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'RICH ASSORTMENT, LOCALIZATION AND PRIME LOCATION MAKE PETER ENGLAND AN ASPIRATIONAL GLOBAL BRAND'

In this feature in our ongoing series on 'How to Build Global Brands from India', we talk to **Manish Singhai, COO, Peter England** about the brand replicating its India success in global markets and what it takes for an Indian brand to acquire global appeal

With a retail footprint of over 600 stores in more than 750 cities in India, coupled with a presence in international markets across the UAE and several SAARC countries, Peter England is truly a brand which has succeeded at both the local and global level. Launched in India in 1997 by Madura Fashion & Lifestyle with the promise of delivering international quality, value-for-money offerings to young men in the early years of their career, Peter England has today diversified its offerings with a complete range of smart and stylish wear for all occasions including formals, semi-formals, casuals, wedding and ethnic wear, party wear, shoes and accessories.

With a tagline that boldly declares "Be Everything You Love", Peter England has come to be known for its many innovations which include wrinkle-free shirts, trousers with adjustable waistbands, Aqua Tech thermos-regulatory shirts, N9 antimicrobial odour-resistant jeans and Oxyjeans (which save 80 litres of water per garment). According to Manish Singhai, COO, Peter England, this attribute of always striving to be 'fashion right' is what makes it an aspirational global brand. Secondly, the brand appeals to the first ten years of an individual's work life. "More importantly, we offer complete wardrobe solutions to our customers, who get to select from a host of designs. At Peter England, a customer will find about 120 designs within one of our best collections. Thus, the brand doesn't just offer clothes, but also an assurance that its customers are always fashion right and are prepared for any occasion," he adds.

Talking about what it takes for a brand to achieve global appeal, Singhai says that it is imperative to first understand the needs of a customer in a targeted geography. The next crucial step is to establish an affinity towards the brand effectively through the right marketing strategies. "For example, a marketing campaign which may have won you reach in the Indian market, may not have similar results in Dubai, due to different tastes of the Indian diaspora there. Thus, the local tastes and dominant preferences need to be

Q What are some of the key marketing strategies for Peter England which have led to its success at a global level?
A Our global marketing strategy is very clear. We have to capitalize on the presence we have in these markets. This entails setting up stores at prime locations within malls. The need for focused advertising to attract the right TG; in this case, the Indian diaspora, is also significant. Moreover, offering a complete look to our customers is imperative. Peter England offers a rich wardrobe assortment for all occasions including shirts, trousers, suits, blazers, denims, t-shirts, casual blazers, shoes, and accessories. Thus, a customer gets to choose from a complete ensemble at one stop.

Q Which are the markets outside India in which Peter England has performed particularly well?
A Peter England is largely present in the Middle East and SAARC countries. It has stores across Sri Lanka, Nepal, Dubai, Doha, Kuwait and other UAE countries. The brand has also opened over 50 shop-in-shops in several Middle Eastern and SAARC countries.

Q What next for Peter England? Which are the new markets where the brand hopes to enter in the near future and what would be the key marketing strategy to take it forward?
A We are exploring new markets beyond the countries in which we have a significant presence. We are also trying to understand the target customer group, the local culture, taste and dominant preferences in various countries. Accordingly, we will work on our plan of merchandise assortment, as well as marketing strategies, to ensure the brand gets an impactful entry into new markets.



studied in-depth." He continues, "While tastes and consumer preferences may differ from country to country, a considerable amount of work needs to be done before we plan the assortment for the targeted customer group. Hence, we strategize campaigns accordingly to adapt to the sensibilities and personas of that group."

Being a melting pot of cultures definitely gives India the expertise to cater to different types of consumer groups in India and globally. "People from different States have varied tastes, cultural differences and rich variety in their dressing styles. This experience helps us address global consumers with great efficiency. We master the art of finely blending the local taste with global appeal," remarks Singhai. Similarly, when marketing to a particular country, the Indian experience helps in understanding the nuances of that market and tweaking the brand offerings, accordingly. Thus, it is all about replicating the learnings from India and using that experience for the global market.

One challenge for Indian brands is the low availability of real estate, because of which the cost of retail space is quite high. Thus, for an Indian brand which does not command a premium, it is challenging to operate in a market where the cost of real estate is exorbitant. Secondly, the marketing investments for addressing consumers who may not be familiar with the brand, can also be expensive. This necessitates creating brand awareness right from scratch. Thirdly, the platform for communication is also different in various countries. Some countries are Outdoor heavy, some are Print heavy, and yet others are Digital heavy, and hence media spends have to be managed accordingly.

That said, there is definitely a shift in perception of homegrown brands today versus a decade ago. Singhai claims that all homegrown fashion brands have now become global in nature, being inspired by Milan, London and Paris. So the flavour which comes with these brands is also international. However, there is usually a season's lag before a new collection comes to India from international markets. "This is because the adoption of those trends in India takes time. Even if we decide to adopt them and push our supply chain for the same season, most consumers might still not go for it. They get inspired by what's happening in the western world. That is how trends are adopted at the consumer level. So with one season lag, we are as good as any global brand," he concludes.

As told to Beryl Menezes