



Bata India Accelerates Retail Transformation with 800 ZBM Stores in 2026

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Indian footwear giant **Bata India** has unveiled ambitious plans to scale up its **Zero-Based Merchandising (ZBM)** retail model to **800 stores by the end of 2026** as part of a broader strategy to deepen market penetration and modernise its retail operations.

The 130-year-old brand is leveraging technology and an expanding **franchise network** to accelerate its footprint — particularly in smaller towns and cities across India — while tailoring product assortments to local preferences rather than relying solely on uniform, centrally planned offerings.

Zero-Based Merchandising Takes Centre Stage

Bata India has rapidly scaled its ZBM approach this year, growing from about **100 ZBM outlets a year ago to 400 currently**. With the target now set at 800 stores by December 2026, ZBM is positioned as the backbone of the company's retail network.

Under ZBM, store assortments are planned **from the ground up**, guided by local demand data rather than a one-size-fits-all strategy. This enables the retailer to better match inventory with customer preferences in each location — a key differentiator in regional markets.

Franchise Expansion and Smart Location Mapping

Bata's franchise network has grown significantly, expanding from around **100 franchise stores five years ago to about 700 today**, while company-owned stores number around 1,300. The company plans to **double its annual store additions** to 70–80 outlets per year, with franchise locations expected to outnumber company-owned outlets in the coming years.

The rollout strategy splits responsibilities: **metros and tier-1 cities** will see premium, modern layouts under company ownership, whereas **tier-2 and tier-3 markets** will focus on franchise-led growth tailored to local price sensitivities and family buying behaviour — critical factors in smaller markets.

Bata is employing data science tools — including size and revenue estimators — to pinpoint the most promising trade areas for future stores.

Technology Integration and Omnichannel Ambitions

Technology is playing a central role in Bata's retail revamp. The company has consolidated **22 separate applications into a single retail platform — 'Bata Hub'** — which supports functions ranging from employee attendance and customer feedback to visual merchandising.

Meanwhile, Bata's **omnichannel capabilities** are expanding rapidly. Last year, roughly **100 stores were omnichannel enabled**; by Q1 2026, that figure crossed **400**, with **40% of outlets offering hyperlocal delivery**. The company is piloting **ultrafast delivery (as quick as 10 minutes)** in select locations, along with plans for 4-hour delivery via quick commerce partnerships.

Bata aims to become **India's largest omnichannel footwear retailer** by leveraging its extensive store network to fulfil online demand from nearby stores rather than distant warehouses — a move expected to improve service speed and customer satisfaction.

Market Dynamics and GST Tailwinds

A recent reduction in India's **GST on footwear below ₹2,500** — from 18% to 5% — has created a more favourable competitive environment for organised retailers such as Bata. The company proactively passed the tax benefit to consumers a month before the government's official rollout, absorbing some margin impact to build goodwill.

According to industry data, Bata's market share in India's organised footwear segment increased from **4.3% to 4.8% between 2020 and 2024**. With stronger appeal among younger consumers and deeper penetration beyond major urban centres, the company expects further gains ahead.

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