



Global brands in footwear are very popular among Indians. Among the foreign brands in India, the class conscious and fashionable Italian and Russian brands are dearer for the fashion conscious Indian consumers. As the footwear industry in India is growing incredibly, and Indians are demanding branded products, there are immense opportunities, both for importers as well as exporters.

Alok Rai, director of Milano Impex started his career as a trader in Russia. To live his entrepreneur dream, he along with his brother had set up a footwear company- Milano Impex in India and launched the Russian brand Egle. Receiving overwhelming response, the company also launched Louis Alberti brand from Italy in the year 2008. Milano Impex Pvt. Ltd established in the year 2003 is today the leader in luxury lifestyle footwear. They design, develop and market lifestyle footwear under brand name of Egle & Louis Alberti, for trend-savvy men of all ages.

“When we launched Egle here in 2003, the luxury foot wear segment was not much heard. I personally felt a gap in demand and supply of stylish as well as quality footwear” says Alok Rai, Director of Milano Impex. MIPL was started as a partnership in Russia and now have diverse product offering from utility-styled work boots to latest and hottest European footwear. The company has expanded its demographic scope with additional lines that highlight the brand’s versatility. The company also manufactures and markets the high-fashion line to attract trend-driven women ages 18 to 34.

“Currently we are present in India with our 170 MBO and also available in countries such like Russia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Belarus, etc” says Alok. Milano’s, aggressive marketing strategies have also played an integral role in the company’s success. Through its strong product lines, innovative advertising and diversified distribution channels, the company’s objective is to profitably grow its operations while leveraging Egle & Louis Alberti brands, one of the most recognized names of the footwear industry.

“India has shown consistent growth for our brand Egle & Louis Alberti in the past 11 years. We have seen a potential growth as far as increase in volumes of production. We have seen about 200 % growths ever since we first started” says Mr.Rai. Milano is currently available across 170 stores in India and intend to reach 240 by the end of the year. The company is experimenting with a good mix of business strategies for more penetration into the Indian markets. “We are present in 170 MBO's across the country through several leading footwear stores like Metro, Shoe Tree, D-Shoe Lounge, Mochi, Rocia, Inc. 5, Regal, & Studio M. We own an EBO in Chandigarh city and are also planning to open more in North. Apart from this, we have an active online selling space - Egleshoes.com ” he continues.

About the market conditions, Mr. Rai opines that “the luxury retail in India keeps on growing, but the overall pace is slow”. Besides all hypes, it is a fact that the demand for luxury products is limited. While there are several international brands competing at the higher end of the spectrum, there are large numbers of unorganized players right from the bottom level. “But in spite of all these, there has been a visible change in the number of high net worth individuals in the country over the past few years. Moved by this trend, it’s quite natural to expect high growth in the luxury retail market of the country. A rise in spending power has also created demand for high-end footwear labels” says Mr. Rai.

Listing out their brand promotion strategies, Mr.Rai says that they are actively involved with strategies like collaborating with MBO’s in target areas like upscale malls and premium markets. “Besides, we are aggressively involved in online marketing of our brand and are promoting our e-commerce portal on various social platforms. We are also setting marketing plan along with PR activity” he says.

The challenges they face according Mr.Rai includes manpower maintenance, assortment of variety and styles, customer satisfaction and cost involved to maintain a physical store. “Under

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online portals, the major areas of concern are the policies of return/exchange, the psychology of absence of the tangible good to the customer and inhibitions of buying the product, the logistics involved and the time taken to dispatch the product” he explains.

In the near future Milano plans to add more MBO's especially in 2 tier cities and 3 tier cities which now has increasing numbers of brand conscious youngsters who have high disposable income. “To ensure that the brand becomes a sort after one, we also look forward to revive and the shopping experience of our customers each time they visit our stores” says Alok. They also look to expand their footprints in the women's section in the coming years.