to take up - Pastamania, KinderGolf and Secret Recipe - last night received awards for outstanding local and international franchisors.

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Winners all: (From left) Rashid Hassan (CEO Pastamania), Donna Lee (founder and CEO KinderGolf) and Steven Sim (CEO Secret Recipe)

The awards, given by the Franchising & Licensing Association Singapore (FLA Singapore), were handed out by Minister of State for Trade and Industry S Iswaran.

The franchisors have found strong support for their franchisees locally and abroad and have charted plans for aggressive expansion through the franchising model.

The FLA awards were held in conjunction with FLAsia, Asia's most international trade event for franchising and licensing, which

started on Thursday and is ending today. The opening ceremony of FLAsia saw some seven local and international companies appointing 15 franchisees in a multiple franchise signing ceremony.

Pastamania, the largest chain of Italian restaurants in Singapore, was awarded the Franchisor of the Year 2007.

It has been working through its main distributor here to negotiate directly with producers and manufacturers in Europe. It works closely with its franchisees to understand the local population to customise their menus and to assist franchisees in setting up new outlets.

'By end- 2007, three additional new outlets will be ready in Singapore and aggressive plans for expansion to have over 100 outlets worldwide within the next five years are in the pipeline,' Pastamania chief executive Rashid Hassan said.

It currently has 30 outlets in Malaysia, UAE, Kuwait, Indonesia, India and Singapore, and is now in discussions with companies in Bahrain, the Philippines, Thailand, China and Mexico that are interested in its franchise programme.

KinderGolf, the world's first and only pre-schooler golfer specialist that trains children between the ages of two and seven, received the Promising Franchisor of the Year 2007.

From its current 12 outlets, four self-owned and eight franchised outlets in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia, the company plans to grow globally through franchising and to have 118 outlets within the next three years.

'On top of the three new outlets we are planning to open in Singapore, Surabaya and Jakarta within the next 60 days, we are opening our flagship outlets in California and Beijing, within three to six months,' KinderGolf founder and CEO Donna Lee said.

Likewise, Secret Recipe, the recipient of the International Franchisor of the Year award, attested to the success of the franchising model, with over 50 per cent of its total revenue coming from its franchising activities.

This year, its franchising revenue is estimated to be more than RM60 million (S\$26 million). CEO Steven Sim said Secret Recipe's success rate in its franchising system has been close to 100 per cent, with double-digit growth for

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the past five years both on turnover and profits.

'Franchising, as we all know, is the fastest growing business model today. It is a methodology of expansion and a vehicle to reduce the number of mistakes made in the building of a business,' Mr Sim said.

While franchising remains an excellent platform to grow, companies are increasingly looking at licensing opportunities, FLA chairman Douglas Foo said last night.

'If you look beyond the consumer goods, fashion and food and beverages sectors, there are overwhelming licensing opportunities that did not exist a little more than a decade ago,' he said.

In a word of advice to companies looking to expand via franchising, Ms Lee said: 'Build up a fundamental base business with a strong value proposition. . . protect your intellectual property and build strong quality and system control procedures.'

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