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MENSWEAR MANDATE

IMAGES BoF conducts a research to understand the dynamics of the Indian menswear market.

Market Watch
INFORMALLY FORMAL
Decoding the definition of formal corporate dressing.

My Thoughts
IT'S ALL ABOUT RETAIL
Ishwar Chugani, ED,
Giordana Middle East, talks
consumer focus

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The Indian textile and apparel market has witnessed tremendous growth over the last few years. The entry of so many international brands has boosted the economy while introducing the Indian consumer to the concept of affordable luxury. The apparel retail market stands at approximately ₹1,54,000 crore with an optimistic projection of CAGR growth of 11 per cent by 2020. Of this menswear as a category forms the lion's share with 43 per cent market share.

When I look back even some years ago I am amazed at the way men's clothing has evolved. In the days of my youth what constituted for men's fashion was only a limited choice of trousers – be it colour or cut – and maybe a slightly wider selection of shirts. Today, it's an accepted fact that fashion changes every six months irrespective of male or female. Man is giving stiff competition to women when it comes to fashion. Pink is no longer effeminate...embroidered clothes no longer remains in the domain of womenswear. And fashion is not governed by age; it's more about attitude. We see brands and designers rushing to fill this growing demand.

Coming at a time like this the government's imposition of 10 per cent excise duty on branded apparel is like cold water dousing. Already since March this year apparel sales have downslided by about 20 per cent. Not surprising because margins are under tremendous pressure. Whose court is the ball in?

Our July issue of *IMAGES Business of Fashion* is dedicated to menswear. The team worked with NIFT to find out what the fashion-conscious Indian male wants. Read to understand your customer better and gain an insight into the average man's wardrobe.

Amitabh Taneja

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have a
lasting
impression!



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It's All About RETAIL



TALKING ABOUT
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE
AND CONSUMER FOCUS
ISHWAR CHUGANI,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- GIORDANO MIDDLE
EAST, STATES THAT IN
THE CURRENT RETAIL
SCENARIO RETAILING
NEEDS TO BE UPFRONT,
STRAIGHTFORWARD,
RELEVANT, FUNCTIONAL
AND AFFORDABLE.

In the retail business customer focus is the new mantra. Change is here; dwelling on past practices will mean that you will miss the future. The world of retail is incredibly competitive, with customers becoming increasingly inundated by the various lines, styles and brands available and every retailer vying to get a substantial slice of the market pie.

Now, more than ever, retailing needs to be upfront, straightforward, relevant, functional and affordable. Customers will buy from someone they can trust, someone knowledgeable, someone who can actually deliver what is promised. While you may see some people rummaging through the myriad choices in the mall for individual items, most will not have the luxury of time to stay long, and they get confused. People instinctively turn to the familiar; brands and outlets that they know will give them what they want and need.

Many retailers tend to think that store ambiance and product distinction gives them the advantage over their competitors. But with today's technology, it is possible to match competitors' product feature by feature. What will really set you apart is customer interaction. In practice, economy is more about how you sell something than what you actually sell. Forget about product distinction. Today's retail market is short on the "distinct experience" – create one and you create an instant relationship with your customers.

Customers are truly loyal to the experiences they prefer. Your loyal customers return because the experiences you create are preferable to those delivered by your competitors. The experience that your brand offers is yours alone and that will provide you with a true competitive advantage.

Customer experience today has also been taken to a different level – in the virtual world. The brick and mortar store concept of course remains a major force, but a strong presence online matters – be that online selling or by merely connecting with customers through social media. How you use the social media can actually spell the difference for your brand. Operationally, leveraging online formats and the use of the social media can not only cut costs but can also contribute to the business growth.

Knowing your customers also provides you with the ability to offer them products and a service level that they are always on the lookout for. Understanding how to better communicate your brand image to the customer is also key. The customer is KING – this is as true today as when the phrase was first coined.

Nothing will turn a shopper off more than rude or pushy salespeople, long lines at the checkout and items without tags or prices. And shoppers will not complain about these issues. It's just too much hassle and they can't be bothered to waste

A New Beginning



AFTER MAKING WAVES WITH THE BRAND BIBA, THE FORMER CO-OWNER SANJAY BINDRA HAS RE-VENTURED INTO THE INDIAN ETHNICWEAR MARKET WITH HIS NEW BRAND CHRISTENED SEVEN EAST. BINDRA SPOKE TO NIVEDITA JAYARAM PAWAR AND PARVATHY GOPALAKRISHNAN ON THIS NEW CHAPTER IN HIS LIFE.

After having founded BIBA and taken it to such heights, what plans do you have for Seven East?

This age is all about re-engineering. With Seven East, I can build a bigger, better brand. If you look at our clothing line in terms of our price points and mix, it's more about lifestyle. I did not have resources when I launched BIBA, but I have it now. And I don't just mean financial resource but also the relationship with developers and mall owners. At the end of the day it is all about encasing the value. Fundamentally, the experience at BIBA has helped a lot as I now know what not to do.

Who is the target consumer and what is price range?

Our merchandise is for a modern woman who's looking for a change and an experience. There is a particular aspiration value to the clothing. So,

if the price and the product is right, you're home. In India, woman-centric is not a branded business, it is a product business. Therefore, the product will decide the consumer. There might be established players in the market but if my store experience is better and my product is far exciting from price and design point of view, then they go with that. Also, I think the consumer is now looking for a change. We have three categories. The first is SKD (salwar kameez dupatta) which is ₹1,299 to ₹7,000. The unstitched dress material ranges from ₹800 to ₹8,000. The mix and match range starts from ₹599 onwards and the bottoms are of ₹299 onwards.

What has been your experience so far?

In two months, I've have been able to have presence in Shoppers Stop across India. We have unstitched as well as readymade garments We are going 30-40 per cent higher than the industry trade. That is because of the positioning and the product. I don't think I could have asked for a better response.

What according to you attributes to the success of a brand?

I think it's the distribution network that determines the success of a product. A brand ultimately is a product and a distribution story. How you distribute the product depends on how much money you make, which further depends on the number of investors coming in. It's all inter-related because at the end of the day you're creating wealth. I've created a certain amount of wealth for myself,



THE INDIAN MENSWEAR MARKET HAS EVOLVED TO BECOME ONE OF THE PRIME CATEGORIES. MALE CONSUMERS HAVE BECOME MORE FASHION SAVVY, BRAND-CONSCIOUS AND STYLISH, MAKING WAY FOR MENSWEAR BRANDS AND DESIGNERS TO CATER TO THE GROWING DEMAND. IMAGES BOF IN ASSISTANCE WITH NIFT CONDUCTED A SURVEY TO ANALYSE THE DYNAMICS OF THE INDIAN MENSWEAR MARKET.



MENSWEAR MANDATE



Informally Formal

DECODING THE DEFINITION OF MEN'S CORPORATE DRESSING WHICH HAS UNDERGONE A SEA CHANGE IN THE RECENT TIMES. BRANDS AND DESIGNERS ARE ALSO FOCUSING ON MORE RELAXED AND COMFORTABLE WEAR WHILE CONSUMERS ARE ALL SET TO BE EXPERIMENTAL.

By Aakriti Agarwal —————

The wardrobe of Indian men at large has always been synonymous with simplicity. Formalwear was primarily dominated by black and grey trousers, mostly white and blue shirts and checked or solid coloured suits. The concept of casualwear is a more recent phenomenon and it offers denims, tees, slim-fit T-shirts, trousers, et cetera. However, over the past few years there has been a shift in the menswear fashion trends. Designers and brands have realised that the potential in the menswear category and they are offering merchandise with a lot of variety, innovation, creativity and style just as in womenswear.

India has been witnessing a social, cultural and political shift since 1990 and the country's demographic profile is largely of youth, with 270 million people falling in the age bracket of 13 to 24 years and half the population below the age of 40 years. The composition of the population along with many other factors has evolved the men's formalwear category, where the choice of clothes has become more flexible, relaxed and experimental. Increasing global exposure with people travelling across the world and international labels flooding into the Indian market have given consumers a lot more choice and fashion awareness. The world has become a global village with communication networks



Stitching Luxe

BOGGI MILANO, A LEADING ITALIAN MENSWEAR LIFESTYLE BRAND, HAD ENTERED THE INDIAN MARKET IN 2008. CREATING A Foothold IN ITS SEGMENT BOGGI HAS EXPANSION PLANS IN ITS PIPELINE. ANAND NAIR, BRAND HEAD, BOGGI MILANO, IN TALKS WITH IMAGES BOF.

Boggi Milano, an Italian classic menswear brand, was launched in India in December 2008 with its first outlet in Delhi. The brand entered the country with a 70:30 partnership in favour of DLF Brands. The company wanted to get labels into the India retail market which were family-focussed with high fashion quotient.

Positioned as an affordable luxury brand, Anand Nair, the brand head of Boggi Milano, says, "DLF Brands have added Boggi Milano to its portfolio

with the aim to fill the gap in the luxury brand segment." The brand offers a 360-degree solution to men's wardrobe. The accessories offered by the brand are belts, bags, perfumes, wallets, pocket squares, cufflinks, footwear, et cetera, which are manufactured and imported from Italy. The USP of the brand, Nair says, is the fact that all products are of Italian design. Boggi Milano imports all its garments from Europe and the fabric used is specifically Italian. He also informs that all decisions regarding designing, fabric selection, quality check, et cetera are made at its headquarter in Milan.

The brand's Indian collection is same as its international market and

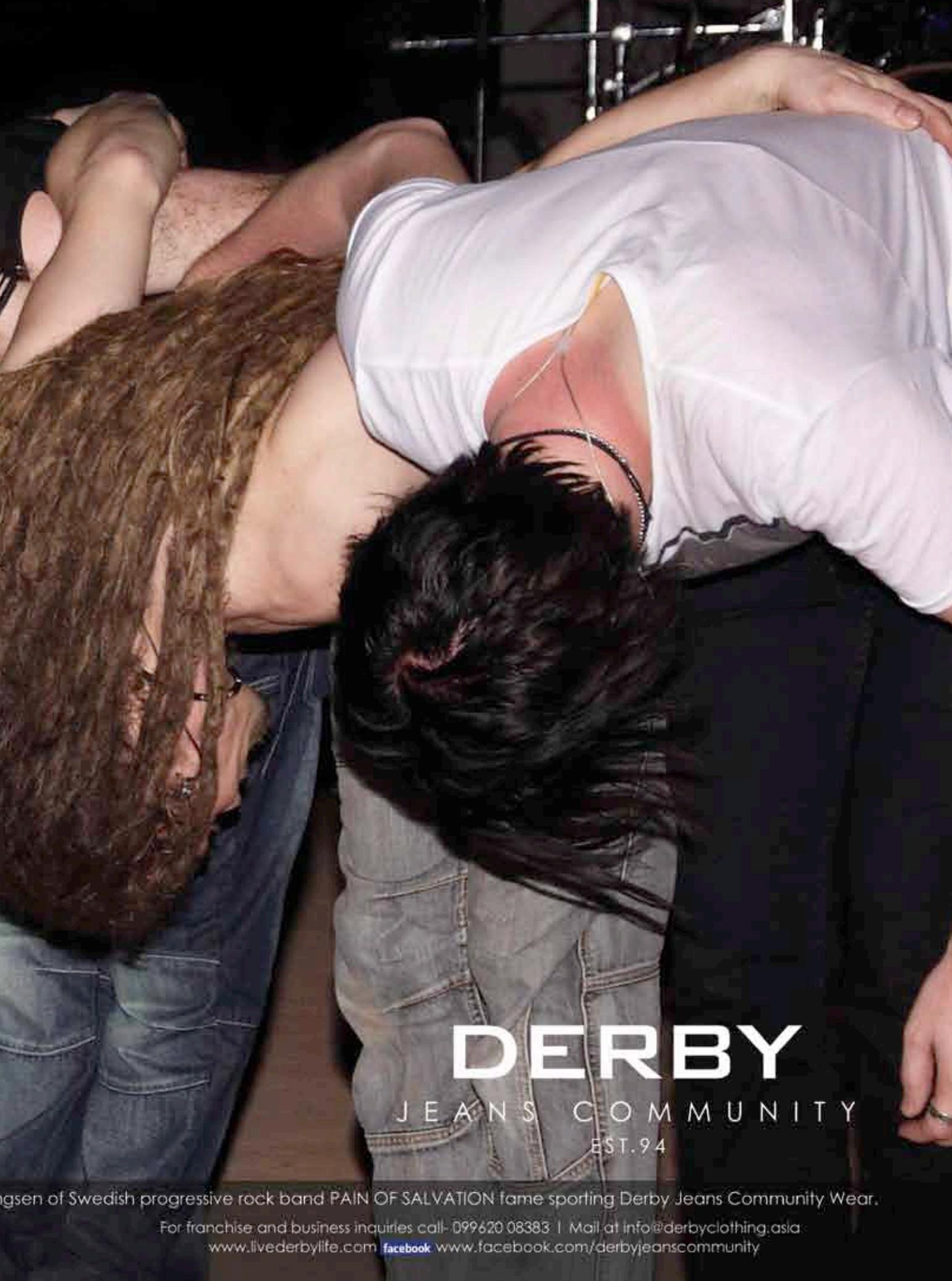
it maintains uniform design, style, colours, et cetera across the globe. Citing an example, Nair explains that micro checks are in trend this season along with structured, unstructured and printed shirts. "We also get the collection almost at the same time when it gets launched in Milan unlike other brands where the lead time is usually more." The brand's Spring Summer 2011 collection is inclined towards a more casual-contemporary look with focus on pastels, blues and greens and has been categorised under Blue level, Black level and the Resort collection.

He says, "The sports inspired Resort collection is getting a good response

Legendary Leathercrafts

PUDUCHERRY-BASED HIDESIGN HAS GROWN INTO A GLOBAL BRAND KNOWN FOR ITS ECOLOGICAL VALUES, QUALITY AND DESIGN. **DILIP KAPUR**, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, TALKS ABOUT HIS LOVE FOR CRAFTING LEATHER AND CREATION OF THE BRAND.

It's a different story for Hidesign, a premium accessories brand that started in the year 1978 as a two-man workshop which included Dilip Kapur, Founder and President and one artisan. The idea behind the name of the company formed was hide (leather) and design with "de" in shadows. Later it was integrated into one word and became Hidesign. The brand was launched in India much later in 1999. While still pursuing his studies in the United States, Kapur interned with a leather factory for a few months. And during this short stint he realised his love for leather, which became his lifelong passion. "Hidesign was born out of the need to be distinct from the uniformity and limited options of the accessory market. It was almost like giving shape to my instinctive aversion to painted, patented leathers that lose all semblance of naturalness," says Kapur.



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