

Shisha Masters

Magazine

Feb 2022 | nº8

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Bengala
SPAIN

FIRESTARTER

Ángel Molero is the founder of shisha giant Bengala, the largest shisha accessory retailer from Spain, where the world's leading brands of shisha accessories are distributed. Bengala, one of the first ESCA members, has set a high bar for shisha retailing and has been expanding rapidly throughout Spain and now the world. Bengala means fireworks in Spanish so we lit the fuse with the natural-born-salesmen to find out how Ángel got started.

Tell us about your origins, what is it like growing up in the Polígono Sur of Seville? It's just like growing up in a humble neighborhood, surrounded by hardworking people that have never been given anything and everything is earned with daily work. I am still surrounded by the same friends as always, even though we have all taken different paths, we will always continue to meet regularly in the bars of La Oliva.

What does your B2B Shisha business consist of?

It is a B2B business in which we distribute our products to tobacconists and physical stores dedicated to growing our sector.

Where did the idea to start selling Shishas come from? I took a cocktail making course years ago, for which I had to present my own cocktail project, with a totally unique flavor and decided to implement an innovative idea. I paired the cocktail with the flavor of a Shisha, one of my hobbies. That experience sparked the interest in shisha and this combined with my vocation for sales, which I built up as result of working for years as a deliveryman in a stationery company, made me venture into setting up my own physical store in Nervión. This evolved into Bengala Spain.

How have you managed to grow so much in such a short period of time, what is the secret? The love with which the idea was born, the passion for the shisha category, by being in the right place at the right time, not giving up when I encountered bumps in the road, perseverance, hard work and surrounding myself with a team that feels that the company is their own. In addition to this, it is crucial to be the first mover in bringing the concept of shishas to retail, to bet on quality products and to import exclusive shishas from different countries, thus becoming pioneers in Spain.



“I AM STILL SURROUNDED BY THE SAME FRIENDS AS ALWAYS”

What challenges have you had to face in the sector when creating your business? The criticism of a product that is directly related to tobacco, the high level of competition that has been generated... but despite this always, with effort, we have managed to find our niche and continue, to the point of partnering with shopping malls and today establishing six physical stores in addition to the online business.

What has been the most satisfying moment of your career in this project? Creating our own Bengala shisha-pipe, its called DMNT, it has a unique and exclusive design and is exported to many countries. Also our expansion into shopping malls, which is something we have never done before, with physical stores in the Canary Islands, Madrid, Barcelona and La Línea.



How many places do you distribute your products to?

We distribute to the 5 continents, we move all over the world.

In all of them, which would you say is the best place to distribute shisha? And which is the most difficult? The best places to distribute are Germany, Hungary and Russia. The most difficult, I would say is Israel.

Do you sell more in physical stores, in local stores, or through the internet? We sell mostly through our e-commerce sites as it allows us to reach all areas of Spain and countries around the world, but we also have a great line of business with distribution to the most exclusive premises throughout Spain. This includes nightclubs, bars and high-end restaurants. This is in addition to our physical stores and from those who buy from us through our B2B platform.

How did the pandemic affect B2B Shisha? Fortunately, and although it was unthinkable at the beginning of the pandemic, our product became essential in making time at home more bearable during lockdown. Tobacconists have been able to increase supply and through our online channel we have been able to also improve our product supply.

Part of your business is based on selling luxury shisha accessories; what is the most exclusive brand you distribute? Medusa. It's a brand from the Czech Republic. Its exclusivity is due to the high quality of materials, the design and being a product classified as "premium".



“OUR PRODUCT BECAME ESSENTIAL TO MAKING TIME AT HOME MORE BEARABLE DURING LOCKDOWN”

Is there a celebrity customer that you can share with us? José de las Heras, a very famous international DJ, well-known consumer of shisha... among others.

What is your favorite shisha flavor and why? An exclusive blend of my own that one day I will reveal to you so you can enjoy it ;)

Where do you see the shisha business in general and B2B Shisha in particular in 10 years? Nationally, positioned in the high-end restaurants and the hospitality industry.

What are your long term goals for your business and personally in your life? To become one of the most important companies in the shisha sector worldwide, since we can say that we have already achieved it in Spain.

On a personal level, to travel around the world, strengthening agreements with the main companies in the sector.

Which businessman do you admire? Ismael Villalobos, CEO of La Casa de las Carcasas.

What changes have you made to your business strategy in recent years? We continue to restructure our business due to the growth we have experienced and in order to further develop our brand image.



If someone wants to start a new shisha business and specifically an online shisha accessory store, what advice would you give them?

Focus on becoming strong in your chosen location. Set up your first store and gradually grow thus expanding your customer base and making contacts that will help you boost your activity and your business.

Tell us three things you could NOT live without:

Without shisha, of course, without olives and without my friends.

And three skills needed to succeed in business?

Sacrifice, perseverance and passion for what you do.

Can you describe a typical day in your life? How many hours a day do you usually work or think about work?

I work about 10 hours a day... and I hope my girlfriend never reads this... plus all of the rest of my day. Bengala is always part of a day in my life.

What is the best place in the world to enjoy a shisha?

After traveling a great deal...without a doubt, the best place for me is Spain.



<https://bengalaspain.com/es/>



ESCA works to promote shisha and to educate the public and political leaders about the tradition of shisha and those who use it.

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