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Young entrepreneurs share their e-commerce journey, plus tips and insights for starting your own business

FROM CLASSROOM TO BOARDROOM

Phoe Chuan An (right), 27, and Tan Sher Yun (left), 25, were still in their second year of university at SMU when they decided to plunge into the world of e-commerce in 2016. What began as a venture selling travel organisers from Chuan An's bedroom is now a successful, well-known home and living brand specialising in home organisation products, with a loyal fan base of customers. To date, they have delivered happiness to over 25,000 homeowners in Singapore as well as in countries such as Australia, India, and the United States.

In this interview, Chuan An, co-founder and now the Head of Business Development, hopes to share the story of their startup journey, and to inspire entrepreneurs in Singapore looking to start their own business.

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Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs

Interview with Chuan An, Co-Founder and Head of Business Development

What advice would you give to young entrepreneurs who would like to start their own business?

Getting the basics right from the start is important – things like the product itself, the customer experience, or investing in a good piece of software for your company. Having the basics in place means that you create a strong foundation for your business to grow.

You'll also need to be patient. It's easy to expect results, especially when you are just starting out and when you have put in a lot of work. But perseverance is key and sometimes, results just take a little time.

Also, don't be afraid or ashamed to be hands-on from the start. When I started, I was literally doing everything myself in one way or another. I was answering customers' questions, packing orders, talking to suppliers - all while handling schoolwork. But this gave me a good insight into what I expect in those roles when I hire people to take up these roles.

What values do you think have helped you to sustain your business?

Being people-oriented is really important. In business and in life, having good people around you and maintaining good relationships with them is crucial. For our customers, we hope to inspire and empower them to create an organised home with our essentials. We want them to feel happy whenever they unwrap our products – that's how our hashtag #UnwrapHappiness came about. For our employees, we want them to come to work in a fulfilling and enjoyable environment, and we want to help them with their personal and professional goals. For our suppliers, we want them to trust us, just as we trust them.

I try to be open & honest with myself and the people around me. Could I have put in more effort? What's working and what's not working? I also try to be honest with my colleagues by giving them open and constructive feedback to help them improve.

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Inspiring Young Entrepreneurs

Interview with Chuan An, Co-Founder and Head of Business Development (continued)

Since you started relatively young, how do you think this has shaped your perspective of running a business? Are we ever too young or old to start a business?

You're never too young or old to start a business. For me personally, being younger makes me more open to using digital tools such as social media, content marketing, among others. Since people my age (mid to late 20s) are at the age where they are first-time homeowners (by BTO ing or purchasing a resale flat), I think being at the same age gives me an opportunity to understand the challenges a new homeowner faces and to provide products that better cater to their needs.

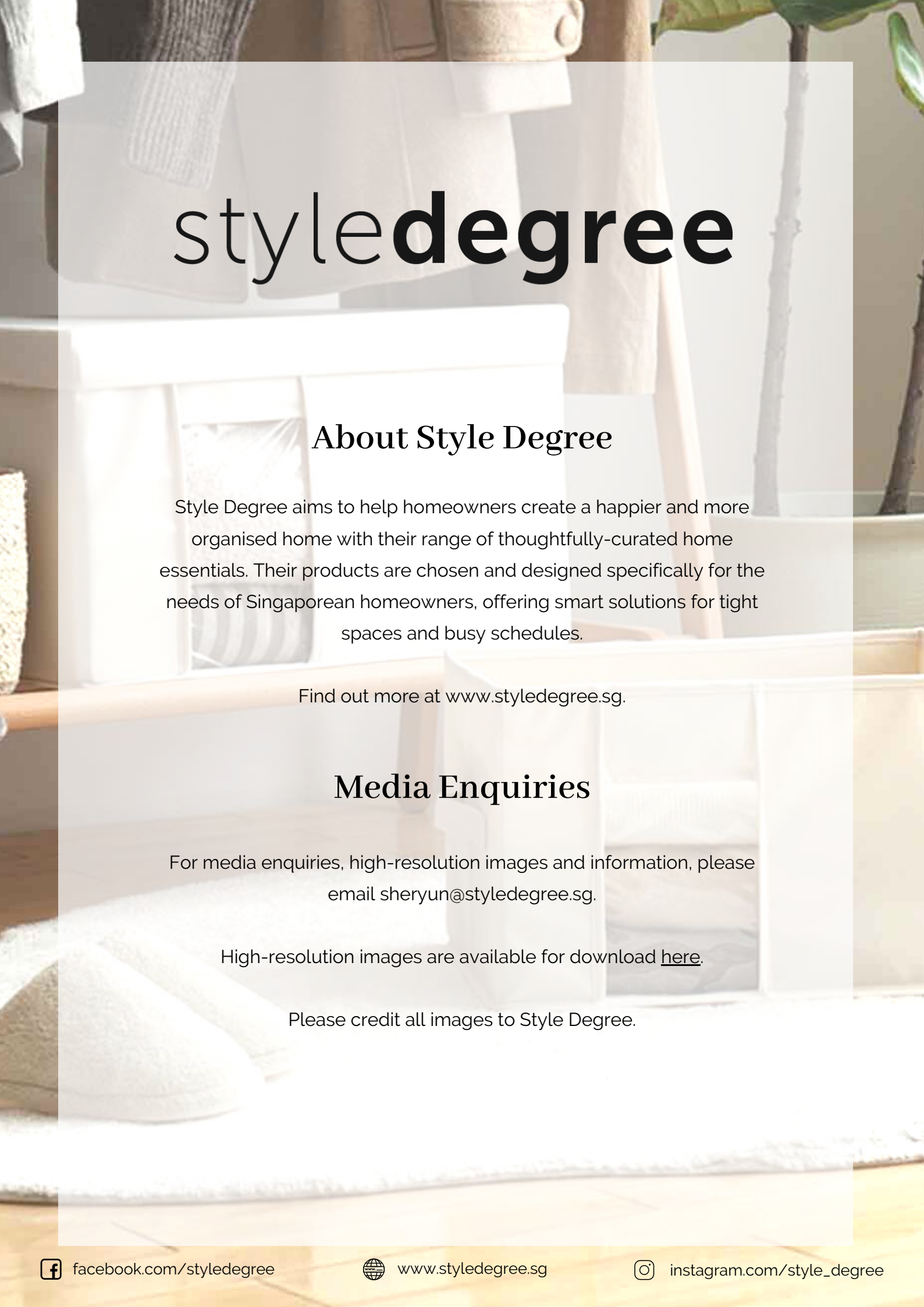
That being said, starting business at an earlier or later stage has its benefits as well. If you are older, you probably have more experience, connections and resources.

What are some challenges you've faced while running your business and how did you overcome them?

There are a couple of challenges that come to mind. For example, especially when we first started out, there was a lot of convincing to do. We had to encourage good employees to stay with the company and do their best work with us. We also had to convince our courier company to work with us and give us a good rate.

So what we did was to keep working on our basics and foundation as a company, and keep improving. Slowly but surely, we started to convince people that Style Degree is a company that has a future, and is one that they can trust.

On a personal level, we also had to persevere through tough times. Grit kept us going with the business -- as a startup, we had to allocate our limited resources very carefully to areas where we could maximise growth for the company, whether it was reinvesting profits into product development or building a team.



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About Style Degree

Style Degree aims to help homeowners create a happier and more organised home with their range of thoughtfully-curated home essentials. Their products are chosen and designed specifically for the needs of Singaporean homeowners, offering smart solutions for tight spaces and busy schedules.

Find out more at www.styledegree.sg.

Media Enquiries

For media enquiries, high-resolution images and information, please email sheryun@styledegree.sg.

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