

'Bathroom is a Happening Place Today'

OMKAR SAPRE

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The bathroom might be a private area for people, but Rajesh Mehra loves talking about it. As the director and promoter of Jaquar, India's market leader in faucets, Mehra is gearing to make his company a complete bathroom brand.

"We will make everything that goes into the bathroom, including ceramics, sanitary ware, wellness products, flushing systems, glass enclosures, geysers and lighting products," he says. "Nowhere in the world will you have all products coming from a single brand."

With an increased focus on exports, Jaquar is targeting revenues of ₹1,700 crore this financial year, up from ₹1,300 crore in 2011-12.

Jaquar has its roots in Essco Sanitations, a bath-fittings company

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RAJESH MEHRA

Promoter, Jaquar

Rajesh Mehra's father NL Mehra started in 1960, at a time when the industry was still nascent. After establishing Essco as a maker of quality bath fittings, he set up Jaquar in 1986 to make products of superior design and technology.

Jaquar now leads the faucets markets in India with a market share of 60% by volume, Mehra says.

India's sanitary ware and bathroom fittings market is seeing a lot

of activity with several foreign brands coming in. "Any and every brand in the world is now present in India," says Mehra. "Competition is always welcome, it inspires you and you learn a lot."

Jaquar has been a leader for over ten years and has maintained its market share despite competition, he says. Jaquar is undergoing a change in its marketing messages along with a brand overhaul. It is re-vamping its orientation centres—where it displays (but does not sell) the entire range of its products—and renovating areas in showrooms selling Jaquar products. It is also increasing its focus on the export market and the institutional segment (hotels, builders) in India that contributes 35% of its sale. The company is constructing its fourth plant at Manesar for ₹100 crore, to manufacture the new

products.

Though the company fell ₹200 crore short of its target set for the last financial year, Mehra is upbeat of reaching ₹1,700 crore by the end of this year.

Jaquar's move to get into new bathroom product segments is in line with the increasing importance of bathroom in people's lives, says Mehra. "After a hard day at work, you head to the bathroom to re-energise and rejuvenate yourself. If you observe, you'd spend more time in the bathroom than in the bedroom," he says.

He says that the engineering head of a large hotel chain said the key to customer satisfaction was a great bed and a great bathroom. "Earlier bathroom was outside the home, then it became a part of the home and now the bathroom has become a happening place," says Mehra.