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HOME DECOR IS GOING DIGITAL FOR MILLENNIAL HOMEOWNERS

YES, MILLENNIALS ARE BUYING HOMES. BUT THEY'RE RETHINKING THE WAY THEY DECORATE THEIR SPACE, AND DIGITAL-FIRST STARTUPS LIKE CLARE ARE READY TO HELP...

Marketing for home goods brands is more important than ever as Millennials increasingly fly the coop. That's right. We've told you that Millennials aren't just living in their parent's basements or spending all their money [on avocado toast](#). Instead, thanks to the generation that's growing up and learning how to adult, the homeownership rate for 2017 was up for the first time in 14 years, according [to the Wall Street Journal](#), with households headed by someone under-35-years-old seeing the highest uptick. And if that's not convincing enough, just take it from Trulia's chief economist: "This is happening because young households are buying homes. Full stop."

As more young people move into their own homes, the home decor industry is seeing a boost—in fact, we found in our [Home Sweet Home trend](#) that Millennial homeowners looking to deck out their spaces spent an average of over \$10,000 on home furnishings in the past year. How can companies make sure they get a piece of that? One way new brands are setting themselves apart is by taking the now-well-trod path forged by Warby Parker. It feels like there's a direct-to-consumer option for almost every industry now, and home decor is getting its own digital spin. While kitchenware has seen a slew of new startups arise to fill this niche—[Curbed](#) reports that Material, Made In, Misen, and more all hope to become the "Warby Parker for the kitchen." But even the traditionally in-store ritual of shopping for paint is getting the direct-to-consumer treatment.

While paint has a few major players taking most of the market (think: Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams), startup Clare could break in with their online-friendly option. Clare is bringing paint-buying online for a new generation of homeowners, who they say are "spending more time at home and really wanting their homes to feel stylish and personalized." Nixing the need to peruse through thousands of paint swatches in-person, the company instead uses a quiz to narrow down their 55 swatches to a handful of paint stickers that can be pressed onto walls. After a color is chosen, the paint, along with all the necessary materials for painting, arrive on users' doorsteps.

We spoke with Nicole Gibbons, the founder of Clare, to learn more about the budding company, the direct-to-consumer model, the importance of social media, and more:

Ypulse: What sparked the idea for Clare?

Nicole Gibbons: As an interior designer building a career in the design world, I wanted to create a brand that would help people everywhere make their homes beautiful—but also truly solve a problem. Paint and color is such an important part of the design process, but shopping for paint has always been a huge hassle. There are thousands of colors, too many product lines, the store environments are completely uninspiring, and there's also a lack of design guidance throughout the process. I didn't want anyone to ever have to sort through a confusing and endless sea of paint chips again.

YP: Fast Company called Clare the [“Warby Parker for paint.”](#) Do you agree?

NG: I think Warby Parker has built a really strong brand and there are certainly some parallels in how they took a product that was painful to shop for in a traditionally unsexy category and created a fantastic experience. We live in a world where convenience rules and the old way of paint shopping isn't rising up to meet consumer expectations. At Clare, my goal is to completely reimagine the paint shopping experience, creating a whole new model where we're the go-to paint brand for everyone who wants to make their homes beautiful.

YP: Why do you think the direct-to-consumer model appeals to young consumers?

NG: I think younger people would rather spend their time doing things that are more meaningful than going back-and-forth to the paint store. With a focus on convenience, curation, simplicity, and experience, we have taken a product that used to be painful to shop for and made it easy, accessible, and fun. Our interactive Color Genius tool is like having the interior designer you've always wanted to help you pick a paint color, and there is design inspiration and guidance throughout the entire experience. No existing paint brand offers a simplified, convenient, curated shopping experience that's respectful of a customer's time.

YP: How do you build hype for your brand?

NG: As a brand focused on home, we know people want ongoing visual inspiration, so channels like Instagram and Pinterest are perfect vehicles through which to deliver beautiful imagery, how-tos, and other inspiration. We're also building meaningful connections with our audience online and that conversation and community is really helping to build brand loyalty.

Nicole Gibbons, Founder of Clare

Nicole Gibbons is an entrepreneur, interior designer, blogger, and on-air personality who is currently bringing her professional experience to life as the founder of Clare. Nicole has been featured in top media outlets such as *HGTV* and *Good Morning America* and has appeared on the Emmy Award-winning *Home Made Simple* on OWN. Nicole grew up the daughter of a decorator and a child of the MTV Generation, and spent more than a decade working in the fashion industry before embarking on a career in design. She finds just as much inspiration on the Fashion Week runways and in the sartorial choices of her favorite pop culture icons as she does from design history, the arts, architecture, and her world travels. Originally from Michigan, Nicole earned her undergraduate degree from Northwestern University and lives in Manhattan.

This interview has been edited and condensed.

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