

US retail chain Steve & Barry's in revamp mode

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America's fastest growing retail chain Steve & Barry's University Sportswear is on a revamp mode. "It would soon turn out to be a 'complete' departmental store," Mr Avirat Sonpal, Managing Director, 4004 Incorporated (a subsidiary and strategic affiliate of Steve & Barry's) told *Business Line*.

The Mumbai-based 4004 Incorporated incidentally is the sole global procurement hub for Steve and Barry's, both for saleable and non-saleable items.

The non-saleable items include tubes, stapler, paper and so on for own consumption.

"We have parameters within which we operate, but overall, it has been a very comfortable service. Since September 2001, we have been doing the procurement service for Steve & Barry's, picking the things at the right price, negotiating with the suppliers, doing lab checks and so on.

About 450 people are engaged in this work. They include research groups as well. We buy their requirement from footwear, clothing, printer, toner, cartridge etc.," he explained.

To a query on procurement, Mr Sonpal said the company sourced about 25 per cent of its requirement from India, of which over 50 per cent was bought from the South.

"Tirupur, Bangalore, Delhi, Ludhiana and Mumbai are the main procurement hubs. We have established at least four trade relationships in Tirupur. The identified units produce solely for Steve & Barry's. We also work with 10 large exporter houses in India to source about 20 million units every month (India alone). Procurement from China is next only to India and Pakistan (20 per cent) at around 16 per cent. We also source from Kenya and the UAE."

While it looks to India for garment and knitwear items, footwear is sourced from China and the coarser and heavier fabrics from Pakistan.

"We enter into a joint venture agreement or a buy-back arrangement with the vendors. We have set up regional offices in several countries. Our global network is well connected," he added.

