

Prime News
Tangs to get makeover as it turns 80

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\$45 million revamp will take store from mass to 'a bit more premium'

TANGS is marking its 80th birthday this year by giving itself a \$45 million make-over.

The major revamp, its third in nine years and its most extensive and costly to date, will be carried out over three years.

The first phase, which begins next month at a cost of \$23 million, will see the transformation of Level 1 of its Orchard Road store into a new concept beauty floor, with the majority of brands occupying mini-shops instead of counters; and a beauty services floor on Level 7.

Other changes include the creation of a hotel-style entrance lobby, new escalators throughout, and the shifting of the east entrance near Lucky Plaza to make way for a sidewalk cafe.

Tangs is working with award-winning home-grown design firm Ministry of Design to conceptualise the look of the first phase. Work is expected to be completed by November.

When the entire revamp is completed in 2015, the store will have food and beverage (F&B) outlets on every floor, a mix of international fashion brands and up-and-coming home-grown and regional labels, and an expanded homeware department with an additional 7,000 sq ft of space and its own kitchen studio.

Tangs chief executive Foo Tiang Sooi, 58, told The Straits Times: 'The idea is to bring together a mix of merchandise, service and lifestyle experiences, to provide shoppers with the best of a department store and shopping mall experience.'

'In the last couple of years, there have been a lot of distractions in the form of new malls on Orchard Road. Now that the dust has settled, we are going to take the best of the old and the new, and redefine Tangs.'

The store is going bigger on beauty - a logical move since it is one of its key strengths. Also, in a Pax survey conducted by global market research company Ipsos, Singaporeans spent an average of US\$105 (S\$130) a month on cosmetics in 2010 to last year, up from US\$81.52 from 2009 to 2010.

Top-of-the-line skincare and make-up brands will occupy most of the 29,000 sq ft ground floor.

The sidewalk cafe, whose tenant has yet to be confirmed, will take over some of the space vacated by the existing accessories department.

The new beauty hall will feature new-to-market names such as the first Tom Ford Beauty store in Asia and Korean skincare brand Sulwhasoo, and the return of brands that had previously exited the market such as Aveda, Nars and YSL. About 20 per cent of existing brands will be replaced.

The majority of brands will occupy mini-shops, ranging in size from 248 sq ft to 1,366 sq ft.

Ms Grace Ban, managing director of Estee Lauder Cosmetics Singapore, said that the brands in her stable at Tangs will introduce new concepts to these new mini-shops, such as using iPad technology, or being able to download your make-up lesson and taking it home.

Tangs' current administrative offices on Level 7 will make way for a 7,000 sq ft beauty services floor, with the first Aveda hair salon in Singapore and a La Mer facial spa. There will be a total of eight spa operators and a lounge for Tangs VIP customers.

Levels 1 and 7 will set the tone for the rest of Tangs' new positioning, moving from mass to 'something a bit more premium... but always value for money', said Mr Foo. 'Just like Tangs Studio reached out to and created a new segment in the 80s and 90s, we're doing that by targeting an affluent and more know-ledgeable consumer by offering them something very different.'

The private-listed company's total group turnover for financial year 2011 was \$154 million, a 2.5 per cent decrease from the previous year.

Business will continue as usual during the renovation works, although the escalators on all floors will not be in service and parts of the beauty floor will be hoarded up till the end of November.

To help brands whose space may be affected during the renovation, Tangs will launch its first beauty online shop next month. More details will be released at a later date.

Dr **Lynda Wee**, adjunct associate professor in retail at Nanyang Technological University's business school, said: 'For a while, Tangs lost its focus and became very average. These changes show that it is coming back to say very clearly, 'we are going to be better than the average department store!'

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AGE IS NO OBSTACLE: Ms Lucy Lee, 71, clocks in 9 1/2-hour days, five days a week, at Tangs, dishing out fashion advice to clients. She is the company's longest-serving employee. This is her 52nd year with Tangs. Ms Lee started as a salesgirl with the company in 1961, at the age of 19. She moved on to become a supervisor and then a merchandiser. She is now a personal shopper. She was offered the chance to continue working when she retired. -- ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

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