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Her Velvet Vase Bows in U.S.

By SHARON EDELSON

Her Velvet Vase, a fashion blog shop based in Singapore, has transported its brand of feminine and tailored classics to the U.S. with a new e-commerce site.

Founded in 2007 by sisters Clare and Magdalena Chan, Her Velvet Vase has been among the top 10 blog shops in Singapore since its launch. In Singapore, brands often use blogs to conduct business, especially in the fashion arena.

The business model is a lean one. The sisters set up an office in a corner of their father's investment company and the blog platform is free.

Sales of Her Velvet Vase have been in the seven digits every year since 2010, Mag Chan said, adding that the brand stands out for its affordability and a wide range of styles.

"We try to give customers great variety," Mag said. "We release collections every week with 20 outfits or about 100 items every month." Her Velvet Vase's customer base consists of 17- to 35-year-olds and includes everyone from students to working women.

Mag, a fashion student at The New School's Parsons School of Design, sends her designs to Her Velvet Vase's supplier every two to three weeks. "He produces a sample and begins manufacturing immediately," she said. "I get advice on design concepts from my professors."

While the collection has a feminine and flirty side, with a blue swing skirt and white tulle skirt, it also has more sophisticated looks, such as a black, fuchsia and yellow strapless dress with a structured bustier and a flared skirt, selling for \$60. Edgier fare includes a vegan moto jacket with asymmetric zippers at \$70.

The Web site offers statement jewelry from \$10 and up, handbags priced from \$40 to \$60 and shoes from \$40 to \$60. "We're working with shoe designers in Thailand, Australia and Indonesia," Mag said.

"The U.S. is our first expansion," said Mag. "We plan to trickle down to Southeast Asia and launch different Web sites in each region. We were one of the first 10 blog shops to launch in Singapore. There are a lot of competitors there – over 200,000 online stores. A lot of them started expanding into Southeast Asia."

The women understand that American shoppers have different expectations. "In Singapore, consumers look for a bargain," Mag said. "In the U.S., they're looking for a more well-rounded shopping experience."



A look from Her Velvet Vase.
Courtesy Photo

Mag acknowledged that the U.S., especially New York, is “incredibly saturated.” To gain exposure the brand has turned to social media, maintaining accounts on Instagram, Facebook and Pinterest. The company has rented office and warehouse space in Hoboken, N.J.

Her Velvet Vase grew out of Clare’s frustration with the apparel offerings she found in Singapore when she returned home after earning a psychology degree at Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. Mag, who was in high school at the time, showed a knack for fashion design and helped her with the business. A \$5,000 gift from their mother launched Her Velvet Vase into the blogosphere.

The Chans imported goods for the blog shop at first, but began designing and manufacturing their own collections two years ago.

“Finding the factories was very hit or miss,” said Mag. “We got conned a lot. We had no connections in fashion. We had to learn how to build our own networks. We found manufacturers in Hong Kong, China and Australia. We’re known for sleek tailoring and fine workmanship.”

Her Velvet Vase offers a monthly Mood Box program, where shoppers answer questions about their style and color preferences and a Velvet Vase stylist puts together an outfits for \$40 or \$90 per month. Boxes also contain freebies, giveaways and promotions.

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