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'We expect to get back to double-digit growth by December'

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Financial Express - 12 Sep 2019

● **INTERVIEW: SHAILENDRA TYAGI**, CEO, education & stationery products business, ITC

‘We expect to get back to double-digit growth by December’

Expressing optimism of getting back to double-digit growth by December, the ITC group, with its flagship brand Classmate, recently launched a new category of notebook called Classmate Pulse 3D. Shailendra Tyagi, CEO (education and stationery products business division) ITC, tells BV Mahalakshmi during an interview that the Classmate Pulse 3D Notebook marks ITC Classmate's commitment towards constantly enhancing user engagement with product experience, learning and interactivity. Excerpts:

Given the current situation, how do you see supply and demand? What is the current capacity and expansion plans? In the last six months, growth had come down for various reasons. We expect our stationery business to get back to double digits from December from single digit in the last six months due to the economic slowdown and floods affecting overall sales. Classmate notebooks are being manufactured in 23

units spread across India with annual capacity of more than 1 lakh tonne capable of varied binding types. Equipped with state-of-the-art machinery, a new factory has been recently set up in Vijayawada with an investment of ₹100 crore to add to the overall manufacturing capacity.

What is the company's market share and projections for improving the sales such as app-based and institutional sales? Classmate has a consumer spend of ₹1,500 crore in the notebook segment and a share of about 25% in the ₹6,500-market. ITC Classmate has a 'myclassmate app' which has positioned itself as a "perfect buddy" to students. The app has around 12 modules ranging from subject fundas and spelling challenge to career explorer. The app is available on both Android as well as iOS platforms. ITC Classmate has been consistently working on improving the reach of the brand to



various schools through multiple channels. It has been consistently engaging with students/schools through 'Classmate Spellbee' and 'Classmate Handwriting competition' platforms. Classmate Spellbee programme not only gives an opportunity to various youngsters to be part of the national level platform but also enables the winner to visit Washington DC

and be part of the National Scripps competition. These competitions collectively reach out to nearly a million children across 1,000 schools in 30 cities.

What are the innovative offerings from your product portfolio?

The ITC Classmate brand is technologically savvy, environmentally aware and creative. Classmate has brought to the market notebooks with interchangeable covers, selfie notebooks which allow the user to personalise the cover, notebooks with a three-dimensional cover enabled through a lenticular board. The same principle has been extended to multiple categories such as Neon and wooden pens from Classmate Octane and Asteroid geometry boxes in other stationery categories. Each of these set standards for new developments in their respective categories. Classmate has also initiated a first-to-market initiative that offers consumers the option to personalise

the images to be printed on notebook covers through 'Classmateshop.com'.

In terms of sourcing of raw material, what is the plan ahead and what are the expected value-added products?

Classmate will continue to leverage the company's world-class paperboards and speciality papers facility at Bhadrachalam in Telangana to source raw material. It will also continue to build its Paperkraft range of notebooks which uses Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified paper made at the company paper mill. It is a reflection of ITC Classmate's strong commitment towards the environment. There are a range of Paperkraft products that are made with ultra-premium paper with an archival value of 100 years. ITC Classmate will continue to leverage its dedicated product development cell and Life Sciences and Technology Centre in Bengaluru to develop and launch innovative/value added products in the market.

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Read the Article on Financial Express :

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