

BROOKS BROTHERS



FOUNDED IN 1818 BY HENRY SANDS BROOKS, BROOKS BROTHERS BECAME THE FIRST READY-TO-WEAR FASHION EMPORIUM IN AMERICA. HERE, RLI SPEAKS TO CURRENT CHAIRMAN & CEO CLAUDIO DEL VECCHIO ABOUT THE BRAND AND HOW IT CONTINUES TO LOOK FORWARD AND INNOVATE.

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An American Institution



The oldest clothing retailer in the US, Brooks Brothers continues to uphold the same traditions and values it began with almost two centuries ago. Since inception, the company has become an institution that has shaped the American style of dress through fashion innovation, fine quality, personal service, and exceptional value in its products.

Today Brooks Brothers operates over 400 stores across 50 countries such as Japan, China, India, Australia, throughout Europe and of course its largest market, the US.

Over the last 12 months there have been challenges in the global retail market, and Brooks Brothers has adapted to this by creating an experience for the customer that gives them a reason to shop. "Our customers know and trust Brooks Brothers, we are an established brand that is celebrating our 199th year in business this month," says company Chairman & CEO Claudio Del Vecchio. "Our customers know that we offer quality products and that they will have an exceptional experience."

Always evolving and looking for new ways to satisfy customers, the company has recently focused on its womenswear collection, hiring Zac Posen as Creative Director to not only retain the existing women's collection customer, but to oversee a change in the department which would attract new customers. The Red Fleece collection for men and women has also been introduced, a label created for the young entrepreneur with an appreciation for the Brooks Brothers style.

The company has launched its Red Fleece Café, a concept unveiled last fall in the Flatiron district

in New York City. "On the lower level we have a full service café serving Stumpton coffee, pastries from Balthazar and other gourmet snacks. On the main level we sell the Red Fleece clothing collection. In a very short space of time it's become a popular neighbourhood destination," explains Del Vecchio.

Over the next 12-18 months the company is focusing on its iconic luxury collection Golden Fleece. Historically the company's sign for the highest level of craftsmanship, the company will be treating this as a 'luxury laboratory' and expect that many of the innovations that will be introduced will impact the rest of the company's collections.

To continue developing new products, the company continually listen to its customers so that they are able to address their needs, and every once in a while provide surprises along the way and offer things the customer may not even know they needed.

"We always look at the diversity of our markets to be sure we are satisfying their needs as well. We have global brand teams from all over the world who meet in NYC several times a year to align on the product assortment and provide local market insight. We do not make specific extra products for each market. It is the same Brooks Brothers wherever you are in the world," says Del Vecchio.

Brooks Brothers engages with social media as a priority, believing it will become even more important in the future than it is now. Whilst not in a contest for the most 'likes', the company uses social media to facilitate a meaningful dialogue with its customer, and ensure it's a quality

experience no different to one they would have online or in a store.

Over the years the target customer has not changed, and is normally a professional in either their late forties or early fifties. The company is in the process of expanding this and appealing to a younger generation through its Red Fleece collection as an alternative way for younger clients to enter into the Brooks Brothers brand.

Why does Del Vecchio feel its customers remain so loyal to the brand?

"The fact that we look at the customer as a partner and we look to have a long-term relationship, we are trying to fulfill their needs rather than force them to make a purchase. We maintain our focus and respect and we love to make quality items for our customers."

This level of quality is what has driven the brands success over the past 200 years and the company will look to continue fulfilling customer's actual and real needs and to make its clients feel comfortable in every situation they find themselves in long beyond its 200th anniversary celebrations.

"We are driven by innovation and we have been around for so long because of this innovation. We make our customer's always feel confident that they have the right items at the right time," explains Del Vecchio.

What is a challenge right now for the company are the mind-set of consumers, and the incredible choice of product they have to buy from.

"We have to stay true to our mission, which is always to sell the right product at the right price to the people that appreciate the aesthetic that we are trying to fulfil," concludes Del Vecchio.