

# JBL's expansion plans for the Indian market

KRISHNA SINHACHAUDHURY

Enough of Bose, Beats or Sennheiser. Audio equipment maker JBL by HARMAN, owned by South Korean tech major Samsung Electronics, is aiming big to expand its footprint in the Indian audio market that is forecast to grow over 15 % in 2019.

JBL forayed into the e-commerce sector in August last year by launching its online store. The company is now working towards expanding its retail presence.

The company's online brand store sells the entire range of consumer products—from headphones and Bluetooth speakers to home and multimedia solutions.

"We will double up on our revenue and will grow by 200% this year in India," Sumit Chauhan, Vice President, Lifestyle Audio Division at HARMAN India, told IANS. "You will see that the audio segment in the category that we deal in—headphones, smart audio and connected homes —



**Sumit Chauhan, HARMAN India, Vice President, Lifestyle Audio Division.**

is slated to grow somewhere around 12-14 %. In India, the market is slightly better, growing at 16 % against the global forecast," he added, quoting market research firm Forrester.

The company is also working towards entering the smaller towns. "There is positive expansion happening in the tier III and IV cities.

Whether you take data from online players like Amazon and Flipkart, or from offline players like Croma and Reliance, both will tell you that much of their growth in 2019-20 is expected to come from Tier III and Tier IV cities," Chauhan noted.

"We are probably the only brand in India where our business split is 50:50.

Most of the other brands are skewed, either towards offline or towards online," added Chauhan.

As part of its strategy to increase penetration into the Indian market, JBL by HARMAN is also working towards collaborating with sports and music brands.

"Under Armour is the fastest-growing fitness brand and has just been launched in India. We are very closely associated with them at global level and will try and bring that synergy here.

"We have co-branded products which are branded as Under Armour and JBL. We would bring those products into India and market them aggressively," added Chauhan. The company said it would also focus towards voice-enabled platforms, without revealing much details.

"We have a close relationship with Google on the Assistant side, with Amazon on the Alexa side and with Microsoft on the Cortana side. This would be a key focus in the future," Chauhan said.

IANS