



A brand that stays true to its roots

Home-grown brand Nayomi retains an intimate understanding of its core Arabic consumers even as it strengthens and expands its retail presence with its new store concept and becomes a formidable regional and international force in the nightwear segment, **Rupkatha Bhowmick** reports

Our customers at Nayomi are princesses," declares Stephen Holbrook, brand director and board member of Dubai-based Kamal Osman Jamjoom Group, which specialises in creating home-grown beauty and fashion brands.

"Every customer deserves to be treated as a princess. We'd like to mesmerise them, let them feel a joyful high and a sense of escapism by creating a luxurious, theatre-like experience that makes them want to come back to us every time they think of buying innerwear and associated accessories. That's why we launched Nayomi Princess Palace, our new concept store," he elaborates.

"These outlets are fantastic,

akin to the luxury residences of Regent Street in London or Fifth Avenue in New York or even in Tokyo, Madrid and Paris. They qualify as top-of-the-rank anchor stores in malls across this region that house many similar international brands within the same category," Holbrook avers.

Experiential yet practical

Function isn't the primary focus behind designing Nayomi Princess Palaces. Rather, it's the total experience, the joy of lounging in a store and being transported to a wonderland of joy and delight. Begin with the Moulin Rouge inspired ceilings – in shades of pink infused with silver, cream, ivory,

muted gold and black hues – that sport a hand painted stocking design, creating a fashion statement. That isn't all. The chairs in the bridal zone are in corset design, while the spacious, fully carpeted fitting rooms boast a unique Nayomi lace pattern with bespoke chandeliers.

"Our customers walk into a Nayomi store not just to browse or buy our products. They want to know how we manage to make our fitting rooms so luxurious, deluging us with questions about details such as where we brought our bespoke black glass chandeliers or door knobs. It's not just idle interest; most are keen to use some of these unique features in their own homes," Holbrook shares.

"We've divided our stores

into zones to accommodate specific consumer needs in a hassle-free and comfortable manner, designing them to allow traffic to flow naturally through each zone. It's like a journey in a woman's life, changing pace as she browses through the spaces, starting with a rectangular room that meanders into a semi-circular pattern," he points out.

The experiential journey begins from the glamorous night wear zone epitomising bedroom fashion for women, then leads to the semi-circular lingerie galleries – an area that's intimate and heightens the glamour quotient. The dedicated bridal zone, a crucial component of Arab culture, is located next. Elegantly designed with a white, custom-made chandelier sourced from

Europe, it houses luxurious changing rooms for would-be brides to ensure a comfortable shopping experience.

From there a u-turn leads to the cash till, where the core purity zone showcasing everyday innerwear – including black nudes, white bras and briefs – is located. Finally, shoppers arrive at the front left of the store where casual innerwear is on display. That's not all; Nayomi's specialised fashion table office underwear zone branches out from the centre of the store and features fashion innerwear in cotton, micro-fibre and lace with double push-ups, embroidery, prints and, of course, a range of colours. Finally, taking centrestage is the luxury innerwear zone,



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STEPHEN HOLBROOK



accentuated by a huge black European chandelier hanging right in the middle of the store.

Appealing to a wide audience with Arab consumers at its core

The core of Nayomi's target audience comprises Arab women aged 27-to-30 years. "We have a broad consumer base but Arab consumers find the brand especially appealing, which is a matter of pride for us. We design our products – including the colour palette, fabric choice and handwork – keeping in mind the fashion needs and sensitivities of our Arab consumers, who are stylish and fashion-aware. In fact, our product development team, with creative talents from different nationalities, is based in the region," Holbrook elaborates.

Infusing comfort and technology with fashion

Nayomi doesn't believe in backward rotation of fashion within its stores. "We carry our product ranges seasonally, bringing in the latest collections and replacing older stock as the season changes. We have four main seasons – spring, summer, autumn and winter – and within these we have fashion drops, bringing in newness to our stores every four-to-five weeks. Our customers look for lifestyle choices. We understand that. That's why anything they conceive of as intimate can be found at Nayomi and that, too, in unique styles and prints, ensuring every collection is fresh and one-of-its-kind. In all, probably 50% of what we do would be incremental to what international brands offer. ➤



► Our biggest competition is in casual nightwear but we're beginning to do well in that category as well," explains Holbrook.

Another important factor any innerwear brand needs to consider is comfort. "Comfort can be driven by different things – fabric choice and softness, or the way the seams are designed and stitched. We pay attention to each element, our goal being to translate fashion in a way that doesn't compromise comfort. We use different technologies such as bonding, ultrasonic and laser cutting and also infuse our daily wear materials with fabrics that are breathable or glow in the dark," Holbrook states.

Registering robust growth

Saudi Arabia – where the brand was launched 22 years ago – remains Nayomi's biggest market in the region. Net profit in the Kingdom

grew over 19% on a year-on-year basis for the March-to-July 2014 period, while in neighbouring UAE it grew even faster at 26%. Ramadan 2014 was an especially rewarding period, with sales recording a whopping 33% increase in the UAE and around 17% in Saudi Arabia compared to the same period last year.

"Our sales figures show that all our categories are performing well. Moreover, our growth has been organic. We're up 19% on a year-on-year basis. That figure would be 8% if you exclude new stores. The categories driving growth are our high-fashion table office underwear (up 40%) and our core basics and nightwear (up 10%). Beauty is also among our fastest growing segments, with fragrances accounting for almost 10% of our overall sales, up 25% in 2014. It's very productive from a density perspective and complements our core category beautifully," says Holbrook.



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"The number of transactions we carry out every year keeps increasing and we expect to clock close to 1.6 million transactions this year. We have loyal customers who visit us at least once a month spending 20 minutes on average on each visit, a duration that's been going up in the case of our Nayomi Princess Palaces. It's the small pieces that are driving our growth, with the bigger ones solidifying it. The difference between Nayomi and other international brands is that the latter do not dabble much in glamour or intimate nightwear and bridals. Another differentiating factor is that all our store executives are women. We're 100% in line with Saudi Arabia's Nitaqat policy and have been in the

forefront of this change. In fact, all our store executives, irrespective of the region, are women, which ensures complete comfort for our customers. We're a brand for women, run by women and I'm sure, one day, there'll be a woman in my position as well," Holbrook prophesies.

Aggressive expansion plans

The brand has a robust expansion plan in place. "We expect our store numbers to grow 10%, a lot of them being Nayomi Princess Palaces. We've launched six Palaces already, with many more to come in 2015. There is potential for at least 50-to-70 Nayomi outlets in the region, although these stores will follow different formats. Nayomi Princess Palaces – our anchor stores – are sized anywhere between 3,767-to-5,381 sqft, our Yas outlet being 5,381 sqft, the one at Mall of Dhahran 3,445 sqft, and Mall of Arabia 4,305 sqft. We are also considering putting in place our smaller format Princess outlets in busy malls that make economic sense," Holbrook explains.

"Nayomi is now prepared to go beyond the MENA region. It's really just a matter of time and waiting for the right opportunity. We're willing to go wherever there is a clutch of Arabic consumers – from Indonesia to Morocco – to offer them the Nayomi experience. Great pricing, glamorous products and good quality are three drivers propelling our growth story. We're becoming more and more universal but that doesn't mean we'll ever forget our main reason for launching brand Nayomi, which is to fulfil the needs of our Arab consumers," he concludes. ■