

'Mass market premium segment has huge potential'

Lisa Srao, Chairman & Managing Director, I Brands Beverages Ltd.

For future growth of the Indian liquor industry, I Brands Beverages Ltd considers the middle class youth segment among Indian drinkers as the best bet. The company before its launch in 2008 had done extensive R&D on the Indian market. Banking on this research and their subsequent market experience, I Brands Chairman & Managing Director Lisa Srao says, "The alco-bev market in India is driven by the increasing proportion of young consumers with high disposable incomes. Young consumers are more aspirational and are looking to purchase superior international-quality products, which are also value for money."

Today, I Brands portfolio boasts of "products of international quality which are affordable. Our products are primarily targeted at the ever-growing middle class youth," tells Lisa.

Currently, I Brands' focus is the brown spirits category of the Indian market. In this category, the company has positioned its products in the mass market premium segment. "We entered this segment as there was limited competition and it has the potential for enormous growth in India. We are also seeing a demand in international markets in this segment, having just started exports to the South East Asian countries," tells Lisa.

Lisa describes their portfolio as "an all-encompassing range of spirits, enviable of any new player in the global arena." It includes Three Royals (premium segment whisky), Granton Whisky (deluxe segment whisky), Rum 99 (Jamaican flavoured rum) and Granton XO Brandy, a rare French Brandy.

Whether I Brands is planning new products to meet new demands of young consumers? The company is not thinking on these lines, as Lisa says, "We are happy with our current consolidated product portfolio that caters to that segment in the industry which is experiencing immense growth. However, we are focusing on rebranding and redevelopment of our



products, based on consumers' needs."

According to Lisa, being a small company, they are dynamic in their approach and are constantly adapting their products to each market and its specific needs. "We constantly test our products before and after launch, as we are ever evolving, working towards creating the perfect product of the best quality possible," tells Lisa.

As part of rebranding, Three Royals will be re-launched this Diwali. "Three Royals Whisky is our premium segment whisky (Rs 350–735). We have rebranded it completely, tweaked the packaging and blend as per the consumer requirement. Blind tasting sessions and shelf tests have given immensely positive results and we are excited about the re-launch," informs Lisa.

I Brands had also rebranded its flagship product Granton Whisky a couple of years ago, graduating from a mono carton to an award winning canister packaging. "It has worked beautifully for us. We now have a small market share in its segment in Haryana and Punjab, two of our biggest markets because the product is accepted so well in the market," tells Lisa.

Regarding marketing campaigns, Lisa says, "We have

undertaken minimal marketing campaigns so far. We have been able to sustain in this competitive market only because of the superior quality of our products.”

The focus of their minimal marketing initiatives is the increasing interaction with the end-consumer for building favourable brand salience. “We have focused on activating our brands at pubs, bars and lounges to drive awareness and trial. In the local markets of Punjab, Haryana and Goa we organise Three, Royals Party Nights that are essentially DJ Nights. This event is very popular with our TG. We sponsored Oktoberfest in Goa where Rum 99 being the only spirit brand available there, created an opportunity for trial and acceptance,” informs Lisa.

To increase their interaction with their TG, whose members are online-savvy, “social media has been the most important medium for us that helps us connect with our consumers on a daily basis. We can get feedback directly and interact one on one with our consumers and keep them updated about our products,” tells Lisa.

For future growth of business, Lisa sees tremendous scope in the brandy market. She says, “Brandy as a product is hugely popular primarily in the southern Indian states. But its market is underutilized with only a few large players. This



market will witness a boom in the years to come. In India both domestic and international players have enough space to grow in parallel.”

I Brands Beverages has launched Granton Brandy in Pondicherry as a test market and it has been doing really well. “We have launched our brandy in Andhra Pradesh only this month. We will aggressively promote the brand as part of our strategy for a pan-India presence,” tells Lisa. S

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