

BRANDING

New tidings

Blackberrys chalks out aggressive expansion plans



They started off doing what they understood best. Two decades hence they are still doing the same, which is the reason behind this brand's growth and success. Blackberrys (the flagship brand of Delhi-based Mohan Clothing Co) one of the first few Indian brands to have entered the men's formal wear space, has come a long way from where it started out in 1991, in a small 500-sq-ft office-cum-factory in Kotla.

This year, the company is celebrating its completion of 20 years in the industry. "Today, we believe we have a sound foundation for the brand - a strong distribution and retail network, product portfolio, brand positioning and so on," says Yogesh Tiwari, vice-president, sales & marketing, adding that they are looking to harness their strengths and take a quantum leap this year onwards.

"The B towns are our clear focus and we will be looking at our growth coming in from these," says Nikhil Mohan, MD, Blackberrys. Echoing a similar sentiment, Tiwari says that the aggressive growth for brand India is expected to be equally shared

Tiwari focusing on staying ahead

by the young business entrepreneurs residing in smaller cities and the Tier I knowledge workers; hence, the focus on representing the power dresses.

At the moment, Blackberrys is present in more than 900 stores (multi-brand outlets) across the country and the number is expected to go up as it penetrates into smaller towns. It is also planning to increase company-owned outlets from the current 124, by launching another 40 stores during the course of the year.

While the company started with making and retailing suits and trousers, its product portfolio has diversified culminating in dress line trousers, khakis, shirts and jackets. While this has been its forte, the brand is also moving towards a 'solutions' based approach. "Today, even within their work sphere, men are opting for different looks - be it a big meeting, a regular work day, interviews, client meetings, etc. Gone are the days of a 'standard suit'. Thus, we are thin-lic-

ing occasions, coming out with product ranges that offer fabrics, colours, cuts and silhouettes, which should enhance consumption, as that has a product implication," says Tiwari.

Theme-based collections

The brand has also been coming out with theme-based collections twice a year. In 2007, the company added accessories to its portfolio - bags, belts, wallets, cufflinks and knitwear. "However, we aren't treating accessories as a business in that sense," says Tiwari. "But rather as something that complements the existing product range." The women's range, however, which the brand introduced in 2007 had to be axed, as gains were not significant. "We were spending almost 20 per cent of our time on this segment and it didn't pan out the way we expected," says Tiwari.

The company is investing in doubling these suits and trousers capacity, and will scale up at a later stage. The recently installed facility which is a 22,000-sq-ft plant will also aid in the manufacturing of suits and jackets. The plant produces about 500 units per day, 1,200 formal trousers and 1,500 casual trousers per day. Investments will also spill into brand building efforts, as well as increase in ad spends. The company may look at increasing its exports to countries in the SAARC and Gulf region later.

"You could say that our growth has been meticulous, well-planned and aggressive," says Tiwari, while commenting about the change that has taken place in the retail industry and how organised retail became a game changer for the market.

The company has been growing at a year-on-year growth rate of 65 per cent. And it is now looking at a turnover of Rs 50 crore by FY13, from the current turnover of Rs 30 crore.

While competition is stiff (Dockers, Calzedonia and Zudio being some), Blackberrys is confident of its prospects. "The biggest challenge perhaps, is to keep innovating. And our focus now will be on how to stay ahead of the game," he concludes.

