



RAYMOND REDUX



Mohit Dhanjal,
Director-Retail, Raymond

It is makeover time at Raymond. The Raymond Shop (TRS) outlets are being renovated across the country to offer bespoke services, upgraded technology and a more contemporary ambience to customers. The brand is launching exclusive fabrics and vibrant collections to connect with the younger audience.

***Manisha Almadi Midha** catches up with **MOHIT DHANJAL**, Director-Retail, Raymond to know more about the brand's facelift plans.*

Gautam Singhania's fabric and apparel giant, Raymond, is on a transformation journey. According to Mohit

Dhanjal, director-Retail, Raymond the brand conducts research every year to evaluate its performance vis-à-vis other brands in the market and to understand consumer behaviour, sentiments and preferences. "Prior to the renovation, one of the clear insights was that Raymond was perceived as an older brand where a father usually takes his son to shop, for an occasion. While we cannot suddenly change Raymond into a hip store, we have embarked on a journey to rejuvenate the brand and make it more relevant to a larger segment of consumers. The manner in which we communicate with the mass media and the way our stores look, is part of the journey," says Dhanjal.

Renovating stores across India

The facelift started two or three years ago when they piloted the new design concept in a couple of their company-owned company-operated (COCO) TRS outlets. "After the success of the pilot stores, since last year we have renovated 40 stores (33 franchises and seven COCO) till date and plan to renovate an additional 50 stores of which 43 to 45 are franchises, this year," says Dhanjal. Most of the Raymond stores – 659 out of 720 in 380 cities – are franchises, and have made their presence even in towns like Kannur in Kerala. "We plan to renovate 90-100 stores by the end of this financial year and aim to re-design all our stores in the next three or four years," he adds.

A touch of London

The new stores have been conceptualised by London-based firm JHP Design and their creative director, Raj Wilkinson. "We now use our in-house team of architects and store designers to replicate the same across different sizes of stores. In today's time, it is imperative to renovate. The only constant is change. However, there is no formula that a retailer can follow as the pace of change is very fast. Therefore, we have integrated the need for frequent change in our new design which gives us the flexibility to create a new look as and when required, be it with the launch of our

spring/summer and autumn/winter collections, or when we introduce and change categories within the store," says Dhanjal.

Investment and returns

Raymond has reportedly spent ₹250 crore last fiscal for the facelift. "For COCO stores, we invest in renovation. For the renovation of the franchise stores, the investment is done by the franchisee. However, it does not matter to consumers whether the stores are COCO or franchise because services and experience expected are the same," points out Dhanjal. Raymond has apparently witnessed a 15 per cent increase in transactions and a 25 per cent top-line growth since the facelift.

Offering improvised services

The 40 stores renovated have 1,50,000 sq ft of retail space and the ones being redone this year are about 1,80,000 sq ft. Most of these are located in high streets and some in malls. Most of the newer stores are already in malls and have the improved design aesthetics. Raymond has four brands – Park Avenue, Colorplus, Parx and Made-to-Measure, and is innovating in fashion and fabric to grab the

attention of the new generation that has the world on the smart phone. Last year, Italian designer Vito Dell'Erba, who has had an association with Prada, was appointed Raymond's creative head to give the brand a more contemporary and international look. Raymond is looking at linen as the game changer for the company, and is trying to transform itself from a worsted suiting label into a lifestyle brand.

Dhanjal says, "Rather than retailing shirts and trousers as separate products, we have created ensemble categories such as formal wear, casual wear, party wear and work wear in which we have put together the complete look for the man. We have also created a dedicated Suit Lounge. We have redesigned our Custom Tailoring section which provides fashion guidance to our customers so they can convert the fabric into stylised garments of their choice. After all, the perfect fit is not found, it is tailored."

Raymond is well aware that the contemporary customer is willing to spend on the premium look and also expects a behaving ambience without the prices being pushed up.



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Increased space for accessories

“Accessories provide incremental revenue opportunities and therefore are like the icing on a cake – you want to have the cake and the icing too,” points out Dhanjal. With this in mind, Raymond has doubled the space for accessories in renovated stores, convinced in the dictum that what is seen is sold. This is particularly appropriate for an impulse category such as accessories which have been moved closer to cash counters and trial rooms. “The current range includes pocket squares, ties, cufflinks, socks and belts,” says Dhanjal.

Taking the bespoke experience further, Raymond has introduced shoes for men under the Made-to-Measure brand. “Most of us are not aware that usually one of our feet is slightly bigger than the other. Therefore, we have varied shoe models for customers to try and we take size measurements for the precise shoe size. We also offer value add-ons such as embossing and lithography wherein customers can get their initials embossed on the shoes.” The price? Anything from ₹10,000 to ₹30,000. The collection has been launched in some stores in Mumbai and Bangalore, and will be available in more stores from October.

Going hi-tech

The new Raymond stores have upgraded their point-of-sale and Customer Relationship Management software to get the right kind of information at the correct time. “This also allows us to gain more insights into what the customer is buying, at what price, how often and how much. We have

initiated a pilot of digitised lookbooks in select Mumbai stores, to begin with, which helps customers to create the right look for their style,” says Dhanjal.

Keeping up with e-com

Raymond e-tails on their website and through e-commerce portals but they do not focus on displaying last season’s collections at heavily discounted prices.

Raymond is remodelling itself for the digital age. “In this day and age, it is important that we stay relevant to our customers, and provide them the convenience and value they seek. One of the big learnings from the e-com play is that we need to be quick and nimble and provide a ‘wow’ experience every time a customer walks into our store,” explains Dhanjal.

Looking at sustainable growth

The textiles industry is expected to grow at a CAGR of nine per cent for the next five years. Apparel and accessories are doing particularly well because of rising disposable income and will grow faster. Fabrics and textiles are faring well too. Raymond looks to outpace the market even while ensuring that this growth is sustainable and profitable.

Raymond’s annual revenue for last fiscal was ₹4,620 crore. It has recently announced an investment of \$5 million to launch products in the West Asian and African markets through subsidiaries. The textile major has ambitious plans to stay ahead of its competitors. On 10 September 2015, Raymond completed 90 years. The firm believes the best is yet to come. **E**