



INSIDE

- Panda love endures across the Pacific > p27
- Lessons in asking for a loan > p29



FASHION BOUTIQUE Any Shop Style works with about 300 designers. Its target customers are well-traveled and open to buying new brands. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Fashionistas favor small designers

New-concept boutiques showcase up-and-coming brands to appeal to younger consumers with independent tastes

By **SUN YUANQING**

sunyuanqing@chinadaily.com.cn

For China's young fashionistas, shopping malls seem to have lost some of their sparkle, populated as they are with shops selling the same range of luxury brands. These shoppers are now switching to multibrand boutiques that stock a selection of products more in line with their personal tastes.

Such stores have grown rapidly over the past decade, offering designer pieces at a fraction of the price of the big-brand items.

According to a 2015 report by the China Commercial Property Research Center, Shanghai has the most multibrand fashion boutiques, with 69, followed by Beijing at 56, and Guangzhou at 27.

Shoppers at these multibrand stores buy to please themselves and, unlike buyers of luxury goods, they are barely affected by widespread economic cooling, the report suggested. With strong personal taste and independent judgment, they are also less prone to go on overseas shopping sprees, the report said.

"The newer designer brands, with their unique style, good prices and quality, are exactly what shoppers need today," said Iris Xu, a partner in the fashion boutique Any Shop Style, who used to work in public relations for the French cosmetics company L'Oreal.

The store now works with about 300 designers, Xu said. "These are people who are fashionable and well-educated. They travel frequently and are open-minded. They are capable of buying luxury brands, but they are also open to buying new brands.

"Any Shop Style doesn't just con-



ARTORIZ, a multibrand jewelry boutique, opened its first two stores in Shenzhen and Shanghai, followed by pop-up stores in New York and Hainan.

sider how well-known a designer is. We rely on sales figures to decide whether this is the right choice for our store."

Building on its previous success, the store recently opened a new outlet in Beijing that sells designer jewelry.

Lane Crawford, an upscale multibrand fashion boutique with branches in Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu, combines fashion with art and music to create what it describes as a unique shopping ambience. The store also has personal stylists who provide consulting services.

Customers who used to rely on top luxury brands are now opening up to the new designer brands, said Irene Lau, China vice-president of Lane Crawford.

"That's what our stylists are there for. Thanks to their guidance, customers are getting to know more emerging brands, and we are happy to be playing a role in educating the market."

These stores have also become a hotbed for emerging designers.

Lane Crawford offers more than 1,000 designer brands covering womenswear, menswear, cosmetics, jewelry and homeware. It also has

exclusive crossover collaborations with the designers.

Through the Created in China project, it has introduced brands such as Ms MIN, Comme Moi, Helen Lee, Ziggy Chen and Uma Wang.

At the same time, Dong Liang, a boutique dedicated to Chinese designers, has become a trendsetter in the independent designer scene. The store presents new designers not only in its boutiques but also at Shanghai Fashion Week. Dong Liang hosts the One Day event that is part of Fashion Week, introducing designers such as He Yan and Sankuanz.

Apart from putting on fashion shows, the event also helps promote designers with innovative multimedia presentations.

The department store Galeries Lafayette Beijing has joined the initiative, and Chinese brands such as Chictopia and Vega Zaishi Wang all have independent boutiques in the French store.

Beijing SKP, a luxury shopping mall, has developed its own multibrand boutique, SKP Select, offering products from the newer brands.

The emergence of multibrand boutiques is changing retailing in

>> **PAGE 25**