



ODEL, The Department Store, Colombo

Words Chiranthi Rajapakse

Sri Lankan shoppers can look forward to exciting times. Odel, the well-known fashion and lifestyle store is expanding its network of stores and gearing up for the summer months. Shoppers in Kandy now have the chance to check out merchandise at Odel's newest outlet in Kandy. Says Ahamed Bary, Head of Buying and Corporate Planning at Odel, "This store mainly focuses on ladies', men's and children's collections and Sri Lankan souvenirs for the traveller, as well as carrying our in house brands such as EMBARK and Backstage."

Shopping at Odel is a complete experience, as a browse through the Odel flagship store at Alexandra Place in Colombo, will attest. Shoppers can start with the 'serious' business of hunting for that perfect dress or blouse, and once that's done, complete the outfit by picking out a matching pair of shoes or accessories. Those who need a little relaxation after this 'strenuous' activity can recharge with a coffee and sandwich at the food court, or, if they have a sweet tooth, sample some goodies from the many outlets located around the store. After a rest, shoppers have the option of moving onto other pastures, perhaps dropping into the homeware section. Or, if shopping for others, they can pick out a gift and get it gift wrapped at the store itself. There are also options for customers to relax and browse through the book and music section. To entertain children there's the toy section so it's a 'family friendly' environment.

The first Odel store opened at Dickman's road in 1990 and since then, many changes have occurred. Under the direction of Otara Gunewardene, CEO and Founder of Odel, the number of stores has increased dramatically and the initial staff of two has now expanded to over 430. Apart from Alexandra Place and Kandy, there are also stores in Mount Lavinia, Kiribathgoda, Ja-Ela, Battaramulla and Moratuwa, to name a few locations, and another new store is planned for opening in Wattala.

Odel is constantly changing to meet new demands and reflect different trends. Says Ahamed Bary, “Everyday you get something new.” He explains the philosophy behind the company, “We focus on that unique experience where the customer will find something different compared to what is available in the market. We will always look for that extra super service in terms of quality and customer service.”

The store aims to cater to everyone, with products in various categories including ladies’ and men’s collections, a children’s section, homeware and souvenirs. The women’s collection includes clothes, (both formal and informal), footwear, handbags, accessories and jewellery; this includes Otara’s signature jewellery collection. Similarly the men’s collection includes clothing, footwear, wallets and accessories. Of particular interest to overseas visitors is the Sri Lankan souvenir range. This extends to key tags, picture frames and fridge magnets, all designed with distinctive Sri Lankan motifs, which provide a lasting memento of a visit to the island.

Bary notes the presence of in house brands such as EMBARK, Otone and Six runs which make the Odel shopping experience a distinctive one. Six runs is a brand aimed at sports lovers, while Otone is designed for those who enjoy working out. EMBARK is part of a CSR project aimed at promoting the wellbeing of animals. Bary also notes that Odel is planning to work with more international brands in the future.

Odel shopping is available even for those who aren’t able to make it to any of their stores - there is an extensive website with online shopping facilities. Delivery is available for over 40 countries thus ensuring that regardless of where they are, customers still have access to the latest trends in fashion and so much more.

ODEL, The Department Store,

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odel.lk

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