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SHAMPOO REVOLUTION

Lynn Tan, founder of The Powder Shampoo, on doing her part to reduce plastic pollution and water scarcity with her very own line of foaming powder shampoos

CREATING A SHAMPOO REVOLUTION

Founder of locally-made The Powder Shampoo, Lynn Tan, shares how she's doing her part to reduce plastic pollution and water scarcity with her very own line of foaming powder shampoos

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Over her 20-year journey as an entrepreneur and distributor for internationally-renowned botanical beauty brands such as Phyto, Lierac and Trilogy, Lynn Tan has become more aware of the devastating impact the beauty industry has placed on the environment.

"In recent years, I've become more aware of the facts and figures of climate change. The more I read, the more I knew, the more it bothered me. I started to question the role I play in the ecosystem as a distributor, if I have been part of the problem for the past 20 years?" expresses Tan in an interview with *CosmeticsDesign-Asia*.

She adds: "There's not a lot I can do as a distributor. I don't have a say in what the manufacturers put inside the products or how they package them. I knew the only way for me to contribute was to come up with something on my own."

In 2021, over 580 billion plastic bottles were sold across all categories. The hair care industry alone produces over 120

billion units of plastic yearly and is one of the biggest contributors of single-use plastics.

What's more shocking is that only 9% of plastics are recycled globally and 12% are incinerated. In Singapore, only 4% of plastics get recycled — out of the 900,000 tons of plastic waste generated yearly — while the rest is dumped in landfills and the ocean.

The beauty industry is also a major contributor to the global issue of water scarcity, given that water tops the ingredient list in most products namely perfumes and shampoos. In fact, a bottle of shampoo contains close to 90% of water and only 10% of active ingredients.

Tan finds it very puzzling and unnecessary why shampoo would even need to be encapsulated in water when we're just going to add more water during a hair wash. On top of that, the extra water weight adds pounds to the packaging, inevitably contributing to rising shipping costs and fuel for transportation, and ultimately leading to more carbon emissions.

Worried for her children's future, the 43-year-old is resolute in doing her bit to combat



Tan: You cannot claim to be sustainable while you are still indulging in plastic packaging. You cannot claim to be sustainable if you are choosing profits as your top priority in the company.

climate change by developing a waterless shampoo in a powder form that activates with water.

A 100% vegan, powder-to-foam shampoo, The Powder Shampoo makes it easy to be kinder to your hair, scalp and the planet all at once. Its ground-breaking formulation retains the pleasurable lather and cleansing power of liquid shampoos and is also free of common nasties like sulphates, parabens, phthalates, and silicones.

A believer in the healing powers of the plants and aromatherapy, Lynn ensures that each bottle of The Powder Shampoo is formulated with over 20 botanically-derived ingredients and five aromatic and therapeutic essential oils including its very own proprietary Thyme-Capsulated.

A little goes a long way to create a rich lather better than regular shampoos. With every 100g bottle of The Powder Shampoo, you get to enjoy 100 washes — which means you save on approximately five plastic bottles of shampoo and 5 litres of water. By removing water from its formula, The Powder Shampoo eliminates the need for plastic packaging and instead, is packed in 100% reusable and recyclable aluminium bottles.

This also helps reduce carbon footprint by 90%.

Currently, The Powder Shampoo comes in four variants in bright and cheery packaging to cater to various scalp types: Strengthening & Soothing Shampoo for normal and sensitive scalps, enriched with grapefruit essential oil to purify the scalp and liquorice root to stimulate hair growth; Exfoliating & Balancing Shampoo for loose dandruff flakes, made with tea tree and white willow tree bark to remove dead skin and dirt build-up; Invigorating & Stimulating Shampoo for thinning and ageing hair, containing bergamot essential oil and ginger extract to boost circulation for optimal hair growth and ginseng to strength follicles; and Purifying & Regulating Shampoo for oily and limp hair, boosted with peppermint essential oil to balance sebum levels and unclog pores, and papaya extract to exfoliate and reduce inflammation.

With sustainability at the forefront of its philosophy, The Powder Shampoo aligns its every effort to doing good. On top of reducing plastic pollution, the haircare brand partnered with Tree Nation in Tanzania to further its positive

impact via a tree-planting initiative. With every bottle of The Powder Shampoo sold, a tree will be planted. The aim is to plant 1 million trees by 2030.

Completely self-funded and bootstrapped, Tan's initial start-up cost set her back \$500,000 which includes setting up the factory, hiring manpower, packaging and raw materials. She works with a Singapore-based chemistry lab to develop the shampoos, and another one to test the finished products.

Hoping to quickly propel her brand globally, Tan hopes to gain financial support from government-led enterprises the Green Fund. "Funding of this nature will propel The Powder Shampoo globally more swiftly so that we can fly the Singapore flag high and proud!"

The game plan for Tan is that in three years, The Powder Shampoo will be a widely-recognised hair care brand available globally via online retailers and qualitative retailers. "We would have planted over 100,000 trees by then, too," she confidently quips.

"Liquid cleansing products that are filled with chemicals, diluted with clean water and wrapped in plastic packaging have no place in our future. My vision is to revolutionise



Tan and her co-founder Judy Sharmawan at The Powder Shampoo factory in Singapore

the personal care industry with healthy and sustainable products that are good for us and good for the earth."

In this interview with Cipriani, Tan shares her journey developing The Powder Shampoo and personal thoughts on sustainability in the beauty industry.

As an industry veteran, how in your opinion has the beauty industry evolved?

I have seen two sides of the industry evolving. Firstly, I see instant greenwashing taking place more where companies attempt to portray themselves with an eco-friendly image that is untrue. For example, they claim their packaging is an innovative paper bottle to contain liquids however it is paper on the outside but lined with plastic inside. Or they claim to use recycled ocean plastic for their packaging and they spend a lot of marketing dollars to promote themselves as being green but the reality is that the amount of recycled plastic used is less than 1% of their monthly production. Or a soap bar brand that promotes itself to be green but their soaps contain chemicals that are not good for us. Another recent scandal is how beauty brands tied up with a prominent recycling company to, again, claim that they are going green but the reality is far from that and now there is a pending lawsuit on this.

To be truly sustainable, it starts from the core values and the foundations of the brand. You cannot claim to be sustainable while you are still indulging in plastic packaging. You cannot claim to be sustainable if you are chasing profits as your top priority in the company. For The Powder Shampoo, we have three core values - Plant Power (everything we formulate is botanical and clean and safe for you and the earth), Plastic Free (we will not use plastic in your packaging), Planet First (we do



Strengthening & Soothing Shampoo for normal and sensitive scalps is enriched with grapefruit essential oil to purify the scalp and supports root to stimulate hair growth



Purifying & Regulating Shampoo for oily and limp hair is boosted with peppermint essential oil to balance sebum levels and unclog pores, and papaya extract to exfoliate and reduce inflammation

no harm to the planet and we will also set aside earnings to heal the planet).

On the bright side, there are a lot of niche beauty brands sprouting out that are truly green and trying to make a real difference. And I see a lot of consumers globally making the effort to make the switch and choosing better.

I also see demand increase throughout the entire supply chain, including packaging suppliers — who supply materials for online delivery packaging — to source and create sustainable packaging options. Raw ingredients suppliers are also creating clean and green ingredients that are free from nasties and cruelty-free.

How have you as a consumer shop differently now?

For the past few years, I have made some switches seamlessly. To name some examples: I use reusable cotton pads, for example, to remove makeup. I switched to laundry strips, no more powder or liquid detergent. The major one personally has to be switching to period panties so my two daughters and I have not been buying or using sanitary napkins for over two years. We use a 10-litre pail in our shower so that we can fill up our water inside to use for each shower. This helps us to monitor the amount of water we use each day. And 10 litres is more than sufficient. When we go out to buy food home, we will always take our containers with us for them to use to fill up and not bring home more plastic containers.

How do you feel being the owner and creator of your very own beauty brand?

The Powder Shampoo was cre-



Incorporating & Stimulating Shampoo for thinning and aging hair, contains bergamot essential oil and ginger extract to boost circulation for optimal hair growth and growing to strengthen follicles



Exfoliating & Balancing Shampoo for laser deoxidant flakes is made with tea tree and white willow tree bark to remove dead skin and dirt build-up

ated from a deep provocation within me as a business leader to harness my experience and know-how to create a ripple effect that will start the winds of change and break out of the mould we are so accustomed to. It feels extremely fulfilling when I receive positive feedback on The Powder Shampoo and how their scalp and hair is so much better after using it. This makes the entrepreneur's arduous journey all the more worthwhile.

As a manufacturer, are there difficulties going green?

Sourcing the right partners for machines, packaging and raw materials partners with the same vision and integrity is not easy. There are also limited choices of truly green partners I can work with too.

What technology does it use — is it like laundry detergent?

It is not difficult because powder wash is nothing new. Facial washing powders have existed for about a decade, hence this technology is not new. The concept that it lathers is the same as a powder detergent but The Powder Shampoo is a vegan, clean formula, unlike most detergents. We use a unique mild, sulphate-free, quaternary surfactant derived from coconut and is biodegradable.

What were some challenges in making a powder shampoo?

Finding the right balance between all the botanical ingredients we want to include and the essential oils we use. We went through numerous changes to reach the final formula.

Aside from saving water, what are some of the manufacturing benefits of creating waterless shampoos?

Without water, the weight of the shampoo is 100g versus 1 litre of shampoo, hence you save space and carbon footprint for shipping. Also, our 100g shampoo gives you 100 washes, while 100ml shampoo gives you 10 washes. Hence more value for money, too.

You will notice that similar foaming powder washes are sold in 40g — 50g packaging because that will mean the consumers will have to purchase more frequently. As a sustainability brand, we take an ethical and a moral approach in our business and we care for the consumer and the environment alike.

While consumerism focuses solely on profits, sustainability focuses on a morally just and ethical approach, caring equally for the consumer, the environment, and the producers. The Powder Shampoo is here to break that time balance. ■



The Powder Shampoo uses a unique mild, sulphate-free, powdered surfactant derived from biodegradable coconut