

All things niche and natural

A close look at two homegrown brands that found innovative ways to expand during the pandemic and still stay successful

January 13, 2023 06:35 pm | Updated 08:25 pm IST

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Terracotta decor from The Yellow Dwelling.

It's a prolonged winter in many parts of India and home becomes the comfort zone most of the time. The décor and accents that make your space also determine the calm you can afford when news of another pandemic threat do the rounds. You could still be on the lookout for anything that exudes verve and joy.

Pinklay: Blending heritage into contemporary designs

Daisy Tanwani studied mass media with a specialisation in journalism from Jai Hind College, Mumbai University, and worked across industries for over 15+ years in mainly marketing and branding functions. In the early 2000s, she found herself marvelling at a tapestry piece at an international home décor brand in the U.S. “A small tag said ‘Made in India’ and I wondered why do Indians have to carry made in India from elsewhere. That is the crux of why I started Pinklay — to design and make in India for Indians who are now well travelled, demanding and discerning,” she says.



In 2015, she resigned from Danone where her role was leading the launch of an international baby food brand and returned to her roots, Jaipur, to launch Pinklay. “I spent 17 formative years of my life in Jaipur and the city has a lot to do with what I do today,” she says. “The idea behind Pinklay was simple — create a more accessible, aspirational, lifestyle brand that caters to the modern Indian while taking our handicraft heritage and fusing modern designs in unpredictable ways.”



“We couldn’t think of a better way to do that than stand in front of our customers, and listen and learn the old-school way. While we always wanted to be an online-first company, learnings from our very first exhibition shaped how we approached our business and offerings,” Tanwani says.



Pinklay launched with a small, but highly curated, collection of cushion covers, quilts, laptop sleeves, tote bags, plush toys, ceramics, and wooden and metal artifacts for home, kitchen, and garden. “I personally designed our very first collection and ran point on everything — from product to marketing. Our initial investment from incorporation to launch was ₹12 lakhs,” she says.

There was no looking back after that. Apart from online, the brand now has two offline experience stores, in Mumbai and Bengaluru, and a third store due to open in Hyderabad.

On international players entering India, Tanwani says they are wonderful and operate on a very different scale, but ultimately are foreign brands trying to come to India to cater to Indians. “We are an Indian brand trying to cater to modern Indians and global citizens who value small batch handcrafts. And, there lies the difference. Pinklay combines heritage handcrafts with contemporary designs. Our design language is authentic and timeless with bold use of colour — it’s Indian but not kitsch,” she says.



Pinklay's designs are crafted to convey stories — often inspired from natural elements and diverse crafts and cultures from around the world. “I love traveling and every collection has an element from various travels within India and elsewhere. We carefully pick unique themes and offer collections like Mahtab, Onam, Padma, Misfit etc.”

The brand works across a variety of art forms such as hand block, kantha, embroidery, patchwork, kalamkari, daabu, and ikat to name a few, pairing designs with the right art forms to arrive at our final collections.

Tanwani says the company is looking to build an omni-channel experience for customers. “We already have a strong online presence and are looking to expand our offline footprint in the coming years. We expect to have retail stores across major cities in India. In addition, we are also doubling down our efforts on building a strong international presence,” she says.