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## BALANCING TECH INNOVATION WITH THE TIMELESS TOUCH OF HUMAN SERVICE



**T**he retail landscape has transformed remarkably over the past decade. As we enter a new era where the customer experience is getting redefined, it's evident that their journey now begins online, merging seamlessly with in-store experiences.

Today, technology and digitization are at the forefront of this change, and our industry is evolving faster than ever. The unprecedented 19% growth in sales last year is a testament to our resilience and adaptability. Retailers are adopting practices that create great experiences across channels.

Amidst this rapid technological progression, let us not forget the heart and soul of retail - our dedicated workforce. As we embrace AI for hyper-personalisation or tap into the emerging trends in smaller towns, the commitment and adaptability of our people takes new avatars. This human touch will continue to differentiate us in a digitally evolving market.

Customer experience will be at its peak as personal attention, and digitisation converge to create seamless retail.

To a fruitful journey ahead!

**Kumar Rajagopalan,**  
Chief Executive Officer, RAI

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## LULU GROUP ANNOUNCES MASSIVE EXPANSION; TO LAUNCH MALL AND HYPERMARKET IN HYDERABAD



**H**yderabad, India, is set to welcome its first Lulu Mall and Lulu Hypermarket as the UAE based retail giant, Lulu Group, ventures into the state of Telangana. Yusuff Ali MA, the Chairman of Lulu Group, made the announcement during a press conference in the city.

The opening of the mall and hypermarket follows several discussions and an MOU between Lulu Group and the Telangana Government during the Industry Minister KT Rama Rao's visit to the World Economic Forum in Davos last year.

The initial project in Hyderabad forms part of a substantial Rs. 500 crore commitment that the Lulu Group pledged to the state of Telangana. An investment of Rs. 300 crore has gone into converting the previously known Manjeera Mall into the expansive Lulu Mall. The mall, spread over 5 lakh sq. feet, is expected to bring an international shopping experience to the residents of Hyderabad and surrounding areas, creating employment for over 2,000 people.

The Lulu Mall, set to open its doors in August

2023, will also feature over 75 local and international brands, a 5-screen cinema with a seating capacity of 1,400, a multi-cuisine food court, and a children's entertainment centre.

The Group's future endeavours also entail the establishment of an agricultural sourcing and logistics hub near the Hyderabad Airport. This move is designed to facilitate exports and promote local Telangana produce both domestically and globally. There are also plans to set up a seafood procurement and processing centre to bolster the local fishing industry.

Hyderabad marks Lulu Group's sixth Indian city of operations, following Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram, Bengaluru, Lucknow, and Coimbatore. The retail conglomerate, with its 250 hypermarkets and 24 shopping malls across 22 nations, is known for its significant presence in the Middle East and North Africa region and has been rapidly expanding in India. The Lulu Group, employing over 65,000 people from 42 nations, boasts an annual turnover of USD 8 billion globally. 😊

## UCLEAN TEAMS UP WITH MYNTRA IN UNIQUE CAMPAIGN



**U**Clean, India's largest laundry and dry-cleaning chain, is thrilled to announce its strategic tie-up with Myntra. This collaboration marks a significant milestone in the evolution of the fashion industry, particularly from the perspective of the laundromat sector. Both UClean and Myntra have joined forces to create an end-of-season sale that aims to positively surprise customers while fostering a new wave of brand collaboration.

The collaboration between UClean and Myntra began with the creation of catchy taglines and engaging campaigns, which customers loved and eagerly reshared on social media. This resulted in an unprecedented level of attention and traction. Customers not just benefiting from the collaboration but are also becoming passionate advocates. They positively surprised others and shared their experiences online.

The tie-up between UClean and Myntra exemplifies a new era of collaboration, where brands join forces to create unforgettable experiences for customers. As the fashion and laundromat industries continue to evolve, this partnership stands as a testament to the power of unity and customer-centric innovation. 😊

## REVITALISED CROSSWORD BOOKSTORE OPENS AT MUMBAI'S GROWEL'S 101 MALL

**I**n a promising development for book lovers, Growel's 101 Mall has re-launched its Crossword Bookstore with a fresh new design and expanded merchandise selection. The refurbished bookstore occupies a sprawling 1200 sq. ft. on the mall's second floor.

Offering an expansive range of genres, the new Crossword Bookstore also presents a plethora of eclectic stationery items suitable for office and school use. Customers can browse through a varied selection of merchandise from fiction and non-fiction to business & management books, kids' books, young adult novels, toys & games, stationery & gifts – including art supplies, writing equipment, premium pens, and more.

The bookstore's makeover puts a strong emphasis on customer experience, providing more choices for book enthusiasts and enriching the shopping experience for children with increased options for learning materials and activities. Along with the revamped retail space, the store plans to host book reading sessions and interactive workshops for kids, featuring hands-on activities designed to ignite imagination and curiosity.

In a bid to boost the vacation experience for families, the store is also introducing a wide array of travel guides, novels, and activity books. With back-to-school season approaching, the bookstore's enticing offerings are sure to attract students and parents alike. 😊



## MEN'S APPAREL BRAND SNITCH REPORTS 250% GROWTH; VENTURES INTO MEN'S JEWELLERY



**M**en's apparel brand Snitch reported a 250% surge in growth from Rs 44 crores in FY 2021-22 to Rs 120 crores in FY 22-23, boasting a healthy EBITDA profit margin of 6%.

In an aggressive expansion move, Snitch has forayed into the emerging men's jewellery category, supplementing its existing portfolio which includes fragrances. The company's objective is to reshape the men's fashion landscape across India. Snitch has also announced plans to penetrate the offline retail market with its first exclusive brand outlet (EBO) in Bengaluru, scheduled to launch in July 2023.

Crediting its success to its commitment to world-class trends, niche designs, and sustainable styles, Snitch reported over 1 million orders in the last year alone. Impressively, 55% of its sales came through its mobile app, which saw 1.5 million downloads in FY 22-23. To cope with this exponential growth, Snitch plans to nearly double its workforce from 100 to 180 employees by FY 2023-24.

Siddharth R Dugarwal, CEO & Founder of Snitch, shared his vision for the brand's future. "Our company has experienced an acceleration of growth over the recent years, and we are committed to maintaining this momentum. Our mission is to transform the men's fashion industry, capitalizing on fast fashion trends that truly differentiate us from our competitors. We anticipate even larger opportunities for Snitch in the next financial year, and we are prepared to seize them," he said.

The brand's dynamic growth and potential have not gone unnoticed. Snitch recently made a splash on Shark Tank India, securing a deal with all the judges who committed Rs.1.5 crore for a 1.5% equity stake. This investment, coming from industry veterans including Anupam Mittal of Shaadi.com, Aman Gupta of boAt, Namita Thapar of Emcure Pharmaceuticals, Vineeta Singh of SUGAR Cosmetics, Peyush Bansal of Lenskart, and Amit Jain of CarDekho Group and InsuranceDekho, further attests to Snitch's promising journey ahead. 😊

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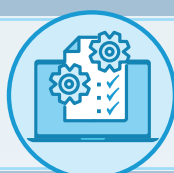
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## RAI DELEGATION HOLDS CONSTRUCTIVE MEETINGS IN WEST BENGAL AND TELANGANA

In a series of high-profile meetings, a delegation from the Retailers Association of India (RAI) met with state officials in West Bengal and Telangana to discuss various operational issues facing the retail industry.

In West Bengal, the RAI delegation had a productive meeting with Shri. Barun Kumar Ray (IAS), Additional Chief Secretary of the Labour Department, and Smt. Sharmila Khatua, Labour Commissioner of the state. The delegation presented the possibility of granting 24x7 operational permissions for businesses in the state. Responding to the suggestion, the Hon'ble Secretary asked the Labour Commissioner and other officials present to study the proposal in depth.

Ray assured the delegation that he will consider allowing 24x7 home delivery services for restaurants and Quick Service Restaurants (QSRs). The meeting concluded on a positive note, promising further discussions and negotiations on the proposal.

In a parallel development, the RAI delegation also met with senior officials in Telangana. The meeting was chaired by the Additional Chief Secretary of Telangana, Mr. Rakesh Singh, and attended by Dr. S Selvakumar (IAS), Principal Secretary



of the Commerce and Industries Department, Government of Karnataka, along with officials from the Industry Department and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP). The delegation highlighted the challenges faced in obtaining trade licenses, focusing on the complexities of the current application process.

The RAI representatives argued that despite the application process and fee payment being online, retailers are still compelled to make multiple visits to the BBMP office to secure their licenses. They advocated for a more streamlined system, wherein an applicant would not need to physically visit the BBMP office if all required documents were

in order and the applicable fees had been paid.

Furthermore, the delegation pointed out the inflexibility of the current portal, which lacks amendment features. They explained that in the current system, if any changes such as applicant details or premises area need to be made, the license has to be surrendered and a fresh one applied for.

Mr. Rakesh Singh responded positively to these concerns, assuring the delegation that he will consider their suggestions seriously.

Further updates from these meetings are expected to be communicated by the Retailers Association of India as discussions continue. 🌱



## RAI SUCCESSFULLY HOSTS ADVOCACY WORKSHOPS IN KOLKATA AND MUMBAI

**T**he Retailers Association of India (RAI), known for its efforts to elevate standards within the Indian retail industry, recently organized two successful advocacy workshops aimed at enhancing industry knowledge and skills.

The first event, an “Interactive Workshop on Mastering Contract Drafting, Trademarks & Music Licenses,” took place in Kolkata on 18th May 2023. The workshop was a success, with around 20 participants attending, offering a chance for industry professionals to learn, network, and expand their skills. Feedback from the participants indicated that the event was informative and well-received.

In June, RAI continued its educational initiative in Mumbai with a “Certificate program in laws relating to Retail in India”. This event, held on 21-22 June, attracted 31 participants. The program was designed to educate attendees on the legal aspects of retail in India, covering an array of topics vital for anyone involved in the industry. The program was highly commended by the participants, with RAI receiving excellent feedback.

These workshops are part of RAI’s broader efforts to promote industry knowledge, professionalism, and best practices within India’s retail



sector. RAI’s commitment to continuous learning and development is helping to raise industry standards and foster a more informed and effective retail workforce.

The successful outcome of these workshops further demonstrates the value of such industry-focused education initiatives and underlines RAI’s role as a leading advocate for the retail industry in India. 🌱

## BIS ESTABLISHES NEW QUALITY CONTROL ORDERS FOR FOOTWEAR

The Director-General of the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), Sh. Pramod Kumar Tiwari, announced new Quality Control Orders (QCOs) for the footwear and textile industries in a media briefing held today. These orders, laying down strict benchmarks for quality, are aimed at ensuring the availability of high-quality products to consumers.

Tiwari announced that the QCOs would cover 24 footwear products under categories “Footwear made from leather and other materials” and “Footwear made from all polymeric and all rubber materials”. Implementation of these QCOs will be mandatory from 1st July 2023 for manufacturing, importing, or selling these products. For five standards revised recently, manufacturers will be given a further grace period up to 1st January 2024 to comply.

Small-scale and micro-scale industries will receive additional leeway, with compliance dates set for 1st January 2024 and 1st July 2024, respectively. This move aims to ease the burden of compliance for these industries and support their growth.

To assist the industries in achieving these standards, test facilities have been set up in two BIS labs, two Footwear Design & Development Institute (FDDI) Labs, the Central



Leather Research Institute (CLRI), and 11 private labs. Furthermore, the government has announced an 80% cut in testing charges for certified start-ups and micro industrial units.

BIS has also issued the Geo Textiles (Quality Control) Order, 2023, and the Protective Textiles (Quality Control) Order, 2023. These orders, applicable from 10th October 2023, bring 19 Geo Textile products and 12 Protective Textile products under mandatory BIS certification.

A ‘Public Call Facility’ initiative has been launched to make the process of standardisation more inclusive. This platform invites viewpoints, feedback, and suggestions from all stakeholders, leveraging modern communication technologies to drive a more robust and in-

clusive standardisation process.

In addition to these initiatives, BIS has launched the Manak Rath, an online exchange forum for mentors and students of Standards Clubs. The initiative aims to foster a culture of quality among students, transforming them into brand ambassadors of quality.

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) delegation attended the meeting chaired by the Honorable Minister Shri Piyush Goyal. Details of the QCOs issued by BIS for the Footwear industry can be accessed here.

The new QCOs highlight the government’s commitment to enhancing product quality, protecting consumer interests, and fostering a culture of excellence in the Indian manufacturing sector. 🇮🇳



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## SEPARATE LIMIT FOR BIG CHAIN HYPERMARKET UNDER ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES

In a significant development for large retail chains, the Government of India has taken into consideration a request from Retailers Association of India (RAI) for separate stocking limits of essential commodities in big chain stores and depots.

The move, if implemented, could significantly ease operational challenges for large retailers, particularly in the face of unforeseen demand surges or supply chain disruptions.

The RAI has consistently advocated for larger retailers serving exten-

sive consumer bases, arguing that the current stock limit of 5 metric tonnes (MT) for big hypermarkets is inadequate. The association proposed that a retail store with a size of 10,000 square feet should ideally have a stocking limit of 15 MT for essential commodities.

This plea from the RAI represents the interests of many big retailers who, due to their wide consumer base, can face difficulties in maintaining adequate stock levels under the current regulations.

The Government of India's notifi-

cation regarding the consideration of the RAI's request can be viewed here. Further details on RAI's submission to the government can also be accessed here.

The revision of these stocking limits would not only improve the operating conditions for larger retailers but also ensure a steady supply of essential commodities to consumers, particularly in periods of high demand.

RAI and the wider retail community are awaiting further information on the government's final decision regarding this important matter. 😊

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## MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS DIRECTS RETAILERS TO RESPECT CONSUMER PRIVACY

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has issued directives, emphasising the importance of consumer privacy during transactions. In a move aimed at protecting consumers' personal data, the Ministry has clearly stated that retailers should not take consumers' mobile numbers without their explicit consent during the sale of goods or services.

This action by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs resonates with growing concerns about privacy and the



misuse of personal information in the era of digitized transactions.

The Ministry's advisory also included samples of grievances that had been registered by consumers.

These cases underscored the intrusive nature of mandatory data collection during retail transactions, reinforcing the need for the new directive. 😊

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## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WORKSHOPS LAUNCHED IN MUMBAI AND BENGALURU



**A** unique and innovative customer experience workshop titled 'Learn How to Boost Customer Happiness using NPS' was conducted successfully on the 12th of April in Mumbai and the 18th of April in Bengaluru.

The workshop, primarily focused on the NPS (Net Promoter Score) system, aimed to offer insights into the creation of customer-centric strategies, best practices surrounding NPS, and understanding the platform's impact on business returns, loyalty, and customer experience. It also offered guidance on how customer experience associates can influence their company's design of a customer experience score using the NPS methodology.

Dr. Jacqueline Mundkar, renowned for her expertise in customer experience management, led the workshop. She delved into the complexities of the NPS platform, discussing its impact on the ROI of retail businesses.

The workshop was well received with participation from over 50 individuals representing approximately 15 organizations, including Croma (Infiniti Retail Ltd.), Welspun India Ltd., Raymond Limited, Welspun Global Brands Ltd., Metro Brands Ltd., Spykar Lifestyles Pvt Ltd., Reliance Retail-VF, Kaya Ltd, Multiplier Brand Solutions Pvt Ltd., Landmark



Group – Max, Sangeetha Mobiles Pvt Ltd, Titan Company Limited, and Celio Future Fashion Pvt. Ltd.

Workshop attendees expressed their appreciation and highlighted the value they obtained from the workshop. Vaishali Thakkar, Lead Customer Service Delivery – VAS at Croma (Infiniti Retail Ltd.) praised the event stating, "Sessions were insightful, mainly learning how metrics are useful in our daily life in terms of driving the customer experience for the organization. We thank RAI for conducting this workshop."

Riya Ramu, Assistant Manager at Welspun India Ltd., appreciated the interactive nature of the workshop and its practical takeaways, commenting, "One of the best takeaways is understanding what kind of NPS would be relevant to my brand and its visibility. The session was engaging and interactive. We appreciate RAI for organising this session."

The success of this workshop underscores the importance of continual learning and innovation in improving customer experience and business success. 😊



## FSSAI'S FOOD SAFETY SUPERVISOR TRAINING GAINS TRACTION

In response to the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India's (FSSAI) mandate requiring all food retailers to undergo Food Safety Training & Certification (FoSTaC), hundreds of food business operators across the country have participated in the required training sessions.

The FSSAI notification stipulates that all Food Business Operators holding either a Central License or State License must have at least one trained and certified Food Safety Supervisor for every 25 food handlers or part thereof, on all their premises.

FoSTaC is a comprehensive training program designed for food businesses across the value chain, ensuring they adhere to all the food safety practices mandated by FSSAI. Upon successful completion of

the programme, participants receive a certification issued by FSSAI, thereby validating their compliance with food safety standards.

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, FSSAI has resumed offline FoSTaC sessions. From April to June 2023, a total of 12 sessions were conducted under the category of 'Retail and Distribution' in various locations across India. The training saw enthusiastic participation, with approximately 326 participants attending these sessions.

The successful resumption of offline training and the widespread participation underscore the commitment of India's food industry to adhere to the highest safety standards, ensuring consumer safety and trust. 😊

## RAI AND IGNOU TEAM UP FOR ANOTHER BATCH OF BBARL

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) and the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) have launched a groundbreaking new program, the Bachelors in Business Administration (Retailing) or BBARL. This is the first-ever graduate program in retailing through distance learning, designed to bridge the gap between academia and industry.

The BBARL is a three-year course that aims to equip students with a robust understanding of the retail industry. As part of their coursework, all students will be required to complete a minimum three-month internship, providing them with a first-hand experience of the retail industry's challenges and opportunities. This practical aspect of the program is expected to balance out the theoretical knowledge imparted

during the course duration.

A series of meetings for the Course Design and Development Committee took place on June 19, 20, and 21 in Mumbai to finalize the curriculum for the program's third year. This committee, made up of subject matter experts and industry leaders, has worked diligently to develop a curriculum that incorporates relevant topics, practical experiences, and emerging trends in the retail sector.

The Committee has ensured that the programme remains aligned with the evolving needs of the retail industry. Through their expertise and commitment to excellence, the Committee members have designed a comprehensive program to prepare students for successful careers in the retail sector. 😊

## SIGNATURE STORE OPERATIONS WORKSHOP FINDS SUCCESS IN AHMEDABAD AND CHENNAI

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) has recently conducted its signature workshop, 'Excellence in Store Operations' (ESOps), in Ahmedabad and Chennai with resounding success. The ESOps workshop, known for its focus on enhancing performance through the optimization of retail operations, was conducted for the first time in Ahmedabad on April 26, followed by Chennai on May 25, 2023.

The workshop has been designed around four critical areas - managing profitability, in-store visual merchandising, local store marketing & catchment area analysis, and understanding buying and merchandising & inventory management. This comprehensive approach provides participants with a broad understanding of retail operations and strategies for optimization.

Both instances of the workshop saw participation from 67 employees representing around 15 organizations, including Kanchi Supermarket, Titan Ltd, Vivek Pvt Ltd., Naidu Hall, Reliance Retail Ltd, Woodpecker Furniture, Inc5 Shoes Pvt Ltd, Jade Blue Lifestyle India Ltd, Kkeen Consultancy, and Raymond Ltd. Other attendees included representatives from Timezone Entertainment Pvt Ltd., among others.

The sessions were facilitated by esteemed industry veterans Sathish Bhat, Senior Vice President Operations & Sales at Specsmakers, Pawan Nagarwal, a Visual Merchandising and Experience Design Expert, and V Rajesh, a recognized Retail & Shopper Behaviour Expert. Their collective expertise contributed to an engaging and informative workshop experience.

The testimonials from participants were overwhelmingly positive. Denzil Joseph, Regional Retail Manager at Raymonds Ltd., expressed his gratitude, saying, "Sessions were very helpful and I am truly



thankful to RAI for this wonderful workshop. I have learned how to apply theories into real-life situations, which will help both front-end and backend teams to grow."

Echoing Joseph's sentiments, Abhimanyou Dhiver, Manager at Timezone Entertainment Pvt Ltd., noted, "We gained a lot of insights related to operational excellence, how visual merchandising and operation work in collaboration. We also learned about people management and handling inventory effectively. Thank you for the insightful sessions."

The ESOps workshop's success underscores RAI's commitment to elevating the retail sector by providing high-quality educational and professional development opportunities. 🌱

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We look forward to the 2024 Show, which will showcase all of the newness and innovation that this industry offers on an annual basis."

— **DEREK MILLER**, *President & CEO,*  
*International Housewares Association*

"I have been to the Show multiple times and each time it inspires me more. I like the consistency of the strategic focus on the experience that the global brands and products offer, keeping the customer in the middle. What makes it unique is also the educational content and engaging sessions by industry experts. In the emerging age of experience-driven economy, this is a big advantage. This show is uniquely positioned to play a pivotal role in bringing forth the global ecosystem of retailers, manufacturers and brands in the new normal."

— **SHALINI TANDON**, *VP, Sourcing and*  
*Brand Management, Nykaa Fashion, India*

With any questions, please contact the Show's representative in India, CK Retail Consultancy:

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For more information and to register for your FREE entrance badge, please visit [TheInspiredHomeShow.com](https://TheInspiredHomeShow.com).



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# A LEGACY CONTINUES: ILLUMS BOLIGHUS OSLO WINS 2023 GIA GLOBAL HONOREE AWARD



**F**rom humble beginnings in Copenhagen in 1925 to a renowned legacy today, Illums Bolighus continues to inspire customers with its unique retail experience. The Oslo store of this up-market department chain, known for its minimalist Nordic flair, recently won the esteemed gia Global Honoree award for 2023.

Established by Danish entrepreneur Kaj Dessau and Swedish designer, Illums Bolighus revolutionized the retail experience by creating immersive environments in which customers could envision the life they could lead. The store introduced the concept of presenting products in curated ensembles resembling theatre sets, allowing customers to visualize their homes with the showcased items.

The Illums Bolighus chain, re-named in 1941, now graces Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Germany. The award-winning Oslo store is famed for its grandeur - from the dazzling chandelier suspended from a sky-lit circular ceiling to the



timeless pendant lights illuminating the lounge areas and hallways.

Customers visiting Illums Bolighus are encouraged to immerse themselves fully in the experience, with every department thoughtfully decorated to inspire conversations about products and styles. Each season or occasion is celebrated with thematic table settings, aroma diffusers, and music, alongside convenient cash points for easy purchases.

Window displays follow four themes each year, showcasing wed-

ding designs in February, a sunny appeal in April and May, a warm indoors vibe in September, and extravagant Christmas decorations in October.

Despite its classic appeal, Illums Bolighus embraces modernity. The gia expert jury praised its “full-universe shopping experience,” recognizing the seamless integration of in-store, online, and digital media experiences. In-store technology includes QR codes for information on displayed products, purchase points for direct home deliveries,



and screens featuring videos, campaigns, and news.

Alongside its physical presence, Illums Bolighus maintains its exclusive aura through its digital presence, mirroring its in-store color-coding on its website and social media channels. The brand also publishes a 100-page digital and print catalogue for customers, filled with unique photography and endless home furnishing ideas.

In-store events are another highlight, with the “No.1” loyalty club members treated to wine and food tastings, workshops, art exhibitions,



beauty consultations, and more. The staff are considered a key element of the store’s success, with a focus on career advancement, comprehensive training, and rewards.

The gia (IHA Global Innovation Awards) organized by The Inspired Home Show and the International Housewares Association (IHA) recognizes excellence and innovation in home goods retailing. The Inspired Home Show 2024 will take place in Chicago from 17-19 March 2024. 🥰

*For more information about The Inspired Home Show 2024, taking place in Chicago on 17-19 March 2024, and to pre-register for a free Show entrance badge, please visit [TheInspiredHomeShow.com](https://TheInspiredHomeShow.com).*

# CONSUMER-CENTRIC APPROACH VITAL FOR HOME AND HOUSEWARES INDUSTRY SUCCESS, SAYS IHA REPORT

The home and housewares industry, having experienced unprecedented demand during the pandemic, is currently facing a significant turning point. Suppliers and retailers are grappling with how to maintain customer engagement, address rapidly evolving needs, and inspire purchases amidst challenging economic times, according to the International Housewares Association's (IHA) 2023 Market Watch Report.

This report, based on the IHA Market Watch Survey, highlights key insights about consumer behavior and purchasing patterns in the post-pandemic world, focusing on five major driving factors: wellness, time, space, experience, and responsibility. It presents vital data and analysis and offers strategic recommendations for product developers and retailers in 2023.

Of the five factors, wellness emerged as the top priority, with



81% of respondents identifying it as very or somewhat important to their daily lives at home. Following wellness were time (19%), experience (14%), space (11%), and responsibility (9%).

As the world shifts towards post-pandemic normalcy, consumers reported feeling the pressure of time. With people returning to

offices and kids back to school, the desire for more time or resources to save time was expressed by 70% of the respondents.

Space is another key issue. Even though people are not as cramped as during the pandemic, permanent remote work arrangements and a newfound understanding of the impact of living space on wellbeing

have led to a renewed desire for affordable and easy ways to update their living areas.

Experience-seeking is also on the rise, with consumers eager to create new at-home experiences such as meals, social gatherings, or replicating paid activities like going to a spa or movie theater, driven by limited out-of-home activities due to the ongoing economic climate.

Furthermore, the report highlighted the growing concern among consumers about corporate social and environmental responsibility, a trend partly driven by the global



community sense created during the COVID-19 pandemic and consumers' increasing awareness and education. Approximately 67% of respondents claimed they're socially/environmentally conscious at home, either often or sometimes.

The IHA Market Watch Report, first launched in 2023, is part of IHA's commitment to aiding retailers and suppliers in connecting with consumer lifestyle trends and values that will drive success. The report was conducted by CivicScience from Dec. 13-20, 2022, among 2,800 - 3,400 adults. 🍷

*For a full read of the 2023 IHA Market Watch Report, visit [Housewares.org/market-watch-2023](https://housewares.org/market-watch-2023).*



# RAI JOINS FEDERATION OF ASIA PACIFIC RETAILERS ASSOCIATION TO INCREASE COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION



**R**etailers Association of India (RAI) was invited to attend the FAPRA Joint HOD & ED Meeting 2023 held in Ayutthaya, Thailand organised by Federation of Asia Pacific Retailers Associations (FAPRA), and hosted by the Thai Retailers Association (TRA). Eleven (11) countries who are mem-

bers of FAPRA represented by their Heads attended the meeting.

Retailers Association of India (RAI), represented by Kumar Rajagopalan (CEO of RAI), was inducted as a full member by the Executive Council. The onboarding of RAI on FAPRA will provide RAI members an exposure to first hand learnings and

support in the APAC retail market.

Speaking about the development, Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO, Retailers Association of India (RAI), said, "We are thrilled to announce that the Retailers Association of India (RAI) is now a member of the esteemed Federation of Asia-Pacific Retailers Associations (FAPRA). We

believe that this membership signifies a new chapter of increased collaboration, information sharing, and growth for Indian retail at large. We now aim to collaborate and cooperate to bring in the best practices across the region.”

Dr. Chatrchai Tuongratanaphan, Vice President, Thai Retailer Association, said,

“We are pleased to welcome the Retailers Association of India to the Federation of Asia Pacific Retailers Associations (FAPRA) This is a significant development in the growth and evolution of the retail industry in the APAC region. India’s remarkable retail growth, characterized by the rapid proliferation of both online and offline platforms, along with a swelling consumer base, presents a unique opportunity for all of us to learn, adapt, and grow. Their experience in managing this growth, and harnessing it in innovative ways, is something we are keen to understand and learn from,”

“Simultaneously, the inclusion of RAI into FAPRA provides a platform for us to share our insights and learnings, derived from our respective markets. It presents a two-way street for knowledge and idea exchange that could help shape the future of the retail industry in the Asia Pacific region.”

“As we embrace the diversities in our retail landscapes, we also celebrate the common goal of providing

the best for our consumers. We are confident that this collaboration will be mutually beneficial, stimulating progress, innovation, and sustainable growth across all our retail sectors.” Dr. Chatrchai Tuongratanaphan further added.


Evelyn Salire, Secretary-General, Philippine Retailers Association, expressed, “We are happy to welcome the Retailers Association of India into the Federation of Asia Pacific Retailers Associations (FAPRA). This is a step forward in promoting collaboration and exchange of ideas within the retail industry in the APAC region. India, with its vast young population, holds enormous potential and new opportunities for the retail sector. This young demographic represents a dynamic, tech-savvy, and evolving consumer base that can be a catalyst for innovation and growth in the retail industry across Asia Pacific.”

“Furthermore, the inclusion of RAI in the FAPRA strengthens our collective capacity to share best practices, learn from each other’s experiences, and foster an environment that encourages innovation. We believe that through open dialogues and consistent collaboration, we can navigate the challenges of the retail industry, foster sustainable growth, and contribute to the betterment of the retail landscape in our region. We look forward to the unique perspectives and fresh ideas that our colleagues from India can

share. More power!” Evelyn Salire further added.

The Federation of Asia Pacific Retailers Associations (FAPRA) is the premier group of the national associations for retail in the Asia Pacific having about 18 economies in APAC to date, including the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, China, Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand, India, Sri Lanka, Fiji, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan. The FAPRA welcomes retail associations and chambers of commerce representing the retail sector in APAC countries to join as members. FAPRA aims to promote information exchange and discuss issues for the development of commerce, retailers and improvement of citizens’ lives. For more info [www.fapra.net](http://www.fapra.net)

#### **ABOUT RETAILERS ASSOCIATION OF INDIA:**

Retailers Association of India (RAI) is the unified voice of Indian retailers. RAI works with all the stakeholders for creating the right environment for the growth of the modern retail industry in India. It is a strong advocate for retailing in India and works with all levels of government and stakeholders with the aim to support employment growth and career opportunities in retail, to promote and sustain retail investments in communities from coast-to-coast, and to enhance consumer choice and industry competitiveness. 

# REVOLUTIONIZING DIGITAL COMMERCE THROUGH THE POWER OF OPEN NETWORK

**T**he Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) stands at the intersection of technology and commerce, seeking to create an expansive and inclusive marketplace that will significantly impact the way we buy and sell goods and services. This ambitious undertaking seeks to offer a platform where consumers with diverse expectations can find their ideal products and services, parallel to the scope found in the physical market, be it five-star hotels or less luxurious options.

The vision for ONDC is predicated on establishing a diverse digital market governed by robust and strictly enforced rules, ensuring compatibility across the board. Just as various customers frequent the physical market, each with their unique set of expectations and requirements, ONDC aspires to create a digital market where the rules are meticulously enforced to ensure a high standard of service and quality for all involved.

One crucial aspect underpinning



the ONDC ethos is the adoption of standards and protocols. This would not only regulate the digital market but also ensure that it's not a 'free-for-all.' Instead, it would be a sophisticated ecosystem where diverse participants adhere to specific rules, ensuring seamless transactions and a well-regulated marketplace.

The ONDC framework revolves around the concept of 'digital traceability,' something that has signifi-

cantly transformed sectors like capital markets. In the past, settlements were paper-intensive and prone to high failure rates. Now, the digital approach has drastically reduced errors, increased transaction volumes, and brought about transparency.

Just as the telecom industry has unbundled its services to achieve greater efficiency, ONDC plans to follow a similar path. This allows for



**“ ONDC IS THE LATEST INITIATIVE IN INDIA’S TRANSFORMATION ENABLED BY DIGITAL PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE WHICH STARTED WITH AADHAAR AND UPI. ONDC WILL ENABLE SMALL MANUFACTURES AND MERCHANTS TO BE INCLUDED IN ECOMMERCE, DRIVE INNOVATION, REDUCE COSTS AND PROVIDE BETTER SERVICE TO A FEW HUNDRED MILLION INDIAN CONSUMERS.”**

*- Nandan Nilekani, Chairman and Co-founder Infosys and Founding Chairman of UIDAI (Aadhaar)*



a seamless integration and greater competition, as seen with telecom giants such as Virgin Mobile, Airtel, and others. The application of standard protocols ensures that different components can interact smoothly and effectively.

In the next five to six years, ONDC aims to establish itself as a prima-

ry platform for broadband service providers looking to access a broad cross-section of buyers. The goal is to create a democratic digital market where buyers and sellers negotiate their terms of engagement, empowering both parties over intermediaries. ONDC is a solution for vendors who find their products

relevant to a broad range of buyers and wish to make their offerings visible on a grand scale.

The strategy and vision for ONDC have been shaped by guidance from an advisory council featuring illustrious names such as Nandan Nilekani and RS Sharma. Acting as both mentors and sounding boards, they provide invaluable insights to steer the ONDC ship towards achieving its objectives.

The journey towards establishing a well-regulated, diverse, and robust digital marketplace is not an easy one. However, with robust standards, meticulous enforcement of rules, and a commitment to digital traceability, ONDC aims to transform the digital commerce landscape. Its long-term vision is to make the digital market as democratic, efficient, and vibrant as the physical one, marking a significant milestone in the ongoing digital revolution. 🌱



# AIMING FOR AN INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE RETAIL ECOSYSTEM

ONDC CEO **T Koshiy** took time out of his busy schedule to speak to Jayadev Calamur on the role ONDC is playing, and breaking the myths surrounding India's next big thing in building a digital retail network

**CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE ROLE OF ONDC IN ORGANIZING INDIA'S RETAIL SECTOR AND HOW IT AIMS TO STREAMLINE AND SIMPLIFY THE PROCESS OF BUYING AND SELLING GOODS ONLINE?**

The ONDC initiative was designed with the aim of creating an open, inclusive and competitive marketplace. Currently, the majority of the ecommerce market is governed by a platform-centric model of business that has a full range of control, including the ability to onboard sellers, find customers, process orders, handle complaints, and manage payments. Though Indian ecommerce has registered a strong upward trajectory over the years, it still faces a few persistent challenges. India fares fairly low in digital commerce share, barely 6%-7% of the total Indian retail market against China's share of 25%-30% and the US share of 14%-16%. Only 5%-6% of India's 100 million MSMEs

or small firms actively sell on digital platforms, despite the fact that 65%-70% of them have access to the internet.

ONDC network's unbundling and interoperability will pave the way for the emergence of all kinds of sellers online without any barriers resulting in varied options for customers to buy rather than limiting their choices to only big sellers. ONDC also takes out the equation of sellers and buyers being registered on the same platform to carry out orders and transactions. As a part of the ONDC network, buyers can see/access any sellers no matter on which domain they are present as long as they are part of the network.

**CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THE MEASURES TAKEN BY ONDC TO ENSURE THE SECURITY AND PRIVACY OF THE DATA OF BUSINESSES AND CONSUMERS USING THE PLATFORM?**

In order to be in sync with the changing legislation and the dis-

course surrounding data privacy in India as well as globally, ONDC aims to adopt an adaptable legislative, institutional, and technological architecture for secure data sharing. This will strike a balance between privacy concerns and data regulation that takes into account the realities of India's business ecosystem's requirements and constraints. Some key principles followed by ONDC include; only the buyer and seller applications to have access to transaction data, and ONDC won't be able to see it or store it. The exchange of this data will be governed by evolving rules that are consent-based and purpose-restricted. ONDC will ensure data security and credibility at the transaction level, which will be key to the growth of digital commerce and the success of ONDC. User's Personally Identifiable Information (PII), as well as seller data critical to trade (i.e., competitive data), will be protected from third-party access.

## HOW DOES ONDC PLAN TO COLLABORATE WITH EXISTING RETAIL PLAYERS AND MARKETPLACES TO ENHANCE THE OVERALL RETAIL INDUSTRY'S DIGITAL COMMERCE ECOSYSTEM?

As a community-led market network, ONDC's vision is to foster a unified, interoperable and open digital ecommerce ecosystem creating a level-playing field for all businesses. We are dividing a complex system into distinct microservices for different players to address separately. This is a substitute for the platform-centric paradigm currently in use, where it controls the entire buyer and seller journey.

We understand the needs and the pains of potential network participants (NP) from a broad spectrum of domains ranging from retail, logistics service providers, restaurants, hotels, etc. The network intends to offer tailor-made solutions to address such needs through a collaborative approach. Most importantly, ONDC is built on the foundations of trust and transparency, and itself is a network that is open to all.

## CAN YOU DISCUSS ONDC'S VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE RETAIL INDUSTRY IN INDIA AND HOW ONDC AIMS TO SUPPORT ITS GROWTH AND EXPANSION IN THE DIGITAL COMMERCE SPACE?

Our overarching vision is to create a level playing field for all kinds of businesses, whether it is a well-known established brand or homegrown



▶ T Koshy, CEO, ONDC

regional start-up. The network will facilitate all types of commerce, from direct-to-consumer (D2C) to business-to-business (B2B) providing an access to even Kanchipuram saree weavers to reach out to bigger markets. Additionally, ONDC would make it easier for B2B transactions to be digitized, giving pharmacies and grocery shops access to a larger distribution network and saving them time and money. Direct connections between manufacturers and merchants would probably result in price reductions and higher profit margins in industries like agriculture and construction.

With ONDC scaling up with time, it would be easier to meet hyper-local demand as digital channels would bring the neighbourhood market online. Meanwhile, omnichannel accessibility may make it simple to order from home after making a purchase at a physical

touchpoint. Consumers can search online for a variety of services, including plumbers, transport, tailors, and even education and skill-based training. By digitising the entire supply chain, enhancing price visibility, and reducing logistics expenses, ONDC will further improve logistics efficiency. Marketplaces have the potential to encourage cross-border trade, especially by making MSMEs more visible to international customers and corporations. Lastly, even self-employed professionals and gig workers will be able to promote themselves in bid to acquire new customers.

In next 5 years, we wish to cover the retailers using digital commerce from 15000 to 20 lakhs out of 1.2 crores of retailers, geographic coverage of ecommerce to touch 75% of pincodes and amplify the number of people buying online from 9 crores to 25 crores. 🌱



# EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PHONEPE'S HYPERLOCAL SHOPPING APP

As little as a decade ago, online shopping was an option not everybody could indulge in. The rise of e-commerce platforms in recent years has made it easier for people to shop from the comfort of their homes. However, even with the convenience of online shopping, there are multiple challenges that are yet to be addressed. For instance, how can local merchants compete with big-name retailers in the market? How can buyers ensure they get the best prices and a wide range of products from their local stores to choose from? These are some of the challenges that ONDC, the world's first decentralized e-commerce protocol, is trying to address.

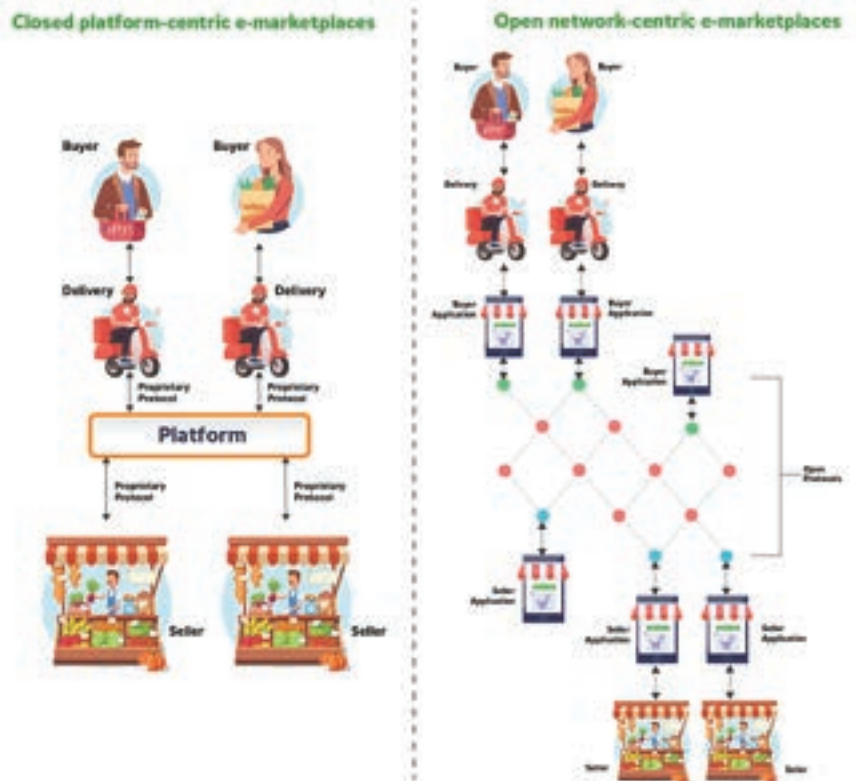
## WHAT IS ONDC?

Today, e-commerce markets work in silos, with each e-commerce platform connecting only its own merchants and customers to each other. ONDC's network-centric model integrates these closed ecosystems and allows each player to be discoverable to a wider audience. Once the

platforms on the buyer interface, seller solution, and logistics side implement a set of open Application Programming Interface (API) specifications, it will create a network that enables open, interoperable transactions between all participants —

buyers, sellers, and delivery partners — no matter what platform/application they use, to be digitally visible. This offers a seamless digital commerce experience for everyone.

Here's an infographic to explain this better:

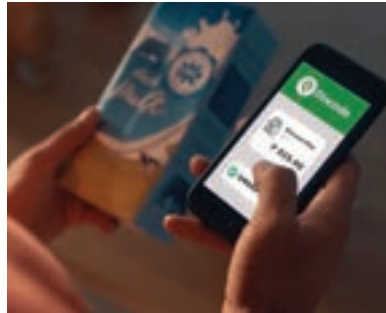


Typically, a shopper on, say, App-A has access to only sellers and products listed on the same app. However, with ONDC, the shopper will have access to sellers and products on another app, say, App-Z even if they are not a user of the app, thanks to the ONDC network.

ONDC is a game-changer for the e-commerce industry in India. By decentralizing the entire e-commerce ecosystem, ONDC allows different players in the industry to come together and talk to each other over a standard protocol. This means that buyers get a wide range of products to choose from, merchants get to choose which parts of the ecosystem they want to partner with, and delivery partners get access to a large pool of customers. It's a win-win for all the stakeholders involved.

### **PINCODE: MAKING STORE-FIRST SHOPPING EXPERIENCE A REALITY**

PhonePe recently launched 'Pincode', a buyer app that allows users to find stores and restaurants in their pincode, browse through catalogs/menus, and get items delivered to their doorstep. Pincode is a hyperlocal store-first shopping app that is a part of the ONDC network. It connects buyers with a wide range of merchants, including supermarkets, kirana stores, grocers, fast food chains, stand-alone restaurants, and pharmacies.



### **HOW ONDC-POWERED PINCODE IS A WIN-WIN FOR THE E-COMMERCE ECOSYSTEM**

**Consumers** benefit from the visibility of stores and restaurants in their pincode that are willing to deliver to them, providing them with more options to choose from. They get access to a wide range of products across different categories, including groceries, food, and medicines. Pincode allows them to get the best prices that merchants offer and choose different delivery options at their convenience.

For **merchants**, Pincode offers an easy alternative to receive and manage orders that they would have otherwise received over a phone call or messaging apps. With Pincode, merchants have the freedom to set their prices and delivery terms, which are showcased to users in a transparent manner. This helps them get more orders and grow their businesses. Pincode also helps merchants with the discovery of their stores and their items to interested buyers.

**Delivery** of goods is done through delivery partners who are a

part of the ONDC network. Pincode, along with other seller platforms and buyer apps on the network, arrange for the delivery of goods with delivery partners. Returns, too, are arranged through delivery partners or directly by the store. This means that consumers get access to the comfort that online shopping brings, such as returns and instant refunds, all through an easy interface in the Pincode app.

### **BUILDING FOR THE FUTURE**

At Pincode, the team is working tirelessly to ensure that users have the best possible experience while placing orders through the ONDC network. They are collaborating with sellers and delivery partners in different areas to open up the experience to consumers pincode by pincode. We believe that Pincode has the potential to become the preferred way to shop for millions of Indians, and we are excited by the opportunities that decentralizing commerce brings.

With the support of the ONDC team, seller platforms like Magicpin and Bitsila, and delivery partners like Dunzo and Shadowfax, Pincode is poised to become a game-changer in the e-commerce industry in India. By providing consumers with a wide range of products at the best prices, and a large choice of sellers, Pincode aims to support the ONDC network in decentralizing e-commerce. 🌱

# INNOVATION AND STRATEGY FOR NEXT-LEVEL GROWTH

Discussions at the 2023 Hyderabad Retail Summit also included the impact of technology on retail, opportunities in rural areas, and need for local sourcing and supporting retailers

**T**he second edition of the Hyderabad Retail Summit (HRS), hosted by the Retailers Association of India (RAI), took place on April 19, 2023, at the Hotel ITC Kohenur in Hyderabad. Presented by Ratnadeep and powered by National Mart, the event aimed to help retailers find the right partners to elevate their retail businesses.

Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO of RAI, spoke about the summit's objectives, emphasizing the importance of bringing together retailers and retail service providers to discuss industry trends, new ideas, and innovations. He also highlighted how technology is rapidly changing retail in the country and stressed the need for retailers to embrace these changes to stay competitive.

"HRS is expected to bring in various retailers, mall owners, as well as service providers having technology and logistics capabilities. Technology is fast changing the way retail in the country is evolving and it is only right that retailers come together to



**Chairman's Address**

► **Bijou Kurien, Chairman,  
Retailers Association of India**



**CEO's Address**

► **Kumar Rajagopalan, CEO,  
Retailers Association of India**

embrace those technologies that will keep them abreast of their competition," he said.

The event was honoured by the presence of Dr. Jayesh Ranjan, Principal Secretary of Industries and Commerce Department and Information Technology, Electronics, and Communications (ITE&C) Department, Government of Telangana. Dr. Ranjan's participation underlined the government's commitment to supporting the retail industry's growth and development in the region.

The Hyderabad Retail Summit 2023 served as a valuable platform

for retailers, mall owners, and service providers with technology and logistics capabilities to come together, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities for collaboration. As the retail industry continues to evolve, events like HRS play a crucial role in fostering innovation and equipping businesses with the tools and partnerships necessary to thrive in a competitive market.

Dr. Jayesh Ranjan emphasised the role of knowledge sharing in driving advancement. He discussed the recent decision by the Government of Telangana to allow stores to remain open 24x7 at the request of retailers and consumers. He also





**Keynote Address**

› **Dr. Jayesh Ranjan (IAS),  
Principal Secretary - Industries  
& Commerce and Information  
Technology Departments,  
Government of Telangana**

acknowledged the responsibilities involved, such as meeting safety expectations set by the government and law enforcement.

He also highlighted the partnership between the Government of Telangana and the Global Linker programme, which has onboarded 8,500 small retailers to expand their brick-and-mortar businesses online.

Additionally, Dr. Ranjan noted that Telangana leads India in per capita income and growth, with a 130% increase since the state's formation. He praised Hyderabad's innovative atmosphere and encouraged retailers to explore opportunities in Tier-2, Tier-3, and semi-rural areas. He called for a retail revolution in Telangana and urged RAI to partner with the government to promote rural development, focusing on local sourcing and supporting local producers, particularly in food sourcing.



**Presentation**

› **Avnish Kumar, MD, Neeru's**

"In Telangana, wealth is equitably distributed mainly due to agriculture, irrigation, direct transfer to farmers, etc. We are waiting for a retail revolution to happen in Telangana and would like RAI to partner with the Government of Telangana to make this happen for rural. We would like to also focus on local sourcing and are keen that the Retailers in Telangana give as much prominence to local producers. Food sourcing should be from local farmers," Dr. Ranjan added.

Susanne Pulverer, CEO and Chief Sustainability Officer of IKEA India, expressed pride in partnering with RAI and commended their efforts in fostering the development of India's modern retail sector. She mentioned IKEA's future expansion plans for Telangana, where the company opened its first Indian store in 2018, and their commitment to improving everyday life through affordable, well-designed, and sustainable products.

Avnish Kumar, Managing Director of Neerus Ensembles, described Telangana as a young state with ambitious aspirations. He recognised the state's accomplishments over the past 5-7 years, including attracting the best and biggest global brands to Hyderabad. Kumar credited RAI's support for bringing together like-minded retail giants to share knowledge and experience, helping to make Hyderabad an attractive destination for national and international brands across all retail segments. The Hyderabad Retail Summit (HRS) 2023, hosted in-depth panel discussion on topics such as The Art of Retail Strategy: Balancing Innovation and Tradition, Staying Ahead of the Curve: Adapting to Changing Retail Technology, and Navigating CX: Building Loyalty Through Customer Experience.

Sharing valuable insights on these panels were some prominent faces of the retail industry in the region, namely Gautam Gupta - MD & CEO, Paradise Food Court; Muskaan Dadu - Managing Partner, Dadu's; P Jayakumar - CEO, Apollo Pharmacy; Vikash Hisariya - Managing Director, Vishal Peripherals, among others.

The Hyderabad Retail Summit 2023 served as a valuable platform for retailers, mall owners, and service providers with technology and logistics capabilities to come together, exchange ideas, and explore opportunities for collaboration. 😊



**Presentation**

› Amit Gedam, DVP, ANAROCK Retail



**Presentation**

› Subhashini Parasuraman, Vice President - Marketing, Ezetap by Razorpay



**Presentation**

› Niraj Jaipuria, Founder & Director, BIRetail Ltd.



**Presentation**

› Shyam Sunder K, Co-founder, Principal Architect & MD, Four Dimensions Retail Design India Pvt. Ltd. and Surender Gnanaolivu, Chief-Strategy & Development, Four Dimensions Retail Design India Pvt. Ltd.



**Presentation**

› Dr. Kushal Sanghvi, Head - India and SEA, CitrusAd

### **SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE - THE ROLE OF MAR-TECH IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**



**Presentation**

› Nitin Nair, SVP, ONDC



### PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE ART OF RETAIL STRATEGY: BALANCING INNOVATION AND TRADITION



› L-R: Abhinay PVS, MD, RS Brothers Retail India Pvt. Ltd.; Avnish Kumar, MD, Neeru's; Bijou Kurien, Chairman, Retailers Association of India (RAI); Susanne Pulverer, CEO & Chief Sustainability Officer, IKEA India; P Jayakumar, CEO, Apollo Pharmacy

### PANEL DISCUSSION ON STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE: ADAPTING TO CHANGING RETAIL TECHNOLOGY



› L-R: Vikash Hisariya, MD, Vishal Peripherals; Subhashini Parasuraman, Vice President - Marketing, Ezetap by Razorpay; Kiran Shinde, COO & CFO, PMJ Jewels; Bharat Singh, GM, Director, South Asia, Sensormatic by Johnson Controls; Bharadwaj Rachamadugu, SVP Sai Silks Kalamandir Ltd. ; and Dr. Hitesh Bhatt, Director - Marketing & Communication, Editorial Director - STOral, Retailers Association of India (RAI)

### PANEL DISCUSSION ON STAYING AHEAD OF THE CURVE: ADAPTING TO CHANGING RETAIL TECHNOLOGY



› L-R: Harmindar Singh Ari, Vice President- India Sales, WebEngage; Niraj Jaipuria, Founder & Director, BIRetail Ltd.; Muskaan Dadu, MD, Dadu's; M Yeshwanth Nag, Co-Founder, TTSF CloudOne, The ThickShake Factory; Krishna Prasad Cheruku, Vice President, Cellbay Mobiles & Electronics Pvt. Ltd; Gautam Gupta, CEO, Paradise Food Court



**PARTNERS AT HYDERABAD RETAIL SUMMIT (HRS) 2023**

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# D2C DIALOGUES: CHRONICLES OF BRANDS SHAPING INDIA'S CONSUMER LANDSCAPE

In the buzzing ecosystem of Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) businesses in India, a series of transformative brands are redefining traditional sectors. From personal grooming to baby care, health foods to wellness, Indi-

an startups are setting benchmarks and leading the pack. Enter "D2C Dialogues" – a unique narrative spotlighting these game-changers. Through intimate interviews and deep dives, "D2C Dialogues" offers a panoramic view of these brands'

journeys, elucidating their vision, challenges, strategies, and aspirations. Join us as we unpack the stories of pioneers, and delve into the essence of their remarkable trajectories in India's thriving D2C marketplace.





In a freewheeling interview with RAI's Director of Marketing and Communication, and Editorial Director, STOrai, **Dr Hitesh Bhatt**, BlueStone Founder and CEO **Gaurav Singh Kushwaha** shares his journey to the top

**Gaurav Singh Kushwaha**  
Founder and CEO  
BlueStone

## FROM ENTREPRENEUR TO JEWELLERY MOGUL: LEARN ABOUT THE BLUESTONE BLUEPRINT

Once upon a time, in the tech-booming city of Bangalore, there emerged an idea: BlueStone.

Gaurav Singh Kushwaha, an enthusiastic entrepreneur, decided to challenge the conventional by establishing one of India's largest digital-first fine jewellery brands. His brilliant brainchild was born out of the need for digitisation within an industry resistant to change.

BlueStone emerged as a beacon of modernity against a backdrop of



traditional jewellery industry. With a captivating combination of an online 'endless aisle' and 170 physical experiential stores, the brand is a trailblazer. Kushwaha leverages cutting-edge technology, allowing customers to weave their preferences into a seamless Omni channel journey from design to delivery.

As Gaurav narrates his journey, one cannot help but be enthralled by his foresight. After scoring a successful exit from his social networking venture, Chakpak, he saw an opportunity for online growth in high-ticket categories. As he so poignantly puts it, "The behavioural shift that I was seeing in the market was that a lot of categories were moving online."

Spotting an opportunity in the massive jewellery market, Kushwaha bet on a product category that traditionally relied on touch and feel. Contrary to popular belief, he felt that even if just 1-2 per cent of consumers moved online, it would be enough to create a billion-dollar business.

But the journey has been far from easy. As a pioneer, Kushwaha had to navigate the uncharted territory of online fine jewellery, dealing with customer reservations and logistical complexities. The gamble, however, paid off. BlueStone's rapid growth serves as a testament to his relentless vision and bold decision-making.

Despite his extraordinary success, Kushwaha remains grounded, focus-

ing on the core principles that fuelled BlueStone's inception. His commitment to offering high-quality designs and products to customers underscores every decision he makes. He firmly believes that regardless of how methods and technologies may evolve, the heart of a business must remain consistent. In BlueStone's case, that means continuously pushing the boundaries to offer consumers the best in design and quality.

Gaurav's vision for the industry doesn't stop here. He foresees a consolidation towards branded players as customers become more discerning and design-focused. Regional players, according to him, may lose ground due to the decreased value of longstanding relationships in an increasingly mobile society.

This trend is reflected in BlueStone's own trajectory. Despite his success, Kushwaha is not complacent. He asserts, "The mission and the objective remain the same...to give high-quality design options and high-quality products to end customers." However, he believes that the method may evolve with the advent of new technology and changing consumer behaviour.

When asked about his advice for budding D2C entrepreneurs, Gaurav's mantra is crystal clear: "Start only online, get the product market fit, and only then go omni." He believes that an online foundation allows for flexibility and a better understanding of

the customer, making it an invaluable first step.

Peering into the future, Kushwaha sees a rapidly evolving landscape for India's jewellery industry. As consumers become increasingly design-oriented and aspirational, the days of stagnant designs and generational loyalty to certain jewellers are slowly fading away. In their place, he envisions a more dynamic market, driven by branded players and individual tastes.

As we wrap up our conversation with this visionary entrepreneur, it's clear that Gaurav Singh Kushwaha's journey with BlueStone is far from over. His eyes may be on the horizon, but his feet are firmly planted in innovation and growth. One thing's for certain: the future of fine jewellery in India looks a lot brighter thanks to BlueStone.

Kushwaha's story is a compelling tale of disruption and determination. His insightful understanding of the market, coupled with his relentless pursuit of innovation, has led to the rise of one of India's leading digital-first fine jewellery brands. His journey serves as an inspiration to countless entrepreneurs and a reminder that in the realm of business, the only constant is change. With this mindset, BlueStone is set to continue shining brightly in the future. 😊



**B O U L T**

Boulton Co-founder **Varun Gupta** Orchestrates a Harmonious Blend of Entrepreneurship and Passion, Amplifying India's Audio Tech Industry. He tells RAI's Director of Marketing and Communication & Editorial Director STOrai, **Dr Hitesh Bhatt** more...

**Varun Gupta**  
Co-founder  
Boulton

## RESONATING SUCCESS: BOULT SYMPHONY IS A MIXTURE OF INNOVATION & GROWTH

**T**he audio tech landscape is revolutionised by fresh, inventive brands that are continuously pushing the boundaries of what is possible. One such brand is Boulton, India's fastest-growing wearable brand for Q1 2023, according to IDC. The brains behind this dynamic company is Varun Gupta, a man whose zeal for entrepreneurship is only matched by his passion for music.

Boulton, a high-end consumer electronics company, designs and man-

ufactures innovative audio products. Striving for the epitome of quality, Boulton has set a high standard for premium audio by delivering high-fidelity audio experiences with unparalleled comfort. Their dedication to constant improvement is clearly reflected in their impressive product lineup.

### THE ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Gupta, a self-proclaimed music aficionado and an engineer, has been on the entrepreneurial journey since his education days. "I've always had this love for entrepreneurship," Gupta said. "It allows me to express myself and create value and employment. That's something that I've always wanted to do."

His first venture into entrepreneurship started during his time at B school. Gupta was the only student in his batch who opted out of summer placements to focus on a startup, a decision that would pave the way for his future endeavors. Having run three startups before launching Boulton, he gained invaluable experience and insights into both the tech and business aspects of running a company.

### MUSIC AND TECH: A HARMONIOUS MARRIAGE

His love for music, coupled with his knowledge of technology, naturally steered him towards the audio industry. "Right from my childhood, I've been very close to music as a category, and as a byproduct, I've been



an audiophile," Gupta revealed. "Any musical instrument or any gadget or device that produces audio signals etc, has been very close to my heart."

Boulton was conceived in 2017 after Gupta and his co-founder had spent an entire year in research and development. Despite the competitiveness of the audio technology industry, Boulton hit the ground running, impressively rising above the competition.

### THE JOURNEY AND THE FUTURE

Being an entrepreneur has its fair share of challenges, which Gupta and his team overcame through innovative thinking, grit, and perseverance. "We always have looked at challenges as a great opportunity for us to learn," Gupta said.

Boulton is well-poised for an exciting future. According to Gupta, the company is focused on expanding its product categories, going offline, and launching in international markets. Also, the internal emphasis is on talent development, ensuring that the team continues to grow and evolve with the company.

"Offline is going to be a big lever for growth for us," Gupta said. "We're

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ *Boulton plans to expand into the offline market, with plans to have products in over 1000 counters across the country by the end of the year.*
- ◆ *Future plans for Boulton include expanding into the smartwatch category, home audio, offline stores, and international markets.*
- ◆ *Varun's favorite Boulton product is Omega, an active noise cancellation product, and Maverick, a less tech spec product that feels like a piece of art.*
- ◆ *In the audio industry, Boulton's closest competition is Boat, and in smartwatches, it is Noise and Fire Bolt.*

looking at about 20% of our sales and that also allows us better visibility to the customers and builds credibility and branding in the eyes of customers."

Looking ahead, Gupta aims to continue creating innovative products while expanding Boulton's reach globally. "In future, I mean if we continue to concentrate on smartwatches as a category because that's a category that's growing and interrupted. We're launching home audio next month," he said, hinting at the brand's exciting plans for the future. 😊



In an enlightening conversation with **Avnish Anand**, Co-founder and CEO of CaratLane, **Dr Hitesh Bhatt**, Director, Marketing and Communication, and Editorial Director STOrai, delves into the story of the brand's unique trajectory, its challenges and the vision shaping its future

**Avnish Anand**

Co-founder and CEO  
CaratLane

# “EVERY OCCASION, EVERY CUSTOMER”: CARATLANE’S JOURNEY TOWARDS SUCCESS

**C**aratLane, India's pioneering omnichannel jewellery brand, embarked on its journey back in 2008. Their daring objective was simple yet impactful - “To make beautiful jewellery accessible, affordable, and forever wearable.” Its co-founder and CEO Avnish Anand recalls the inception of the brand, stating, “We noticed that nobody was offering great jewellery at the sub-Rs 30K, sub-Rs 40K price points, everybody in India was focused on Rs 1,00,000 plus. So there was a clear opportunity there.”





Founded by Anand and Mithun Sacheti, who hails from a seven-generation jeweller family, CaratLane brought together deep understanding of the jewellery market and a forward-thinking digital strategy. By identifying and addressing gaps in the market, the duo created a business model that challenged the status quo.

“One of the problems was imaging, right? Because in jewellery, if you make it too big, they feel the jewellery looked bigger, but the actual jewellery was smaller. But if you make it too small, they can’t make out the detail. So this is a permanent problem for us, right? Yes. And we, every time there is a new technology, we see whether this technology can solve this problem.” Anand explained.

Despite the initial hurdles, such as the desire of customers to physically touch and feel the jewellery, CaratLane prevailed with its digital approach. Anand attributes their success to their relentless focus on solving customers’ problems. They were inspired by other businesses but they never forced any technology application that wasn’t solving a core issue for them.

Today, CaratLane has flourished, thanks to a strategic partnership with India’s largest retail jeweller, Tanishq. The partnership is geared towards a common mission: to offer customers beautiful jewellery and a distinctive shopping experience.

“We feel that there should be at least many occasions and customers lives. Where the moment they think of celebrating that occasion,

they should think of us first, OK. And we should have a store for every customer who wants to buy. They should be able to go and have that product available for them within 24 hours in every part of this country and hopefully in many countries in the world.” Anand expresses his vision for CaratLane.

As for advice to aspiring D2C brands, Anand stressed, “You have to have a great product which your customers love and they want to buy it again and again and they want to talk to other people about it. If that is not happening, then you still need to keep working on that.”

His segmentation strategy revolves around a single, powerful insight: Pin codes. Anand explains, “Both demographically and psychographically, people live around people who are like them. So, if you target certain pin codes well, you will get enough customers there because they are all like each other in many ways.”

This approach, coupled with the unwavering belief in the value of their products, serves as the guiding light for CaratLane’s journey towards the future. In the next five to ten years, they aim to be the first choice for every occasion, in every part of the country, and for every customer. As they put it, their mission is indeed about “every occasion, every customer.” 😊



ClearDekho's Founder and CEO **Shivi Singh** speaks to **Dr Hitesh Bhatt**, RAI's Director Marketing and Communication, and Editorial Director STOrai, and shares his vision of making eyewear accessible to all

**Shivi Singh**  
Founder & CEO,  
ClearDekho

## CLEARDEKHO: BRINGING VISION TO A BILLION EYES

In the bustling landscape of startups, ClearDekho emerges as a beacon of hope for those seeking affordable yet quality eyewear. With an aim to serve the untapped billion eyes across India, this brand resonates deeply with the masses. We delve deep into the mission, vision, and values of this rising titan in the eyewear sector.

“One of the most crucial factors in today's age is understanding the consumer. The consumer today is smart, well-educated, and de-

mands transparency,” states Shivi Singh, Founder & CEO of ClearDekho. Indeed, in an era brimming with information and tech-savvy users, understanding and catering to their needs becomes paramount.

### TRANSPARENTLY BRILLIANT

With the Internet democratizing information, customers have unparalleled access to data, further fuelling their desire for transparent transactions. Shivi Singh says, “Customers are no longer easily fooled. They seek clarity and value in their purchases. And brands cannot risk their reputation by attempting to deceive them.”

### THE VISION OF A BILLION EYES

The ‘Billion Eyes’ campaign, a core initiative by ClearDekho, sheds light on the brand’s commitment to serve India’s vast population. “Every pair of eyes is a billion I,” Shivi explains, emphasizing the brand’s mission to deliver its services to India’s vast populace, particularly the underserved sections.

### BUILDING FOR BHARAT

ClearDekho’s focus is clear - they target the Tier 3, 4, and 5 cities of India. Shivi aptly points out a striking statistic, “80% of the market volume comes from these tiers. While many are chasing the lucrative cash-rich segments of Tier 1 cities, we see the potential in the smaller towns. They’re the future.”

Uttar Pradesh, India’s most populous state, embodies the potential of



these smaller towns. With a population exceeding 200 million, the state represents a significant fraction of the ‘Billion Eyes’ ClearDekho aims to cater to. By emphasizing their presence in such a dense and diverse market, the brand is strategically positioning itself to tap into vast untapped reservoirs of demand, particularly in towns that have previously been overshadowed by the glitz of metropolitan cities.

With six stores already successfully operating in villages, it’s evident that ClearDekho’s focus on grassroots penetration is paying off. Their goal? To dig deeper into India, emphasizing their long-term commitment to the subcontinent.

### LOOKING BEYOND

While India remains a primary focus, ClearDekho has also recognized the potential in emerging economies similar to India, such as African countries and Bangladesh. “It’s a simple pair of glasses, yet close to 2 billion customers across haven’t got it,” notes Shivi, underscoring the vast untapped potential.

### FUTURE ENDEAVOURS

When asked about future growth, Shivi confidently shares his vision for ClearDekho. In the next 5 to 10 years, he hopes to see the brand across 600 cities, spanning 30 states with an ambitious 5000 store footprint.

### SUMMING IT UP

In a market dominated by high-end brands, ClearDekho’s dedication to affordability, value, and persistence stands out. The brand, in Shivi’s words, is a manifestation of “Persistence, value, and affordability.” Aiming to bridge the gap between the unorganized eyewear sector and the pricey alternatives, ClearDekho is indeed on a mission. One that sees clearly and serves brilliantly.

With a relentless commitment to its core values and a vision that seeks to cater to a billion eyes, ClearDekho is well on its path to not just success but also making a tangible difference in the lives of many. 🧐



**Saurabh Munjal** of Lahori Zeera delves deep into brand strategy, growth, and future prospects in an enlightening chat with **Dr. Hitesh Bhatt**, Director, Marketing and Communication, RAI, and Editorial Director STOrai Magazine.

**Saurabh Munjal**  
Co-founder  
Lahori Zeera

## AN INSIGHT INTO LAHORI ZEERA'S BEVERAGE ODYSSEY

In the realm of global titans like Pepsi and Coca-Cola, breaking ground seems almost Herculean. Yet, here stands Lahori Zeera, a brand that has become synonymous with 'Desi,' 'Chatpata,' and most importantly, 'Quality.' At the heart of this effervescent success story is a man with vision, Saurabh Munjal.

"We grow as a brand... I want to compete with the likes of Coke and Pepsi," Munjal once remarked, a sentiment he echoed in his recent conversation with Dr. Hitesh.



## HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, GRAND VISIONS

What started as a niche beverage for the masses has metamorphosed into a brand with its sights set on global recognition. Munjal, co-founder of Lahori Zeera, hasn't just brewed a drink; he's crafted a narrative.

"Ever since our inception, we've always been profitable," shared Munjal. It's not just the enviable position of securing a funding of 22 million that sets Lahori Zeera apart; it's the philosophy of being consumer-centric, grounded in unit economics, that drives its spirit.

## CHOOSING STRATEGY OVER STARDOM

Despite the funds and the recognition, Lahori Zeera has yet to rope in a celebrity brand ambassador. To this, Munjal elucidates a poignant strategy.

"It's not just about the funds... We believe where the brand ambassador is taken on board, this increases our demand for the product. But if we're not able to cater to that demand, the brand equity goes down," explains Munjal. The insight is profound. Many brands in the race to recognition often stumble in their stride by not aligning demand with delivery. For Munjal, it's a pitfall he's keen on sidestepping.

"First, get your product right, your distribution right. And then get a brand ambassador," Munjal sug-

gests, noting that many often make the mistake of reversing this order.

## A SYMPHONY OF SUPPLY CHAIN AND MARKETING

In the orchestra of business success, Saurabh Munjal conducts Lahori Zeera with a masterful balance between supply chain management and marketing. While the vibrant marketing efforts have positioned Lahori Zeera as a drink that resonates with the Indian palate's depth and diversity, the robust supply chain ensures that this promise is fulfilled consistently across geographies. Munjal views the supply chain as the backbone of his business, intricately weaving a network that ensures timely delivery, reduces wastage, and optimizes costs. It's no less than a choreographed dance where the rhythm of demand generated by marketing efforts syncs harmoniously with the supply chain's pulse. "The distribution has to be right. Once you've cracked that, that's when you enhance your marketing efforts, even considering brand ambassadors," Munjal emphasizes. This synergistic approach has made Lahori Zeera not just a beverage of choice, but a testament to seamless business operations.

## A PAN-INDIA DREAM

Munjal's vision is clear. Within less than five years, he envisions Lahori Zeera not just as a household name but as a staple. A Pan-India brand with a valuation soaring to 1000



crores INR. His aspirations are grand, yet grounded in reality. As he emphasizes the massive potential within the Indian market, his strategy is clear – go deep and wide.

## A DESI ODYSSEY WITH GLOBAL IMPLICATIONS

With its rich, tangy flavours catering to a broad audience spectrum, from ministers to the common man on the street, Lahori Zeera stands testament to Munjal's belief that, "No matter what part of the country you're from, as long as you are somebody looking out to buy a beverage, you will find Lahori Zeera as an option."

As the narrative of Lahori Zeera unfolds, it's not just a tale of a beverage making waves. It's the chronicle of a visionary – Saurabh Munjal, who believes in strategy, timing, and above all, the heart of the Indian consumer. 🍷



**Sidhant Keshwani**  
Founder and CEO  
Libas

**Libas**

**Sidhant Keshwani**, the founder and CEO of Libas, speaks to **Dr. Hitesh Bhatt**, Director, Marketing and Communication, RAI, and Editorial Director STOrai, on his dreams to make Libas the Zara of India

In the thriving world of fashion, there are those who follow trends and those who create them. One such trend-setter making waves in the Direct-to-Consumer (D2C) fashion industry is Sidhant Keshwani, the dynamic founder and CEO of Libas.

Since its inception, Libas has been guided by Keshwani's innovative vision and entrepreneurial flair. Today, it stands as a beacon of modern, young, and fashionable ethnic wear, catering to an audience that values quality and style.

## **BUILDING ON A FASHIONABLE AND ETHNIC FUTURE**

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- ◆ *Ethnic wear is the largest apparel category in India at 30% of the Rs 6.15-trillion domestic apparel market. The womenswear segment takes up 81 percent of this category*
- ◆ *Ethnic wear is becoming a part of everyday wear and has even gained acceptance as formal attire. Rising e-commerce are adding value to the segment*
- ◆ *50 to 60% of our business comes from this category... We're talking a lot about inclusivity in the organization*



The seeds of Libas were sown with the goal to modernize Indian ethnic wear, bringing it into the limelight in a fresh and appealing way. From the onset, Keshwani's vision was to rival global giants like Zara, rather than compete solely within the ethnic wear sphere. This bold stance has fuelled the evolution of Libas into a powerhouse that seamlessly merges the vibrancy of ethnic wear with the allure of fast fashion.

One of the key distinguishing factors of Libas lies in its customer-centric approach. Keshwani's commitment to customer obsession is deeply ingrained in the brand's ethos. Listening to customer feedback and swiftly implementing changes based on this feedback have been key drivers in Libas' success. The brand is revered for its high-quality products and value for money, earning it a special place in the hearts of its customers. Keshwani recounts an interaction where a customer referred to Libas as "an emotion, not just a product."

Being a 100% bootstrapped business, Libas reached the scale of 500 crore plus without external funding - a commendable feat in the crowded D2C space. The company believes strongly in self-funding, focusing on profitability and unit economics. The goal is always to ensure that each product and each launch is profitable, rather than burning money to keep up with the competition.

As trends evolve, so does Libas. This adaptability is a testament to Keshwani's leadership, which encourages the team to be proactive rather than reactive. When COVID-19 struck and D2C became the norm, the team swiftly transitioned, aligning with the changing dynamics of the retail industry. When omni-channel retailing gained momentum, Libas was quick to open its first physical store.

The future of Libas, as envisioned by Keshwani, revolves around the intersection of fast fashion and sustainability. The brand is also expand-

ing its product line, launching new categories like handbags and footwear to enhance its existing portfolio. Despite requests for men's wear, the company's focus remains on its core female demographic.

The next five years are crucial for Libas, with Keshwani aiming for the brand to become the largest fashion house in the country. The vision is to build a seamless omni-channel experience for customers, making Libas an omnipresent entity, whether online or in malls.

Keshwani's favourite aspect of leading Libas is the team's innate drive to innovate. This hunger to push boundaries and exceed expectations is what keeps Libas at the forefront of the fashion industry. With Keshwani at the helm, Libas is set to continue its trajectory, breaking barriers and redefining fashion norms. This is just the beginning of the journey for Libas, and with Sidhant Keshwani at the helm, the future looks incredibly fashionable. 🌟



**Taran Chhabra**, Founder of Neeman's, a Hyderabad-based shoe brand, tells RAI's Director of Marketing and Communication, and Editorial Director STOrai, **Dr Hitesh Bhatt**, that going sustainable is just one value proposition the brand provides

**Taran Chhabra**  
Founder  
Neeman's

## TRANSFORMING FOOTWEAR WITH NEEMANS' SUSTAINABLE COMFORT

In the ever-evolving footwear industry, new brands emerge each day. However, the ones that endure are those that seamlessly blend innovation with consumer needs. One such brand is Neemans, led by its forward-thinking founder, Taran Chhabra. With a vision rooted in sustainability and comfort, Chhabra's Neemans stands out in the cluttered shoe market.

Taran began our conversation with a simple premise, "Today, there are a plethora of brands in the foot-



wear industry. But the only thing that differentiates between success and failure is how you connect with the customer.” Indeed, for Neemans, this connection was forged through a clear understanding of consumer behaviour. “Footwear isn’t an impulsive buy,” Taran shares, adding that it’s about creating a mental recall, a brand memory that consumers revert to when purchasing shoes.

So, how does one build such a mental recall? “You’ve got to keep knocking on the door of a consumer,” Chhabra muses. It’s about consistent communication, about ensuring that when someone thinks of buying footwear, Neemans is among the top brands they consider. To achieve this, Neemans used a comprehensive marketing strategy, addressing customer apprehensions head-on.

There are challenges in the online shoe marketplace. There are worries about fit, exchange processes, and overall trust. “India is a low trust market. People don’t trust brands easily here,” Chhabra points out. Neemans’ approach to these challenges was simple and effective. They offered unlimited exchanges, refunds, and returns. By eliminating these apprehensions, they effectively opened the doors to building brand trust.

But building trust isn’t just about the policies—it’s about the brand’s image. In a move to bolster Neemans’ brand recognition and trust, the company collaborated with well-

known figures such as cricketers Jasprit Bumrah, Hardik Pandya, and Suryakumar Yadav. “The reach we got from these collaborations was phenomenal,” says Taran, highlighting the brand’s strategic thinking.

On being asked about the competition, Chhabra mentions, “We never observed competition much right now because we knew the competition has been there, done that.” This self-assuredness emanates from a deep belief in Neemans’ unique value proposition. And perhaps, it’s this belief and vision that led them to success even during the initial financial crunch that most startups face.

“We bootstrapped for a year,” Chhabra recalls. The founders believed in the need to demonstrate the brand’s potential in product quality, marketing, and team building before seeking external investments. Neemans has secured investments and backing from notable names like Annie Cut and Six Cents.

Taran wants to take Neemans to be among the top 10 footwear brands that India has seen.” But for him, it’s not just about revenue—it’s about reaching consumers through every channel possible, from their website to e-commerce platforms and offline stores. And always, always innovating.

Speaking of innovation, Taran reveals, “We don’t do any leather.” Leather doesn’t fit into Neemans’ comfort and sustainability model.

However, for corporate consumers seeking something formal, Neemans has an answer in the pipeline. “We’re launching a dress sneaker range next month,” he divulges.

The true genius behind Neemans’ allure is not just in its branding or its commitment to customer trust—it’s in the meticulous crafting of each shoe. Neemans shoes are the embodiment of innovation and eco-consciousness. Avoiding leather not only on ethical grounds but also in the interest of achieving optimal comfort, the brand turns to nature for alternatives. Materials such as recycled rubber, wool, and plant-based castor bean oil are transformed into footwear that stands apart in both design and function. Each pair undergoes rigorous testing, with Taran himself mentioning a personal collection of over 200 pairs, all in the name of ensuring impeccable quality. In an era where fast fashion often sidelines sustainability, Neemans’ endeavours to marry the two, creating shoes that tread lightly on the planet while providing unmatched comfort to its wearers.

Taran Chhabra’s journey with Neemans is a testament to what brands can achieve with a clear vision, an understanding of their audience, and an unwavering commitment to their core values. As Neemans marches into the future, it’s clear that comfort, sustainability, and versatility will remain at its heart. 😊



**Vikas Bagaria**  
Founder  
Pee Safe

# PEE SAFE: REVOLUTIONIZING PERSONAL HYGIENE AND WELLNESS

**Vikas Bagaria's** shares his journey from inspiration to innovation with **Dr Hitesh Bhatt**, Director, Marketing and Communication, RAI, and Editorial Director, STOrai

In a world where personal hygiene and wellness have gained paramount importance, one brand stands out for its commitment to creating innovative solutions. Pee Safe, led by Vikas Bagaria, has become synonymous with revolutionising the way we approach intimate hygiene. What started as a personal experience has now transformed into a global movement.

## THE BIRTH OF A VISION

“Being on a trip with my wife and witnessing her severe illness due

to a urinary tract infection (UTI) was a turning point,” says Bagaria. This experience shed light on the risks associated with unsanitised toilet seats, even in seemingly clean environments. The realization that millions of women were suffering from UTIs worldwide, with India alone accounting for 10 million cases annually, sparked a revolutionary idea.

### THE AHA MOMENT

“In that moment, it became clear that there was a dire need for a solution to reduce the risk of UTIs caused by unsanitised toilet seats,” recalls Bagaria. This led to the development of Pee Safe’s flagship product—a toilet seat sanitiser spray. Bagaria explains, “We created a small canister that women could conveniently carry in their purse and use to sanitise toilet seats wherever they went.”

### FROM INSPIRATION TO ACTION

“The journey to establish Pee Safe began four years prior to its inception in 2017,” Bagaria reveals. The company’s mission was clear—to create a comprehensive range of personal hygiene and wellness products that promotes feminine well-being.

Like many entrepreneurs, Vikas Bagaria faced initial challenges in securing funding for his venture. While friends and family provided support in the early stages, raising institutional investment proved to be more arduous. However, with unwavering determination, Bagaria persisted in his vision. Eventually, Alchemy Ven-

ture Fund recognised the potential of Pee Safe and became the first institutional investor, providing the necessary support to propel the company.

Pee Safe’s operations have witnessed remarkable growth, both domestically and internationally. The brand is distributed through a combination of online and offline channels, with a presence in over 12,000 stores across 90 cities in India. Their products are strategically placed in various locations, including airports, railway stations, cafes, and corporate washrooms, ensuring widespread accessibility.

### BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE BRAND

“Our commitment to sustainability is at the core of our brand,” asserts Bagaria. Pee Safe offers a range of eco-friendly products, including biodegradable and organic pads, tampons, menstrual cups, and reusable sanitary pads.

### CHALLENGES AND TRIUMPHS IN FUNDRAISING

“Raising institutional investment proved to be challenging,” admits Bagaria. However, with unwavering determination, he persisted in his vision. Alchemy Venture Fund recognized the potential of Pee Safe and became the first institutional investor, providing the necessary support to propel the company forward.

### EXPANDING HORIZONS

“We have experienced remarkable growth both domestically and inter-


nationally,” Bagaria proudly states. Pee Safe’s products are distributed through a combination of online and offline channels, with a presence in over 12,000 stores across 90 cities in India. “We strategically place our products in various locations, ensuring widespread accessibility,” Bagaria explains.

### EMBRACING COLLABORATION AND INSPIRING CHANGE

“We are more than just a brand—we are a catalyst for change,” Bagaria emphasises. Pee Safe welcomes entrepreneurs who can help expand the category of intimate hygiene. “We believe in working together to improve women’s health and hygiene, sharing knowledge, and creating a positive impact on society.”

### THE ROAD AHEAD

“With a robust R&D team and a forward-thinking approach, we envision Pee Safe as the world’s leading feminine hygiene brand,” shares Bagaria. The brand aims to continue pioneering innovative products and advocating for sustainable practices and holistic approaches to women’s well-being.

Bagaria’s story exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit — a blend of passion, resilience, and a relentless pursuit of creating positive change. As Pee Safe continues to inspire and empower women across the globe, its impact on personal hygiene and wellness is destined to leave an indelible mark. 



**Shankar Prasad**  
Founder  
Plum Goodness



**Dr. Hitesh Bhatt**, Director, Marketing and Communication, RAI, and Executive Editor, STOrai, has an Exclusive Conversation with **Shankar Prasad**, Founder of Plum Goodness to understand the brand ethos, and the idea behind the company

**S**tep into the world of Plum Goodness, India's pioneering 100% vegan beauty brand that has captured the hearts of consumers nationwide. In this exclusive interview with Shankar Prasad, the visionary founder of Plum Goodness, we delve into the brand's remarkable journey, its commitment to good science and sustainability, and its ambitious plans for the future. Get ready to explore the intersection of nature and science in the realm of personal care.

## **PLUM GOODNESS: ADDING THE COOL QUOTIENT TO BEAUTY**



Founded in 2013 by Shankar Prasad, an IIT ISB alumni, Plum Goodness stands as India's first vegan beauty brand. With a strong portfolio of PETA-approved, cruelty-free, and non-toxic products spanning skin care, hair care, personal care, and makeup, Plum Goodness has carved a niche in the industry. Prasad shared, "Our brand is based on the philosophy of goodness, combining the richest sources of natural nutrients with research-backed actives."

When asked about the inspiration behind Plum Goodness, Prasad explained his lifelong fascination with the personal care industry and the desire to create products that people love using. With a background in consumer goods, Prasad recognized the potential of the skincare sector and the loyalty it commands when excellent products and branding align. The vegan concept emerged as a natural choice, driven by the belief that creating vegan cosmetics was technically feasible and aligned with Plum Goodness' philosophy of goodness.

At the heart of Plum Goodness lies a deep commitment to product efficacy. Prasad emphasized the brand's consumer-centric approach, stating, "Every product we develop starts with a consumer need. We strive to find the most efficacious and delightful ways to address those needs." The brand's emphasis on research and development, coupled with active consumer engagement

and feedback, has resulted in a loyal customer base.

While the beauty and personal care industry witness a surge of brands entering various categories, Prasad believes that achieving success in multiple categories requires significant effort and consumer acceptance. Plum Goodness, with its DNA as a multi-category brand, understands the challenges and nuances of expanding into new product lines. Prasad highlighted the importance of maintaining brand differentiation and consumer acceptance in each category, a task that requires a combination of art, science, and hard work.

With Plum Goodness achieving a revenue milestone of 250 crores in 2022, the brand's growth trajectory is set to continue. Prasad envisions doubling the revenue to 500 crores within the next year or two and ultimately reaching the ambitious target of 1,000 crores within the next five years. The growth strategy revolves around executing well, maintaining discipline, and expanding the brand's retail presence to tap into new markets.

Sustainability holds a special place in Plum Goodness' ethos. Prasad shared the brand's initiatives, including the Empties for Good program, which encourages customers to recycle packaging, and partnerships with organizations like WWF to contribute to meaningful

environmental projects. The brand's dedication to responsible packaging and continuous exploration of innovative sustainable practices further reinforce its commitment to being a conscientious industry player.

As Plum Goodness marches towards its future, Prasad envisions delivering a billion delightful personal care experiences daily. With a focus on aligning with customer needs and distilling their views into the brand's direction, Plum Goodness aims to become an essential household name in India. Prasad believes that by constantly improving, executing well, and putting the customer at the forefront, Plum Goodness will continue to stay relevant and impactful in the ever-evolving beauty and personal care industry.

In conclusion, Plum Goodness exemplifies the power of marrying nature and science to create a vegan beauty brand that resonates with consumers seeking effective and ethical personal care products. Shankar Prasad's visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to goodness, sustainability, and customer satisfaction have propelled Plum Goodness to the forefront of the industry, with even greater achievements on the horizon. 



The Souled Store's Co-founder **Harsh Lal**, spills the beans in an exclusive interview with **Dr. Hitesh Bhatt**, Director Marketing and Communications, Editorial Director, STOrai. Find out how they turned their passion into a thriving business, acquired over 150 licenses from top brands, and set their sights on becoming India's ultimate pop culture merchandise destination!

**Harsh Lal**  
Co-founder  
The Souled Store

## THE SOULED STORE: WHEN POP CULTURE DREAMS TURN INTO MERCHANDISE REALITY

**A**t The Souled Store, one is immediately immersed in a vibrant world where superheroes rub shoulders with cartoon characters, and pop culture references hang in the air. Spearheading this unconventional merchandise destination is the affable Harsh Lal, co-founder of The Souled Store.

Ten years ago, Harsh Lal and his co-founders embarked on a journey that was anything but ordinary. "We had no business experience; no

family business; no money,” Harsh recounts. Despite their jobs, there was a shared feeling that “this life does not excite us.” Fuelled by this discontent and armed with the idea of The Souled Store, they had a clear conviction - “we had nothing to lose – we were kids.”

Their journey began as a group of young individuals who disliked their jobs but loved the world of pop culture. They dreamt of a different life and poured their savings into starting The Souled Store. With the help of a friend, they designed their website for a mere ₹25,000, showcasing their resourcefulness and determination.

They even managed to save ₹5 lakh, which was invested in inventory. As Harsh fondly recalls, “We created a space which is now India’s official merchandise page.” Today, ‘Souled Store’ is not just a name; it’s a “brand recall,” standing tall as the “biggest brand for official merchandise” boasting partnerships with renowned leagues like IPL and EPL, not to mention Disney, Warner, and Netflix.

Recognising the untapped market for quality, affordable pop culture merchandise in India, The Souled Store filled a significant gap. Fans were offered a diverse range of products that catered to their interests in superheroes, cartoons, and other pop culture elements. To ensure their product offerings hit the mark, the founders leveraged

data-driven strategies and market insights. They paid attention to their fans’ wishes, meticulously crafting products that spoke directly to them.

#### **BUT HOW DID THEY START THIS?**

One might wonder, how did a bunch of novices pull off such a grand feat? Harsh explains, “We didn’t burn money on marketing; we focused on great product designs and worked strategically with our partners to build credibility.”

Their first products were launched with a simple aim – to gain customer feedback. As Harsh believes, “What the customer wants is what we need to put out.” And they’ve stuck to that mantra. Today’s process is more streamlined, but the core philosophy remains the same - stay true to the customer.

#### **THE LICENCING BEGINS**

The journey to acquiring licenses was also a significant one. Harsh recollects how they obtained their first licenses for Big Bang Theory and Friends back in 2013-2014. He emphasises that every license is a separate partnership and that they were always aiming to “do something extra for the customer rather than just stick a design on the t-shirt,” adding a “deeper-longer value” to their products.

Their most significant game-changer has been the acquisition of over 150 licenses from top brands like Disney, Warner, Netflix, and others.

This allowed The Souled Store to create official merchandise, bringing their fans’ favourite characters and stories to life.

The Souled Store recently expanded into kids wear. The founders, not resting on their laurels, have their sights set on becoming India’s top brand for casual wear.

Even though The Souled Store’s digital presence was strong, they recognised the importance of physical presence for credibility. Their first offline store opened in 2019, helping them recover their initial investment within four months. The venture was so successful that they plan to open 25 more stores in major cities, aiming to open 100 stores in the next few years.

Interestingly, they’ve debunked the discount myth. Understanding that modern customers value quality products and consistent service, they focus on sustainable growth and profitability rather than lure customers with discounts.

From regular employees to trendsetters, The Souled Store’s journey is a testament to their creativity, commitment, and passion. With their unique approach to licensing, expansion into new product categories, and strategic offline presence, they’re making fans’ dreams a reality. They continue to captivate fans and aspire to be the ultimate destination for all things pop culture in India. 🧐



**Sudip Ghose**, Founder & Managing Director of Uppercase, divulges his entrepreneurial journey and vision to **Dr. Hitesh Bhatt**, Director Marketing and Communication, and Editorial Director STOrai Magazine

**Sudip Ghose**  
Founder & Managing Director  
Uppercase

# CRAFTING A SUSTAINABLE LEGACY WITH UPPERCASE

In the eclectic realm of fashion and luggage, few names have managed to captivate the market quite like Sudip Ghose. His brand, Uppercase, has become synonymous with sustainable, quality, and innovative luggage solutions. Chatting with Ghose, the Founder & Managing Director of Uppercase, one gets a clear view of his journey, vision, and the unbeatable spirit that led to the brand's monumental success.

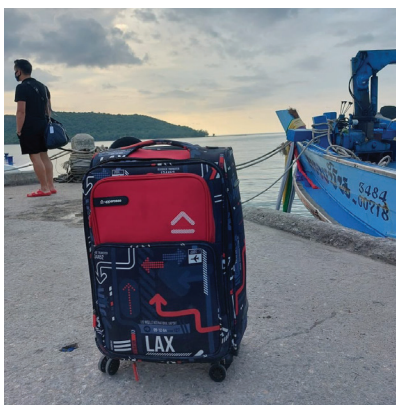
Ghose begins by highlighting the importance of sustainability, "To



us, fashion isn't just what you see; it's about the message it conveys. We chose an extraordinary person for our campaign, someone who embodies not just the sport but the commitment and dedication required for sustainability. His recent injury was unfortunate, but we are looking forward to seeing him back on the field, supporting our beloved nation and contributing to our World Cup dreams."

Despite his strong foothold in the industry, Ghose's journey hasn't been devoid of challenges. Reflecting on the testing times, he mentions, "Even when our ambassador was not on the field, the impact was evident. The Test series losses were a testament to his importance. We truly missed having a good bowler. However, just as he delivers on the field, we strive to consistently deliver as a brand, reaffirming our place in our consumers' hearts."

Pivoting to the luggage business, Ghose gives us a candid insight. "For an entrepreneur like me, starting Up-



percase wasn't challenging because I was familiar with the industry's intricacies. But for someone new, there is a steep learning curve. Regardless, the foundation of any business is conviction. No business is inherently easy or difficult—it is all about the people steering it," he shares with a determined glint in his eyes.

His words echo the sentiment of countless entrepreneurs: if you believe in your venture, you can overcome any obstacle. Drawing from his experience as a managing director of a listed company, Ghose elaborates, "There was a significant shift in perception when I ventured on my own. Yet, the reception I received, especially from trade partners, was heartwarming. It's proof that if you're genuine and deliver value, people remember."

Ghose's credentials undoubtedly played a pivotal role in securing funding for Uppercase, especially during the challenging times of the pandemic's second wave. "When I began seeking funds for a luggage company, it seemed counter-intuitive given the global shutdown. But within about 35 days, I secured my first investment," he recalls with a sense of pride.

His advice for budding entrepreneurs? "Funds typically ask five crucial questions," he informs, listing them off with practiced ease: "What is your story? Why should I hear this story from you? Why can't someone



else narrate this tale? What is in it for me? And why would consumers believe your story?" Sudip firmly believes that if one can articulate answers to these quintessential questions, securing funds becomes a more straightforward endeavour.

The spirit of the Uppercase team, Ghose claims, can be encapsulated in two words: "Never ordinary." It's this spirit that drives them to explore newer horizons, pushing boundaries and setting benchmarks in the luggage industry.

As our conversation comes to an end, Ghose's enthusiasm for Uppercase's future remains undiminished. With a gleam of ambition in his eyes, he concludes, "We have huge aspirations to go global. The goal is to stabilize our India business and then expand internationally. When we venture into new markets, I envision half of our business stemming from abroad."

With leaders like Sudip Ghose at the helm, the future of Uppercase looks bright, expansive, and most certainly, extraordinary. 😊



**Suhasini Sampath**, the co-founder of YogaBar speaks to RAI's Director of Marketing and Communication, and Editorial Director STOrai, **Dr. Hitesh Bhatt**, and shares how she and he sister patented the name YogaBar years before it became a famous brand in India

**Suhasini Sampath**  
Co-founder  
YogaBar

## UNPACKING THE SUCCESS STORY OF YOGABAR

In the heart of the health food revolution, one company stands as a beacon of balance, taste, and nutrition: YogaBar. At the helm of this successful enterprise is the ever-passionate, ambitious, and entrepreneurial Suhasini Sampath. Her commitment to the brand, her consumers, and her unwavering belief in transparency and sustainability has turned YogaBar into a force to be reckoned with in India's FMCG sector. We caught up with Suhasini to delve into her entrepreneurial journey, her recent partnership with ITC, and her



aspirations for YogaBar's future.

The conversation kicked off with Suhasini discussing the company's recent strategic partnership with ITC. In an era of cut-throat competition and a booming market, it's crucial to strike deals that benefit both parties. The ITC deal, according to Suhasini, is precisely one of those rare win-win partnerships. The reason? A mutual recognition of fairness in terms of deal conditions. This partnership has led to a substantial boost in YogaBar's distribution capabilities, a significant leap from 4000 to potentially 45,000 stores over the next three years.

She attributes YogaBar's selection by ITC over other brands to the company's standing as the largest health food brand in the country and the brand's sheer strength, a testament to their quality products and impressive market presence. Currently, YogaBar dominates breakfast and kids snacking categories, with an eye towards further expansion.

Suhasini expressed confidence about YogaBar's position in the competitive health food market. Despite the influx of numerous brands in the sector, YogaBar stands out, thanks to its easy recall value and the strategic naming, a nod to a practice intrinsi-

cally linked to health and wellness.

When quizzed about her vision for YogaBar in the next five years, she enthusiastically painted a picture of YogaBar as a one-stop-shop for health food. A space where a conscious consumer could walk into a store and choose a healthy alternative for every item in their cart under the YogaBar brand.

Suhasini's advice for budding entrepreneurs revolved around the importance of passion, a deep understanding of their consumers, conscious use of capital, and transparency. As for female entrepreneurs, Suhasini shared her belief that gender is irrelevant when it comes to business. She encouraged women to be patient and prepared to play the long game while balancing their other roles.

Her entrepreneurial journey culminates in YogaBar, a brand she describes in three words as 'honest,' 'tasty,' and 'healthy.' Five years down the line, she envisions YogaBar as the largest new-age health food company in India, rivalling the revenues of a large multinational corporation.

This spirited conversation with Suhasini Sampath underlined the remarkable journey of YogaBar. The passion, commitment, and the desire to provide consumers with honest and healthy products make Suhasini's story one of incredible inspiration and determination. 🧘



## FUTURE OF COMPLIANCE IN RETAIL: TRENDS, AUTOMATION, AND REGULATORY CHALLENGES



**T**he consumerism effect has seen a tremendous change recently, ultimately affecting the retail industry. A change in the economy and marketplace has ultimately changed how consumers are wired. Nowadays, consumers prefer experience and comfort over the pricing and utility of the product. Brick and Mortar setups, considered the usual places of retail,

are in danger and face enormous challenges. The E-commerce industry, on both large and small scales, provides consumers with a customized experience and the comforts of shopping from home. Impulse shopping also aids in the growth of e-commerce and offers a larger variety of options for products. E-commerce also has the added advantage of tech support, which customizes the whole experience through initiatives

such as self-service kiosks, artificial intelligence, and algorithms recommending the consumers the product they wish to purchase.

Furthermore, as sustainability and environmental consciousness are gaining traction rapidly amongst the public, e-commerce is also focusing on providing sustainable packaging, including recyclable or bio-degradable packaging.



The demographics of the retail shops are no longer important, as almost everything is automated. Consumers prefer a more automated system of purchase, which can be filtered according to their requirements.

**Automation is present & future to retail.**

Retailers are required to break from their traditional methods of sale and budgeting in today's environment, which is extremely competitive. Automation is the perfect investment to cut down costs in the long run and sustain in today's market to increase margins. Big retailers such as Amazon, Flipkart, etc., are already automated, and even if a retailer thinks about automating today, he has a long route to catch up with the existing players. A big advantage of automating businesses and retail experience is the elimination of risks. Purchase trends, history, and purchase patterns can be generated from the consumer's data on the website/app visits, and that can lead to a reduction in losses and inventorying of adequate commodities. This will increase sales and reduce the dead inventory, which might require clearance sales. Another benefit of automation is the talent pool, which need not be demographically located in the same location. Now, retailers and business owners can select a



› Thenmozhi Krishnakumar is the AGM – Legal – Compliance Knowledge Hub, Aparajitha Corporate Services Pvt. Ltd.

workforce who need not be in the same location.

**Regulatory Challenges**

However, with the ever-growing e-commerce and the change in retail trends, it comes with regulatory challenges. As young, millennial entrepreneurs increase to dominate the retail sector, who are changing the trends, the challenges in regulatory compliance also change.

With the workplace moving online and demographic barriers almost vanishing, retailers need to ensure that they are complying with any regulations that might apply to them. This includes vendor compliances, which need not be local compliance as the vendors are also located across



› Shourya Mittal Gupta is part of Legal Initiatives – Compliance Knowledge Hub, Aparajitha Corporate Services Pvt. Ltd.

borders. With the workforce's management, the retailers are to ensure that adequate pay and wages, along with prescribed work hours and leaves, are being provided. Further, a bigger issue that dominates the regulatory challenges is the protection of consumer data and privacy. Larger-scaled e-commerce companies are more likely to have adequate measures in place for data protection and privacy.

However, smaller-scale e-commerce entrepreneurs, more likely operating from their homes, might not be aware of such compliances. In addition to the above, governments across the globe are also becoming stringent about environmental, health, and safety compliances. 😊

# A SUSTAINABLE STORY: HOW THIS INCENSE STICK BRAND'S APPROACH SET THEM APART IN THE MARK

**B**harat Bansal has always been driven by his desire to create something unique. Leveraging his experience from building his previous venture, he has now co-founded Nirmalaya - an eco-conscious aroma brand specialising in charcoal-free aromatic incense products.

Nirmalaya, initiated in October 2020, came to prominence after its feature on Shark Tank season 2. The brand, the brainchild of Bharat, Rajeev, and Surbhi Bansal, was inspired by the traditional process of flower-to-incense conversion, the alarming pollution of Yamuna, and a shared fondness for fragrances.

Today, Nirmalaya offers over 15 fragrances across a range of products including incense sticks, cones, backflow idols, and their star product, havan cups. Adhering to their eco-conscious philosophy, they've recently expanded their portfolio



to include ittars, organic gulals for holi, and essential aroma oils, all embraced enthusiastically by their environmentally-aware clientele. Here is his story

## **CAN YOU TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY IN FOUNDING NIRMALAYA, AND WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO CREATE AN ECO-CONSCIOUS AROMA BRAND?**

Rajeev, one of the founders saw the

process of conversion of flowers to incense in Shirdi Temple and on enquiry we came to know the process. Since we are living in Delhi for more than 30 years and have seen Yamuna getting polluted to an untreatable extent. Also, we come from religious backgrounds and our religious sentiments are hurt whenever we see offered flowers dumped into garbage or landfills. So this encouraged us to start Nirmalaya.

**THE INDIAN INCENSE STICKS MARKET IS EXPECTED TO GROW RAPIDLY OVER THE NEXT FEW YEARS. WHAT SETS NIRMALAYA APART FROM ITS COMPETITORS, AND HOW DO YOU PLAN TO STAY AHEAD OF THE CURVE?**

The market is growing many folds specially because people are becoming more and more conscious about mental wellness, environment and sustainability, and they want to contribute to the environment in some way or the other. There is growth in disposable income of the customer in turn allowing him to buy good quality products irrespective of price, which is a positive point for a brand like us. We have various competitors in the segment because of the large size of the overall wellness sector. While other focus only on recycling the flower, our prime focus is waste management via recycling the flowers as well as wellness through fragrance. Apart from this our product portfolio is wide when compared to our competitors. We have 4 products- incense sticks, hawan cups, cones, and dhoop sticks along with gual, essential oils, attars, etc.. Along with that, the fragrance that we offer is quite long-lasting, better than any other product available in the market and the smoke from our products also do not suffocate.

**HOW DOES NIRMALAYA SUPPORT RURAL WOMEN IN ITS PRODUCTION PROCESS, AND WHAT IM-**



› Chetan Thakwani, Chairman, Legacy of Bhojraj

**PACT HAS THIS HAD ON THEIR LIVELIHOODS?**

We are recycling 40 tons of waste flowers every month. Our floral waste is collected from 300 temples across Delhi NCR every day and recycled by over 100+ women workers. We employ 40+ underprivileged women full time who work with us as team Nirmalaya and recycle floral waste and handicraft incense products that reach our customers. Also, during holi, we engage NGO's near our factory and teach rural women on how to make holi colours at home and to provide them with livelihood, we purchase those colours from them post our quality checks and sell them under our brand.

**CAN YOU DISCUSS NIRMALAYA'S "WASTE TO WELLNESS" APPROACH AND HOW IT ALIGNS WITH THE LARGER TREND TO-**

**WARDS SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTALISM?**

We are a company based on the model of circular economy. We have derived a value out of floral waste and intend to continue doing this in future and are known today for our fragrances. By our process of recycling floral waste to Incense products, we are addressing many problems at once. We are recycling floral waste, that accounts for 16% cause for our river water pollution, we are employing 40+ underprivileged women for the process, providing them with livelihood and focussing on women empowerment and we are also manufacturing products that are not harmful and irritating, thereby focusing on health and wellness. If we talk about wellness, there are 7 types of wellness and Nirmalaya very well focuses on 3 out

of them i.e. environmental, spiritual and emotional.

**YOU RECENTLY RECEIVED SEED FUNDING FROM ARTHA VENTURE FUND AND OTHER INVESTORS. HOW DO YOU PLAN TO ALLOCATE THIS FUNDING ACROSS DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE BUSINESS, AND WHAT ARE YOUR REVENUE PROJECTIONS FOR THE UPCOMING FISCAL YEAR?**

We are looking at allocation the funds to expand the business in a big way and getting a corporate structure and process to the Nirmalaya Ecosystem. Major portion of funds will be spent on branding and marketing. Another decent percentage of funds would be allocated to hiring the right staff to take the brand and sales forward / increased retail presence and strong online delivery systems and processes. We will close FY 2022-23 with a growth at 300%. We closed last FY at 2.6 crores.

**CAN YOU DISCUSS ANY PLANS FOR EXPANDING THE NIRMALAYA PRODUCT LINE OR ENTERING NEW MARKETS IN THE FUTURE?**

Our entire focus is on growth and we are moving big time into exports, gifting and offline distribution channel now. We will soon be present in US, UK and UAE. In the offline channel, we are majorly focusing on Delhi/NCR as of now and then we will move to the other parts of the country. Regarding more SKUs, we are

currently scaling up in our existing product portfolio only and after 4-5 months, we will come up with some more products.

**HOW DOES NIRMALAYA ENSURE THAT ITS PRODUCTS ARE OF HIGH QUALITY AND CONSISTENTLY MEET CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS?**

We focus on our quality and customer satisfaction in two ways. We ensure quality by standardisation of our recipe and manufacturing process. Our continuous research on improving our existing product and regular quality checks helps us keep our quality consistent. We are also regular with taking feedbacks from customers and then working on the feedback which in turn help us in staying connected to the customer.

**CAN YOU SPEAK TO THE ROLE THAT TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION PLAY IN NIRMALAYA'S BUSINESS STRATEGY, PARTICULARLY IN REGARDS TO SUSTAINABILITY AND WASTE REDUCTION?**


We are a consumer startup following path of circular economy. Technology plays an important role for us. Technology of our products is based on patented process of CSIR-CIMAP Lucknow, based on which, we have innovated our own recipe of products for long lasting fragrance. Moreover, technology plays an important role in designing a sales point for us in terms of our website and marketplaces. We make a good use of tech-

nology for internal controls of our organization also.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO OTHER ENTREPRENEURS LOOKING TO BUILD A SUCCESSFUL ECO-CONSCIOUS BRAND IN TODAY'S MARKET?**

Need Input Businesses are not made on Excel Sheets. Be realistic in approach and no magic happens, only hard work and perseverance pays. Survival is very important. It is too early for me to share tips but yes i would advise young entrepreneurs to work hard, do all you workings before you start acting and take a calculated risk.

**FINALLY, CAN YOU SHARE ANY UPCOMING PROJECTS OR INITIATIVES THAT NIRMALAYA HAS IN THE WORKS, AND WHAT IMPACT DO YOU HOPE TO HAVE ON THE INDUSTRY AND THE BROADER COMMUNITY?**

We want to capture the entire premium sector market in fragrances and incense and moreover disrupt the incense industry with our zero charcoal products. Our entire focus is on first scaling up our existing product portfolio, spreading our brand into exports and distribution channel and then launching some new products, so that we can optimize the distribution channel. We want to create a community also, where we promote wellness through fragrances and also work on recycling more and more floral waste. 





# WHY JOIN RAI

## **Advocacy Support**

RAI makes representations to Central and State Governments and local authorities on critical issues. RAI liaises with the Government, in identified areas for the development of the retail community. As a member, you would have access to the 'Member's Only' section of the website – and be able to participate in collaborative efforts within the community to shape policy.

## **Guidelines and Standards**

RAI disseminates on common guidelines and policies for the sector which would be accessible to Members. These include the National Occupation Standards – developed by RASCI (Retailers Association's Skill Council of India). Other guidelines help in the creation of infrastructure and facilities to improve the retail environment in India.

**Networking Meets:** As a member you would be invited to participate in Networking Meets held at Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Bengaluru, Kolkata, Coimbatore, Kochi and other cities.

You can also:

- Be part of and steer industry committees on aspects such as Supply Chain, Finance, Advocacy, HR, and Technology.
- Attend events, seminars and training programs organised by RAI at member rates. Get access to RAI infrastructure facilities in Mumbai for training activities.
- Receive complimentary copies of STOrai and RAI's daily newsletter – Replenish – which aggregates news, insights and jobs relevant to Indian retail.
- Purchase RAI publications at member rates.
- Receive survey findings, trade information and legislation updates.

**Most importantly, you commit to helping  
create a robust retail industry in India.**



## Join RAI as

- **Core Member:** Core Membership of RAI is applicable to retailers across sectors. To join as a Core member, a retailer must fulfil the following conditions:
  - a) Issue a tax invoice for every transaction.
  - b) Be registered under Goods and Services Tax (GST).
  - c) Not employ child labour.
  - d) Earn over 50% of the organization's business or INR 100 Crore whichever is less from retail activities.

<u>Turnover</u>	<u>Annual Fee</u>	<u>with 18% GST</u>
Upto Rs 5 crore	Rs 2,500/-	Rs 2,950/-
Rs 5 - 10 crore	Rs 5,000/-	Rs 5,900/-
Rs 10 - 20 core	Rs 10,000/-	Rs 11,800/-
Rs 20 - 50 crore	Rs 15,000/-	Rs 17,700/-
Rs 50 - 300 crore	Rs 25,000/-	Rs 29,500/-
Rs 300 - 500 crore	Rs 35,000/-	Rs 41,300/-
Rs 500 - 1,000 crore	Rs 1,00,000/-	Rs 1,18,000/-
Rs 1,000 - 5,000 crore	Rs 2,00,000/-	Rs 2,36,000/-
Above Rs 5,000 crore	Rs 5,00,000/-	Rs 5,90,000/-

- **Associate Member:** Associate Members are companies that support retail industry. These include retail consultancies, retail hardware and software suppliers (design companies, retail fixture and furniture companies, POS hardware, software, security systems). To be eligible a service provider should:
  - a) Be registered as a company or firm in India.
  - b) Be a supplier, vendor, developer or service provider to retail.
  - c) Be registered under Goods and Services Tax (GST).

Membership fee structure based on the turnover of the company is as follows :

<u>Turnover</u>	<u>One time Joining fee</u>	<u>Annual Fee</u>	<u>with 18% GST</u>
Less than Rs 20 crore	Rs 1 lakh	Rs 10,000/-	Rs 1,29,800/-
More than Rs 20 crore	Rs 2 lakh	Rs 25,000/-	Rs 2,65,500/-

- **Real Estate Member:** Real estate members are companies that develop/manage retail destinations such as malls and shopping centres. To be eligible a company should:
  - a) Be registered as a company or firm in India.
  - b) Be a supplier, vendor, developer or service provider to retail.

<u>Turnover</u>	<u>One time Joining fee</u>	<u>Annual Fee</u>	<u>with 18% GST</u>
Less than Rs 20 crore	Rs 1 lakh	Rs 25,000/-	Rs 1,47,500/-
More than Rs 20 crore	Rs 2 lakh	Rs 1,00,000/-	Rs 3,54,000/-



## Join RAI as

- **Affiliate Member:** Affiliate associations are associations/industry bodies that partner with RAI towards promoting exchange of information and pursuing common interests. For instance: NASSCOM, The Federation of Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Clothing Manufacturers Association of India (CMAI), Gems & Jewellery Association of India (GJAI), National Restaurant Association of India (NRAI) and All India Footwear Manufacturers & Retailers Association (AIFMRA) are affiliate members of RAI.
- **Academic Member:** Academic membership is valid for one year from signing the agreement. The college/university shall pay Rs. 1, 00,000 (Rs one lakh only) plus 18 % GST to RAI at the time of signing the agreement under the scope of this Agreement as consideration.

To be eligible an institution should:

- a) Be registered as an educational institution or an educational trust in India.
- b) Offer one or more courses in Management/Retail/Design/Visual Merchandising, as part of the curriculum.

Annual Membership fee Rs. 1,00,000 + \*18% GST

### To know more about RAI membership contact

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# NEW MEMBERS

## CORE MEMBERS

- Abros Sports International Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- Aditya Wellness Retails Pvt. Ltd., Vizag
- Amrutaya Processing Indian Pvt. Ltd., Pune
- Athyuk Automotive Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Avira Diamonds, Chennai
- AVR Swarna Mahal Jewelry Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Bhevin Exim, Kolkata
- Burgundy Hospitality Pvt. Ltd. Mumbai
- Chakhor India Ventures Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata
- Chennai Kulfi, Chennai
- Chheda Grain Stores, Mumbai
- Chique Fashion, Delhi
- Comfort Retail, Chennai
- Damensch Apparel Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru
- Decowindow (Jayanita Exports Pvt. Ltd.), Delhi
- Duroflex Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru
- Eat N Joy Bakers, Hyderabad
- Essorsuperfoods Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Flyberry Gourmet Retail LLP, Hyderabad
- Giriraj Stores, Delhi
- Happilo International Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru
- Hellmart Services Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- Himalaya Wellness Co., Bengaluru
- Indiejewels Pvt. Ltd. (GIVA Jewelry), Bengaluru
- Jouleshealth Enterprise Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru
- Jyoti Departmental Store, Kurnool
- Lamiya, Chennai
- Looks Salons, Delhi
- Maruthi Venkatasai Retail Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad
- Moti Confectionery Pvt. Ltd., Kolkata
- Mukharochak, Kolkata
- Nicobar Design Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- NutsMojo, Bengaluru
- Paramount Clothing Co., Chennai
- Parshw Nuts & Spices, Mumbai
- Patterns Furnishing, Chennai
- Platinum Business Hotel, Hyderabad
- Rainbow Pro Gear, Chennai
- Relier De Enterprises Pvt. Ltd., Coimbatore
- Rubarru Hotels, Noida
- Sarumam Pharmacy, Chennai
- Sarvana Tryitfirst India Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad
- Shanthalam Coimbatore
- Shanti & CO, Chennai
- Shanus Boutique, Chennai
- Sheriff fashions Pvt. Ltd., Agartala
- Signature Export, Tirupur
- Slowave Pvt. Ltd., Bengaluru
- Sri Krishna Nagai Maligai Pvt. Ltd., Madurai
- Sri Madhura Jewellery Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Tania Corporation, Mumbai
- Thakkar Bakers, Mumbai
- Trends of India, Jharkhand
- Urban Food Co, Kolkata
- Vanilla Bean Bakery, Kolkata
- VKC Footgear Pvt. Ltd., Kochi
- Whizzo, Salem
- Yoda Whole Food Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad

## ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

- BDO India LLP, Mumbai
- Buynxt Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- Comboseal Industries Pvt. Ltd., Delhi
- Consulting & Beyond, Chennai
- Diginfluenz Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Focus Softnet Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad
- Gyankaar Technologies Pvt. Ltd. (Pagarbooks), Bengaluru
- Infidigit Consultant Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai
- Intellect Commerce Ltd., Chennai
- Jiffy Software London, Kolkata
- Kider India Pvt. Ltd. (Instor), Pune
- Lookbooks Tech Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad
- Mekark Structures India Pvt. Ltd., Chennai
- Radiant Cash Management Service, Chennai
- Senselab Technology Pvt. Ltd. (Intelisa), Hyderabad
- Sun Consultants & Engineers, Delhi
- TVS Electronics Ltd., Chennai
- Zungang Manpowers India Pvt. Ltd., Mumbai



# CATALYSING RETAIL SUCCESS

VIDVEDAA PRG – Your Gateway to Retail Triumph at Chennai Airport

In the ever-evolving landscape of retail, every interaction, every opportunity, and every location holds the potential for success. VIDVEDAA PRG, having participated as an associate partner in the Chennai Retail Summit #crs2023, brings a wealth of insights and prospects to the forefront of the retail industry. This event not only enabled us to engage with industry leaders but also offered a platform to showcase our expertise, resources, and commitment to nurturing retail entrepreneurship.

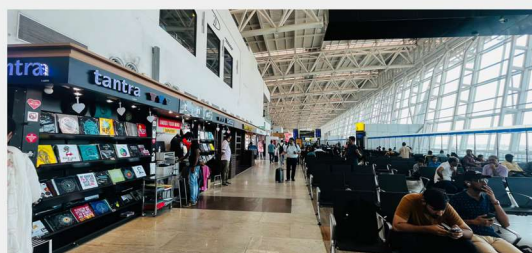


Now, we extend a warm invitation to explore a realm of untapped potential - Chennai Airport. Ranked 3rd in air traffic growth and welcoming a staggering 35 million passengers annually, the airport stands as a bustling hub of activity and a canvas of opportunity for retailers. Imagine a vibrant atmosphere where diverse individuals and global travellers convene, creating a backdrop for your brand to captivate and leave a lasting impression.

We understand that embarking on a new retail venture can be both thrilling and challenging. VIDVEDAA PRG serves as your guiding compass in navigating this dynamic landscape, offering insights, resources, and tailored solutions for seamless integration into the Chennai retail ecosystem. Our dedicated team illuminates your path to success, providing expertise and unwavering support to overcome obstacles and seize opportunities.

Embracing the power of location and buzz, we ensure your brand ascends to new heights of recognition and achievement.

With a spirit of aspiration, following the transformative wave of Chennai Airport Retail Evolution and in the companionship of VIDVEDAA PRG, your brand's potential is bound to reach greater and newer heights. To explore further and to put your brand's excellence on display for the world to see and shine a spotlight on its brilliance, reach out to us at [airportretail@vidvedaa.com](mailto:airportretail@vidvedaa.com). Let's embark on this journey united by our shared aim of shaping the retail ecosystem, without limits.



# MBH PLANNING



## Global Design Firm

Mumbai · Bengaluru · San Francisco Bay · New York City · Denver

### Our Advantage

34 years as a trusted design partner  
10,000+ successfully completed projects  
Experience working in 96 countries  
Client relationships spanning decades  
250+ talented design professionals

### About Us

Established in 1989, MBH is an award-winning global design firm with decades of experience designing transformative spaces for many of the world's top retail, restaurant and hospitality brands.

### Our Services

Conceptual Design  
Construction Documents  
Visualization  
Project Execution  
Retail Rollouts  
Branding & Graphics  
Fixture Design

Let's Create **Memorable Destinations Together**

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