

## Brazil's Hip Accessories Maker Chilli Beans Gets a Shot in Hollywood

Contributed by Geovana Pagel  
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Chilli Beans, Brazilian brand of accessories like dark glasses and watches, is looking for trade partners in the Arab market. "We want someone who invests in brand. A partner that after buying the franchise will have the right to use the brand in the country opening as many points of sales as they want," explains the businessman Caito Maia, 37 years old, proprietor of Chilli Beans.

"We already have some contacts, especially in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates. We believe in the potential of Arab countries for their high purchasing power and we also believe in our product. Sunglasses are ideal for the region as they have plenty of sunlight in the desert," jokes Caito Maia.

Chilli Beans is a reference not only in the market of dark glasses, but also in franchises. In Brazil the brand markets their products and 156 franchises, distributed about the greatest shopping malls and commercial areas, from Porto Alegre, in the southernmost Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, to Manaus, in the northern state of Amazonas. Most of them are kiosks.

The aim for 2006 is indeed to invest in the internationalization process which started last year with the opening of the first point of sales in Lisbon, Portugal. Today, Chilli Beans already has three franchises in the European capital and one own store, recently inaugurated in Los Angeles, in the United States.

Caito Maia recalls good heartedly how he managed to build, "from scratch", as he says so himself, a solid and prosperous business. The idea to sell fashionable sunglasses came in 1996 when the youngster, then a musician, lived in California. When he came back to Brazil with some models with him, that same year, and sold everything to his friends, he realised there was good market for the product.

That was how Caito decided to open a small stand in the Mercado Mundo Mix - fashion fair aimed at youngsters, in São Paulo. There he placed the first Chilli Beans glasses in the market. One year later, he started selling them at the Galeria Ouro Fino, a gallery for trendy clothes in São Paulo.

In October 2000 the businessman opened the first Chilli Beans kiosk at the Villa Lobos Shopping Centre, which exploded in sales. "It was crazy. On the following year I opened another three points: in the shopping centres Eldorado, Iguatemi and Morumbi," tells Maia. "From that moment on the brand started to consolidate itself. The propositions for franchises already started coming up," he recalls. In 2002 the first store was installed, this time in the Ibirapuera shopping centre, which wouldn't open kiosks.

"Shopping malls see kiosks as a transition factor to the store. With time we discovered it worked very well having a store on one floor and a kiosk on another, in the same shopping centre," he states.

According to Maia, Chilli Beans' recipe to success is simple: a young brand, which launches ten sunglass models per week, with accessible prices going from R\$ 35 to R\$85 (about US\$ 16 to US\$ 40). The prices of the sunglasses abroad vary from US\$ 30 to US\$ 55.

"Nowadays, market leaders, in any segment, have to change constantly to please the customer. Chilli Beans has new products every week. There has to be new things, you have to keep moving. The client wants to enter the store one week, and things are one way, and next time he comes in, there has to be something completely different," teaches the businessman.

The Chilli Beans approach is innovative. Following the trends of giants like Nike and Coca-Cola, the company doesn't produce not even one pair of sunglasses. They work with three Chinese manufacturers. One office installed in the world's movie capital Los Angeles, where they also design the glasses, coordinates the activities in China.

The mix of products at Chilli Beans targets from children to adults, with greatest receptivity amongst youngsters. There are about 80 models of glasses exhibited in each point of sales. The lines are divided in Kids, Classic, Metal and Sports, all of them with 400 UV protection in polarized polycarbonate acrylic lenses.

To complement the line of sunglasses, Chilli Beans offers lens cleaner sprays, hard cases, flannels, straps and glass holder clips for the car.

Another important step for the company was launching the line of watches that after two years of research, entered the market with about 140 different types. They are exclusive models that combine modern design and technology.

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