CHAPTER 3

Venturing in Entrepreneurial Undertakings

3.1. Case 3: In Search of Luxurious Slippers: The Birth of Edmini, an Entrepreneurial Venture in the UAE (A)

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Abstract

This case study illustrates the birth of an entrepreneurial business concept, named Edmini, which was initiated by two Emirati citizens. The main idea behind Edmini lies in the creation of an online store to provide male consumers in the UAE convenient means to acquire customized high-end slippers. Bringing out subtly the culture and tradition of the local UAE population, the case offers relevant insights into various processes and steps that were put in place to establish the Edmini brand between 2009 and 2010. By showcasing different experiences that revolve around identifying the market need, developing optimal branding schemes, and allocating required resources for footwear manufacturing, this case provides the opportunity to grasp a thorough understanding of the challenges that a start-up could face.

Keywords

entrepreneurial venture, business concept, market analysis, launching a brand, online store, product customization, UAE
On an afternoon in September 2010, Abdulnasser was on his way to the Edmini office in Sharjah, UAE. Having completed his day’s work at the Sharjah Islamic Bank, Abdulnasser was looking forward to reaching his office to discuss with Rashid the problems they were encountering with foreign suppliers and decide on an immediate action plan. Earlier in the day, Rashid had informed him that the first samples of slipper molds had finally arrived from the factory in Thailand, much later than they had initially expected. Moreover, the leather cutting and sewing machines, which had to be delivered a long time ago by the vendor in China, were nowhere to be seen. “I am confident that Edmini was a great idea! So far, we could take care of everything—the concept, the brand, the online store. Now, the supplies that are needed for the local product manufacturing have to be taken care of,” thought Abdulnasser, as he approached the front door. “I am still determined to start the production of Edmini slippers prior to the upcoming Eid celebration of October 2010. Yet, we need to make important decisions right away if we are to make it!” was the first thing he said when he saw his business partner.

The Birth of an Entrepreneurial Idea

Abdulnasser Jamal Hussain Alshaali, a young aspiring entrepreneur, had a bundle of ideas for a business concept he wanted to launch in his native UAE. Keeping in mind his favorite quote “whenever there is a need, there is an opportunity to succeed,” he uncovered the need for his entrepreneurial concept on the occasion of the Eid festivities. There were two Eids that were celebrated each year across the UAE: Eid al-Fitr marked the breaking of fast at the end of the holy month of Ramadan, while Eid al-Adha occurred after the Hajj when Muslims worldwide completed their annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Being the most important religious holidays in the UAE, this was the time when locals had many social gatherings where they greeted each other and made merry. This was also when people noticed what everyone else was wearing for Eid. Thus, shopping for new items, garments, and shoes prior to Eid celebrations was given a lot of importance.

Slippers were one of the main items of clothing that were of fashionable interest amongst the Arab male crowd in the UAE. In particular, when men gathered in the Majlis (an area with special seating), they noticed each others slippers and could easily tell whether the shoe was of a good make or not. It was in August of 2008 when Abdulnasser was doing some last-minute Eid shopping in search of slippers that were sleek in design, good in quality, and comfortable to wear that he screened both local and foreign designer brands, only to discover that the slippers lacked at least one of his expectations: when