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BIGGER TICKETS



Manufacturers of luxury mattresses believe that there are opportunities to sell higher-priced products
 By DAVID GILL

Savoir Beds, which began making beds for London's Savoy Hotel more than 100 years ago, will launch its beds in U.S. markets this year.

Hughes said, "If you have genuine product with genuine content in terms of product and service, that's how you justify the high price."

Demonstrating how confident the company is of this strategy, Savoir Beds (which began in 1905 with a commission to make mattresses for London's Savoy Hotel) has slated an aggressive debut in the United States. It plans store openings in major U.S. metropolitan areas throughout this year, which include franchised showrooms and shops-within-a-shop.

Similarly, Sweden-based Hästens is moving toward a larger presence in this market, with appearances at the last two High Point Markets.

"The luxury customer is returning, but he or she wants a product that's authentic and a lot of value," said Janet Stoin, Hästens' country manager-USA. "He or she wants to be shown the value points behind the mattresses in that upper price range, like the fact that our products are handmade with all-natural materials, and the fact that the company has been around for five generations."

Domestic manufacturers have also seen consumers who are looking for luxury—and value. "I agree that luxury customers will lead the turnaround in the retail economy," said Bill Hammer, president of Shifman Mattress. "Although the luxury customer has disposable income, they are still cautious with how they spend it. These customers are more inclined to buy luxury products that offer strong value."

Given the opportunities that manufacturers in this upper range believe are out there, some of them have taken steps to open the doors for otherwise reluctant consumers. "Much of the marketing (for high-priced mattresses) is done on the showroom floor," said Earl Kluff, president and CEO of E.S. Kluff & Co. "The store's environment and how they display the beds are very important. We educate the sleep consultants so they can tell the story of our company's heritage and our commitment to providing the best night's sleep."

Shifman Mattress has also been working at the dealer level, through "cooperative advertising campaigns" that "drive traffic to the stores," Hammer said. Beginning this month, "Shifman is launching a retailer advertising program that will highlight the benefits of a two-sided mattress," he added.

New product development is another key to approaching this market. Magniflex has recently launched a 22-carat gold mattress and a matching 22-carat gold pillow, whose gold nutrient helps to regulate the products' temperature and provides anti-bacterial, anti-odor and anti-stress qualities. Cost of the mattress: \$24,000, cost of the pillow: \$1,000.

Hollandia has added what it described as a "more affordable" version to its line of mattresses with built-in, 32-inch flat panel televisions. The new products, branded as The View and part of the company's Platinum-Luxe collection, start at from \$8,940 to \$11,000 for queen size, as opposed to the most expensive product—the Executive, which starts at \$20,000 for a queen size. ■

GOT TEN-THOU FOR A MATTRESS?

Given the current shape of the economy—recovering, but taking its time about it—the conventional answer would seem to be, "No." But some mattress manufacturers are approaching this environment in an unconventional manner.

Domestic manufacturers such as E.S. Kluff & Co., JMI and Shifman Mattress have introduced mattresses priced at more than \$10,000 at retail. Vendors based abroad—such as Hästens, Hollandia, Magniflex and Savoir—are looking to increase their presence in the U.S. market with, yes, mattresses priced in the five-figure range.

So what has happened to the conventional wisdom, which says the only products in any category that sell during a down business cycle are those in the lower price ranges?

Vendors said the revving down in the economy has actually created opportunities for products priced at these higher levels.

"It's not that the money disappeared at the top end, but people are more questioning about what they are buying than they were three years ago, and that's a good thing for us," said Alistair Hughes, owner and chief executive officer of United Kingdom-based Savoir Beds.

It's a good thing for companies like Savoir because it gives them a chance to highlight their quality points in marketing their mattresses. "We've had people asking to go to our factory,"



All in Mattresses

THE NUMBERS FOR THE MATTRESS INDUSTRY have been good since the end of last year, and the February Las Vegas Market was a positive one for the industry. Thus, vendors are approaching this month's Las Vegas Market as another step on the road to the industry's recovery, and have prepared a number of new-product launches to take advantage of the more upbeat business climate.



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1 Comfort Solutions is unveiling the Grand Luxe mattress, featuring Surface Modified Technology foam layers, under its iconic King Koll brand. www.kingkoll.com 2 Serta will highlight the limited-edition Trump Home Luxury Mattress and unveil a major national promotional campaign that will take place during Labor Day. sertainational.com 3 Spring Air will introduce aggressively priced specialty mattresses in the Sleep Sense brand, which has been re-positioned as the company's ultimate back-supporter line. springair.com 4 The iCon mattress from Hollandia, featuring an iPad docking station and speaker system, is the company's first design under its joint venture with Therapeutic. hollandia.com/medialand.com



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