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PROGRESSIVE GROCER

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GROWING BIG WITH A REGIONAL FOCUS

How World Retail has become the big fish of F&G trade in Odisha



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The hype and hoopla surrounding the e-retail sector has dimmed significantly. Enviably unicorns in this space such as Flipkart and Snapdeal have lost their earlier mythic appeal and the air of invincibility. The climbdown is the result of the downward revision of their once stonking valuations that defied the laws of gravity. For instance, in the case of Flipkart, India's most valuable start-up, the markdown in valuation has been to the extent of 30-40 per cent.

Diminished valuations is not the only concern for India's feted start-ups. Once liberal investors are now turning tight-fisted, stanching the generous flow of funds. This deluge- to- drought turn of events is now forcing a rethink across the sector. To rub it in, investors are now handing down a virtual démarche to companies to shore up their unit economics and sharpen the focus on performance.

With the mood now sombre, e-retail players and especially those in the food retail business are now making course corrections and pivoting their business models. PepperTap has abandoned grocery deliveries in favour of e-commerce logistics. For many other businesses in this space, the monomaniacal focus on customer acquisition and growth is shifting to profitability and sustainability.

All of these changes remind me of some home truths. One is about the ability to trim one's sails to the wind. It is all about adaptability and making your model resilient to the slings and arrows of fickle fortune. Businesses that sail through the tough times will ultimately turn sustainable, proving another maxim - tough times don't last, tough businesses do.



Amitabh Taneja
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Sustainability sells, is the Indian consumer buying?

Sustainability can no longer be perceived as the sole responsibility of any one stakeholder in the process of transforming value chains. The question of 'who leads?' is critical in the process of market evolution. Is it the role of the business, the consumer or the pressure of external factors that drive change? While the first part of in this series focussed on the importance of retailers in driving demand for sustainable commodities, and the second part on the role of brands in the creation of sustainable markets, this article will look at the role of consumers in the sustainability equation

With urbanisation and consumerism gaining ground, the growth of organised retail in Tier II and Tier III cities is seeing the emergence of the 'value buyer' – the average consumer who now has a variety of offerings to choose from and is often more informed and aware about competing brands and the differences in their products. With wider access to information and social media influence, this consumer plays a crucial role in driving change in the value chain.

In the midst of a clutter of brands catering to this evolving 'value buyer', there is an opportunity for companies to create a distinct product image and carve out a point of differentiation for their product. Several multinational companies have long recognised this opportunity, going further in suggesting that their commitments to sustainable sourcing are no longer about product differentiation, but a type insurance for their brand and supply chain.

These dynamics are more pertinent now given the Indian government's decision in March 2016, to allow 100 per cent foreign direct investment in multi-brand retail for food products. Differentiation will be seen as a key point of leverage for companies to improve product sales and pave the way for competitive pressures to soar.

Differentiation in India until this point has been focussed on quality of the product, price and benefits. Interestingly, markets across the world



have shown that it has also become possible, and indeed necessary, to demonstrate product value not just in a traditional sense but also performance on other fronts – sustainability, production processes, environmental footprint and social impacts. In this regard, multi-national brands like Unilever, IKEA,



What started as an NGO action against Kitkat's 'business as usual' unsustainable practices at the sourcing level – which had drastic impacts on critical tropical forests and biodiversity – resulted in immense consumer backlash against the company on social media. This came as a reality check to many companies about how consumers are no more bound by geographies to voice their opinion and influence demand.



In the midst of a clutter of brands catering to this evolving 'value buyer', there is an opportunity for companies to create a distinct product image and carve out a point of differentiation for their product. Several multinational companies have long recognised this opportunity, going further in suggesting that their commitments to sustainable sourcing are no longer about product differentiation, but a type of insurance for their brand and supply chain

Kimberly Clarke, and L'Oreal etc. have taken steps to ensure that businesses and supply chains are evolving to address these needs.

Globally, a number of public and private initiatives have also emerged in recent times. The Consumer Goods Forum (CGF), for example, an alliance of 400 companies including retailers, manufacturers and service providers across 70 countries – pledged in 2012 to achieve 'zero net deforestation' by 2020. Out of this commitment, the Tropical Forest Alliance was formed – a global public-private partnership which sees eight governments, 33 civil society organisations and 27 private sector companies partnering to tackle the drivers of deforestation associated with the sourcing of commodities such as palm oil, soy, beef, and paper and pulp. Twelve international banks joined the CGF to form a 'Soft Commodities Compact' in 2013 to support the 2020 target for zero net deforestation in supply chains.

So who leads?

While the notion of responsible consumption evolves in the Indian context, alignment will be needed among producers, brands and retailers to provide access to "responsible products". As this demand is growing, there is still a long way to go. No one player can drive this change in isolation. However in the current context, the larger onus must sit with the supply side. Consumer preferences will evolve, but the speed of change in preferences among this group will not be sufficient to address the most serious environmental and social impacts linked to the production of consumer goods. FMCG companies can drive change in their supply chains and thus play



Unilever's sustainability-linked brands such as Dove, Lifebuoy, Ben & Jerry's and Comfort, represent half of its growth, and are growing twice as fast as its other brands. A growing number of its leading brands have integrated sustainability into their purpose and into their products' ingredients and lifecycle.

a crucial role by creating awareness on sustainability among consumers through marketing and other outreach mechanisms. Therefore, the FMCG sector's efforts are critical in making sustainable products the norm rather than a niche. Further, the retailer is uniquely placed to be the interface between companies and consumers, and in doing so, can ensure long term benefits to their business. **PG**

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Growing big with a regional focus

How World Retails has built a solid foundation for expanding its retail operations and taking its business higher in Odisha

By Sanjay Kumar

The journey of modern retail in India is still in its early chapters. In some parts of the country like Odisha, the industry is still in its diapers. While it will take a few more years for the industry to bloom and blossom in all its glory, the roots are taking a firm hold and growing stronger by the day. A strong indication of the prescient changes slowly aborning even in the backlands can be found in the lengthening footprint of regional retailers. In this issue, we share with our readers the charysalis-to-moth-to-butterfly like evolution of 'The World Retails Private Ltd', a modern retail chain in Odisha, which is a part of The World Group.

Starting off with one store in 2007, the company today operates eight stores in various parts of the state – with three stores in Bhubaneswar, two stores in Berhampur and one store each in Cuttack, Dhenkanal and Angul. The chain's retail footprint covers 85,000 sq. ft., which brings in average monthly turnover of Rs. 5.7 crore. The stores are all rented and belong to the Value Superstore Format kind, with their sizes varying from 2,600 sq. ft. to 19,000 sq. ft. With growth coming at 10 per cent annually, World Retails is looking forward to a steady and reassuring business ride in the days ahead and has a target of reaching Rs. 100 crore by the end of FY2017-18. "Since inception, The World Retail Group has been striving to provide a retail experience on a par with the national and international standards. We have



Rajesh Patnaik

COO, World Retails Private Ltd



been seriously pursuing qualitative development over the years and the same is now visible in our stores and products,” affirms Srinibash Sahoo, Chairman of The World Group.

Over the past eight to nine years, the group has gone about its task of becoming a regional retail power brand with grit and determination. What has given more puff to the company’s ambition and made its prospects more appetizing is that there is not much of competition to ruffle its feathers. “We enjoy a specific edge in the segment we are in and in our kind of business within the region. To a certain extent, V-Mart and Reliance Fresh can be called our competitors. Since we have the privilege to offer both FMCG and Fashion as our retail package, we have been able to take the advantage of combining both businesses and that too under the value format,” says Rajesh Patnaik, COO of this fast growing regional retail powerhouse, which is at the forefront of bringing modern and innovative retail practices in food and grocery in an otherwise predominantly traditional retail market of Odisha.

The unique blending of FMCG and Fashion in a value retail format has allowed World Retails to pack a greater punch to its business. Customers enjoy the privileges of adequate store space, good ambience, excellent service standards, all of which coupled with value pricing not only offers a bigger bang for the buck but also whips up the kind of competitive advantage that is hard to ignore. “We have been able to build a strong brand image within the state of Odisha. Being a regional player we have focused on regional products / assortment, which are make-in-Odisha products. This is part of our regional strategy and it allows us to cater to most of our customer requirements,” says Patnaik at whose stores the food and grocery range extends to categories across processed food, loose staples, packed pulses, cooking ingredients, detergents, personal care, beverages, diary and frozen.

Regional strategy for products and suppliers

The regional strategy as formulated and executed by World Retails deserves special mention and holds a salutary lesson for regional retailers everywhere.

“We enjoy a specific edge in the segment we are in and in our kind of business within the region. To a certain extent, V-Mart and Reliance Fresh can be called our competitors. Since we have the privilege to offer both FMCG and Fashion as our retail package, we have been able to take the advantage of combining both businesses and that too under the value format

For World Retails, the strategy is one of the most potent weapons in the company’s armoury, and one which gives it enough dry powder to fight the odds with poise and confidence. The strategy is based on stitching a formidable alliance with the local and regional brands. The collaboration has helped World Retails to reap handsome dividends – not only by way of distending sales but also by way of developing and building a strong retail platform, which has helped the retailer to forge a symbiotic and deeper relationship with brands and suppliers in the region. “We believe in promoting regional trade by way of reaching out to small entrepreneurs and sharing our shelf space with their products. This has helped us develop a synergistic relationship, which has become a source of mutual strength between the small entrepreneurs and our retail chain. They have stood with us at all times as by virtue of this relationship they have become the dominant players in their respective assortment in the regions. Hence we promote trade regionally,” confides Patnaik.

In a small market like Odisha, where the distribution business is limited to a few hands and instances of irregular stock supplies by stockists / distributors at peak times and even the availability of products on time is a recurrent issue, what can



“No big company has entered the banana chips segment”

Progressive Grocer speaks to Ashok Chheda, CMD, and Kishore Chheda, MD, Chheda Specialities Foods Pvt. Ltd, about the pioneering efforts of the company in making banana chips a mainstream snack not only in the home market but also overseas and their vision of how retailers can pitch in to expand and strengthen this snack segment



Which are the snack food products produced by your company?

Ashok Chheda: Chheda Specialities Foods Pvt. Ltd., established in 1993, initially started with one product – banana chips. Since then we have introduced many core snack products such as potato chips, ethnic snacks, 3d pop ups, chikki's, etc, besides introducing banana chips in new flavours. We have two segments in our products menu: traditional snacks and continental snacks. Traditional snacks include banana chips & namkeens while Continental snacks feature cheese balls & choco vanilla snacks. Our manufacturing unit is equipped with ultra modern machines, which helps us to ensure that we offer a consistent quality of chips & namkeen with focus on hygiene and affordability.

Of all the snacks, why did you pick on banana chips?

AC: We are the pioneers in manufacturing and marketing of banana chips in organised way. We brought our vision to bear on the banana chips

segment by selling the product in a consumer pack with appropriate branding. Since this product is processed manually, no big company has taken a chance to enter this segment. We took it as an opportunity and have worked hard to achieve the leading position in this segment. We have taken this product across the world and have received appreciation from far and wide for our initiative.

Which are the major markets for your products?

Kishore Chheda: Our products are well-known in Mumbai, Thane, some other parts of Maharashtra & south Gujarat. They are also loved and appreciated well in some export markets. Apart from being a fast growing brand in India, we have made our presence felt in major international markets in very short span of time.

What is your retailing strategy?

KC: We are focusing more on Modern Trade because it helps to control marketing and distribution cost.

↑
Ashok Chheda
CMD, Chheda
Specialities Foods
Pvt. Ltd



Tell us about the growth potential of your products and the performance of the snacks category?

AC: The snacks food industry has performed well over the past few years, benefiting from the growing demand for snacks among consumers. Favorable product pricing, increasing income levels of consumers and their busy urban lifestyles have also contributed to the rising popularity and growth of the category. In view of these considerations, we are expecting a 20 per cent growth in this segment.

What are the challenges before the category?

KC: Competition in this category has become very fierce. New players in the unorganised sector have made this segment even more competitive. Price rise for all raw materials and those of agri products like potato, banana, pulses, grains is a major challenge, apart from the rising cost of packaging materials.

Any suggestion for better category management/ merchandising and category innovation by retailers that could help the category grow more impressively?

AC: There are plenty of steps that retailers can implement for sound category management strategies. To start with, instead of taking subjective decisions, retailers should go for more data-driven analyses, which will help their category managers to make better product decisions with better results and more satisfied customers to show for. Of course, this is simpler in theory than in practice.

But retailers need to have a greater customer focus. Sales is often the only indicator that Indian

retailers use to measure performance and for identifying the areas to improve. It is on the basis of sales that allocation of more space to a category gets decided. For example, although apparel and electronics have limited relevance to food and grocery formats, many retailers are lured by the possibility of increasing sales. So they provide the space to these categories in their stores in a disproportionate manner even though they fail to convince customers that they have the credible “merchandising authority” to sell these items. I think there is much scope for greater strategic category management, which is key to reducing costs, increasing sales and improving profit margins — all the while keeping customers happy.

Your advice/suggestions/recommendations for new players entering the market.

AC: Once a business is established and thriving in its home market, it is often seen as the right time to branch out into a new market. If the company enjoys strong sales, has great brand awareness and the business is stable overall, it may be the right time to take the plunge. However, as with all new ventures, there are risks attached to this move and it is not a step to be taken lightly. A new market will not be so comfortable and there will be new competitors and unknown threats. The key to success is a disciplined approach with the appropriate level of investment in doing a thorough market analysis. The golden rules to follow before entering new markets are: choose the right country or region; check the cost of doing business; know the people and the competition; choose the right partner; understand the challenges; know the law, and begin with the right attitude. **PG**



Kishore Chheda
MD, Chheda
Specialities Foods
Pvt. Ltd

what's next

▼ Multigrain muesli with fruits



Gaia's latest offering is a healthy mix of multi-grains with pieces of papaya, apple, pineapple and raisins. You can enjoy the muesli with milk, yoghurt, ice-cream or simply munch on it as an all-day guilt-free snack. Gaia Crunchy Muesli Real Fruit is available in two packs – 1 kg for Rs.420 and 400 gm for Rs.210 respectively. The product is available at all leading stores and pharmacies.

▶ Smoothie rich in antioxidants

RAW Pressery has launched 'Life', a nutrition-packed drink blended with strawberries, blueberries, bananas, apples and pineapples, which can benefit your immune system, skin and body. The Life smoothie is available at premium retailers like Foodhall, Nature's Basket, in hotels like Marriot and Hyatt, to online stores like Bigbasket, Grofers, Zomato and Holachef across Mumbai, Gurgaon, Chennai, Pune, Delhi, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.



▼ Eggless cookies in a wide range

Lovely Bake Studio has launched eggless cookies in seven variants, in packed boxes of 75 gm. The range includes cookies in Oats & Raisins, Chocochip, Coconut, Butter Pista, Roasted Almond, Australian-Anzac cookies and Crunchy cookies. These variants are available in north India currently at price points ranging from Rs. 35 to Rs. 65.



▶ Dahi with no preservatives

Prabhat Dairy has launched Dahi with no preservatives. Positioned as 'Ghar Jaisa Dahi' the manufacturing process employs the latest technology to ensure a product untouched by human hand. The company has adopted a unique model called 'Raftar', which directly delivers fresh Dahi in chilled vans to 3,000 local grocery shops. Launched in Mumbai, the dahi is available in packs of 85 gm (Rs 10), 200 gm (Rs 25) and 400 gm (Rs 45) across modern retail chains.



▲ Morning breakfast biscuits launched

Mondelez India Foods Pvt. Ltd. has launched its new Cadbury Bournvita Biscuits in India. With this Mondelez India expands its category footprint from creams to cookies. The product with its ProHEALTH Vitamins™ and signature chocolatey taste will offer a perfect balance for the morning snacking occasion. The launch will be supported by an integrated marketing campaign and a visibility strategy in modern and traditional trade stores. The product will be available in two packs – Rs 10 and Rs 25 – across all major urban and rural retailers.



▲ New range of Ginger, garlic and chilly pastes

Neo Foods has come out with a new range of pastes made from ginger, garlic and green & red chilly. The pastes are available in pouches of 100 gm, 200 gm, 1 kg, 3 kg & 5 kg and in glass jars. Neo, besides its current canned fruit range of pineapple & fruit cocktail, will offer cherry, lychee and mango dices in cans from next month. The pastes are available on Amazon, Big Basket and with select retailers nationwide.

▶ Canadian maple syrup brand in India

Citadelle, the world's largest supplier of conventional and organic maple syrup, and a fast growing producer of premium, plump and moist, dried sweetened cranberries, is now distributing its Cleary's brand in India in association with LComps Impex. The product is sold in a especially made 125 ml bottle as well as in a 187 ml traditional bottle and is available at all major retailers in the Tier 1 cities. Citadelle is a Canadian cooperative of nearly 2,000 producers and their families who collect sap from seven million maple trees across Canada, ensuring a top-notch, consistent supply of liquid gold, year after year.



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California Walnut Commission

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