

BUSINESS RESOURCE INDIA

Retail brand creation: Peter England People

LIZ MILLER, WGSN 25.07.08

A new family-oriented retail brand, Peter England People, has been launched in India and ultimately aims to compete on the global high street. CEO Zeena Freeman speaks to WGSN.

When Peter England People opened its first store in Mumbai, excited customers gathered to shop at a slick modern retail concept pitched at the family market with an affordable "East meets West" fashion offer and a strong brand identity.

The successful Mumbai launch in May, followed by a further three stores in Bangalore, Hyderabad and Delhi, is **testimony to how a new brand can be created from scratch** by a team of retail experts with an ambitious global vision.



Peter England People's targets include men's, women's, kids', youth and baby

Peter England People was born out of the popular Indian menswear brand Peter England, which is owned by Aditya Birla Group, one of the country's largest companies with \$30bn sales a year.

Its garment division, Madura Garments, is focused mainly on menswear and the wholesale market, but saw **a gap in the Indian market for a family brand with an international perspective.**

A team of experts headed by CEO Zeena Freeman, formerly of Gap Inc and Aeropostale, and using New York-based brand consultants Graj + Gustavsen, was hired to come up with **a vertically integrated retail brand**, which is a new model for India. Everything from the creation of the men's, women's and kids' collections and mood of the brand to the target market, retail concept and marketing strategy was dreamt up by the team.

Freeman moved to India in the summer of 2007 to begin exploring the marketplace, to recruit and build an organisation working with consultancies McKinsey, AT Kearney and Orchard (a Leo Burnett agency) to bring the brand's personality to life.

"I am really proud of what we created, not only because it **breaks new ground in India** but also because we brought to life a totally proprietary brand with a distinct personality, unique product and a compelling store experience in less than nine months," she told WGSN.

Fact file

- Owned by Madura Garments, a division of Aditya Birla Group
- Vertically integrated retail brand targeting the middle class family market
- Fashion is a fusion of East and West
- Collections include women's, men's, kids', youth, baby, home and accessories
- Pricing is affordable compared to many international high-street brands
- Design team based in India and production uses Indian factories
- Retail environment designed to be fun with photo booths and customisation facilities
- Four stores currently trading in Mumbai, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Delhi
- Stores are between 10,000 and 15,000sq ft
- Plans for 75 stores across India in five years
- International expansion will follow

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Peter England People trades from spaces between 10,000 and 15,000sq ft and the aim is to open 75 stores in five years across India, with several stores in each of the key cities. The brand is targeting the 350 million-strong Indian middle class, who shop in malls and organised retail stores - although Freeman is careful to point out the vast differences in regionality in the market.

Studying brands such as Gap, Old Navy, Zara and Uniqlo, ultimately **Peter England People is aiming for a place on the global high street** with its international styling and accessible pricing.

Fashion offer



"Peter England People offers **casual international fashion**. The entire concept is about a fusion of the best of East and West. We offer 'fashion-right' universal items like graphic tees, polos and five-pocket jeans, but also focus on silhouettes such as kurtas (tunics) which we tweak based on international trends and offer these in an array of unexpected prints, colours, wovens and knit fabrics," she explains.

The design team is made up of Indian nationals, many of whom have international brand experience. The company is **working with around 24 Indian suppliers, enabling a close relationship** between them and the designers and therefore fast-response fashion.

The brief for the design team was to create a casual collection that was unique, internationally relevant and also cohesive, not only within each customer segment but also across the brand, says Freeman.

"We filtered our colours, prints and silhouettes based on whether we thought the collections and the product would be relevant in Mumbai, London or New York," she says.

The brand's target market is "anyone looking for casual international style at **affordable price points**", Freeman adds. Most family-oriented shopping takes place at department stores, but many retailers produce product exclusively for their own stores, she adds.

"Of the few retailers who carry dedicated product for the family, these are considered "premium" in the market and do not have as wide an appeal as the Peter England People concept. We deliver great value by offering a **premium style and store experience at mass-market price points**," she says.

Customer response over the first few weeks of trading has been very positive across all the locations says Freeman. "I am excited that customers are voting for core and fashion items largely the way we expected. It is also fantastic that **customers are driving sales across women's**, as this is one of the trickiest segments to get right anywhere in the world - but particularly in India where the women's market is so fragmented."

Store design and brand DNA



Graj + Gustavsen were responsible for the "loft like" store space that is designed to serve as a retail gallery for the Peter England People collections. Founding partners Simon Graj and Eric Gustavsen explained that they researched the Indian market to come up with **a mixture of the local bazaar-style shopping experiences and Western-style retailing.**

The combination of the two cultures is expressed through colour and fabric, but also an iconic modern expression that G+G believes makes an enduring brand. "The stores have **a clean, simple, gallery-like nature** with great music, great smiles and great fashion. The brand value stands for 'happy contentment'," says Graj.

Jumbo lifestyle posters are set against the white backdrop of the stores and primary accent colours are used on the ceilings to break up the space. Colourful clothing collections for women, men, kids, youth, babies and homeware are clearly marked. Fixtures are flexible and adaptable to any location and bold price messages are a key part of the signage.

G+G has come up with a brand DNA for Peter England People which involves **empowering the customer** according to Gustavsen. The stores have a photo booth so that customers can have their pictures taken. A photo wall will be introduced, and special events, such as Mothers and Fathers days, will enable customers to make cards with their photos.

Expanding the **"retail as theatre" philosophy**, stores also have a T-shirt bar with heat press styles and transfers, and jeans can be customised with jewels. Jukeboxes will be introduced, allowing customers to control the music played. Other ideas are being dabbled with, including an LED display welcoming each customer by name as they enter the store.

Marketing was tackled in several ways, with **an emphasis on word-of-mouth** rather than blanket poster and press campaigns, while store openings used Indian celebrities. Future ideas include capitalising on the "people" part of the brand - for example G+G are now looking at all the rock songs that use the word 'people'.

The future

The next five years will be about creating a strong retail brand in India, infrastructure permitting, before focusing on **international expansion**, says Freeman.

"I do think this is absolutely the right business model and the right mix to compete in international markets," she says. "There are many cities in various countries where I could envision Peter England People."