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Eating experience, nutrients, portability and innovative solutions will drive growth

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PROGRESSIVE GROCER

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FRONT-RUNNER IN PER SQ. FT. SALES

— Samir Modi
President, 24 SEVEN

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The linear journey of shoppers through the aisles of supermarkets is fast changing. Customers are now presented with myriad retail choices. They have the luxury of choosing one of the several channels available to them, depending on their convenience and mood. In addition, at any given time, there are other factors at play as well that play a role in coaxing shoppers to stores: their sense of comfort, urgency to purchase, paucity of time, ease of travel, or the desire for some shoppertainment.

Not surprising then that the bemused grocer is trying to gauge his customer's next move. Looking at the current phase of retail industry evolution, grocers have no choice but to offer both offline and online touch points if he wishes to remain competitive. The focus now is to build and grow the grocery business from a customer-centric perspective. This entails serving customers through multiple channels: Internet, telephone, home delivery, mobile vans, catalogues, kiosks, etc.

Today, more than ever before, the customer is dictating the route he/she wants to do business in, and grocers are quickly adapting. They are putting in place systems and processes that can facilitate the customer's shopping experience. By using a combination of online and offline channels, they are able to leverage the unique benefits of each channel to attract and satisfy their customers.

The growth of alternate retail channels is also compelling brands and retailers to devise their marketing strategies around these retail formats in addition to the conventional brick and mortar retail channels. Over the next few years, it is expected that intensifying competition will drive grocers to innovate further in order to remain closer to their customers.



Amitabh Taneja
 Editor-in-Chief

All feedback welcome at editorpgindia@imagesgroup.in

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The front-runner in per square feet retail sales

Samir Modi, President, 24 SEVEN Convenience Stores, is a buoyant retailer with fresh wind in his sails. After a sedate couple of years spent fine-tuning and tweaking his retail business, he is now limbering up and set to move the needle further in the convenience store format. The recently opened 47th outlet of 24 SEVEN in tony GK II, M-Block market, Delhi, embodies the chain's business philosophy of acting as a retail leader in the vanguard of latest technology adoption. "We have pushed the retail envelope further by launching a more cutting edge convenience store, which is a reflection of the world-class stores that we wish to create for the well-travelled Indian consumer," said Modi, during an interaction with Sanjay Kumar of Progressive Grocer.



Samir Modi
President, 24 SEVEN

With the demand for a round-the-clock convenience store showing effervescence – be it for emergency shopping, a hop-in buying, or for impulse purchases – in urban metropolises, 24 SEVEN is gearing up to open 400 new stores in Delhi-NCR over the next two years. "We have the concept, the brand visibility, and our value proposition is crafted to create an International shopping experience with the convenience of round-the-clock availability of all needs and a unique mix of reasonably priced products in a shopping environment that prioritizes quality and hygiene," avers Modi.



You have just launched a new store after quite some time. How would you assess the performance of your stores till date?

The world over, the retail landscape is gradually moving away from the large departmental stores and supermarkets toward smaller stores located at every nook & corner. Globally, these stores are also known as the “Convenience Stores” and the core identity of such stores draws on three basic elements. First is their proximity (walking distance) to the catchment; Second is the fact that they are open round the clock; and the third and most important element is their unique product assortment, which essentially takes care of all “dusk to dawn needs” (all those products one needs from the time they wake up in the morning to the time they go to bed).

In India too we have stores that fit this description more or less. They are better known as “kirana” (mom n pop stores) shops, which are in abundance. But the format is under-developed and unorganized even though kirana shops offer great convenience.

This void was being felt over a long time and the gap was accentuated as consumers’ spending power increased and their needs began to grow even as the time on their hands to tend to the growing needs began to shrink. Other factors also came into play: A rapid increase in International exposure brought about by frequent travels and the pervasiveness of media; changing lifestyle & purchasing habits. The combined impact of all these factors created a huge demand for a “convenience store” model. By 2005, the market appeared ripe and tailor-made for this format, which is when 24 SEVEN Convenience Stores were launched and have ever since pioneered this concept.

Our business model was designed around the winds of change to begin with. So we launched and tested four stores in the first year. Over the next few years the model was tweaked to get the product assortment, services, look & feel of the stores in line with the international standards back then. To offer an international shopping experience, our stores

came with a modern look and ambience in terms of design, shop fit outs and equipment. In 2012, we got the platform ready for the first set of expansion of this profitable “convenience store” model and opened 45 stores in a span of two years.

This year, we have pushed the envelope further by launching a more cutting edge convenience store. Last month, we launched the new and improved cutting edge 24 SEVEN store at GK II, Delhi. The store embodies our business philosophy of acting as a front runner and an early adopter of the latest technology in use world-wide. The new store at GK II is a reflection of the world class stores that we wish to create for the well-travelled Indian consumer. The response to the new store has been overwhelming but it will not make us complacent in trying out even more innovation in terms of technology in the near future.

In your view, what do you consider the pros and con of your format over the others?

a) Pros

- Open 24 hrs, 365 days
- Fulfillment of all daily needs from dusk to dawn
- Assurance of quality & freshness
- Quick check outs
- Unique assortment

b) Cons

- Space is a constraint therefore limiting depth (choices) in categories
- No space to stock products. As space is limited, the focus is on offering fresh products to customers
- High warehousing & delivery cost

What is the location strategy for your stores?

We follow our customers and the demand for a round-the-clock convenience store can be seen almost everywhere today. We adopt and choose the locations in high footfall areas or busy markets. Our shops are conveniently located on the ground floor with a clean and large façade. Our customer must

We stock complementing products together for the ease of consumers and follow “Tanpin Kanri” to replace slow movers with more sought after products regularly.

Holly Jolly Noshing and munching

Snacks are among the fastest and most convenient forms of consumption. Not surprising then that snacks are replacing many traditional meal occasions. With most snack categories experiencing strong sales growth in recent years, the outlook for the category is going to be strong. Analysts predict that long-term growth in snacks will be due in large part to greater experiences, a growing grasp of whole-ingredient nutrition, portability and miniaturization of solutions.

By Premjit Mohapatra



Today, more than ever before, eating occasions are now overwhelmingly linked with snacks. Be it ready-to-eat popcorn, veggie chips or nuts, snack items considered better-for-you options are driving sales growth in snack food categories. Analysts attribute this trend to the rise in urban population, increasing per capita income, busier lifestyles, higher disposable income and need a need for convenience arising out of the fast-paced lifestyles and a growing cultural tradition of snacking between meals. Over the past two decades, snacks have found high acceptance across large and small cities to become the preferred choice for consumers. According to Ranjana Sundaresan, Senior Research Analyst, Mintel, “During 2011-15, the retail snack food category grew at an annual rate of 20.5% by value and 12.3% by volume and the category is projected to grow at an annual rate of 18.0% by value and 13.3% by volume in the 2016-20 period.”

According to research commissioned by Mintel, snacking is pretty much an established trend for Indian consumers. About 75% of adults aged 18-64 said they snacked at least once a day. Among younger adults – those in the 18-34 age group – 77% said they snacked once a day. This dropped slightly to 73% for adults aged 35-64 years. According to Mintel’s data, India’s organized snack market was worth INR 197.8 billion in 2015 and it should only continue to grow as India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world. According to Mintel, the major product segments within retail packaged snacks category includes:

- Chips, which includes primarily potato chips
- Snack Nuts, which includes packaged nuts intended for immediate consumption
- Other Snacks, which includes potato-based snacks, rice-based snacks, corn-based snacks, popcorn, fruit snacks/jellies among others. Other Snacks also covers a large variety of branded and packaged traditional snacks, including but not limited to mixture, chivda and banana chips.

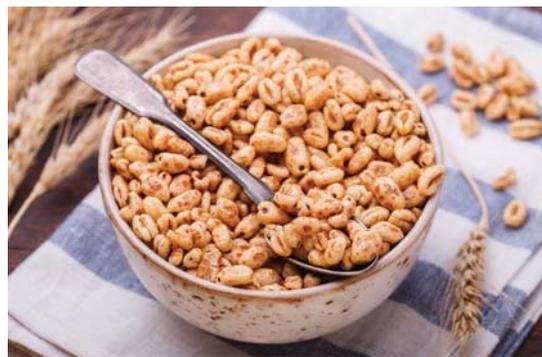
As per Mintel’s Global New Products Database (GNPD), Other Snacks, which is the largest segment, accounted for 70% by volume and 61% by value of the retail snacks market in 2015. Chips followed, accounting for 34% by value and 27% by volume. Snack nuts accounted for 4% of volume sales and 6% of value sales. This segment saw the highest volume of growth between 2014 and 2015, at 22%. In 2016, in terms of new products, nuts led the overall snack category with 21% of launches.

With the entry of major players like PepsiCo India Holdings Pvt Ltd, ITC Ltd, and Balaji Wafers Pvt Ltd in the snacks category, salty snacks have grown tremendously over the past decade. The introduction of brands such as Lay’s, Uncle Chipps, Bingo! and

Balaji within potato chips and brands such as Kurkure, Cheetos, and Bingo! within puffed snacks have proved to be a huge hit among consumers. According to market researcher, Euromonitor International, salty snacks is the largest selling snack product in terms of retail value sales with a contribution of 55%-58% of total value sales within snacks in India. It is also the largest in terms of volume share. About four years ago, packaged namkeen had replaced Western snacks such as potato chips and finger sticks as the largest segment within branded salty snacks market. According to Manoj Gupta, Executive Director, AFP Manufacturing Co. Pvt. Ltd, “In the last four years, Indian namkeens have grown at faster pace @ 24-25% as compared to Western snacks @ 12% overall.” AFP, which has over two decades of experience in manufacturing snacks ranging from moong dal, namkeen mixture, aloo bhujia, sweets, bakery, kaju mixture and extruded snacks, is also one of the leading players in the Private Label category that has served some of the top snack players like Lehar Namkeens, Bharti Walmart and others.

Demand Accelerators

Innovative products & variants: The Indian snack market has always been known to surprise and delight



During 2011-15, the retail snack food category grew at an annual rate of 20.5% by value and 12.3% by volume and the category is projected to grow at an annual rate of 18.0% by value and 13.3% by volume in the 2016-20 period.

— Ranjana Sundaresan
Senior Research Analyst,
Mintel

Major snack categories in India and their sales growth

Sub-Category	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total Sample
Nuts	18.13%	18.56%	20.55%	21.38%	19.50%
Wheat & Other Grain-Based Snacks	12.96%	12.78%	11.94%	11.05%	12.27%
Snack Mixes	11.67%	12.59%	11.05%	11.30%	11.72%
Bean-Based Snacks	11.67%	11.78%	11.94%	11.10%	11.64%
Fruit Snacks	9.65%	10.52%	13.06%	13.65%	11.53%
Potato Snacks	8.96%	7.19%	6.55%	7.54%	7.59%
Rice Snacks	8.36%	6.74%	5.38%	5.65%	6.63%
Vegetable Snacks	4.68%	5.89%	5.38%	2.95%	4.83%
Corn-Based Snacks	3.15%	3.89%	4.12%	3.97%	3.76%
Hors d'oeuvres/ Canapes	3.39%	4.07%	3.56%	3.56%	3.66%
Total Sample	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

Source: Mintel



A Brand Idea

Eye-catching displays, clever campaigns are making a name in fresh fruits and veggies.

By Jennifer Strailey

“
Branded produce is quite important today, because trust, safety, quality and reliability are how consumers make their choices, and that's what brands convey.

— **Mary Coppola**
 United Fresh Produce Association

“**B**randed produce has changed the consumer dialogue about fresh fruits and vegetables,” asserts Mary Coppola, senior director, marketing communications for the Washington, D.C.-based United Fresh Produce Association, who sees brands as a vehicle for helping the consumer differentiate between choices in the produce department.

“As real estate in the department becomes more and more valuable due to the addition of new and different SKUs, branding becomes even more critical,” she continues, noting that it builds loyalty and communicates trust, familiarity and consistency.

“Branded produce is quite important today, because trust, safety, quality and reliability are how consumers make their choices, and that's what brands convey,” affirms Coppola.

According to “Fresh Facts on Retail,” a report from United Fresh and Nielsen Perishables Group, products such as salad kits and value-added vegetables, both of which are widely branded, continue to drive growth in the produce department. Meanwhile, value-added fruits contribute 5 percent of dollars to total produce.

Sustaining and growing sales of branded produce offer both fresh opportunities and new challenges for supermarkets.

“The real challenge is in maintaining that success and capitalizing on it as you introduce new products to the retail space,” says Coppola, who adds that focusing on the messages that resonate most with consumers — fresh, healthy and convenient — is key. “It's the trifecta for success.”

Runaway Success

What could be more fresh, healthy and convenient than an apple? Rainier Fruit Co. encapsulates the fruit's virtues in its new Wholesome to the Core messaging. The Selah, Wash.-based company's latest campaign targets health-conscious consumers in general, and runners in particular.

“According to Running USA, running as a sport has grown by over 300 percent during the last 20 years, and nearly 19 million athletes completed a running event in 2015,” notes Andy Tudor, Rainier's director of business development. The company plans to support this burgeoning community with online promotions and in-market events that celebrate everyday runners.

As part of Rainier's new focus, it has forged a three-year sponsorship agreement with the Boston Athletic Association to serve as the official apple of the Boston Marathon, an event that attracts some 30,000 participants and 500,000 spectators.

Rainier created a special Boston Marathon box that was featured in supermarkets and club stores, including Whole Foods Market and Costco, throughout the Northeast. Many of the participating retailers, like a Whole Foods store in Portland, Maine, built captivating displays of Rainier's organic apples using the display-ready marathon boxes.

“The iconic blue-and-yellow branding of the Boston Marathon got both retailers and consumers excited, and drew more shoppers into the category — especially at a time of year that apple sales are lagging,” observes Tudor.

The Boston Marathon boxes also built brand recognition for Rainier's organic Lady Alice,

Honeycrisp and Junami apples. “We have made a large shift toward organic production in apples, pears and blueberries over the last 15 years, making us one of the largest organic fruit producers in the U.S.,” adds Tudor.

While progress has been made in building brand loyalty in the produce department, the industry’s work is far from done. According to Tudor, “Produce has several legacy brands that have been around for a long time, and a few new brands that have recently developed thanks to the power of marketing, but as a rule, consumers aren’t able to name a lot of branded produce.”

Ongoing success depends on suppliers and retailers alike consistently supporting quality, great-tasting products with a strong message position.

Good Times

Holidays and special events provide the perfect opportunity to showcase popular brands in the produce department. Produce managers across the country have particularly shown their display prowess in the avocado category leading up to the Super Bowl.

Prior to Super Bowl 50, the Target website posted an image from its Edina, Minn., store that depicted a bountiful bin of avocados branded with Avocados From Mexico’s Taste the Victory tagline. Above the



COOL RUNNINGS
A Whole Foods Market in Portland, Maine, features Rainier apples for the Boston Marathon.

image, the retailer used the following caption: “This Week’s Spike in Avocado Sales Can Only Mean One Thing: It’s Game Time.”

Minneapolis-based Target also touted a short nutritional message and a few of its favorite avocado recipes for game day on its site.

Meanwhile, a Mollie Stone’s Market in Greenbrae, Calif., used the Irvine-based California

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The Trade Pundits



Freshness is the most important component of customer decision-making in the category and this is unlikely to change.

— K. Ravindranath

GM, Head – Buying & Merchandising (Fruits & Vegetables)

ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITY

K. Ravindranath: FnV category is one of the most profitable categories at Heritage Fresh. I was instrumental in establishing and scaling up the Fresh category at 132 plus stores across Hyderabad, Chennai and Bangalore. This vertical delivers about 1/5th of our total business at Heritage Fresh.

Delivered one of the best gross margin return on floor space and lowest dump and shrink among all organized competitors in supermarket format; Supervised the complete supply chain operations; delivered approximately 60% of the produce by volume sourced directly from farmers/aggregators.

Experience in retail: 12 years of direct association with the industry.

Area of specialisation and excellence: Agribiz, Buying & Merchandising & Retail Marketing.

Most interesting thing about your job:

Opportunity to build a successful fresh business in the Indian modern retail context that is instrumental in driving the business/format's profitability.

Pramod Onkarappa:

- Operating profitable business model
- Buying & Merchandising
- Ensure high quality standards & hygiene practices
- Customer delight

Experience in retail: Coming from a strong sea food industry background and with retail experience of 4.5 years, and overall experience of 16 years.

Most interesting thing about your job:

As an everyday business, every transaction is an opportunity.

Area of specialisation and excellence:

- Subject matter specialist
- Efficient procurement
- SOP development and implementation
- Right sourcing
- Catering to customer needs
- Category expansion & penetration

SOLUTION TO CHALLENGES

K. Ravindranath: Finding and retaining talent with an attitude for business in Fresh category; finding suppliers who understand our vision for Fresh business and be a part of it.

Pramod Onkarappa:

- Need to be more proactive as its not an organized sector
- Less control on external factors like seasons / natural calamities, etc.
- Groomed and trained CSAs as butchers (skilled unorganized labourers) to overcome attrition

CONTRIBUTION TO THE CATEGORY

K. Ravindranath: Unique procurement strategy: Two separate teams (category & IPH) driven by our own and independent PnL to help us buy at the right/lowest price, thus enabling to deliver best margins while keeping our selling prices low.

Farm procurement: Over 70% of all bulk/seasonal SKUs sourced directly.

Best merchandising: 40 per cent plus penetration. Best-in-class range – 120 plus SKUs at top 15 stores. About 90 SKUs in other stores.

Market led pricing strategy: All selling prices are fixed after benchmarking about 5-6 competitors on a daily basis.

Right indenting & right discounting: Aided indent, system indent and system driven discounting.

FnV champion program: Dedicated & knowledgeable champs for handling FnV in shops.

Value pricing: Consistently our selling prices are cheaper than most competitors on key perception driving skus (Basket of 15-20 skus).

Quality assurance: Quality Checks at every stage to ensure only better than market quality and fresh material is delivered to every customer.

Safe fruits: All fruits sold by us are safely ripened in our ripening chambers.

Dependable & frugal supply chain: Same DC premises and same vehicles are used for FnV in the morning and FMCG in the afternoon/evening to keep deliveries costs frugal.

Rigorous dump & shrink monitoring: To control FnV supply chain losses to under 6.5 per cent. Consistent delivery of best net margin



Fresh ideas and freshness will always be the mantra to win the customer's heart.

— Pramod Onkarappa

Senior Business Manager –Fish & Meat, SPAR Hypermarket



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