

"John's vs Popy umbrella innovation war"



Weekly Learnings 32 / 2023

We tend to look at eyeball-to-eyeball brand fights like Nike vs Adidas, Sony vs Samsung, and Coke vs Pepsi and draw lessons from them.

We have in India two Umbrella brands John's and Popy who give us great innovation lessons.

1. Umbrellas were first used to protect against the sun and it's only later that they were used for rain.
2. John's and Popy are from the same family, Kasim Kauri and Abraham Varghese started in British India in Alappuzha in Kerala. The families separated in 1968. These two brands have 80pc in the Kerala market and are present across other cities in India.
3. Innovation in material. Both companies use steel, and alloys, to strengthen the rib cage of Umbrellas and use better materials for grips. Popy had material that changed colour when it comes in touch with water.
4. Innovation via technology. They have an auto-close umbrella for women, they have a selfie stick umbrella, and they have a stronger material umbrella against heavy wind. They have I Auto a fully electric umbrella.
5. Innovation by demographics. They have umbrellas for women, men, boys, and girls and a cane walking stick umbrella for the aged. They also have a pocket umbrella sub-branded Nano and Atom.
6. Focus on kids... Popy started advertising to kids in 1996 and the two brands have a creative war. They have a water pistol umbrella, Batman umbrella, princess umbrella, and Bhim umbrella.
7. Innovation by size... they have various sizes of umbrellas depending on the demographics and price.
8. Innovation by fold...They have umbrellas that fold inside so that the water doesn't splash on the user.
9. Innovation in manufacturing. They consistently push for superior material handling and better production facilities. They have facilities equivalent to car seat manufacturing standards. They have won all quality awards in India.
10. Price Range... They have umbrellas in the range from Rs 100 to Rs 6000, that's a 60x factor. They export to USA and Europe. This pricing is a combination of size, material, innovation and theme.

All companies can learn from John's and Popy. Companies cannot sell a range and invariably focus on low-price variants to get volume. Companies do not innovate at this pace, invariably they will say a chip is a chip, a laptop is a laptop, and a jam is a jam. These two brands, their agencies and their partners are obviously thinking much harder and sharper about growing consumption via innovation.

Innovation can be brought to any sphere is the big lesson here.

Kudos to John's and Popy

Shiv

www.shivshivakumar.com

14 August 2023