

# Cartier

## WOMEN'S INITIATIVE



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2019 FINALIST FOR EAST ASIA

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### CLAIRE YAN

#### Cobbler's Suggest - CHINA

[www.dongxie.com](http://www.dongxie.com)

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#### IF THE SHOE FITS...

A busy entrepreneur-about-town in her 30s, Claire Yan was tired of damaging her heels in Shanghai's urban jungle and not having access to a decent shoe repair service. Where once you could have found a little cobbler's shop in every neighbourhood, today Shanghai's high commercial rents and gargantuan shopping malls have forced older artisans out, replaced by fashion boutiques and... shoe shops! With China's expanding economy, the market has shifted to a more consumerist approach. “People stopped valuing the services of good cobblers, preferring to throw shoes out and buy a new pair instead,” says Claire.

In step with the desires of urban shoe lovers and their penchant for exclusive models they'd rather keep, Claire has launched a shoe repair business for the 21st century: Cobbler's Suggest. A few clicks on the app and a personal delivery service will pick up your shoes and whisk them to the proprietary repair site in the suburbs of Shanghai, where a team of skilled shoe artisans set to work saving them. Once completed, the shoes are hand-delivered back to your door, with top quality and no stress or fuss.

## A WELL-HEELED SOLUTION

Having co-founded a successful digital marketing business, Claire knows that quality is the key to success. Her business caters to the Chinese wealthy classes and their love of luxury shoes – a market which was set to grow by over 20% in 2018. Ferragamo, Jimmy Choo, Roger Vivier... the luxury brands sent to Cobbler's Suggest read like a Christmas wish list. The company offers high-grade services such as changing the soles on Goodyear welts and even erasing the damage caused by dog bites. With 18,000 shoes already fixed since going live in June 2016, in late 2018 Cobbler's Suggest also launched a luxury handbag repair service.

For Claire, combining digital modernity with traditional craftsmanship is the answer to safeguarding livelihoods in a valuable profession, while ensuring a younger generation receives training to uphold their craft. But there are environmental benefits as well. With Statista figures ranking Chinese footwear sales at over 2 billion pairs per annum, that's a lot of shoes that could find themselves in landfill. Once seen as one of the world's dumping grounds, China is waking up to the issues of waste management and Claire wants to do her part to help.

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## THE FOOTWEAR LIFE-CYCLE FROM TOP TO TOE

With repairs running well, Claire saw new openings through B2B applications. “Once you are in your business, you see more opportunities, you take them, and your business model starts to evolve,” she notes. Her company has started to offer services to major e-commerce players to handle shoes in large quantities. It is also set to open a consignment facility for re-sale of quality luxury goods, approved and certified by her trusted label. Once achieved, Claire's business will cover the entire life cycle of luxury shoes.

**“Society needs to stop looking at gender difference and start to focus on what people are actually doing.”**



### INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELATIONS

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