

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

IN FOCUS

Premiumisation Is Now Default

Jaquar's Sandeep Shukla discusses India's home upgrade boom, AI-powered marketing, evolving consumer aspirations and building an Indian brand for the global stage

By Soumya Bhutani

Indian consumers are reimagining their relationship with the home. Bathrooms are becoming wellness sanctuaries, lighting is increasingly viewed as an experience rather than a utility and renovation cycles are shortening as aspirations rise. At the centre of this shift is a growing appetite for premium products that combine design, functionality and personal expression.

For Sandeep Shukla, Vice President & Head - Marketing Communications, Global Operations, Jaquar Group, these evolving consumer behaviours are creating new opportunities for brands that can balance innovation with enduring brand fundamentals.

Fundamentals Intact

Despite dramatic changes in media consumption and

digital engagement, Shukla believes the fundamentals of building trust remain unchanged. "Consumers may consume content differently today, but trust is still built when brands consistently deliver on their promise."

What has changed dramatically is how consumers engage with content. Fragmented media habits, shrinking attention spans and the rise of short-form formats have forced marketers to rethink storytelling. "The medium has evolved from long-form copy to snackable content, but the principles of consistency and credibility remain unchanged," Shukla explains.

Going Global

As Jaquar expands across Europe, the Middle East, Africa and Asia-Pacific, Shukla sees a marked shift in perceptions of Indian brands. "Consumers are increasingly

evaluating quality, design and value rather than country of origin," Shukla says.

Reflecting this approach, Essco caters to the value segment, Artize serves the luxury buyers and Jaquar balances design with functionality. That positioning has helped the company gain traction even in mature markets such as Italy and the UK.

"The formula is simple: deliver quality, offer value and communicate consistently. Those principles work anywhere," Shukla adds.

Next Growth Chapter

One of the strongest shifts Shukla identifies is the transformation of bathrooms from utility spaces into wellness destinations. Post-pandemic, consumers have become increasingly conscious of health, self-care and mental well-being. As a result, demand for products such as steam cabins, whirl-

pools, wellness showers and spa-inspired experiences has risen significantly.

"Bathrooms are no longer just in-and-out spaces. Consumers increasingly view them as wellness sanctuaries. They want relaxation, rejuvenation and a better overall experience," he says.

A similar evolution is underway in the lighting segment. Shukla believes Indian consumers are becoming increasingly aware of how lighting influences mood, ambience and overall quality of life. "Consumers today don't want to see the source of light; they want to experience the effect of light," he notes.

Equally important is the changing role of aesthetics. Consumers are investing more in design-led spaces, while renovation cycles are becoming shorter than ever before. These behavioural shifts are directly contrib-



uting to premiumisation across the category.

AI as a Co-pilot

Shukla sees AI's role as an indispensable productivity partner rather than a replacement for human creativity. He mentions, "AI has reached a stage where it acts as a co-pilot."

At Jaquar, AI is being deployed across customer conversations, dealer interactions, website and digital channels. By analysing these interactions at scale, it uncovers insights into customer intent, product demand and service quality that traditional research often misses. "That's a huge advantage," says Shukla.

The company is also

Brands must deliver exceptional quality, offer meaningful value and communicate strengths consistently. These principles work irrespective of geography



exploring AI-powered personalised product journeys, where consumers can receive tailored bathroom recommendations, product configurations and dealer referrals based on a few simple inputs.

However, Shukla remains clear that creativity is a human function. He continues, "AI can help with research and efficiency. It can take away repetitive tasks. But replacing

creativity with AI would be a mistake. Its role is to make us more effective, not less creative."

Towards Premiumisation

Looking ahead, Shukla sees premiumisation as one of the defining trends shaping the future of India's home improvement sector.

Rising incomes, a growing upper-middle-class population, greater design awareness and a stronger

emotional connection to homes are driving consumers towards better products and experiences. "Premiumisation is no longer a niche trend. It has become the default direction of consumer behaviour," he points out.

With consumers spending more time at home and investing more heavily in their living environments, categories such as bathrooms and lighting are poised for sustained growth.

As Shukla puts it, the opportunity lies at the intersection of lifestyle and living style, a space where functionality, design and wellness increasingly converge. **BW**

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