

# Clearing the Air 净化空气



With many parts of China choking due to air pollution there is a deep concern amongst consumers of its effects on their health. Roger Bitterlin, General Manager of PLASTON China, the parent group of BONECO, talks with **The Bridge** on how the Swiss healthy air specialist is helping Chinese consumers live in healthier environments, and how the market will develop in the future.

by **Mark Andrews**

空气污染使得中国许多地区的人们不堪其害，它对健康的威胁令消费者忧虑。博瑞客（BONECO，原名瑞士风）的母公司 PLASTON 公司中国区总经理 Roger Bitterlin 就瑞士健康空气专家是如何帮助中国消费者获得更为健康的空气环境及市场未来的发展趋势等问题与《桥》进行了交流。

作者：**Mark Andrew**

## Tell us briefly about the history of BONECO and its activities in China?

BONECO is part of the Plaston Group and has been producing air treatment systems for over 50 years. At the turn of the millennium we entered the American market using the new 'Air-O-Swiss' brand. When we launched in the Chinese market we decided to use the name as it has a very good connection to Switzerland, at the time the brand had the Matterhorn in the key visual.

BONECO started to sell its products here in the autumn of 2004 under the brand Air-O-Swiss. At this early stage of our business development, we introduced our Air Humidifiers into the Chinese Market. The market leader at that time was Yadu with its low price Ultrasonic Humidifiers. Based on the successful introduction of our Air-Washers model W2055, we steadily introduced evaporators, steamers, combination units (humidifier and purifier) and dehumidifiers into the market.

We made our big breakthrough in terms of increased turnover, in the 2009 / 2010 season in which we started to sell our Travel Star humidifier U7146. This small unit has since sold more than 200,000 units and has helped us to increase awareness of our brand in the market.

From 2011, China began to enter the early stages of air purifier hysteria. I remember arriving twelve years ago and descending through the smog, but it took a while for people to become really concerned about the issue. In 2011, we introduced our P300 purifier series in the market. Due to changes in Swiss law, we had to change the brand name used in China to BONECO and we introduced this name here in 2013.

## Concerns about the effects of air pollution are now a major issue in China. How much has this impacted on the sales of your products?

From 2011, air pollution has had a major positive influence on our sales in the Chinese market. While the market for air humidifiers is still growing at single digit figures, the purification market has now become far more important for us in China. Chinese have got more wealth and so their buying ability is increasing. Awareness of the air pollution issue is growing steadily, a few years ago no one was talking about it. People now have the economic power to buy these kinds of unit and are concerned about their health.

Still, the market boom led to a lot of new entrants into the market - from both famous brands and unknowns - hence a lot of competition. Today, we have more than 700 purifier brands in the market. The Chinese market got flooded with units and it was very difficult for the end consumer to find out which unit they should buy. Many manufacturers wanted to jump onto the bandwagon and often just put a fan and a filter in a housing, and then called it a purifier.

In January 2016, the Chinese government introduced a new purifier standard. This new standard sets limits and specifies how to calculate the related performance data of a purifier. There are official testing institutes that test the products and also check that what you write in the manuals and on packaging and websites is true. Most of our products are already certified. We are hoping the new standards will clean up the market, and in the end we will see only about 150 to 200 brands remaining. It should help the end consumer a lot in choosing the unit that meets their expectations.

## 请简单介绍一下博瑞客的历史和在中国的业务?

博瑞客是 Plaston 集团的一部分，拥有 50 多年的空气处理系统生产历史。在千禧年之际，我们的新品牌“瑞士风”成功的进入了美国市场。在进入中国市场时，我们决定继续沿用瑞士风这个名字，因为它与瑞士有着密切的关联，那个时候这个品牌以马特洪峰为视觉形象。

博瑞客于 2004 年秋开始在中国销售瑞士风品牌的产品。在业务发展的初期，我们率先把加湿器产品引入到了中国市场，那时的市场领导品牌是低价的亚都超声波加湿器。在成功引入型号为 W2055 的空气清洗器的基础上，我们不断扩充产品系列，增加了蒸发器、蒸汽加湿器、组合产品（加湿器和净化器）和除湿机等产品。

2009 年至 2010 年间，我们开始销售加湿器——便携之星 U7146，这款产品的热销大幅提高了公司的销售额。期间，这款小巧轻便的产品销量高达 20 万台，大大提高了品牌在市场上的认知度。

自 2011 年，中国开始进入对空气净化器需求的初期阶段。我记得 12 年前来到这里，眼前一片雾霾，多年后人们才开始关注这个问题。2011 年，我们引入了型号为 P300 的净化器系列。由于瑞士法律的变化，我们不得不把中国品牌的名字改成博瑞客，并在 2013 年开始正式使用。

## 空气污染的危害已经成为中国的一个重要问题，这对你们的产品销售有哪些影响？

自 2011 年以来，空气污染对我们在中国市场的销售带来了十分积极的影响。在加湿器市场仍以个位数增长的情况下，中国的净化器市场对我们而言就显得尤为重要。随着中国人财富的增加，人们的购买力不断提高。人们对空气污染问题的认识不断加强，几年前还没有人谈这个问题，而现在，出于对个人健康的担忧，有一定经济能力的人们都会购买此类产品。

此外，市场的爆发也吸引了许多新品牌的进入——有知名品牌，也有新品牌——这就意味着更为激烈的市场竞争。如今，市场上的净化器品牌已经达到了 700 多个。中国市场充斥着各种净化器产品，这使得终端消费者难以选择合适的产品。还有一些厂家鱼目混珠，装一个风扇和一个滤网就说是净化器。

2016 年 1 月，中国政府公布了全新的净化器标准。新标准设定了门槛，细化了净化器相关性能数据的计算方法。同时还指定官方测试机构对产品进行检测，并对说明书、包装和网站上的信息进行核实。目前，我们公司的大多数产品都获得了认证。我们希望新标准能够有效整肃市场，将主要品牌缩减至 150 至 200 个，这样的话将有助于终端客户选择符合他们要求的产品。

How do you expect the market to develop in the next few years in terms of demand and also type of product?

Back in 2004 no one was talking much about air purification, but now air purification is the main market. We believe that the demand for purifiers will remain high during the next few years. Although the Chinese government has placed an emphasis on getting air pollution under control, it will take another 10 to 15 years to achieve.

The challenge for all brands in the end is to find the right mix between performance, noise, quality and design. The kind of particles and amount of air that can be cleaned is actually more important than just how fast the unit cleans air. It is clear that competition will remain tough in the purifier industry, and that well known brands will need to innovate to keep market share or increase it. As we are a worldwide group, product development should match as much as possible the needs of all markets. However, we are aware that China has different expectations for the product than those of Europe or the US, and so we are currently developing a product that is tailored especially for China.

I also think that we will see some changes in the market. "Healthy Air" does not only mean clean air, having air with a humidity level of between 40 and 60% is also important for people's health. At the moment to reach this 'well being' target the consumer often needs to have two units, a purifier and a humidifier. Our BONECO flagship unit the H680 is a combined unit which has a high purification and humidification performance.

**Has the Sino- Swiss Free Trade Agreement impacted on your business, and if so how?**

Not really. The Swiss FTA did not influence our business here at all as we do not have any production in Switzerland. Most of our products are produced in the Czech Republic, with some products that are sourced from South Korea. And we also produce the Travelstar Humidifier here in China.

**How has the 'Swiss-made' brand helped, and in what way?**

It helped a lot in the past when we used the "Air-O-Swiss" brand. Chinese consumers like to buy foreign and high end products and the Chinese like Switzerland. Switzerland does not just stand for banks and chocolate, but also for high precision, quality and trust.

Our products are all designed and developed in Switzerland, but from eighteen years ago we shifted production to the Czech Republic. Swiss law changed and in order to use the word Swiss or Switzerland in the brand name, the product must be produced in Switzerland. Therefore we switched to the BONECO brand name which our company introduced to the Swiss market in 1970. The name 'BONECO' is from the French *bon* (good) and *économique* (economical) which ideally matches the trend of having good and environmental friendly products in your home. ○

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自 2011 年，中国开始进入对空气净化器需求的初期阶段。

**你认为在未来几年里市场需求和产品类型会有哪些变化?**

早在 2004 年，市场上还没有人谈论空气净化器，可是现在空气净化已经成为了一个重要的市场。我们相信在未来几年市场对净化器的需求将保持高位，虽然中国政府已经将控制空气污染作为发展的重点，但是这个目标需要至少 10 至 15 年的时间才能实现。

最终，市场上所有品牌面临的挑战都将是找到性能、噪音、品质和设计之间的最佳组合。事实上，产品可净化的颗粒类型和空气量比产品净化空气的速度更为重要。很明显，净化器行业将保持激烈的市场竞争，知名品牌必须不断创新以维持或获得市场份额。作为一个全球性企业，产品开发应尽可能适应所有市场的需求。然而，由于中国市场对产品的期望与欧洲或美国市场不同，因此，我们正在研发一款专门针对中国市场的产品。

另外，市场会不断变化。“健康空气”指的不仅仅是清洁的空气，使空气的湿度保持在 40%-50% 之间对人们的健康也是十分重要的。目前，要想达到这个“健康状态”的目标，消费者需要购买两台设备：一台净化器，一台加湿器。而我们的博瑞客旗舰产品 H680 是款组合产品，拥有较强的净化和加湿效果。

**中瑞自由贸易协定对你们的业务有影响吗？如果有，是什么影响？**

没有什么影响。中瑞自由贸易协定对我们没有任何影响，因为我们的生产活动都不在瑞士。我们的大多数产品在捷克共和国生产，还有一些从韩国采购，便携之星加湿器是在中国生产的。

**“瑞士制造”的标签对你们有哪些帮助？**

以前我们使用“瑞士风”这个品牌的时候，“瑞士制造”的标签对我们帮助很大。中国消费者偏爱购买外国品牌和高端品牌，瑞士产品就深受他们的喜爱。瑞士标签并不仅仅代表着银行和巧克力，还代表着高精密度、品质和诚信。

我们的产品设计和研发都是在瑞士进行的，18 年前我们把生产转移到了捷克共和国。后来，瑞士法律要求品牌名称中有“瑞士”字样的产品都必须在瑞士生产，因此，我们把品牌名称改成了“博瑞客”，博瑞客是我们在 1970 年引入瑞士市场的品牌名称。“博瑞客”（BONECO）源于法文 *bon*（好）和 *économique*（经济），这个名字完美的契合了家用产品优质环保的发展趋势。○