



ART DIRECTION: SYAHJIA ALBINA SARI; PHOTOGRAPHY: KAH MUN FROM MYTH STUDIO; HAIR AND MAKEUP: A CUT ABOVE

Think Outside the Box

Dynamic husband and wife duo, *Xin-Lung Tai and Rebecca Chia*, share with *Sangeeta Devi* their journey in creating one of the most innovative online shopping platforms in the world

WHEN HUSBAND and wife team Xin-Lung Tai and Rebecca Chia realised a gap in the e-commerce market, they made it their mission to revolutionise the way we shop by creating an interactive online portal called ShopandBox. This is essentially a personalised online shopping platform that empowers shoppers with the ability to purchase anything they want from anywhere in the world, with the help of a personal shopper, known as a 'Boxer'. Boxers residing in those specific countries you desire products from, will personally go out and purchase your items and have it shipped to you. They will also recommend additional or alternative items, giving shoppers access to local deals they otherwise couldn't enjoy and helping them get past payment issues.

The ShopandBox Boxer family is made up of over 80 individuals across more than 20 countries including Australia, USA, Japan South Korea and France. These Boxers come from all walks of life, but the one thing they have in common is that they are individuals who love bagging a bargain. Thanks to its exclusive partnership with DHL Express, ShopandBox also provides shoppers with the best delivery rates, and products purchased are expected to arrive at the shopper's doorstep within one to three days.

"The idea to create ShopandBox sparked from a common request that not only the both of us get, but many of our friends and family as well," Tai says. "We often come across the case where people would be handing their friends a shopping list when they discover that their friend is travelling overseas. We thought of turning it into a business idea because people are busy when they're travelling for work or holiday and they

don't necessarily want a long list of things to get for other people, let alone figure out what they're going to buy for themselves," Tai continues to explain about how the idea for ShopandBox came about.

As the founder and CEO of the company, Tai acts as the glue for the team around the world. "We're quite unique in a way that we don't have any real physical presence. We work remotely with each other, but this can be a challenge because everyone has to make that extra effort to communicate, whether it be through chat or email." According to him, his prior experience in management consulting came in handy when managing ShopandBox, as it equipped him with the perfect training. "Being thrown into the deep end across multiple industries during my consulting years has definitely helped me in my journey at ShopandBox, which involves presenting solutions and executing ideas quickly," he reveals.

His wife, Rebecca Chia, is the co-founder of ShopandBox and the driving force behind the brand's outreach efforts and marketing

They made it their mission to revolutionise the way we shop

strategies. Her out-of-the-box thinking and eye for detail has steered the brand in the right track, as it continues to gain exposure in many countries around the world. Born in Singapore, Chia later moved to Melbourne where she obtained a Bachelor of Arts and Masters of Applied Commerce at the University of Melbourne. This is also where the couple first met. "I remember it was during the first year of university and there were exams coming up. There was this strange guy who came up to me and my friend



“The idea to create ShopandBox sparked from a common request that not only the both of us got, but many of our friends and family as well”

and asked if we wanted to study for the exam together,” Chia recalls. The pair lost touch after university but reconnected six or seven years later when Tai was in Singapore.

“Unless you know Rebecca very well, she can come across as an introvert, but she still manages to be a real idea generator in her own way and has given ShopandBox a level of credibility that ensures the brand stands out beyond the rest. Over time, she has also shown that she is very organised because she actually deals with a lot of the nitty-gritty work like selecting the right font size and ensuring the pictures for the website are up to standard,” Tai says.

“I think Xin is very persistent and that’s why ShopandBox has managed to get to this stage. When it comes to things like pitching for funding and getting the shipping rates from DHL, a lot of people give up trying in the early stages. However, Xin was adamant on finding a way, and in the end he did,” Chia revealed details of her husband’s perseverance when bringing the couple’s vision for ShopandBox to life.

The pair also thank their parents for all of their support throughout the journey. “My father is an engineer who entered the oil and gas industry. He has always been pretty methodological and risk alert, which is quite different from me. I think this worked out to be a really good balance,” Tai shares. “As I got older, and he realised I was going to do what I wanted to do anyway, he provided me with really good insights. He is also a great person to bounce ideas off with. My mum is a principal of a school and her wisdom is also very valuable.”

Chia credits the parents for the couple’s success as well. “We wouldn’t have been able to launch a startup company without support from both our families,” she reveals. “My dad has been a really good role model. Whenever we have any business ideas, we always go and talk to him. It is the same with my mum, she sends me emails every day!”

According to Chia, being positive is important when developing a startup business. “It is especially vital when you are used to living pretty comfortably and then you suddenly move into a space where it is unstable and there’s no fixed salary,” she says. “There isn’t just one key to success, there are multiple keys with various degrees of success. Persistence is also one of those keys,” Tai adds with conviction. ●