

# YOUTH



**Left:** With years of work experience in clothing factories, Xu Yajun knows the industry inside out. **Center and right:** Xu's video series *Made in China* takes a close look at the manufacturing industry, such as a wig factory in Xuchang city, Henan province, and an electric guitar business in Changle county, Shandong province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Five years ago, when Xu Yajun quit his job as an agent of a talent management company in Beijing, he started taking videos of himself and talking about topics related to clothes.

It's not a foreign territory for the 30-year-old. Xu was born in Jiaozuo, Henan province, and moved to Dongguan, Guangdong province, at the age of 6 with his parents, who worked at a clothing factory.

Xu dropped out of middle school and worked at a clothing factory in Dongguan for four years. He learned about making clothes, especially sorting out different fabrics and knitting, both handmade and by machine.

"I know clothes very well. So when I decided to launch my own social media platform and make short videos, I started with shooting programs that I am good at," Xu says.

"From the feedback of viewers, I learned that many people don't know the process of making clothing and they have no idea what the industry is about, which inspired me to make more videos."

In the beginning he mainly evaluated the quality of different clothing brands in his videos, which built him a fan base on video-sharing and livestreaming platform Bilibili.

In late 2017, he traveled to Hangzhou, capital of Zhejiang province, to take a video of the burgeoning e-commerce business there.

When he visited the city's Sijiqing clothing market — one of the country's largest wholesale and shopping areas for clothing, Xu found many social media fashion influencers went there to shop.

He also visited nearby clothing factories and interviewed many workers and owners.

"Unlike white-collar workers working in bigger cities like Beijing,

Shanghai and Guangzhou, who are paid monthly, these workers are paid by the number of clothes they make every day. They would love to work extra hours to make more money," Xu says.

He once interviewed a couple in a clothing factory, who worked 14 to 15 hours a day, seven days a week.

"Besides the clothes and online influencers, I want the viewers to see more about what's behind the story," he adds.

Xu posted the video on Jan 2, 2018, on his Bilibili channel, which has been viewed over 5.7 million times. It also became the first video of his series of videos, titled *Made in China*, a hit on social media.

In the past three years, Xu has visited over 20 factories across China to take videos and do interviews about the country's manufacturing industry.

*Made in China* includes about 30 videos, each running from 10 to 30 minutes. Now, Xu has nearly 1 million followers on Bilibili.

"The videos don't look glamorous but are compelling and thought-provoking. They portray things in a simple way, which involves us closely in those workers' daily lives," comments one netizen.

Another viewer comments: "I buy things every day but I have never seen what happens in a manufacturing plant. It's interesting to picture that a wig made by a woman in a factory in an unknown town in

## A cut above the rest

Online series on clothing and manufacturing centers across the country proves to be an unlikely hit, **Chen Nan** reports.



"I believe that in 10 years, China's manufacturing industry will be changed by these young people."

**Xu Yajun**, host and producer of short video series *Made in China*

Henan province may be bought by someone living on the other side of the world."

When asked if the filming was welcomed by factory owners, Xu says "sure".

"There were lots of discussion before we actually started shooting. The factory owners were very cooperative because our videos will help them to be known by more people and ultimately bring new opportunities for their businesses," Xu says.

"Every single person we filmed had to give us the OK to hang out with them, and then we had to build trust and relationships with everybody."

He traveled with one photographer and another person who took care of postproduction.

Besides the scenes inside factories, they also captured lives around them by shooting restaurants and entertainment venues nearby. One such place Xu visited was a small town called Tangwu in Changle county in Shandong province.

The town is home to more than 100,000 people and over 10,000 work directly or indirectly in the production of electric guitars.

Their products are sold worldwide and the yearly output is about one-third of the total number of

electric guitars produced in the country.

"One of the workers, a middle-aged man, told me that his favorite band is Red Hot Chili Peppers from the United States and his favorite song is the band's *Don't Forget Me*," Xu says. "Isn't it amazing?"

He also visited villages in Henan, where people make wigs and snow boots, and Caoxian county in Shandong, which is a center for the manufacture of performance costumes.

He says many of the factories are run by families, usually husband-and-wife teams. The younger generations are well-educated and they have returned to their hometowns to work in family businesses with their open vision and new knowledge.

"I believe that in 10 years, China's manufacturing industry will be changed by these young people," Xu says.

He has seen many changes in the industry, especially domestic consumers' increasing support for products by Chinese enterprises.

"I realized that Chinese buyers, the younger generations in particular, are open to buying products made by Chinese enterprises. They embrace brands with quality and concept rooted in Chinese culture," Xu says.

"It's a great change, which motivates Chinese companies to bring out better products."

Now, Xu is working as a "bridge" to connect students of Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology with clothing manufacturers. Students are paid to contribute their ideas to the factories, from designing, making clothes to marketing.

"Hopefully, the collaboration will benefit both sides," Xu says.

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## Palestinian woman sets example by recycling glass waste

RAMALLAH, Palestine — Rawan Rajab, a young Palestinian woman from the West Bank city of Tulkarm, has always strived to be creative and that is why she started turning the glass waste into eco-friendly building stones.

The 22-year-old woman came up with the idea when she witnessed how broken glass waste injured many children in her town and she thought about how she could help her neighbors get rid of the waste without getting hurt.

"I decided to turn that waste into colored building stones that would

be used for decorations of homes, restaurants as well as some offices," says Rajab, who is also a student of interior design at a Palestinian university.

However, establishing such a project was not an easy task, especially as she did not have enough money to launch it. To realize her dream, she approached the nongovernment Palestinian Agricultural Relief Committees that ended up funding her project.

First, she collects the glass waste from the debris of houses, streets and surrounding areas, or that she buys

from local children, whom she wants to educate about waste recycling. After she gathers enough glass waste, she begins the process by grinding it to powder. Then she puts the mixture into a small machine that turns it into white sand. After that, she mixes the white sand with regular sand, water and other material and then pours everything into iron molds.

Rajab says she began the project because she tried to connect her passion for the environment and her university studies with a source of stable income.

She says she hopes to use the

project as an opportunity to arouse public awareness about the need to recycle waste and encourage young women to take a more active role in society.

Rajab is still facing a number of difficulties. The research, the experiments and the production processes are arduous. She also needs to promote her products in the market, which is equally difficult.

But that is changing, especially after her hometown started exerting efforts into preserving the environment and bought big quantities of stones from her. Rajab makes 2

square meters of colored stones daily, while the price of 1 square meter is about \$15. But she says she hopes to get more money to help her expand the project in the future.

"I am so happy as I have become famous in the West Bank and receive many demands from my clients, not only from my town but also from other governorates in the West Bank," Rajab says. "The only thing we must have is our belief in ourselves, as well as our ideas and strive to achieve them."

Firas Fhamawi, the project coordinator at the Palestinian Agricultural

Relief Committees, says Rajab's project received significant attention from society for its pioneering role in preserving the environment.

The association assists pioneering projects in the West Bank and Gaza, targeting women from 19 to 29 years old by providing financial assistance, training or marketing, Fhamawi adds.

He calls on Palestinian women to undertake pioneering projects in an attempt to enhance their role in the society.

XINHUA

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