

BRAND PROFILE



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BEST OF INDIA UNDER A ROOF

Bindu Gopal Rao speaks to Mr Ajoy Chawla, SVP – Strategy & Business Incubation, Titan, to get insights into Taneira, the youngest brand from Titan.



name Taneira comes from the 'tan' in Tata, Tamil Nadu, Titan and Tanishq along with 'ira' which is another name for Goddess Saraswati in Sanskrit. Also the brand is inspired by the lotus as a motif. Ajoy Chawla, tells us all about the brand and how they are focused on natural and handloom fabrics in this exclusive conversation.

WHAT WAS THE THOUGHT PROCESS BEHIND TITAN VENTURING INTO CLOTHING?

The way we look at it is that Titan as a company has several brands, the watches or eye wear are all about personal adornment and while there is a functionality to it, there is a lifestyle expression also attached to it. Also, we would like to see ourselves as a design driven company and in a way we use design and brand power to express ourselves. When it came to watches and to an extent eyewear, it was all about engineered design. With jewellery, we took a leap into crafted design from engineered design. Again, all our products are about special occasions and milestones. Additionally, we have a large consumer base considering the mindset we appeal to and Taneira was a logical extension to connect with this customer base. And, we are a 'Make in India' brand and we appeal to Indian sensibilities. Therefore, this category is a perfect natural fit for us.



Taneira is the youngest brand from Titan which aims to revive one of the oldest occupations of handloom weaving and the oldest garment - the sari. The collection of handwovens and handcrafted saris include mugas from Assam, cottons from Chettinad, *tussars* from Bhagalpur, ikats from Gujarat, Andhra and Orissa; *jamdanis* from Bengal, *chikankari* work from Lucknow, exotic and classical banarasi silks; exquisite *kanjeevarams*; heirloom pieces like patan *patolas* and muslin *jamdanis*, amongst others. Also, the

WHY HAVE YOU CHOSEN BENGALURU TO START YOUR STORE?

We are at a stage where we are piloting the category. While it is anchored in saris, we are not restricted to that and it is all about special occasion wear when you seek indulgence. We decided to pilot it in Bengaluru as we are familiar with Bengaluru and we are based here and it is truly cosmopolitan. In fact, our second store is opening soon. The pilot, however, will not be restricted to Bengaluru. Also, in Bengaluru we

BRAND PROFILE



can test both the cosmopolitan and the regional mindsets equally with much understanding.

WHAT MAKES THE BRAND UNIQUE?

We have chosen to operate in naturals and hand woven fabrics for occasion wear. We feel there is an opportunity to make a difference in this space, as we are able to give the promise of authenticity. Customers find it hard to know which products are authentic in this space, as mostly these are mixed with synthetics or are made on power looms. And our products come with a brand promise that brings trust and assurance. We have chosen handcrafted products from across the country. We want to bring India under one roof and want to be a national player as and when we roll out. We have seen that women are quite experimental and open when it comes to having saris of different kinds and regions. Also, we want to curate and design products for women whose mindset is rooted yet progressive. We want to use traditional crafts in a contemporary avatar to connect with the women we are addressing. The retail experience, including the blouse boutique and style studio will allow for customising products, which will help women get an elevated customer experience. Also, we are sourcing from 20 of the 400 clusters in India so there is a lot of choice too. Also we plan to have our own designs and over a period of time there will be more of

this in store and we will get them woven to our designs. In fact, exclusivity is another factor – you will only find one piece, of its kind in the store. More importantly, we are able to tell the story of the crafts of different places under one roof. A lot of women have appreciated that the collection is so interesting and exclusive that they are spoilt for choice. Also they are able to browse at their own leisure and can buy if they want to.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE TRADITIONAL INDIAN FABRIC MARKET GROWING IN THE COUNTRY?

We have intentionally kept the focus on special occasion wear because as soon as you make it every day wear, there can be many western influences. We have a rich heritage and this is a 5000 year old category that has stood the test of time. Also, the consumer has a lot of pride in India today and they may or may not wear it on their sleeve. Also, we have a lot of unique choice of techniques of weaves, that this is an opportunity to bring it alive to the rest of the world. A lot of western designers are showing interest in these weaves and the west is also recognising these weaves. Also, weddings have become big and even in a conservative city like Chennai, a wedding will also have a sangeet ceremony. And these are occasions to celebrate our great cultural diversity.

BRAND PROFILE

WHAT ABOUT EXPORTS OF THESE SARIS?

Already there is a lot of interest and in the last few months we have received several requests from Dubai, London and US. Right now, we have not geared up for it, but I am sure that in time we will. The first thing is to be able to figure out the business model. This is not a mass market model as each piece here is unique. But there is a great value proposition – yes, the NRI segment is definitely a key market as they want to be rooted to India. And this helps anchor that sentiment, especially as they celebrate festivals with more gusto than we do in India.

WHEN DO YOU WANT TO BE ONLINE?

We will also explore that sometime in the future, assuming that we are able to establish the fundamental proposition of doing things right. We have several requests from other parts of the country and again this category attracts a lot of interest. What we have found out is that women are extremely passionate about this category and you do not need to advertise really and we get a lot of enquiries on our Facebook page and website. So, once we evolve the strategy we should do it in the future.

WHERE DO YOU SOURCE THE SARIS FROM?

We are working with 200 suppliers including weaving societies, weavers, master weavers, and designers working with special clusters and a few intermediaries as well. We are also exploring more and a lot of people are reaching out to us saying they have a new offering to add to the line.

WHAT ARE THE GROWTH PROJECTIONS FOR THE ETHNIC WOMEN'S WEAR SEGMENT?

We have not yet put in our own numbers, but a KSA *Technopak* study done a couple of years back for ethnic wear had pegged that this 25,000 crore market is growing in double digits.

WHAT ARE YOUR EXPANSION PLANS?

We are exploring a few more cities – as we want a North Indian insight, as well as a small city versus a large one insight. We are also looking at other cities and we plan to also do exhibitions and trunk shows that will allow us to understand regional preferences, merchandise, pricing, colours and more. The idea of the 12 month pilot is to use the learnings to arrive at a view to sharpen our brand proposition and check if the pricing, product assortment, retail formats are right.

WHERE DO YOU WANT TO TAKE THIS BRAND?

We know that the brand stands for celebrating craft and artisans. One of the insights we had was that a woman feels transformed when she is wearing a sari, especially for an occasion. And the transformation she feels and her experience with the knowledge, that this is a unique expression of her femininity, is what we want. The idea of the brand is very purist in that sense. In India, if you offer a good value proposition, you will have a market. But what matters is to create the special feeling of buying a sari and discover the craft on your own and then become the brand advocate. So, the aspiration is to make the experience special and not get caught up in the rut of scaling up. ■

