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PROGRESSIVE GROCCER

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OFFERING 'VALUE FOR TIME' AND 'VALUE FOR MONEY' ARE OUR CORE USPs

– **Biyas Roy**

Executive Director,
Arambagh Foodmart



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The government's demonitisation move has come as both an opportunity and challenge for India's food and grocery market. As an opportunity, both online and offline players stand a chance to pull in more customers into their fold. The challenge lies in preparing the operations to veer away from being heavily cash dependent to the cashless mode.

With cash transactions out of favour, alternative forms of payment are seeing a surge in demand. It is critical for companies at this juncture to address all the concerns if they want to exploit this opportunity to their advantage. They must seek solutions for introducing more of cashless and digital transactions.

By proactively encouraging cashless transactions, food companies, wholesalers, dealers and retailers can hope to bring down their own cost of operations. For instance, online retailers can leverage this opportunity to cut down their costs by embracing card technology that enables their executives to accept payment from customers swiping their card at the time of delivery.

In the days ahead, digital transaction systems, e-wallets and apps, online transactions using e-banking, use of plastic money, etc. are all expected to see substantial increases in demand. Therefore, the Food & Grocery industry must work to strengthen such systems and put in place all the infrastructures required. As more retailers adopt alternative/digital payment solutions, the market ecosystem will become more transparent and structured going forward.



Amitabh Taneja
 Editor-in-Chief

All feedback welcome at editorpgindia@imagesgroup.in

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Why front-end retail staff are critical differentiators

For brick and mortar retailers, the contribution of front-end staff can help convert customers from browsers to shoppers, and leave a positive influence on them to return again.

By **Mohit Khattar**

Disinterested and indifferent sales personnel in retail stores is a common sight. Staff members, who are plain bored of their jobs or complete misfits in roles that demand presence and engagement, can often be that critical under-performing link in such stores. Customers increasingly have the option to buy online. Brick and mortar retailers therefore need to use the opportunity provided by the visit of the customer to their store as an opportunity to leave a positive influence on them to return again.

One of the most significant and easiest ways to leave that positive influence on customers is through front-end store staff. Their contribution can be

immense in converting customers from browsers to shoppers, impressing them with their knowledge and attention to detail and in general giving them a superior experience that online will always find tough to match.

This has implications for retail businesses in terms of the kind of people that must be recruited, the kind of behaviour and learning that should be encouraged specifically in the store teams – and the kind of behaviour that should be consistently rewarded.

While recruiting, front-end Operations Managers often juggle the demands of the job in their own heads. This means potential recruits must be good at organizing, managing the back-end, indenting for stocks, making reports, creating





rosters at one end and simultaneously have endless energy to interact with customers at the front-end. Of course, the first part is a hardcore nuts-and-bolts operation at the heart of the retail business and without which the store can't function, while the other is an equally energy sapping and, perhaps, the tougher aspect of dealing with customers, day in and day out.

At the heart of this dilemma is the quest for that perfect retail employee who can do it all—be valuable for the business through his hardwork and diligence and also ensure that he leaves a positive impression on the customers that he interacts with. To make this possible, rather than blandly recruiting store staff on the basis of historical patterns or basis individual needs of front-end managers, the question that HR and front-end Operations Managers must answer is (a) what kind of profile should they consistently recruit that can add value to their business? What kind of behaviour should they train employees for? And what attitude or skills should be encouraged, valued and rewarded on a day-to-day basis?

A section of Retail Managers speak about the importance of discipline in store teams and look at those who will always come on time (and before time if possible), work late hours, can multi-task in the store when required and unquestioningly accept

the diktats of the Store Chief or Store Manager. While these are important and highly desirable qualities, they are by no means sufficient to make an employee a valuable resource or the kind of qualities that'll help elevate the store from an average business to one that is loved by its customers.

Another section of Retail Managers rightly point in the direction of staff who handle the back-end. I am more inclined to agree with them for the sheer importance of work done by these team members in ensuring that the stores run efficiently in terms of stock indenting, product availability, hygiene and cleanliness, stocking accuracy, reporting, etc. The skills required here are an ability to work with numbers and the discipline to do it diligently at the prescribed frequency. When one considers this in light of the question whether this quality is enough to bring a smile to the customers face or if it is sufficient to bring a customer back to the store, I am not so sure.

This brings me to team members who work in the front-end engaging with customers of all hues. Their key role is to ensure that customers find what they are looking for, make their experience in the store pleasurable and achieve targets that they may have, through upselling or cross-selling etc. At the outset, this doesn't look like a great skill and can easily be dismissed as too generic. But to my mind if, between the three sets of store staff, any one has the power to bring a customer back into the store, it is this set.

It is obvious that we need all the three kinds of skill sets and experience in a retail store to be able to run it well. But seen in the backdrop of increasing incidence of online sales, chaotic roads with limited parking on high streets, malls overflowing with customers on weekends, and stores in general beginning to look like each other, Retail Managers need to be clearer about the profiles of employees that they are entrusting to run their stores. The business needs to be clear about the kind of behaviour that will help distinguish them from other competitor stores, or the kind that ensures customers have a genuinely good experience and encourages them to return to their stores in the future as well.

Qualities of great store staff

To my mind, quite unequivocally, the team members who should be most valued are **those who are trusted by customers. These are colleagues who can engage with customers** in the most authentic and appropriate way. Customers don't think twice before sharing their contact numbers with them. These team members never seem to be over pushy when selling. Observations regarding such team members throw up a couple of important pointers that recruiters and front-end Managers must be cognizant of:

- Their **confidence** is just at the right level. They are neither over nor under confident. Their quiet

Potential recruits must be good at organizing, managing the back-end, indenting for stocks, making reports, creating rosters at one end and simultaneously have endless energy to interact with customers at the front-end.

Arambagh's success recipe for neighbourhood supermarket format

Progressive Grocer speaks to Biyas Roy, Executive Director, Arambagh Foodmart Pvt. Ltd., about how a chain of stores selling processed and ready-to-eat chicken items has evolved into becoming one of the top three Food & Grocery retail chains in eastern India with a footprint across all major cities of Bengal. Arambagh stores occupy a format that is positioned between the neighbourhood kirana store and the larger supermarket, with average store size of 700 sq.ft. approximately. "Our USPs are developed more along the lines of a convenience store offering 'value for time' along with 'value for money', says Roy, adding that apart from attractive promotions, good quality grocery and competitive pricing, the strength of the format lies primarily in the location of the stores, and a bunch of convenience factors such as quick checkout, free home delivery for any order amount and order over telephone facility.





Biyas Roy

Executive Director

Arambagh Foodmart Pvt. Ltd.

Please share the growth journey of Arambagh Foodmart chain of stores over the years.

Arambagh Foodmart chain of convenience retail stores was started in the year 2000, following the concept of international '7-11' chain. The first Foodmart was converted from the existing Arambagh's Chicken chain of stores selling processed and ready-to-eat chicken items. With the USPs of good quality, attractive promotions and location convenience, Arambagh Foodmart was a quick success. Stores have been steadily added over the years. In 2006-2007, there was a setback owing to the bird flu, and the company's revenues - which used to come majorly from chicken and related items - plummeted, slowing the expansion rate for sometime. *In 2012, the Foodmart Division with 25 stores and a warehouse was incorporated into a separate company named Arambagh Foodmart Pvt Ltd. The first year was used to consolidate operations and set up processes, after which the number of stores increased steadily to the current 46 stores, which is planned to reach 53 by the end of FY 16-17.*

How do you look at your retail format as strengthening your business model?

Arambagh Foodmart is the neighborhood supermarket - a unique format that positions itself between the neighborhood kirana store and the supermarket that offers modern ambience and attractive promotions. *Our USPs are developed more in the line of convenience or 'value for time' along with value for money. Apart from attractive promotions, good quality grocery and competitive pricing, the strength of our format lies primarily in the location of the stores, and a bunch of convenience factors such as quick checkout, free home delivery for any order amount and order over telephone.*

With its footprint across all major cities of Bengal, Arambagh Foodmart is one of the top three retail chains in eastern India.

What do you feel are the marked differentiators of your stores that put them apart from the retail players in the same category?

One of the main differentiators for our stores has been their location. *They are strategically located in densely populated localities yet at important junctions to attract the floating customers.* About 90 per cent of the daily needs of a household are available within 10 minutes of reach, or are delivered free.

Another key differentiator has been the employee-customer relationship. Many of our employees have been with us since the inception of the company as is a large percentage of customers. They have become a part of one big family. Elderly customers have depended on our staff for not just delivering their groceries, but also for suggesting buying options. Sometimes, our customers drop in just to have a quick chat over a cup of tea. Customers have truly made our stores a part of their household.

What kind of people frequent your stores and in which age group? Has the customer profile been changing in any way over the years?

Our customer demography comprises the middle class to upper-middle class. *All age groups frequent our stores, but less of the young and affluent families who prefer a wide range and gourmet products. There is a captive base of aged customers who rely on our home deliveries.*



Brewing a flavour storm

With a broadening of taste and consumers' willingness to experiment with new varieties and flavours, there exists a huge potential for tea and coffee retailing in the Indian market. Taking a cue, tea and coffee brands are introducing new and exclusive ranges that promise the perfect cuppa, along with a host of attendant health benefits. New interest and demand is also coming from customers in the younger age group who are more health-conscious and concerned about fitness and diet.

By Sanjay Kumar



The market for beverages in India is close to Rs. 195,000 crore and is growing at 20–23 per cent. This growth rate will take the category at three-and-a-half times of its present size by 2020. All constituting segments are witnessing a growth at a healthy range of 20–25 per cent, which is the highest among all food groups. This growth can be attributed to the fact that the market for beverages is getting more segmented and niche than ever before. The expanding products range is majorly fuelled by the food processing sector. With the growth of the sector, the tea & coffee segment is bound to carry forward the acceleration.

The beverages category can be divided into four broad segments – tea and coffee, occupying the largest market share; juices and flavoured drinks; packaged drinking and flavoured water; and other non-alcoholic drinks, including soft drinks, cocoa, chocolate, etc. The lion's share of tea and coffee in the category confirms that it is still ruled by traditional beverages. India may be a country with strongholds in tea and coffee in specific areas but combined together they hold a commanding section of the whole market.

India is one of the major tea producing nations of the world. In fact, the Indian tea industry is the world's second-largest producer and the fourth largest exporter of tea. Over 80 per cent of domestic tea is produced by east and north-east India and the balance is produced by south India. Amongst the east and north-east Indian states, Assam (including Assam valley and Cachar), which is not only the single largest tea-growing region in India but also in the world, has around 312,210 hectares under cultivation and produces around 570 plus million kgs. The rest of the production is in the state of West Bengal – primarily in Darjeeling, Doaars and Terai, which together contribute to around 309.39 million kgs. Indian tea is known for its quality, especially teas from the eastern and north-eastern regions, and this gives it an edge over the others in a global market. Thus, when consumers talk about tea from India, they mainly refer to the eastern region, which is a market leader as far as the production is concerned.

In the global coffee production scenario, India ranks among the top 10, with Brazil and Vietnam leading the way. Domestically, the coffee story in India has two distinct halves, depending on geography. The

southern states have a unique coffee-drinking culture, with higher levels of household consumption than the rest of India's population. This is in line with the fact that Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu alone contribute over 90 per cent of India's total coffee production. In terms of coffee types, while the Arabica variety dominates worldwide production, comprising ~60 per cent, in India it is the Robusta type that is more widely produced (~68%), due to the tropical climates in India's coffee-producing regions.

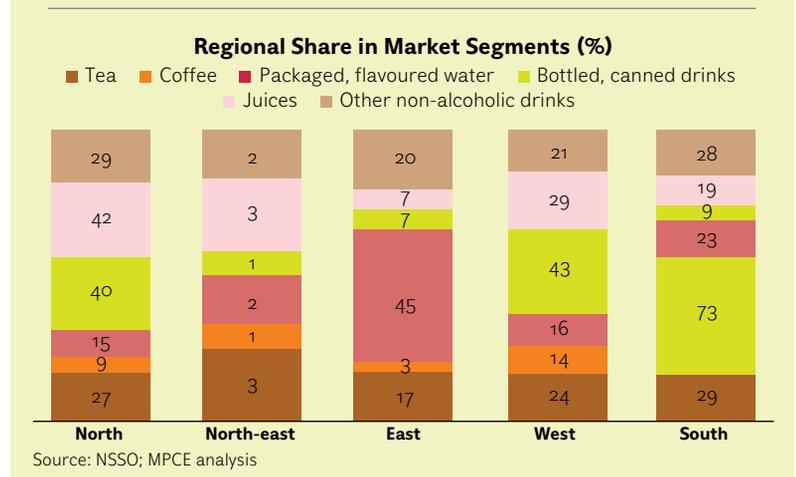
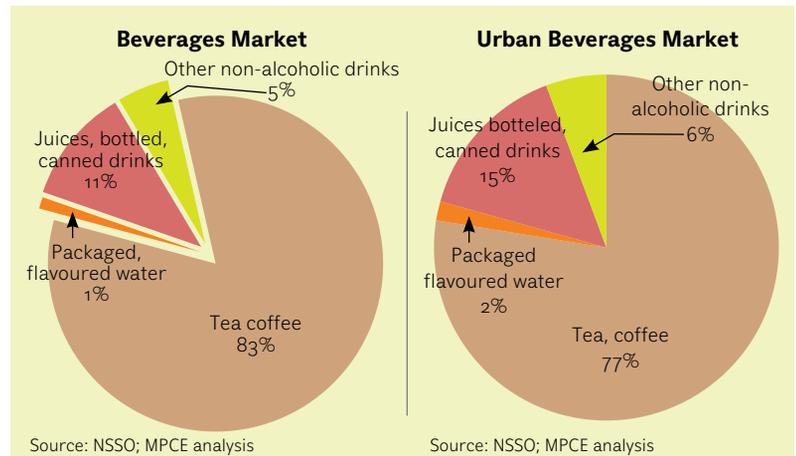
Tea

As the biggest segment of beverages in India, tea rules over 79 per cent of the market, which is growing at 20–23 per cent. By the same rate, it will cross its present market size by more than three times by 2020. At an average, each person in India spends about Rs.106 on consumption of tea every month. Although south India is usually perceived as a market dominated by coffee, the market for tea here is about nine times bigger than that of coffee in the region. The monthly per capita consumption of tea in the region is Rs.147, which is even higher than all-India average.

On an all-India basis, tea dominates with a 45 per cent share in the urban market with the west and south regions having almost the same market share in this segment. Both the regions also share the same monthly per capita tea consumption figures about Rs. 177. As the largest consumer of tea in the entire world, India is definitely a major market for tea. According to Technopak Advisors, the major share of tea market is dominated by unorganised players. There are over 1,000 tea brands in India, of which 90 per cent are regional players. According to industry experts, packet tea, being branded, has a prime advantage of assuring consistency of quality and guaranteed taste even in the smaller towns and semi-urban areas where the distribution outlets of bulk tea do not exist. Packet brand establishes a 'look good', 'do good' and 'feel good' factor, ensuring that the consumer has a comfort level with the brand and therefore induces trial. Naturally, the intention of the industry is to enhance wider penetration of packet teas in the domestic market.

There are many national and local tea brands and each holds a respective market share. Most of these brands have created a niche market for themselves by targeting different consumer segments. Brands and manufacturers have extended their range in tea to suit every taste bud. Branded players have their own network of sales all across the country and also export tea in branded packet formats. Tata Tea, HUL, Williamson Magor, Wagh Bakri, Andrew Yule, Duncans, Apeejay Surrendra Group, Goodricke, Ginnar Group, George Williamson, Harrisons Malayalam, Mcleod Russel, Bishnauth Tea, Dhunseri Tea, Warren tea and AFT Industries, etc., are some of the major players in this sector.

The total branded tea market in India is currently Rs. 6,000 crore approximately, and is growing at a rate of over 5 per cent year-on-year. There is a lot of potential and space in the category for many brands to co-exist. And although the market size for premium or high-end tea is not very big currently, industry observers reckon that with the increasing awareness about tea as a health beverage, the market size for premium tea could double in the next



what's next



▲ Cornitos launches flavoured nuts

Cornitos recently launched premium roasted cashewnuts and roasted almonds in two variants and flavours: California almonds in smoky barbeque flavour and roasted cashewnuts in crack pepper flavour. These healthy nuts come in an easy-to-open and re-sealable pouch packs. Cornitos premium nuts are cholesterol free, zero trans fats, high source of protein, fiber and Vitamin E. Cashewnuts and almonds are priced at Rs. 375 for 200 gm and Rs. 340 for 200 gm respectively. It is available at all leading retail outlets and online portals like Amazon.

▼ Sri Sri Ayurveda introduces cow desi ghee

FMCG brand Sri Sri Ayurveda by spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravishankar has recently launched its pure cow desi 'Ghee'. Enriched with the goodness of cow milk, this ghee helps in digestion and contributes to better nutrition. It is manufactured using hygienic and safe conditions to ensure purity and quality. The Ghee is priced at Rs. 450 for one litre and is available at www.srisriayurveda.com and other e-grocery portals.



► Gourmia launches California pistachios

Leading dry fruits brand KBB Nuts Pvt. Ltd. has recently come up with its flavoured range of Gourmia California pistachios, sourced from the 'Wonderful company'. These California pistachios are enriched with antioxidants, nutrients and are proven good for health. These lightly salted nuts are available in an attractive and easy to use pack of 200 gm and priced at Rs 360. The product is already available at select modern trade stores like Walmart, More, and others.



► Kairali Ayurvedic introduces herbal tea

The Kairali Ayurvedic Group has come up with a new range of herbal tea in three variants: Aarogya, Taahira, and Yuvan Tea. These blends are concoctions of medicinal herbs and spices and loaded with nutrients to balance body elements. The blends work on the principles of three ayurveda doshas (characteristics) in individuals. Aarogya herbal tea helps in boosting immunity and protecting against various seasonal ailments. Taahira helps in protecting against various water-borne diseases. Yuvan helps in distressing & revitalising the body.



▲ Catch introduces new hing sachet

Home-grown spice manufacturer Catch has recently rolled out Rs. 1 sachet of hing (asafoetida). The new sachets are aimed at increasing retail penetration. The pack makes it convenient for consumers to try and buy the product. The company says that one sachet is enough for a dish cooked for four people in a household. With increasing exposure to different cuisines in India and across the world, consumers are more willing to experiment. With an array of products, Catch has the right mix for the discerning consumers.

▼ Anmol Biscuits introduces 'Mellizo' cookies

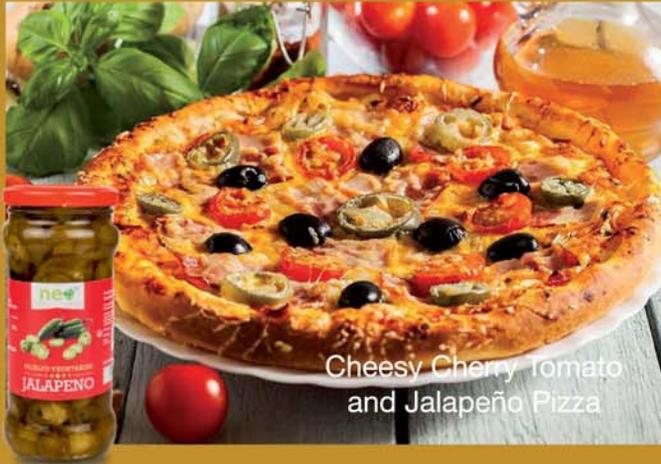
Leading confectionary player Anmol Biscuit has recently launched Mellizo range of cookies. These cookies come in four delightful flavours such as butter cookies, chequered choco-orange cookies, coconut cookies and chequered choco-vanilla cookies. These cookies are available at leading retail outlets and is priced at Rs. 10 per pack.



*All Real
ginger and garlic.
Nothing else.*



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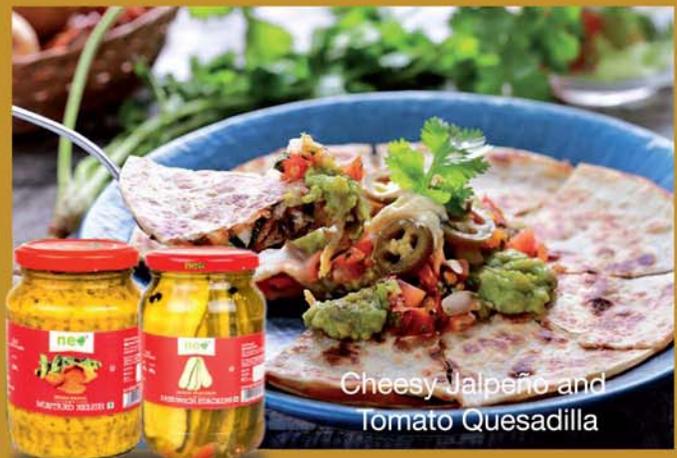
Cheesy Cherry Tomato and Jalapeño Pizza



Creamy Chicken and Baby Corn Salad



Tofu and Cherry Tomato Pasta Salad



Cheesy Jalapeño and Tomato Quesadilla

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PASTES
GINGER GARLIC

Garlic Ginger paste can be added with the Oil while cooking pasta and salads



PASTES
CHILLY Red & Green

What would Eastern food be without the hero ingredient - chilly. Thank god there's plenty of it around.

