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India's wholesale business

The wholesale concept is gaining traction in the Indian market. To remain competitive, India's traditional wholesale markets, though efficient and organised, will find it necessary to upgrade and expand their procurement and distribution systems, in order to accommodate the increasing number of products that are now in demand by customers who have higher expectations in terms of quality, range and services. For cash and carry retailers, the key challenges will be managing inventory, training staff, ensuring supply, finding affordable rental space, and, of course, making huge investments.

India allows 100 percent foreign ownership in wholesale operations and single-brand retail. What is heartening is that despite the country's economic slowdown, international cash and carry chains present in India are considering expansion across territories. For Germany's Metro, India lists amongst its select countries for expansion from the current 15 outlets. While Metro has focussed on big cities such as Bangalore, Delhi and Mumbai, Bharti Walmart has entered smaller cities like Amritsar, and currently operates 20 cash-and-carry stores. French retail major Carrefour currently operates four such stores. UK-based Booker, which has four wholesale centres in the country, plans to open 20 more over the next five years.

According to media reports, Reliance Retail, which operates cash-and-carry operations through Reliance Market chain, plans to open 15 such stores in almost all the geographies. Its Reliance Market in Ahmedabad is already associated with 108,000 business partner members, including 17,000 local kirana traders. Its 50,000 sqft Reliance Market in Bangalore is offering over 8,500 products, both food and non-food, and more than 85,000 business partner members have already enrolled. Future Group is also building up wholesale stores in a few cities.

It is obvious that these companies are seeing a huge potential in the Indian market, and are keen to expand their presence. Industry experts estimate the cash-and-carry business to grow to the value of approx Rs 1.2 lakh crore by 2017.

The cover story in this issue discusses the challenges, concerns, opportunities and plans of the C&C players in India.



Amitabh Taneja
Editor-in-Chief

All feedback welcome at editorpgindia@imagesgroup.in

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Fresh avenues to expand and grow

Frozen & Fresh

A familiar name in the poultry industry, Suguna Foods has carved out a special niche in south India with its range of frozen products, and, more recently, its retail outlets. **Mohan VK**, General Manager, Consumer Product Division, talks about the company's growth over the years with **Roshna Chandran**

Coimbatore-based Suguna Foods, currently a Rs 5,000 crore company, was founded in 1985 by B Soundararajan, Chairman of Suguna Foods Limited a company that trades in eggs and poultry feed. The company is now present in over 15 states in India and in several international markets. With a year on year growth rate of 15 to 20 percent, the company's integrated operations include broiler and layer farming, hatcheries, feed mills, processing plants, food products, retail outlets, vaccines and exports.

"We had a very humble beginning 25 years back; today we are a million dollar company. Our annual turnover of Rs 2,500 crore comes from frozen foods," informs Mohan VK, General Manager - Consumer Product Division.

Buoyed by consumer acceptance and demand, Suguna launched their own retail chain of stores called 'Suguna Daily Fressh'. Currently, there are over 120 outlets in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala, with an employment of over 5,000 people, and a slew of new products across its categories. According to Mohan, the growth of modern retail has helped in spreading awareness of their products, and enabled an ideal environment for processed frozen food products across various categories.

Contract farming

B Soundararajan was also the first to execute contract farming, which today, comprises of 15,000 farmers from 8,000 villages in India. The format of contract farming model

(which was reintroduced as a wider operation in 1989-90) had Suguna Foods supplying farmers with DOCs (Day Old Chick), medical support, feeds and guidance. Farmers, in turn, provided their land, farming and labour.

Mohan informs that in a year, the company produces 395 million chicks from 36 hatcheries. About 2.2 million tonnes of feed are produced in a year, and the processed



Mohan V K

CONTRACT FARMING MODEL



We plan to add over 150 stores during this financial year, and are actively looking for franchise partners in Tamil Nadu and Kerala. We are also working on shop-in-shop models and actively seeking opportunities with large modern trade chains to partner with us

chicken production per annum is 18,000 tonnes. The company ensures quality as it handles integrated operations right from parent chicks to hatcheries, breeder farms to feed mills, and poultry farming to processing.

Explains Mohan, "The farmers are given growing charges at the end of each 'lifting', whereby the fully-grown chicks are lifted from the farm to be taken for processing, or to be placed in retail shops. Farmers are also given expert medical guidance and supervision. The USP of this business model is that it works to the highest advantage to both the farmer and the company."

Suguna Foods ensures that every farmer is guaranteed regular income through fixed minimum growing charge rates. Proven to be cost-effective, the company does not have to shell out capital on land, labour and on sheds. Steps are also taken to trace pathogens, banned antibiotics, growth hormones on products and ensure that they are hygienically cleaned, processed and then preserved in a controlled bio secure processing area. The company sells its processed chicken in a chilled format through its Suguna Daily Fresh outlets.

Suguna Daily Fresh outlets

In order to provide customers a new experience while shopping for processed chicken, Suguna Daily Fresh (SDF) offers a modern air conditioned store, where customers can select from a range of fresh chilled chicken under the brand 'Suguna



● Around 120 Suguna Daily Fresh stores offer consumers the healthy and hygienic way of shopping for chicken in a high-quality modern air-conditioned environment

Anytime' which are available in 8 types of portions. Ready-to-eat products are sold under the brand 'Suguna Home Bites'. The recent addition of a variety of specialty eggs (Suguna Eggs) like nutritive eggs, frozen fish, and vegetable products like green peas, potato fries, refined soya bean oil are sold under the brand 'Mother's Delight'. Milk and value-added dairy products are retailed under the brand 'Sahanaa'. SDF caters to regular walk-in customers, institutional customers, HoReCa and QSRs, and exports its frozen chicken. Apart from these, Suguna offers nutrition-rich herbal mixes, cattle and poultry feeds, and poultry equipment.

Adds Mohan, "Now, with the Daily Fresh retail format Suguna is able to offer

consumers processed chicken as per globally recognised standards. The chicken sold at SDF are processed at our state-of-the-art processing plant, which is HACCP certified, ISO 22000:2005 and FSSAI compliant to ensure the highest quality for product and the processes. The shelf life of a frozen product is 12 months which gives enough time for sales at the retail point, hence, there are no dead stocks. The processing plant of Suguna is FSSAI compliant, and quality standards and processes are governed by HACCP and ISO certifications. Frozen food slows down decomposition by turning residual moisture into ice, thereby inhibiting further growth of most of the pathogens. Freezing helps keep the food fresh and wholesome, and the nutrients intact till the product's extended shelf life of one year."

The typical store size of a SDF is around 300-600 sqft and requires an investment of Rs 5 to 7 lakh, depending on the location. The company follows both company-owned and franchise models. Franchisees can expect an ROI of 36 to 40 percent within a year of opening. Suguna provides a franchisee the brand set up and marketing support.

Explains Mohan, "For a Suguna Daily Fresh franchise, we offer great opportunities in a growing industry. With low investments levels, a faster break-even model, quicker store set up time, and strong backing from the principal





Wholesale Opportunities

Cash & Carry formats are gaining traction as the B2B business offers large volumes, faster inventory turnover, better supply management, greater sourcing power, low gestation period, long term growth, and higher returns on capital

By Priyanka Dasgupta

For many global retail chains, the cash-and-carry (C&C) model was a way to get a foothold in the Indian market given the stiff regulations in multi-brand retail. There's a good reason why international giants such as Walmart, Carrefour and Metro or for that matter home-grown Reliance Retail are investing big bucks in their Indian C&C operations. The positive impact of this format is mostly felt in tier II and

III towns or even further, where these players have actually succeeded in changing the lives of lakhs of wholesellers and small time retailers. Experts feel that C&C players are harnessing the concept of inclusive growth in real sense of the term and thereby benefiting the retail industry at large.

Cash and Carry (C&C) is a special format that retails to its members only. Products are usually sourced directly from producers

and retailed at wholesale rates. The main target audience for C&C stores are retailers, industrial users and other wholesalers. Store formats vary between 75,000 and 2,00,000 sqft. According to Euromonitor International: "Cash and carry is a wholesale format aimed specifically at trade customers, generally large-scale big-box stores providing a wide range of goods. Goods are paid for immediately and taken away by the customer."

A C&C chain has the potential to organise a large number of retailers across numerous categories in a very short span of time in its catchment area

C&C stores usually focus less on merchandise display and more on maximising sales in the given area, and stock displays are in large volume. In India, wholesale stores are usually smaller in size, i.e., around 50,000- 60,000 sqft. At present, the players dominating the Indian C&C sector are Metro Cash & Carry, Best Price Modern Wholesale, and Carrefour. Some of the new entrants include Reliance Market and Decathlon. Future Group has already announced that its wholesale non-food, non-grocery concept World Market will be operational by 2014.

These retailers have been trying to modernise the supply chain and provide value to the final consumer. The positive impact of the C&C format would be felt mostly in the tier III and IV towns. Harminder Sahni of Wazir Advisors states: "These locations otherwise would have had to wait for the arrival of modern retailers who are currently busy with the tier I and II markets. The trickledown benefits of a single C&C store could be much larger than many stores of modern retail players opening in a particular city. A C&C chain has the potential to organise a large number of retailers across numerous categories in a very short span of time in its catchment area."

The cash-and-carry business is highly efficient. There is a lesser need for stock-keeping units, which in turn enables better supply management and greater sourcing power.

Rise of C&C format in India: a historical perspective

Retail in India is a difficult and different ball game altogether as compared to the developed markets and is mainly dominated by the unorganised sector. Modern retail, as characterised by trading by licensed retailers who are registered for sales tax or income tax, is still at a very nascent stage comprising only about 8 percent of the total retail market in

the country (India Retail Report 2013). The unorganised sector is dominated by small shopkeepers, kirana stores (mom-and-pop stores) managed by families and individuals and employs a huge number of people, the majority of whom lack basic skill sets. This has been a major bone of contention amongst the political parties in India who fear that the advent of foreign retailers in the country will lead to major labour displacements and job losses. Foreign investment in the Indian retail sector was restricted till the early 1990s.

to 50 times in a year, which in turn pushes up the returns.

Foreign retail giants, who were unable to enter the country due to FDI restrictions, tweaked the entry strategy and entered as "C&C wholesalers" in order to tap the huge potential in the Indian markets. German retailer, Metro Cash & Carry was the first foreign C&C player to set its shop in India through this route. Metro's first outlet in India was opened in 2003. American retail giant, Wal-Mart forayed into wholesale retailing



□ The positive impact of Cash & Carry format would be felt mostly in the tier III and IV towns which would have had to wait for the arrival of modern retailers who are currently busy with the tier I and II markets

However, things started to move once India signed the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 1995 which included wholesale and retailing services. Consequently, the Indian government slowly but progressively opened the retail trade sector to foreign investors known as foreign direct investment (FDI). The first major step was taken in 1997 permitting 100 percent in C&C wholesale trading under the government's approval route. It was subsequently brought under the automatic route in 2006.

Reliance Retail was the first Indian retailer to enter the cash-and-carry business, which is currently dominated by multinational companies, namely Wal-Mart, Metro and Carrefour. For these big box retailers the cash-and-carry business not only provides large volumes, but also ensures higher returns on capital as the inventory turnover could be 40

business in India through a 50:50 joint venture (Bharti Walmart), with Bharti Group. Among the other major foreign C&C players present in India are France's Carrefour SA and Britain's Booker Group Plc, each having four stores in India.

The Indian government has been very progressive in reforming the retail sector and has taken proactive steps in the last few years. Today FDI up to 51 percent is allowed, subject to prior approval from the government, in multi-brand retail trade with the objective of attracting investment, technology and global best practices and catering to the demand for branded goods in India.

Making a difference through inclusive growth

A C&C wholesaler is a vital link between the manufacturer and retailer since he performs

Popping The Bubbly

Champagne is perceived as a high-end item, despite which, growth in the category is on the increase in India as consumers aspire for a taste of this 'new' product

By Shubhra Saini

Champagne has always been considered as an 'elixir for elites'. The Champagne region in France, from where this sparkling wine takes its name, has about 12,000 registered brands, most of which are present in the country. The potential for growth of this product category is seen in emerging markets such as India, which is experiencing economic growth and a newly developed taste for luxury products such as champagne which was historically unavailable to all classes of consumers.

For the emerging middle and upper classes champagne is perceived as part of an aspirational lifestyle, and it is enjoying the status of a 'new' product, luring consumers to try it out. It is time then that brands market it well so that it can reach the dinner tables of the Indian middle class, as have the non-sparkling counterparts such as red, white and rose wine. A big barrier, however, is the high price, but the market has been growing because of the several entry points, enabling consumers to pick and choose brands as per their affordability from premium, expensive brands to the cheaper varieties.

Emerging category

The Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC) is bullish about the growth of champagne as a spirit category in India, even though champagne has a very small share in the total wine and spirits trade in India. The Office of Champagne in India was established in 2008 as part of the international network of the CVC based in Epernay, France.

India is not traditionally a wine or champagne drinking country. Due to its higher price vis a vis spirits like whiskey, consumption of wine in India is really low when compared

to other countries. Commercial wine grape production in India has been in existence only since the 1980s, and till the past few years it was limited to wine connoisseurs. But, lately, because of the status quo attached to consumption of champagne and wine, and also the health benefits attributed to these drinks, the market for wine has been growing. However, champagne is still considered a celebration drink and is, therefore, not popped as often as other wines.

According to Harish Bijoor, Brand-Expert and CEO, Harish Bijoor Consults Inc, "Champagne in India was a drink of the maharajahs and royal families. It kept company with the Louis Vuitton suitcases and other luxury items of their ilk, which found a waiting market in royalty. Today, champagne is clambering down the nobility ladder hard and fast. Champagne is the sparkling cousin of wine, and wine is doing very well in our big city markets as of today."

Retailing

Champagne has paved its way into modern supermarkets. Says Venkat Narayanan, Chief Merchandising Officer at Spencer's Retail, "Champagne is the classic, celebratory drink. A selection of champagne is essential to the liquor section in our stores. Our sale of champagne is growing very fast, and we see a lot of potential in this area."

"Sparkling wines and champagnes have always had their place in the liquor segment. Yes, it indeed is preferred by a niche section of people but at the same it has always been something which is irreplaceable. I feel champagne and sparkling wine have always been ready to make an impact. So if there is any opportune time to make an impact, it is right now!" says Ashwin Deo at Aspri Spirits Pvt Ltd, a

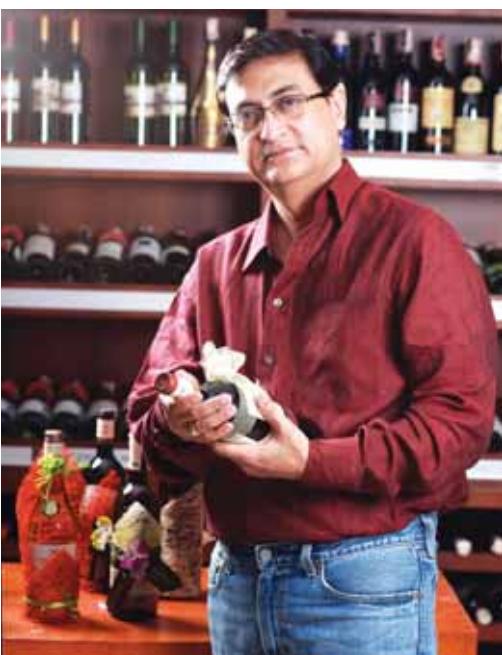


leading importer and distributor of premium international wines and spirits in India.

As a retailer, Nature's Basket does not retail hard liquor. Of its wine sales, champagne constitutes a relatively small amount in value terms. Some of its best sellers are Moet & Chandon (Rose Imperial); Louis Roederer (brut); Champange billecart-salmon (brut reserve); Champange Dom Perignon and Sula brut.

Says Mohit Khattar, MD and CEO, Godrej Nature's Basket, is one of the most popular stores for wines and champagnes. Foodies and experts in the field vouch by our range of wines and champagnes. This is evident from the quantity of champagnes that are sold at our stores and the customer feedback that we receive regularly."

"Retailing liquor products is still a developing concept in India. Also, India in general, is still acquiring a taste for wines. To begin with, wine storage must be temperature



Mohit Khattar, MD & CEO, Godrej Nature's Basket

India's champagne industry can achieve significant growth by extending knowledge of wines and champagne, proper positioning of the category, better branding and in-store promotions, along with favourable policies and subsidies by the government and the wine board

controlled so as to ensure that wine does not deteriorate during storage. Excessive bright lights should be avoided. Specifically for old world wines, keeping them in a horizontal position becomes critical to avoid corks becoming too dry. Understanding consumer requirements before sale is important and that is perhaps where modern Indian retail has a lot of catching up to do, " he adds.

In fact, Khattar places a lot of emphasis on proper storage of champagne. "Champagne is classified as wine and as you may be aware, storing and selling wines in India is governed by specific licenses which the retail trade must conform to. Therefore, champagne is kept in the wine section across our stores. But there are several differences in the way champagne should be stored vis a vis other wines. Ideally, we do not keep champagne for more than 4 years for the best taste, unless it is a vintage bottle. Also, if we plan on storing champagne for a long time, we do not ever store it on its side as the liquid tends to eat away at the cork and ruin the champagne. The ideal temperature for champagne storage is between 50 and 59°F (10 to 15°Celsius)," he informs.

Some of the luxury champagne brands are also pitching to enter the Indian markets. The main reason why brands are optimistic about their expansion plans in this product category is the growing disposable income and increasing aspirational level of the globe-trotting Indians.

The much coveted champagne brand Cattier, which is sold in 120 markets around

the world, is set to enter India soon at a reported price tag of Rs 40,000 per bottle. Cattier is looking for distributors in India to retail its champagne, and has joined hands with Sri Lanka-based Global Brands to launch in South Asia, including India, Maldives and Sri Lanka. The company is trying to target the movers and shakers of India who have expensive tastes and can splurge on indulgent products like champagne.

and stringent government rules with different taxation across various states. This has resulted in low penetration of champagne as a spirit category in India.

According to Khattar, selling wines in general is not very profitable but within the constraints champagne tends to yield high returns for the store as by industry standards they do decent sales within their niche clientele.



Liquor section at a Spencer's store

With Indians becoming more discerning about their lifestyle choices, and with luxury consumption growing in the country, spending on expensive products by the new-age consumers has increased demand for champagne, which is now growing at a positive rate. Champagne is being stocked at high-end parties, destination weddings, resort get-togethers and even at home for private celebrations.

Deterrents and alternatives

Although Indians are becoming receptive to consumption of champagne as a category, growth of this product category has hitherto been low due to poor storage and transport facilities, unfavourable rules for domestic marketing of wines (except in a few states),

Lack of promotional activities is also one of the main reasons for its slow rate of growth. However, seeing its high potential as a beverage, retailers as well as brands are working hard to create awareness about this spirit category. Comments Deo of Aspri Spirits, "We do a lot of events and promotions to market the champagnes and wines in our portfolio; in fact, we follow an all-round – 360 degree marketing approach. Apart from on-ground activations we also market them over the web, in the media, etc."

Narayanan from Spencer Retail, says, "Education, information and awareness are very important in building a better understanding of champagne. We have wine advisors in our store who help the



About Champagne

Champagne is a sparkling wine produced from grapes grown in the Champagne region of France, following rules that demand secondary fermentation of the wine in the bottle to create carbonation. Some use the term champagne as a generic term for sparkling wine, but many countries reserve the term exclusively for sparkling wines that come from Champagne and are produced under the rules of the appellation.



Budding Romance

Floral departments woo customers with wedding bouquets, local lilies, creative classes and more

By Jennifer Strailey

Industry experts agree that floral sales often mirror the current economic landscape. When consumers feel rosy about their fiscal health, they're more apt to purchase a bouquet of fresh flowers.

So as the nation's economic recovery continues, supermarkets across the country are expanding their floral offerings and forecasting blossoming sales.

In Progressive Grocer's 80th Annual Report of the Grocery Industry, a significant 41.1

percent of respondents said they anticipate increased floral traffic this year. Only 9.6 percent of respondents thought traffic in floral will decline this year, while 49.3 percent think it will remain the same.

But it's not the economic upturn alone that's spurring sales of everything from spring bouquets to orchids and hydrangeas. Retailers are redefining the supermarket floral department, making it a true destination and focal point of freshness for the whole store.

Arranged marriage

Weddings have become big business for a growing number of supermarkets, particularly in floral. Rochester, New York-based Wegmans Food Markets offers elegant custom and packaged wedding flowers through a number of its stores. Packages range from a couple of hundred dollars to more than \$1,000, depending on the design and scope. Custom arrangements run the gamut.

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