

From 'Fashion Forecasting' to 'Value Engineering' for Leather & Leather Products

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Abstract: Leather has emerged as a fashion product. Colour, texture and other highlights add to the fashion values of creatively designed leather products. These add significantly to the value realization from leather products. Nations like India have remained in the backyard of fashion world in Europe for long. If India were to emerge as a strong global player in the world leather trade, all efforts to take proactive measures to be ready with the fashion leathers when the fashion does emerge, is crucial.

In a globalizing economy, design is being perceived as a new engine of economic and industrial growth. Design and breakthrough innovations can play a pivotal role in positioning of Indian Leather and Leather Product industries in the global arena apart from enhancing competitiveness. Design and brand driven value chain need to be developed as core strengths of Indian Leather Products manufacturing industries. India also needs to aim to be a leading influencer of global design and must have a focused multi-pronged strategy to enhance the quality and spread of Indian designs and to increase India's share in the world economy through this major value addition.

Success in being able to work with high-end customers requires building design capabilities that enable us to offer exciting collections that can compete internationally.

Key words: Leather, Design, Colour, Texture, Innovation

DISCUSSION:

1 Travel of India in 'fashion forecasting' for leather



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1.1 India at MODEUROP!

India is a member of MODEUROP since 1994. CLRI and CLE jointly hold the membership.

1.2 What is MODEUROP?

MODEUROP is an International Institution founded in 1960 in Zurich / Switzerland by the most important institutions of the leather and footwear industry.

MODEUROP forecasts fashion and trends in Leathers, Colours and Materials for the International market, three seasons ahead.

1.3 Winning Colours

Getting one Indian colour into the MODEUROP Colour Card in 1994 was a matter of prestige. Today, we have almost 70%-80% of the colours chosen, featuring from Indian proposals. The challenge and opportunity today is to capitalize on the winning colours and translate them into fashion products.

The potential of INDIA was recognized and it was conferred with the Presidency of MODEUROP recently.

The official MODEUROP Colour Cards are now 'Made in India' with suitable acknowledgements to the contribution of CLRI/CLE as well as to the contributing tanners; thereby enhancing the marketability of Indian Leather in International markets.

2 From 'concept to 'value engineering'



The footwear branch of the Indian Leather Sector has been largely addressing itself to the middle segment of the global footwear pie. The time to move up the value chain has come. Italy, Spain and to a lesser extent Brazil have witnessed a near cessation of manufacturing activities in this sector due to various reasons. China has largely been a volume player with dominance in the lower segment of the market. By virtue of its image, it represents the bulk of the low value product range.

The world footwear markets are dynamic. While there is stagnation vis-à-vis China and a decline in manufacturing in Europe, the hub of manufacturing now shifts eastwards with India having a golden opportunity to cash in on this global shift. India has been known to manufacture reasonable quality products for leading international brands and this gives it a head start in capturing a larger market share in the world footwear trade.

However, while quality has been reasonable it has to be upped to meet the quality standards of the manufacturing countries it is seeking to replace viz. Italy and Spain. A lot of attention would have to be paid to honing 'Design' capabilities, introduce technologically advanced tools to aid in the design process and to develop 'merchandizing' expertise amongst our product design teams in the footwear companies.

While one school of thought advocates an increase in volumes to achieve the value target set by the turn of the decade another school encourages achieving the target by means of greater value realization from the products. This merits closer scrutiny as we already have an exposure to manufacturing quality products but we would certainly need to focus on Product Development with emphasis on Design, Engineering, Quality, Styling and Construction. 'Merchandizing' would be another crucial area of attention and synergies would have to be built with international agencies to master this art.

Addressing these issues would give our manufacturers a major edge over the competition.

3 Conclusion

In the realm of International marketing of fashion related products, advance information relating to changing trends is a major business advantage. The leather industry of India has realized the importance of fashion forecasts to be able to cater to the buyers with original materials / products in leather.

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