

Selling Cycling

Amidst the thick jungle of brick & mortar stores; a world where the large format stores, largely rule there also exist a rare species of formats that add a hue of innovation to retailing. Track n Trail Café is one such hue we managed to explore; a format which blends the science of selling with the art of experience. Paddle through the details of this store, which 'Sells cycling'.



Reena Mehta

Learning to ride a cycle unfailingly is one of the most vivid and treasured memory residing in the archives of our childhood. The prized possession must have either entered our lives as a birthday present or in the form of a pat on the back. Trying to recollect the experience of buying my first 'bike', this is what surfaces as a rough memory.

The store was in a lane so thin that 'walk in a queue' is the only way you can traverse it. The lane was nick-named and famously known as 'Cyclewadi' (being in Gujarat the lane got its name from the local diction and language). 'Cyclewadi' was a lane where practically all the cycle traders operated out of; each shop a mere 100 sq. ft. gala holding every variety, some hanging from the façade some parked in the store. We braked at a shop called 'A1 Cycle Store' the owner knew us, and in a matter of minutes the deal was sealed. The only aspect where I was allowed to exercise my freedom of choice was the color; the rest had already been discussed over the phone. This visit was just a transactional formality.

But this was a reality, a good 20 years back; slowly 'Cyclewadi' transformed into a 500 sq ft. air conditioned shop mushrooming in shopping centers, and then came in the suave sports stores. But one thing was common among all these renditions: each of them 'Sold cycles'.



Makarand Nadkarni, DGM Retail, Ti Cycle India



But TI Cycles chose to go beyond the obvious and did the same with a twist. The twist they call 'Track n Trail Café' a chain of stores cum café which isn't about selling cycles but about selling cycling. "The appetite for social engagement is increasing amongst the new generation, which compels retailing to go beyond traditional forms and become entertaining. Thus we at TI Cycles thought of starting up Track n Trail Café, a store + café hybrid that renders to be a platform which engages the community of like minded passionate cycling enthusiasts', and promotes cycling as a way of life by fostering active participation. The concept encourages the users to browse leisurely without any intimidation. This is one of our efforts to make the category move up the lifestyle ladder," elucidates Makarand Nadkarni, DGM Retail, TI Cycle India.

This is India's first concept store in the category, and was launched 4 months back in Bangalore. TI Cycles operates the cycles' part while the Café is managed by a leading Bangalore based hotelier. The store + café, is a junction that merchandises bikes above the range of 10,000, and cycling





accessories, it also is a service center. The concept is targeted at a highly niche audience, which includes high net-worth individuals usually employed in IT/ITES companies who are looking at investing in cycles for fitness and leisure, broadly falling into the age range of 25-45 years. Elaborating and sharing the typical customer who is likely to walk into Track n Trail Makarand says, "Young corporate employee in a managerial position, who looks beyond traditional forms of entertainment, considers investing in cycles for fitness and leisure and is a part of a cycling community and indulges in weekend rides of 50 kms and above."

Instead of merely creating a retail arm TI Cycles added a twist by starting a cycle store which is also a café. Sighting the insight and logic behind this hybrid model Makarand says, "Today buying a cycle is a family affair and it involves active participation between users, influencers, friends and the sellers spending extended time at the stores. The inclusion of light snacks and coffee into cycles was an attempt to make the buying experience pleasurable and comfortable, while they shop for cycles and get their bikes serviced."

Being an innovative and unique concept sure earns a brownie point for Track n Trail café. But the crucial side to the story is to be able to attract the TG so niche and remain relevant to them. There exists a slew of other competitive store forms, that sell cycles and the concept of selling cycling is relatively new for the consumers to relate to. But TI Cycles handles this tricky situation by creating quite a buzz around the

store, "Our TG shares certain common interests which are allied towards the cycling concept. Leveraging this interest we at TI Cycles have initiated promotions and activities like cycling rides, cycling & photography, cycling & travel, cycling & adventure. We also engage celebrities like Han Rey, which generate further excitement among our consumers. And all these aspects are tied to Track n Trail café. The endeavor is to upgrade and constantly involve the customer in active participation and community development programs regularly. Further on being a niche concept we also get sponsorships which are put to appropriate use," Makarand explains.

Along with the healthy F&B options, the store also offers a wide range of books and magazines which inspire both a beginner and professional cycle enthusiast. Value additions like Wi-Fi, bicycle service center, and a projector which screens live sporting actions. The basic objective is to provide a space for the customers to relax and engage in conversations related to cycling. Further on even the smallest of all details are aligned to incite the interests of the TG, like the store manager recruited is also from a sports background and possesses a good acumen towards building community mobility.

While ensuring a store experience so specialized TI Cycles sure faces some challenges and sharing them Makarand says, "Standardizing the entire experience of bringing cycling and Café together, along with localization of taste and preference towards managing events and the quality of food, attracting more

number of young Indians to involve in a healthier option like cycling, finding the right business partner who has the acumen of bringing cycles and F&B business together. And with all this ensure that the store staff and its experience are at par with the customer expectations."

While these challenges can be tackled through tactics, the key to success for this concept lies in being present where it is relevant. "Ti cycle of India chooses to open in markets where there is positive traction towards cycling as a means of fitness and leisure. Bangalore being the No 1 city for cycling has grown to have many cycling communities, thus the first obvious option was to start with this city. The market has doubled since we have started the store," Makarand entails. Further on Track n Trail is set to start in cities like Pune, Chandigarh, NCR, Mumbai and Chennai.

Track n Trail has already managed to garner commendable response; it has already crossed a fan following of 28,000 fans on its facebook account. Today the concept has grown to be a haven for cycle enthusiasts where they find international bikes, a place where they actively involve themselves in knowledge sharing.

Track n Trail surely has managed to spread the joy of cycling amongst the urban youth.

By the way, Lady Bird was my first bike! What was yours? And how about reliving the joy of pedaling back in the past! ■