

Looqal Makes Shopping for Exquisite Sustainable Products Easy

Solving the pain point for consumers who want to shop for products from small sustainability-oriented companies was the reason for founding Looqal, said founder Joyce Teh. The problem consumers have, Joyce added, is that “Supply is fragmented. They chance upon them. The quality and authenticity are not verified. It’s made worse with greenwashing.” Looqal offers a single site for consumers to find quality products from small impactful businesses that support their communities and the environment.

A One-Stop Shop for Purposeful Brands

Looqal is a one stop-shop for conscious consumers to shop for an array of lifestyle items from purposeful lifestyle brands in categories including fashion, beauty, wellness, home & living, and pantry. “Although it does take more time, I establish from interviews and their websites that they are vested in being socially and environmentally responsible,” Joyce noted.

Looqal is two-pronged, Joyce explained. On one side, it provides support for microbrands. On the other, it is building a community of consumers who want to be more sustainable in their lifestyles. Looqal actively assists businesses in cultivating sustainable operations, while guiding consumers to make more mindful choices.

“We provide education for the community on how, why and where to lead a more sustainable lifestyle. It is a great opportunity to learn what’s happening with the environment, why we should or shouldn’t be doing certain things, and to educate them. We keep it positive.” Customers have also realised that the products can be good gifts, as many brands in the sustainable space are relatively unknown and consumers can give gifts that have quality, aesthetics, social and environmental value.

She curates the brands based on quality and aesthetics. “When I first started researching, there was a lack of brands that were interesting. I look for premium-level-and-above products. When I come across brands that have great products, quality, aesthetics, they fulfil the social and environmental principles, I reach out to have a chat with them. We provide a marketplace of curated brands. Customers are working adults who are mostly in their 30s and 40s. A person is shopping to equip all the rooms in her house, Joyce said, so she hopes to be able to offer seamless shopping and convenience. “We provide a marketplace of curated brands.

The process for customers to order on her multi-vendor website, designed by a developer she works with quite closely, is straightforward. Customer orders are transmitted to the merchant, and orders are shipped either via Looqal or directly to the customers through a third party.

Marketing Supports Looqal and its Partners

“A lot of the marketing is on Instagram,” Joyce explained. “That is where customers are most responsive. It does translate into traffic to our website. Tik Tok is new. We are trying to see what resonates. Facebook is a given.” She works with a boutique agency on content creation, to optimise her time. She is also working on plans for advertising beyond Singapore to start building awareness.

Along with marketing her own company, Joyce supports her small business partners. “Entrepreneurs lack the time,” she said. “Marketing gets sidelined. They lack skills in marketing. Most of them are dependent on social media. We create interviews, stories and chats about raw materials, sources of the products and artisanship. You see content on Instagram and Tik Tok created around these brands.”

There aren’t competitors offering exactly the same thing, Joyce said, so she believes she has an advantage. Popups, which are becoming quite common, have a very limited product

range. While some have physical stores and others have a limited product range online, she said none are one-stop shops like Looqal.

Growing the Business

Even though the business has been under development for three years, Looqal just had its official launch in Singapore at the end of August 2023. “When we hosted the official launch, we hosted our first official popup in Joo Chiat. We invited media partners. I had thirty brand partners with me. Since we were set up, we took the weekend, opened it up to the public, and allowed customers to have a chat with the partners.” Now, she said, “I’m prepping for the giving season. That will help us gain traction.”

Joyce has ambitious plans for growing the business. “We are looking at \$1 million in revenue for year one, with 120 brands on board. I have 30 now. What I’m focusing on, while building brand awareness, is bringing on brands that are relevant.”

She is currently bootstrapping the business. While she has spoken to angel investors and friends in the industry about a fund-raising round, they advised her to launch the business, gain traction and come back once it scales up. “We are focusing on this for the next six months.”

Impact

“What I hope to achieve,” Joyce said, “is to use consumer demand to move the needle. I can nurture a community that would see the benefits in buying into more sustainable products. If we can influence consumer demand, the appeal would shift for more sustainably-produced raw materials. It will encourage more brands to come in and hasten big retail brands in their processes.”

Joyce also seeks to be an end-to-end sustainable lifestyle enabler. “We start with a community of businesses and conscious consumers. Then we give back 1 percent of customer orders to non-profit partners. We have one partner, Aidha, which offers financial education to low income and foreign helpers. I would like to be able to create micro-economies and bring commerce to communities around the world. They can create their own flourishing economy. I believe in giving where it is sustainable.”