

Business Standard

Bengaluru liquor start-up exports whiskey, rum to Southeast Asia

I Brands has hired a local distributor to reach out to local bars, clubs and hotels and will work with large wedding and event organisers to sell its products

Raghu Krishnan | Bengaluru January 28, 2016 Last Updated at 13:46 IST



I Brands, a liquor start-up in Bengaluru has begun exporting Indian made whiskey to Cambodia and plans to expand in other countries in Southeast Asia such as Vietnam, Laos and Thailand in the year ahead.

"You don't find many Indian brands in these markets," said Lisa Srao, chairman and managing director of I Brands Beverages Ltd. "The initial orders are small but would grow."

I Brands has hired a local distributor to reach out to local bars, clubs and hotels. It also plans to work with large wedding and event organisers to sell its products.

The firm, founded by British-Indian Lisa Srao in 2010, has four products -- two whiskey brands and a dark and French brandy -- sold in 13 states across India including Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh.

In India, the firm says sales have grown over 100 per cent in the last two years due to better product, packaging and competitive pricing against whiskey and brandy brands of larger players such as United Spirits. I Brands did not disclose financials as it was a privately-held firm.

Srao and Col Mahinder Singh Khaira, a high networth investor have jointly invested Rs 30 crore in the firm so far.

India, the fastest growing spirits market in the world due to its young population with rising income, has seen global players expanding their presence in the country.

Diageo, the British liquor firm has majority stake in the market leader United Spirits, Bacardi, which makes rum, Pernod Ricard and ABD have significant presence in the country. At the same time, startups in the liquor space are emerging such as I Brands and Whiskin Spirits are trying to carve a niche with products targeting users in smaller towns.

I Brands has strategically remained outside the large metros, focusing instead on smaller towns to build its products. This, Srao said, has helped it gain customers at lower cost than in larger cities.

While the firm is financially stable, Srao said, that I Brands is looking at strategic alliances with global firms and local large spirits firms to help grow distribution of its products.