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smaller cities, Ding Meimei, chief executive of fashion management firm DFO Showroom, told trade magazine *Business of Fashion*.

As the market in tier-one cities becomes oversaturated, these stores are now expanding to smaller cities such as Chengdu, Shenzhen and Guiyang. There are not enough customers there for brands to open independent stores, Ding said. But multibrand stores can become a shop window for the new designers, she said.

Even though retail in China faces tough times, there are still new companies keen to take advantage of the spending power of the middle class. Shenzhen Hemei Group, which makes smart electrical meters, entered the fashion industry by setting up a new multibrand jewelry boutique, Artoriz.

The company has joined forces with Bluebell, a Hong Kong branding company that has represented brands such as Louis Vuitton, Fendi and Loewe in China. The brand has signed with 34 designers from both home and abroad, creating jewelry aimed at young middle-class consumers.

"There are established brands and boutiques for clothing in China, but for jewelry there are few," said Shirley Zhang, creative director of Artoriz and a jewelry designer. "We want to build a platform for the young brands. We believe that these designers, each catering to a small crowd, will eventually win over a huge market."

The store has played a role in the success of designers such as Xu Ke and Zhang Baohua. It opened its first two stores in Shenzhen and Shanghai, followed by pop-up stores in New York and Hainan.

These days stores are not just stores: They go beyond fashion to offer a wider experience.

The phenomenal fashion and art concept store from Milan, 10 Corso Como, opened a store in Beijing in 2014 after opening one in Shanghai. The store partners with Trendy International Group, a Chinese fashion retailer that owns fashion brands including Ochirly and Five Plus, in its development in China.

Taking after its Milanese progenitor, the store offers a shopping experience that combines fashion, design, art and dining.



**IRENE LAU**, China vice president of Lane Crawford.



**IRIS XU**, a partner in the fashion boutique Any Shop Style.

"The idea of 'slow shopping' and creating an entire sensory experience seems to translate well in China," founder Carla Sozzani said after the Beijing store opened. "It is meant to offer an experience for the five senses and the mind together. What we always hope to bring to any city is an interest in lifestyle and values beyond the trendy and fashionable."

The idea of integrative retail space is also being adopted by more business owners.

Brand New China, a pioneer in China's multibrand retail market, is now undergoing a revamp. Founded in 2010 by publisher Hong Huang, the store has been a springboard for emerging young designers.

The store is now transforming from a fashion boutique to a lifestyle experience center that offers everything from ceramics to bicycles and kitchenware. It also plans to expand its space for art exhibitions and other kinds of events.



**LANE CRAWFORD** is an upscale multibrand fashion boutique with branches in Hong Kong, Beijing, Shanghai and Chengdu.

# Store reflects a stylish life

Inspired by travel in Europe, Algorithm owner seeks to add a sense of ceremony to everyday pursuits like shopping and dining

By **SUN YUANQING**

Algorithm cannot be pigeonholed as a multibrand fashion boutique, or as a restaurant or a furniture store. It manages to be all of the above.

A five-minute walk from the buzzing Sanlitun area of Beijing, the store can be found at a bustling intersection. The design is minimalist, with transparent glass walls. The entire store is a giant window on the dining scene and fashion display inside.

In Algorithm you can buy a huge range of goods from food to clothing, accessories to furniture, and even the bonsai plants in the corridor.

The restaurant menu is updated every season, and every dish is named after a city that has a story to tell. For example, a sandwich is called the Copenhagen, where two of the founders first met.

At a time when technology has made it possible to do everything from shopping to socializing on a smartphone, Hu Nan, cofounder of Algorithm, believes that there really is nothing to match a sensory experience. She wants to enliven the everyday by giving a sense of ceremony to the smallest things.

"When we really pay attention to the minutiae of life we are happier," she said.

She studied economics at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing and later became executive chief editor of *Fashion China Magazine*, where she developed an extensive network in fashion circles. She curated one of the first showrooms for Chinese designers during China Fashion Week and worked as a consultant on strategy and design to many fashion brands.

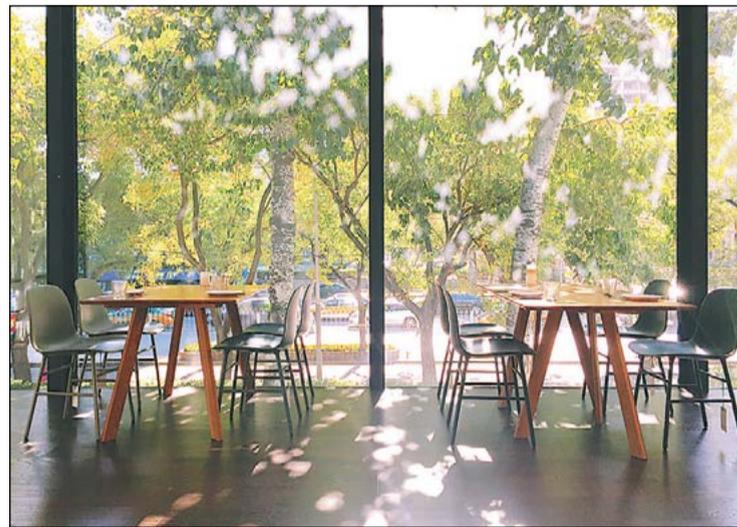
After working for a few years she went on to acquire a master's degree in business at her alma mater and traveled to Europe during her studies.

There, she was inspired not only by how fashion boutiques are run, but also by the European lifestyle. So she decided to open a store that sells not only clothing but is dedicated to the lifestyle to which she aspired.

Hu imagined the space as reflecting the type of home she would like to live in herself.

"We want to create a sense of cleanliness, quietness and comfort. And we want to attract people who enjoy the aesthetics and lifestyle that we do," she said.

Hu cofounded the store with three friends who worked in media, culinary arts and design, and engaged the Kuo space design



**AT ALGORITHM**, near Sanlitun in Beijing, shoppers can buy food, clothing and furniture. One corner displays the latest designer fashion pieces.

team. All the walls in the venue — which formerly housed an Iranian restaurant — were removed to create a more open space and allow in the sunlight.

Hu selects all the products herself. The store now works with more than 30 designers from China and abroad. Stock includes women's clothing from China, men's clothing from Malaysia, handmade glass from Japan and skin-care products from Germany.

The store also offers made-to-wear service for men and brides.

Hu displays the products by category rather than by designer, sensing this is what most customers want. Good design needs to be complemented with wearability and good quality, she said. "The new designers are really creative, but they need to relate to the customers. Quality and cost are usually a challenge for them."

Now the store has become a venue for fashion events and business salons. Chanel, Oysho, Adidas and Ford are some of the brands that have held events there.