LENDING A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO 'FRESH'

VIVEK GUPTA &

ABHAY HANJURA

CATEGORY: 0-3 YEARS
Licious

C URIOUS ENTREPRENEUR passionately building India's most loved food brand that **aims to make a difference to the consumer** and to elevate the entire ecosystem of meat and fisheries in India!" Yes, this is Abhay Hanjura for you in his own words. Vivek Gupta brings to the table a vast set of multidisciplinary skills and can effectuate a kaleidoscope of roles, all at once. In July 2015, the duo founded Licious, **India's first fresh meat consumer brand.**

The idea behind the startup

In early 2015, we (Hanjura and Gupta) set out to build a consumer brand that was committed to solving some of the most challenging and highly critical everyday pain-points of quality, hygiene, fresh - ness and convenience when it comes to every day food items.

Much deliberation led us to the meat sector, which remained highly unorganised, lacked quality and safety standards, product in - consistency and lack of produce traceability. Deeper un - derstanding about the meat market dynamics, led to the realisation on the need and possibility to build a trust centred, quality driven, full stack consumer meat brand.

Licious was conceived in an economy where commodities like milk, masalas , flour and even water is labelled, but the most susceptible category that poses the highest food safety risk had been left significantly deficient. Built on the farm-to-fork model, Licious owns the entire back-end supply chain, powered by world class processing facilities and stringent cold chain control to scientifically maintain the quality and freshness of each product till it reaches the end user.

The USP

As a category leader and the largest direct to consumer

fresh meat and seafood brand, Licious has been able to build differentiation across all dimensions including technology, data science, supply chain, product quality, consumer engagement and category understanding. With its seamless supply chain capabilities which is cold chain powered and scientifically maintains global standard of quality and freshness of each product, Licious has been able to stay ahead of the curve and holds a great distinc - tion to drive the category that has remained highly unor - ganised. Licious' ability to innovate daily and consistently in a market, which is not con - strained by demand but lacks high-quality supply is definitive and distinctive.

Over the past three years, Licious has to its credit many industry-first initia- tives, which includes aseptic cold chain processing facility managed by doctors and meat scientists, first-in market tech- nology like vacuum packing and modi - fied atmosphere packaging to maintain freshness of short shelf-life products and IoT powered refrigeration technology across all stages of cold chain.

Business model

Licious is a direct-to-consumer meat and seafood brand, built to maintain the quality and freshness of each product from the stage of procurement, process - ing and packaging till it reaches the customer. Licious is building its market value on the back of being a product-first, consumer obsessed brand with a compulsive focus on receiving greater consumer loyalty.

As a technology driven, digitally native consumer brand, Licious engages with its consumer via its web platform and mobile app. Licious currently serves over 3 lakh customer base with close to 90 per cent repeat transaction across Delhi NCR, Bengaluru, Hyderabad and Chandigarh. We have plans of opening in seven other cities in 2019. The scale and competitive advantage the brand and team en - vision goes beyond just being profitable and aligns itself

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with the brand salience of being a champion of change. Given its strong supply chain, cold chain management, demand forecasting platform which rests deep on tech - nology, Licious has gained a significant head-start for its product and service enabling a 300 per cent growth over the past three years. Operating in a $40 billion meat industry, Licious foresees a tremendous opportunity to build a billion-dollar enterprise.

Overseas foray

Despite the size of the meat eating population in India, the market has remained poorly fragmented lacking qual - ity standards and product traceability. Also, given meat, as a category, is most susceptible to food safety risks than any other, the market has not witnessed transformation, which could have a positive impact on the consumer and ecosystem overall. Inspired to bring a change to some of the deep set market dispositions and build a meat brand that is synonymous with trust and quality, We founded Licious to elevate the way meat is consumed and regarded within and out - side the ecosystem.

Licious is working towards creating mainstream job opportunities for the community of butchers, farmers, fish - ermen and affiliated workforce by giving them assured and fair salaries, social security, insurance, performance incentives and recogni - tion they deserve with equal opportunity to grow. Licious currently works with a growing network of over 200 in - dependent farmers and affiliated workforces

Social touch and the paradigm shift

With over 70 per cent of population comprising of meat-eaters in India, the market has been longing to change the way meat is consumed. The time is opportune for brands who want to provide fresh, safe, consistent and quality driven food products to its consumer, and we are glad to be able to champion the category transformation and set new benchmarks for now and future. We are hope - ful that the steps and innovations being witnessed in this industry will not only help organise the meat ecosystem but also change the way consumers buy and consume meat going forward.

Tech disruptions

In the long term, AI will bring with it many possibilities

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in terms of production efficiency, effective logistics opti- misation, better demand forecasting and planning and more importantly, user experience and recommendation specific to a given customer.

Blockchain is a very interesting concept, and we have been exploring how this technology has use case in terms of traceability of material from farm to fork. From the time of animals being tagged at birth, which will capture the movement of the material from farm to abattoir to processing and finally to the customer. Information like feed, storage time, temperature, etc., will be embedded in the blockchain to get better control on the supply chain.

Idea of wealth generation & Self-realisation

Both of us don't think we have made it big yet as we be - lieve success is always work in progress. So long as consumers new and old continue to share their love for the brand and good quality meat products, we will find suc- cess. We realised that building a meat brand in a country, which is otherwise known as Coventry of vegetarians, is not going to be easy and cannot be a short play, it will be around for generations to come and they look forward to growing strength to strength in this transforma - tive journey.

Licious dreams to build a Indian food brand which is loved, trusted and consumed in India and globally. Apart from deepening its presence across its current and new markets in the immediate future, Licious is looking to invest a significant amount of effort towards building consumer value on the back of product innovation. With its value-added portfolio that includes ready-to-cook and ready-to-eat products and technology capabilities, Li - cious plans to drive the change of meat innovation and consumption in India. Over the course of the next 10 years, Licious will continue to be at the cutting edge of driving this change.

Message to entrepreneurs

Never fear failure as it is as important as success. Also, no business idea is good or bad, so long as you have the perseverance and conviction in self.   BW