



How has Sabyasachi diversified its products and geographic reach and has the brand been able to maintain its core values whilst doing the same?

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Abstract

The Sabyasachi brand is known worldwide today. However, the journey to this global recognition is nothing less than impressive having its roots in humble beginnings. This research paper analyses the growth and competitive edge obtained by Sabyasachi in the Indian market before proceeding to evaluate the growth of the brand's product portfolio through its jewellery line and tableware collection as well as its internationalisation into newer and foreign markets - all whilst maintaining its core values. The aforementioned is supported by the application of appropriate business management theories including the Ansoff Matrix and Uppsala Model.

Introduction

Can a brand that celebrates the essence of Indian culture captivate not just its own nation but the entire world?

In the ever-evolving realm of luxury fashion, few stories resonate as deeply as the journey of Sabyasachi. This renowned brand achieved fame within India's fashion industry before venturing into the challenging path of global expansion and diversification.

The story of Sabyasachi's rise to fame and global recognition is nothing short of remarkable. Sabyasachi Mukherjee's path to success began with a leap of faith, he left everything behind to pursue his passion. After his parents refused to support his dreams by paying for the NIFT exam, he took a bold step and left home, making his way to Goa, where he took on the role of a waiter, working tirelessly to earn the fees for the designing institute (Feitelberg, 2022). After completing his graduation, he stood at a crossroads, armed only with his dreams of

establishing a fashion label. With the modest sum of Rs 20,000 borrowed from his sister, he took the bold step to start his own venture (Financial Express Lifestyle, 2023).

Four months later, Sabyasachi Mukherjee's brand gained attention in India's fashion industry. Over the years, Sabyasachi expanded his products, creating a diverse range of clothing and accessories that showed traditional Indian aesthetics with a modern touch. His designs found recognition not only within India but also internationally, driving Sabyasachi to global prominence in the luxury fashion domain. The brand's success allowed him to open stores in India and engage in collaborations with international brands. In line with the aforementioned, this research paper aims to answer the question **How has Sabyasachi diversified its products and geographic reach and has the brand been able to maintain its core values whilst doing the same?**

This paper aims to critically analyse the factors that drove Sabyasachi's fame in the Indian market before proceeding to evaluate the brand's diversification and globalization strategies.

Sabyasachi - An Analysis of the Brand's Rise to Fame in the Indian Market

As mentioned in the introduction, Sabyasachi Mukherjee's vision was to bring tradition and authenticity back to Indian fashion, and he started this journey from a small workshop in Kolkata. Since then, the brand has evolved significantly with the journey being marked by significant milestones that have made it prominent. One of the key drivers of this success may be credited to the **unique selling point (USP)** that Sabyasachi as a brand offers. This can be further understood with a quick comparative analysis between Sabyasachi and one of its main competitors Tarun Tahiliani. Sabyasachi's success can be attributed to its unique combination of tradition, authenticity, and craftsmanship. The brand actively promotes '**Made in India**', featuring locally made textiles and handcrafted work. Sabyasachi's dedication to traditional craftsmanship is seen in its use of hand-embroidery techniques executed by skilled Indian artisans. In contrast, Tarun Tahiliani offers a more modern fusion of fashion elements and a broad design spectrum, combining tradition with modernity. Overall, Sabyasachi's commitment to heritage, authenticity, and craftsmanship, alongside its endorsement of 'Made in India,' contributes to its distinct success in the Indian fashion market.

Further expanding on the above, one of Sabyasachi's standout qualities is its ability to blend cultural traditions with contemporary aesthetics seamlessly. The brand's designs demonstrate the stories of India's rich cultural heritage. An illustrative example is the use of 'Kalamkari' prints in Sabyasachi's collections. Kalamkari is a traditional Indian art form that tells stories through hand-painted or block-printed textiles (Times of India, 2023). The designer's Kalamkari sarees in Khadi come from Andhra Pradesh where they are made over 31 days each by women from the villages of Barasat (The Economic Times, 2018). By incorporating Kalamkari into its designs, Sabyasachi connects the wearer to India's heritage and history. Moreover, in the 'Kesribai Pannalal' collection, Sabyasachi incorporated traditional Mughal floral motifs and patterns reminiscent of the Mughal era (Mehra, 2018). These motifs have

historical and cultural significance, representing the beauty of India's past. By using these motifs, Sabyasachi shows the country's rich heritage. Sabyasachi also incorporates traditional textiles from different regions of India, such as Banarasi silk, Chikankari from Lucknow, and Kanjeevaram silk from the South. Each of these textiles has a distinct history and cultural significance, and their use in Sabyasachi's designs reflects the diversity of India's cultural heritage. Furthermore, Sabyasachi's choice of colours often draws from India's cultural symbols. Red, for instance, is a dominant colour in Indian weddings, symbolising love and commitment and one that is most popular is the brand's designs.

Sabyasachi's bridal wear collections are iconic in India. They show a sense of elegance that appeals to brides across the country. The visible detailing, luxurious fabrics, and timeless designs make Sabyasachi the preferred choice for brides looking to make a statement on their special day. Applying the **Resource-Based View**, we can see that the brand's unique resources, including its skilled artisans and access to rare textiles, give it a sustainable competitive edge in 'Zardosi' work and mirror work, highlighting the brand's dedication to preserving traditional craftsmanship. These collections are not just garments, they represent a bride's dream of the perfect wedding attire.

One of Sabyasachi's most remarkable achievements is the emotional connection it has established with its audience. This connection is rooted in cultural nostalgia and heritage. Sabyasachi's designs evoke a sense of belonging, and the brand has become a source of pride and identity for many Indians. In terms of marketing theories, Sabyasachi's success can be linked to the **Emotional Branding theory**. This theory suggests that brands can create a deep emotional connection with customers, and Sabyasachi's ability to evoke emotions tied to cultural heritage exemplifies this concept.

The Growth of Sabyasachi's Product Portfolio

Sabyasachi is most renowned for his Indian bridal wear but over the years he has started to expand his offerings beyond clothing. The two most prominent examples of this have been the jewellery line established by the Sabyasachi brand as well as the tableware collection launched. To thoroughly analyse these two examples and the type of growth strategy they represent, it is essential to first understand the Ansoff Matrix.

		Products	
		Present	New
Markets	Present	Market Penetration	Product Development
	New	Market Development	Diversification

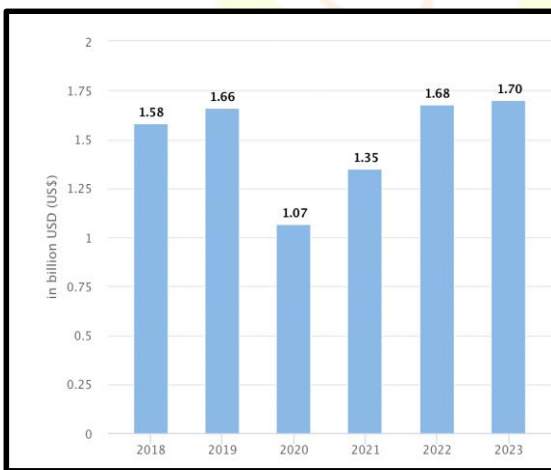
The **Ansoff Matrix**, developed by Igor Ansoff, is a strategic planning tool that assists businesses in understanding and evaluating their growth strategies (Peterdy, 2023). The Ansoff Matrix distinguishes between four growth strategies: market penetration, market development, product development, and diversification - each with different levels of associated risk. Market penetration focuses on selling existing products to existing markets and is linked with relatively low risk. Market development is concerned with expanding into new markets with

existing products. This strategy seeks to reach new customer segments or untapped geographical areas and is deemed to have a moderate level of risk. Product development, on the other hand, is related to creating new products for existing markets. This strategy focuses on innovation and introducing novel offerings to current customers and also comes with a moderate level of risk. Lastly, there is diversification, which is defined as a brand entering into new products and new markets simultaneously. This is the riskiest strategy but offers the potential for significant returns.

Sabyasachi's Jewellery Line (2017)

In 2017, Sabyasachi strategically entered the jewellery industry, marking a notable shift from its foundational business focus on fashion and bridal wear (The Indian Express, 2017). This move may be identified as *product development* as it consists of a new product category being introduced to the existing market i.e. primarily brides. This strategic decision aimed to capitalise on the brand's established reputation while exploring new avenues for growth and customer engagement.

The strategic reasons behind this expansion are multi-faceted. Firstly, it was a response to the evolving preferences of the target audience. Luxury consumers often seek a comprehensive brand experience, and offering jewellery



complementing Sabyasachi's apparel allows for a more enhanced engagement with the brand. Secondly, the move leveraged a great market opportunity as the market for luxury jewellery in India was thriving. As can be seen in the image to the left, taken from Statista (2023), the luxury jewellery market in India saw a year-on-year increase in valuation pre-COVID. Whilst the state of the market may have looked less promising in 2020, it has since recovered and the upward trend is expected to continue. The aforementioned proves the popularity of this market in India and provides a reasonable explanation as to why Sabyasachi as a brand would want to market its place in the

same.

This product development also aligns with the brand's core values of tradition, authenticity, and craftsmanship. Sabyasachi's jewellery line incorporates traditional Indian design elements, handcrafted excellence, and a narrative storytelling approach (Dey, 2020). The brand successfully extended its principles from clothing to jewellery, ensuring continuity in the customer experience - as can be seen in the analysis of some of the core pieces introduced by the jewellery division of the Sabyasachi brand.

Sabyasachi Heritage Jewellery

As per Sabyasachi (2023), one of the most iconic pieces from the heritage jewellery produced by the brand is its reinterpretation of the royal jadau necklaces of India. These historic handcrafted necklaces adorned the ancient royals and aristocrats. The threaded rope clasp or ‘sarafa’ has been transformed into a broad sash in Sabyasachi’s iconic printed velvets. While a more contemporary frame layers together precious gemstones with handcrafted techniques and legacy crafts.

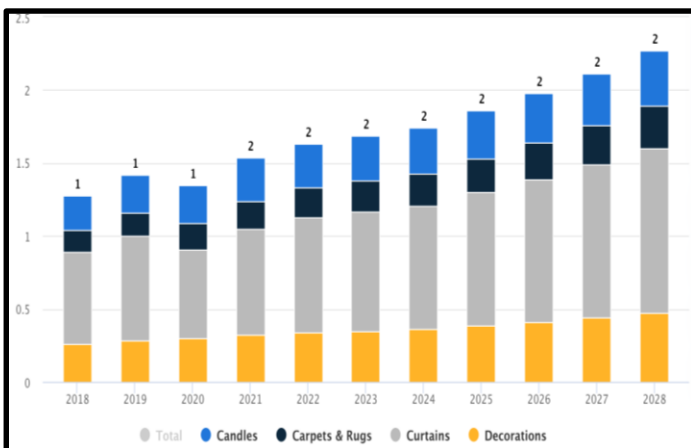


The Tropic of Calcutta Diamond Jewellery Collection

“To make our jewellery truly luxurious again and to create modern heirlooms that are wearable, authentic, timeless and most of all, beautiful. India and our Indian heritage remain my biggest inspiration” is what Sabyasachi himself had to say regarding his collection, Tropic of Calcutta, launched a few years back (Jamal, 2021). This collection was a true example of a contemporary take on heritage whereby some pieces featured opulent bibs with tiger’s heads and coloured gemstones, diamond-studded chokers anchored by walnut-sized opals, ropes of brilliant-cut diamonds mixed with pyrite, sapphires, rubies, coral, and spinels and even palm tree-shaped earrings with coral and emeralds, pearls and real diamonds. The designer called this “disruptive diamond jewellery”

Sabyasachi x Thomas Goode Tableware Collection (2019)

In 2019, Sabyasachi made a strategic move and *diversified* into the homeware segment through a collaboration with Thomas Goode, unveiling a tableware collection (Siganporia, 2019). This expansion represents a deliberate shift beyond the core fashion business, as it ventures into a distinct product category outside the traditional realms of clothing and accessories. While diversification is evident, it’s crucial to note that this move is somewhat unrelated to Sabyasachi’s foundational focus on fashion, marking a deliberate exploration into new avenues.



The timing of this diversification appears strategic, considering the global trends in luxury homeware and lifestyle products. As can be seen in the image to the left (Statista, 2024), the home decor market in India was at a high in 2019 and whilst numbers may have been low in 2020, the revenue has once again been increasing year on year since 2021. The yellow section especially signifies the ‘decorations’ category which is where the collaborated tableware collection would arguably fit in for many. With

an increasing emphasis on home aesthetics, the launch of a tableware collection was aligned with the evolving needs and preferences of consumers, especially those who already knew about the Sabyasachi brand.

This move also signifies harmony between fashion and homeware. By extending the brand into the realm of home decor, Sabyasachi aimed to offer a comprehensive lifestyle experience to its clientele. The collaboration with Thomas Goode, a renowned name in luxury homeware, added credibility and expertise to this diversification strategy. Thomas Goode & Co., a distinguished name in luxury homeware, has a legacy dating back to 1827, renowned for supplying tableware to British royalty (Sotheby's, 2021). As a prominent figure in the homeware industry, Goode's position and expertise add substantial credibility to Sabyasachi's foray into home decor. His brand embodies a tradition of excellence, aligning with Sabyasachi's pursuit of offering a comprehensive lifestyle experience.

The strategic collaboration serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it leverages Thomas Goode's established reputation to instil trust and assurance in the quality of Sabyasachi's home decor line, especially when entering a new market segment. Secondly, it taps into Goode's extensive knowledge of the homeware industry, providing valuable insights and ensuring the products meet the highest standards. By associating with a trusted name like Thomas Goode, Sabyasachi aims to position its homeware collection as a symbol of craftsmanship. This collaboration strategically aligns the brand with established expertise, presenting the line to the market in a more credible and trustworthy manner.

Furthermore, the introduction of a tableware collection not only broadens Sabyasachi's consumer base but also taps



into potential opportunities, especially in the context of weddings. Sabyasachi's prominence in bridal wear could translate seamlessly into the realm of wedding gifts. Inspired by Sabyasachi's designs for their wedding attire, brides may now extend this aesthetic to their homes through the homeware line. The prospect of having Sabyasachi prints adorning not just their attire but also their living spaces can create a holistic and cherished experience for brides.

Additionally, the collection opens avenues for friends and family to gift pieces from Sabyasachi's homeware line, providing a meaningful and luxurious option for wedding gifts. This aligns with the trend of selecting gifts that are not only functional but also reflective of the couple's lifestyle and preferences. Sabyasachi's tableware could become a go-to choice for those seeking distinctive and elegant gifts, thereby strengthening the brand's association with special occasions.

Overall, thoughtful marketing and product positioning ensure that Sabyasachi's foray into jewelery and more importantly homeware is perceived as a natural extension of luxury living, complementing its fashion offerings, rather than a departure from its exclusive appeal.

The Internationalization of Sabyasachi

To understand the internationalisation of Sabyasachi further, we may apply the **Uppsala Model** - a theoretical framework developed by Johanson and Vahlne explaining the internationalisation process of firms. It posits that companies gradually increase their international involvement through incremental stages. Initially, firms engage in sporadic export activities and, as they gain experience and knowledge, progress to more committed forms of internationalisation, such as establishing sales subsidiaries or entering into partnerships (Zohari, 2021). The model emphasises the importance of experiential learning and market commitment, suggesting that firms become more involved in foreign markets as their understanding and commitment to those markets deepen over time.

In line with the above, Sabyasachi, being an Indian fashion designer, would likely have followed a step-by-step approach to entering foreign markets.

No Regular Export Activities

Initially, Sabyasachi might not have engaged in regular export activities but may have participated in international fashion events or collaborated with international designers to gain exposure. In line with the aforementioned, in 2004, Sabyasachi Mukherjee made his mark on the international fashion stage with captivating appearances at the Kuala Lumpur Fashion Week and Miami Fashion Week (The New York Times, 2008). These events showcased his unique designs, blending traditional Indian craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics. This marked the beginning of Sabyasachi's global recognition journey, laying the foundation for the brand's expansion into the international fashion arena. The acclaim during these early forays played a crucial role in establishing Sabyasachi as a renowned designer with a distinctive and globally appealing design aesthetic. However, it was the momentous debut at New York Fashion Week (NYFW) in 2006 that proved to be a turning point as that is when the brand started to be recognised as an international brand (Sur, 2022). NYFW stands as a pinnacle in the global fashion arena, influencing trends and setting the tone for the industry. Showcasing the collection at this event benefited Sabyasachi in myriad ways including **access to global markets** through an entry into a network of influential industry professionals, collaborators, and buyers worldwide; **industry validation** generated from the positive reception at NYFW which also led to collaborations within the international fashion community; **cultural fusion and diversity** through the Indian culture being showcased globally and resonating with a diverse audience and enhancing the brand's universal appeal.

The continuous showcasing at international fashion weeks and events, such as NYFW, Milan Fashion Week, Miami Fashion Week, and the Cannes Film Festival, over the years, played a crucial role in shaping the Sabyasachi brand and its global recognition. The analysis employs **Network Theory**, a conceptual framework in social science and business, to illuminate the strategic significance of Sabyasachi's participation in these events. These events act as nodes in a dynamic network, facilitating connections and collaborations with global fashion influencers, designers, buyers, and media. This interconnectedness amplifies Sabyasachi's visibility, providing a powerful platform to showcase the brand's distinctive blend of traditional Indian craftsmanship and contemporary design. The resulting global acceptance and appreciation underscore the pivotal role of Network Theory in shaping the brand's narrative within the international fashion circuit.

The Cannes Film Festival, more specifically, has brought the brand great international success. This event is one of the most prestigious film festivals globally, held annually in Cannes, France. Renowned for showcasing exceptional films and attracting international celebrities, it serves as a cultural hub for the film industry (Carolyn, 2023). The relevance of the Cannes Film Festival to Sabyasachi lies in its status as a high-profile event that transcends cinema to encompass fashion and glamour. Sabyasachi's participation in the festival involves showcasing his designs on influential celebrities attending the red carpet, providing an exceptional platform to exhibit his creations to a global audience. For instance, as seen in the image



to the right, Deepika Padukone, who was on jury duty at the Cannes Film Festival 2022, exuded retro charm as she walked the red carpet in a glamorous Sabyasachi saree. Featuring golden and black stripes with sequin embellishments, the saree was inspired by the majestic Bengal tiger (Chawla, 2022). This exposure not only reinforces the brand's association with luxury and style but also aligns Sabyasachi with the epitome of international cultural events, further enhancing its global image and appeal. Sabyasachi has become a fixture on the international fashion scene. His creations, worn by Bollywood and international celebrities at Cannes, add a touch of Indian heritage to the festival's red carpet, elevating its sartorial allure. Sabyasachi's impact extends beyond fashion, contributing to Cannes as a platform where diverse cultural influences converge and are celebrated with timeless elegance.

Export via Independent Representatives

As the brand gained recognition, it could have started exporting its designs through independent representatives or collaborations with international retailers, gradually increasing its market presence. This can be substantiated by the brand selling its designer wear in countries such as Dubai, California, Atlanta, and London through authorised bridal stores. The choice of these countries may also be deemed strategic as

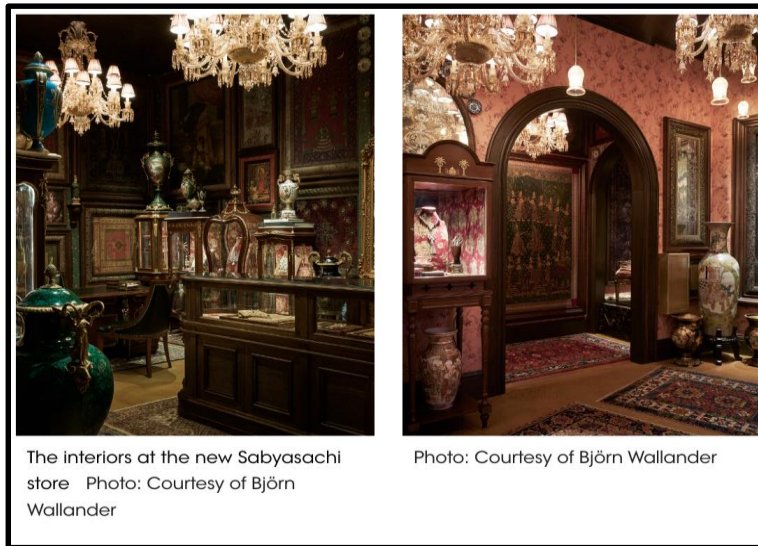
they all offer both business potential and cultural closeness, aiding the brand's gradual internationalisation process. Dubai, for instance, has a significant South Asian expatriate population (Medium, 2023), and Sabyasachi's designs resonate strongly with this demographic due to their traditional Indian elements. Moreover, Dubai is a global hub for luxury fashion and attracts a clientele with a penchant for high-end, couture fashion, aligning with Sabyasachi's brand positioning. London too is a global fashion capital with a rich history of embracing diverse styles. Sabyasachi, aiming for international recognition, might have strategically chosen London to establish a presence in this influential fashion hub. Concerning California, Sabyasachi's decision to establish a presence here could be driven by the attention the brand received from the West by having its designs worn by both Hollywood and Bollywood stars. Other than that, it is also vital to highlight that with 900,000 Indian American residents, California boasts the largest Indian American population in the entire country (Indian American Impact, 2023) - signifying the element of cultural closeness.

Establishment of Own Sales Subsidiaries

Sabyasachi might have moved on to establish its own sales subsidiaries or stores in key international locations, ensuring more direct control over its products and brand image. This is evident in a more recent move by the brand wherein they have opened their first international store in New York. The opening of Sabyasachi's first U.S. store in 2022 represents a significant milestone in the brand's global expansion strategy. The store, housed in The Archive building at 160 Christopher Street, marks a new journey for Sabyasachi's couture wares that have had a resounding success with brides and clients on a global scale (Zamindar, 2022). To successfully navigate the American market, Sabyasachi undertook a meticulous adaptation of its marketing, product offerings, and retail experience.

Marketing strategies were tailored to resonate with American consumers, leveraging culturally relevant themes while maintaining the brand's distinctive identity. Product offerings were adjusted to align with local tastes and preferences, ensuring that the collections catered to the nuanced demands of the U.S. market. The retail experience was crafted to create an immersive environment that seamlessly blended Sabyasachi's Indian heritage with a contemporary American aesthetic.

This strategic move is indicative of the brand's flexibility and understanding of market dynamics, showcasing its commitment to establishing a strong and authentic presence in the competitive American fashion landscape.



Conclusion

Sabyasachi is a very prominent figure in the luxury fashion market and also a brand which has built itself up over the years. The brand comes from humble beginnings and by diversifying its product range and globalising, is now recognised as a fantastic example of an Indian luxury brand going global. In light of the aforementioned, this research paper aimed to explore how Sabyasachi diversified its products and expanded geographically while maintaining core values like tradition, authenticity, and craftsmanship.

Sabyasachi's unique blend of tradition, authenticity, and craftsmanship sets it apart in the Indian fashion market. The brand seamlessly blends cultural traditions with contemporary aesthetics, evident in iconic bridal wear collections that tell stories of India's rich heritage. Emotional connections rooted in cultural nostalgia have turned Sabyasachi into a source of pride for many Indians, embodying the concept of Emotional Branding.

Diversifications into jewellery in 2017 and tableware in 2019 align with the Ansoff Matrix. These expansions allowed Sabyasachi to tap into new markets while preserving core values. The jewellery line incorporates traditional Indian design elements, while the tableware collection, through collaboration with Thomas Goode, signifies a commitment to authenticity and craftsmanship in diverse categories. Global forays, beginning in 2004 with appearances at Kuala Lumpur and Miami Fashion Weeks, align with the Uppsala Model. Sabyasachi's step-by-step approach to internationalisation, entering cities like Dubai, California, Atlanta, and London, reflects a well-thought-out expansion strategy based on cultural affinity and business potential. The recent entry into the American market in 2022 represents a culmination of Sabyasachi's global expansion efforts. Adapting marketing, products, and retail experiences for the American consumer underscores the brand's commitment to establishing a strong and authentic presence globally.

In conclusion, Sabyasachi's success lies not just in exquisite designs but also in adaptability, diversification, and transcending traditional luxury boundaries. The brand's global recognition results from a strategic blend of tradition, innovation, cultural storytelling, and an emotional connection with its audience. Sabyasachi stands as a shining example of an Indian luxury brand captivating not just its nation but leaving an indelible mark globally.

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