

Adios Stress

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.. .With Friday Dressing. **Allen Solly's** effort has always been to redefine workwear. **COO Sooraj Bhat** talks about this unique concept.

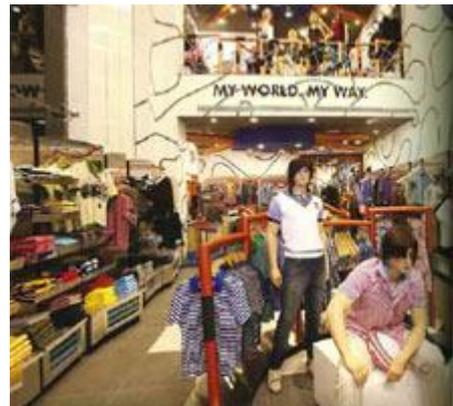


What is Friday dressing?

More youngsters are joining the workforce in the country and they obviously want to break through the usual workwear colour codes that mainly comprises white, blue, cream, grey and black. Keeping in mind the youth's requirement, Allen Solly, a light-hearted and relaxed brand, launched the concept of Friday dressing in 1993 that refers to comfortable workwear. For professionals, Friday dressing captures the mood and spirit of the much-awaited Friday that is followed by the weekend. Also, today's youth is interested in wearing fitted outfits and have an individual style quotient that defines their persona. Allen Solly's "Friday Dressing" has tried to create a platform for such style-conscious young men and women to stand out from the rest. The brand's current articulation of Friday dressing is a little more casual than what it was 20 years back, providing a cool and relaxed feel yet maintaining the formal look required at work.

Is the concept inspired from the West?

This concept was born out of the need to contemporise the traditional corporatewear in India. We create outfits that suit Indian consumers. With respect to fashion, the West is definitely more modern and stylish. At Allen Solly, we have referred to those international fashion trends that work well for Indians. In terms of understanding what Indian consumers want it is the brand that does the research. In order to keep the merchandise fashionable, work-friendly while maintaining international standards Allen Solly is often inspired by international trends.



How has the response been so far?

The brand has a longer history with menswear. So, the responses and feedback mostly come from men. Creations such as uncrushables that are stretchable, wrinkle-free cotton trousers and authentic chinos with slim-fit and low-waist style for younger men have received rare reviews and are the best-selling items at Allen Solly stores. For women, we will soon be launching a special collection from Friday Dressing this summer that will include shirts in soothing colours, cotton trousers and washed cotton chinos.

What have been your marketing strategies to make Friday Dressing a hit?

The brand being first of its kind is a key reason for its successful foundation have been promoting this concept widely through TV commercials and print medium since inception. Allen Solly that allocates around 6 per cent of its revenues on marketing has also invested on campaigns that focus on dressing up at work. One of our campaigns that goes with the tag line "Don't wear uniforms to work" successfully projected the unique offerings from the brand to the customers well. We have also been actively promoting the concept through social media marketing and have more than a lakh fans on Facebook. We have also bagged silver in the Best Website-Product category in 2011 from the Indian

Digital Media Awards (IDMA) and the Site of the Day Award in 2010 from the Favorite Website Awards (FWA), a company in the United States that recognises internet award programmes and portal.

Why a new TV commercial for Friday Dressing?

The brand only advertises when there is a specific task to be fulfilled. We felt that a new TV commercial will help the brand build better, stronger and long-lasting impression on the consumers and to re-emphasise Friday Dressing.

Brands such as Indian Terrain, Color Plus, Blackberrys, et cetera have extended to the casual zone. How is the competition?

If you take a look at the market, our nearest competitor would be half of what we are. We have a pre-eminent position in the market by now.

It's good to have more players with the concept of Friday dressing in the Indian market as it would not only decide who's the leader, but also expand the market. There is surely a stiff competition but we deal with it by staying true to our concept and by bringing in new innovative designs and styles.



Do you offer any loyalty programmes?

The brand has a loyalty programme called My Solly. It has over two lakh registered customers who are updated about the new collections. They are also provided with a certain number of points on every purchase that can be redeemed at the stores on the customer's next buy. There are also other privileges for My Solly members where they are given a chance to take a look at the new collection before its put up for sale.

What is the turnover expected in 2011-2012?

The brand expects a turnover of ` 500 crore by the end of this financial year. Allen Solly contributes around 15 per cent of the total revenue of Madura Fashion and Lifestyle. For the upcoming financial year, we intend to grow by 40 per cent.

What is Allen Solly's growth plan in the next financial year?

The brand is looking forward to expand aggressively in the next financial year. Distribution is the key part of our growth strategy. Along with stores, we expect our new launches in the product category to create better business for the brand. By the end of this financial year Allen Solly will have 130 exclusive stores in total. The distribution strategy combines major cities such as Mumbai, New Delhi, Kolkata, Bangalore, Hyderabad, to name a few and tier II cities including Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Coimbatore. In the next fiscal we will have 40 more stores.

What is your take on the brand's accessories business?

Our focus has always been on apparels. The brand proposes to scale up its accessories business, which is currently limited to socks and ties. Next on the agenda is to bring bags and shoes for both men and women in the stores by end of 2012. With the market maturing, the trend of co-ordinating with one's apparel is also catching on. Today, accessories contribute only a small bit to our total sales, but with the introduction of shoes and bags, sales will definitely be on an upswing.