

A bit of everything

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Urban - Feature

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Bazaar organisers Lynette Ee and Germaine Lim deal with this&that and everything else in between, like running a wedding boutique, a wine retailing business and a spa. KUEK LIN reports

What do you name a business that dabbles in this and that? Why, this &that of course.

Owners Lynette Ee, 41, and Germaine Lim, 39, started their venture as a fair-organising business earlier this year.

It is now a spa, bazaar, wine retailer and wedding boutique all rolled into one.

Drop by That Boutique Bazaar and That Spa in River Valley Road, and you will find a one-room spa with two beds tucked in a 100-year-old conservation shophouse.

After the spa session, you can browse through an array of arts and craft items from a \$100 abstract painting done by a Singaporean to a \$300 hand-painted shawl from Nepal.

Imported from all over the world by the vendors that this&that engages, these wares change every two weeks.

Then there is Anything But White, the bridal arm which customises wedding dresses for rebels of white weddings.

There is also That Wine Bazaar, which sources for premium wines like the Chilean Los Vosco Ledix and French Guigal Chateau Nuf De Pape from local distributors which supply to restaurants and hotels.

Both these ventures do not have a physical store, but are among the services that this&that offers. Simply walk into That Boutique Bazaar and work out a personalised plan with Ee and Lim.

The two met at a fashion show in August last year and hit it off instantly.

Lim was a general manager with consumer giant Procter & Gamble, while Ee, a former buyer at Ikea Asia-Pacific, ran her own home gallery that sold handmade jewellery.

They decided to pool their 25 years of marketing and retail experience and organised their first bazaar at Hilton Hotel in May this year.

They rented the venue and leased out the space to vendors, who paid \$600 per booth.

The two-day fair was a hit. Over 9,000 people visited the more than 80 booths and the total vendor takings were estimated to be about \$250,000 based on credit card sales.

Their second bazaar was held at the same hotel last weekend and saw takings jump to an estimated \$440,000.

Ho Shufen, catering and sales manager at the Hilton Hotel, says of the organisers: 'They brought in a variety of products that were unique and could not be found anywhere else.'

These range from vintage clothing to tableware.

Ee explains: 'We aim to provide what others can't, so the products that our vendors sell have to be unique and upmarket.'

While they used to 'shop' for suitable vendors, they now have interested parties calling them daily to ask for a booth in upcoming fairs.

Their bazaars have caught the attention of Clarke Quay's landlord, CapitaLand, which approached the women earlier this year to stage fairs at the riverfront attraction.

Three are slated, on the last weekend of each month from next month.

But money, as the two women would tell you, is not everything.

At the first Hilton fair, they gave two prime stall spaces near the doors to the National Committee for Unifem Singapore and waived the rental.

Unifem is an organisation under the United Nations umbrella which represents female rights.

Fazlin Abdullah, general manager of the National Committee for Unifem Singapore, says:

'We were tucked in one corner in previous fairs, but with this&that, we were given the best locations.'

The committee took in 40 per cent more than they did at previous fairs, selling donated items such as second-hand clothing. The two women behind this&that are busy thinking up more ideas for their business, and say work is now a pleasure.

'If we are any 'holic', it has to be shopaholic,' Ee says.

After all, it was their passion for shopping that brought them together.

That Bazaar @ Clarke Quay will be held at the Central Fountain Square at Clarke Quay on Oct 28-29, Nov 25-26 and Dec 9-10.

That Boutique Bazaar is at 289 River Valley Road, tel: 6735-4868,

<http://www.thisandthatbazaar.com>