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HP Mini Limited Editions: an America's Hottest Brands Case Study

By [Beth Snyder Bulik](#). Published on November 16, 2009.



Hewlett-Packard wanted to target women consumers for their computers, but it knew that meant more than just covering an existing PC in a hot pink plastic case.

So marketing executives contacted couture clothing designer Vivienne Tam and asked for her opinion. And when she told them she saw it as a fashion accessory, not a computer, they agreed -- and gave her complete control over

its design. The original HP concept, in fact, was meant for a larger laptop computer, but when Ms. Tam saw the HP Mini netbook, she seized on the smaller PC as the perfect form factor for her "digital clutch" design.

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And when Ms. Tam was finished, the Vivienne Tam HP Mini had soft corners, keys that felt like a piano, champagne-colored metal and a gleaming lacquer exterior decorated with Ms. Tam's spring 2008 peony floral design "Double Happiness." She designed the computer first, and then the clothing line.

"No tech company has ever addressed this market with great authenticity," said Satjiv Chahil, senior VP-global marketing at HP. "Other efforts have been about making products pink. ... This is a total fashion design, not an industrial design."

The marketing campaign, created with HP's agency Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, focused on events and public relations instead of traditional advertising. The specialized Mini debuted on the runway during Ms. Tam's presentation at New York Fashion Week, and it went on to star in showcases at fashion weeks in India, Tokyo and Beijing. Condé Nast included customized ads across its portfolio of magazines and gave it premier placement at its Teen Vogue concept store. The Mini was not sold at Best Buy, but rather at fashion retailers such as Macy's and Neiman Marcus, and online.

The Vivienne Tam Mini was originally forecast as a limited edition but demand, and output, pushed the run to special-edition status. The netbook sold five times more than the original forecast, and it sold out inventory completely in five months. The next Tam Mini, just announced this fall, will debut in the spring with a butterfly lovers theme.

The success of the Tam Mini has spawned the next version as well as this fall's 3D Mini design, by European designer Studio Tord Boontje, and it has inspired other limited editions such as the music aficionado notebook, HP Envy Beats, created with Interscope Records and Dr. Dre, announced in October.

Another departure for the limited Minis is that development costs aren't part of the research and development budget but considered a marketing expense.

"These are not products with a marketing program, these are in fact marketing tools," said David Roman, VP-marketing communications, HP.



Satjiv Chahil, senior
VP-global
marketing, HP

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