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PROGRESSIVE GROCER INDIA
AHEAD OF WHAT'S NEXT

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Modern retail in India – whose penetration is set to increase substantially from the current 19% to 24% in the next three years – is passing through an exciting phase. The sector is expected to reach Rs. 1,71,800 crore from the current Rs. 87,100 crore across the top six retail markets of the country, and has been attracting keen interest from overseas players and investors.

Industry intelligence suggests that more than 50 mid-rung global retailers are planning to enter India within the next six months, with an eye on tapping mostly smaller, under-served markets within the country. Of the incoming brands, 18 are in food and beverage space alone. By 2020, food & grocery segment is expected to account for 66 per cent of the total revenues in the retail sector.

This growing enthusiasm of players is based on the market potential. In a recent development, India has replaced China to become the most promising retail market in the world. Government efforts to boost cashless payments and further simplify the nationwide goods and services tax are also expected to accelerate the adoption of modern retail.

Our recently concluded annual mega retail intelligence congregation this year – India Retail Forum – perfectly captured all the action taking place in our retail universe. Over 100 top global and Indian retailers participated in the conclave where they exchanged views on present-day challenges, opportunities ahead, and the strategies for unleashing the sector's true potential. Turn the pages to read what these leaders said about India's dynamic retail landscape.

Amitabh Taneja
Editor-in-Chief

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Tryst with Destiny

L to R:
Harriet Green OBE, IBM GM, Watson Customer Engagement, Watson Internet of Things and Education
Govind Shrikhande Chairman, IRF'17 and CCA and MD, Shoppers Stop
Krish Iyer President & CEO, Walmart India, and IRF Chairman 2016
Arvind Varchaswi MD, Sriveda Sattva Private Limited
Philip Auld MD, Tata Trent
Shashwat Goenka Retail Sector Head, RP-SG Group

India's economic outlook over the next decade offers a promising period of faster growth, acquisition of new capabilities and the creation of more diverse and optimal tools of production. Bustling with energy and ideas, the country's young and aspiring populace and its growing bulge of digitally savvy middle class is impatient for growth and change. India's retail industry, which is amongst the fastest growing retail markets globally, is actively scouring for growth potential and new opportunities. Higher disposable income and an increase in consumer spending, an expanding base of mobile users and e-commerce penetration, positive regulatory environment and a burgeoning middle class present the retail sector in India with tremendous potential for growth and for tapping new opportunities.

By Premjit Mohapatra

Even as the future appears rosy, there are many challenges along the way that could derail the sector's onward trajectory on the path of growth and profits. To secure its future and surmount the challenges, the industry needs to focus on building better capabilities, develop appropriate skills and cultivate a winning mindset to create new solutions that will keep the retail sector on the path of sustainable growth.

With this backdrop, the eminent panelists at the inaugural session of India Retail Forum that concluded in Mumbai recently set out to discuss and deliberate on the opportunities and challenges that await the retail sector in India and how the industry can plan for the future to achieve the growth trajectory that its various stakeholders so aspire.

Participants in the thought-provoking and candid discussion were Govind Shrikhande, Chairman, IRF'17 and CCA and MD, Shoppers Stop; Krish Iyer, President & CEO, Walmart India, IRF Chairman 2016; Harriet Green, OBE, IBM General Manager of Watson Customer Engagement, Watson Internet of Things and Education; Arvind Varchaswi, Managing Director, Sriveda Sattva Private Limited; Philip Auld, MD, Tata Trent; and Shashwat Goenka, Retail Sector head, RP-SG Group. The panel discussion was moderated by B.S. Nagesh, Founder, TRRAIN.

When countries experience growth at 7%-8%, changes are inevitable. All are profoundly impacted – people and society at large, economy, culture, consumers – by the fast growth and its implications, which lead to major shifts in the wake. There are implications for development of skills and infrastructure, innovation in product and format along with the need for building adequate and new capabilities. Harriet Green, OBE, IBM General Manager of Watson Customer Engagement, Watson Internet of Things and Education, summed up the scenario for India by emphasizing the need for a concerted and coordinated effort by all major stakeholders in order to catalyze an innovation culture. Drawing from her wide international exposure and business experience in India, she stressed on the greater need for governance, education, private enterprise, money and capital to come together so as to bring about sustainable growth and for achieving the desired outcomes. "There are implications for development of skills, which has always been an India strength; implications for infrastructure as we look at the internet of things and how it rolls outs and the implications for some of these ground-breaking technologies, which are all very exciting possibilities for the market," she said.

But while India's economy is in pole position and on the cusp of unlocking new frontiers, there is still a long way to go achieve sustainable growth of 7-8%. To maintain this growth trajectory, building capabilities is a strategic imperative. It's not just about capital. A nation's physical connectivity — its network of transportation and logistics infrastructure — forms the backbone of its economy. Robust physical connectivity improves productivity, creates employment opportunities and lowers logistics costs. Though India has created new airports, metro rail networks, highways, and roads in the past ten years, much work remains for the country to improve its global competitiveness in terms of physical connectivity. The crisis of capability plaguing India was brought to the fore at an event of Maharashtra government, which focused on infrastructure development. The state government candidly admitted to the dearth of quality contractors for developing and building roads and ports, railways etc. Despite the dilution in standards and specifications, enough contractors aren't still available, lamented the officials.

Opportunities and challenges

So it is the ability for capability building that is at the core and one that will drive higher levels of growth in the country. Krish Iyer, President & CEO, Walmart India and IRF Chairman 2016, recounting his experience said, "Even if we take Walmart as an example and look at the growth numbers, the extent of capability building that we need to do in terms of talent, digital, logistics, agriculture supply chain is quite a task. It requires a huge degree of focus, effort and capital. While capital is not a constraint, the

The key thing is to impress upon the government to recognize retail as an industry. That could be the turning point for the retail sector and for which government support is required.

— Govind Shrikhande
Chairman, IRF'17 and CCA and MD, Shoppers Stop

HOW TO CREATE A THRIVING RETAIL ECOSYSTEM FOR **THE FUTURE**

Retailing has undergone a sea change over the past decade. The easy availability of capital and the transformational impact of technology have had a profound effect on the industry. Increasingly, online shopping is being combined with traditional shopping trips to brick-and-mortar stores. Now, even though omni-channel and e-commerce are coming up in a big way, there is still a lot of scope for the ecosystem as a whole to grow together. "I am sure the trade would find a good synergy. Traditional shops have to be taken care of because at the end of day any person would love to go out and actually experience the shop front. People might actually buy it online, but would still like to go to the shop. I think these are values that India will definitely keep on," said Arvind Varchaswi. He added: "I think the future of retail in India is going to be a love marriage between e-commerce and physical store. I think a lot of it has actually happened."

While online is set to grow, the majority of sales still come from stores. This is the reality, in the Indian context as much as it is in the US where 90% of retail is still brick-and- mortar and is estimated to remain at 80% level even in 2020. This creeping increase in online sales has more to do with the rapidly increasing digital influence than with the actual cannibalization of sales. The majority of customers who come into stores have actually researched online about what they want to buy. They have made the comparisons in terms of features, prices and other benefits they want to derive out of the product. So the time they spend in the store is very less. They are purposeful when they come into the store, know exactly want they want, buy and leave. Also the increase in the valuation of online players despite their losses and the concomitant decline in the valuation of physical retailers despite the sales and profitability are because of the prevailing perception that the future belongs to online business. "Really speaking, it is all about how the buyer and analyst are looking at it. Definitely, the online trend is going to grow faster but there is space for both to coexist, to collaborate and to grow together and satisfy the customer," said Govind Shrikhande, .

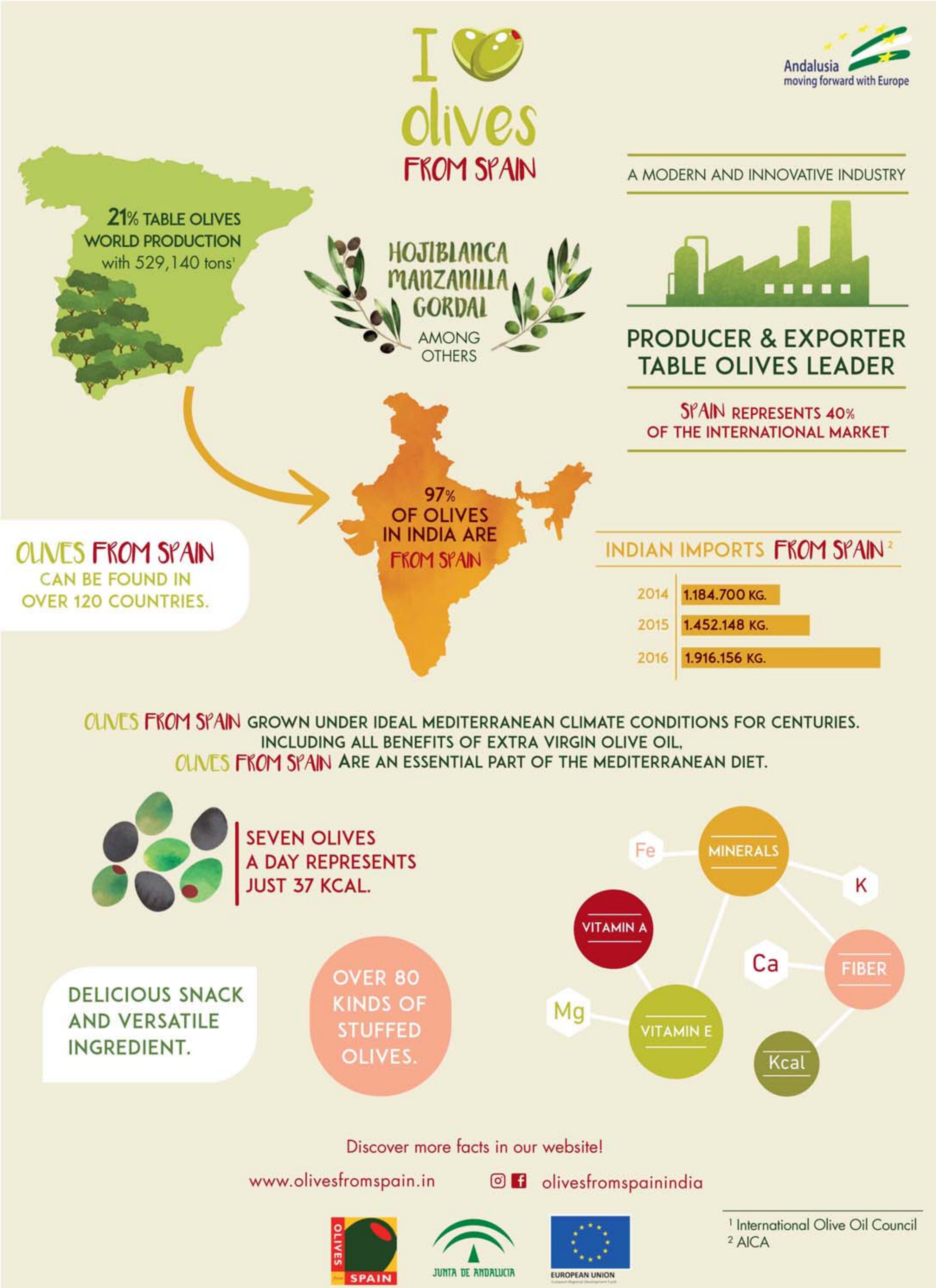
"I think the collaborative model has almost become the way to live. If you look at Amazon Now, Paytm Mall and ShopX, they are combining modern retail with the traditional. The collaboration is not necessarily about the money to be invested but more about collaboration of ideas, infrastructure, people and skills. In my view, the next five years is the best opportunity for India to collaborate, whether it is collaborating with small or big players. The important thing is to really capitalize on this opportunity," said B.S. Nagesh. "The window to expand is in the next five years; it a huge opportunity and franchising is a big part of being able to move fast and utilize capital in a very efficient way. Partnering with someone in a particular market helps to bring in a lot of useful background information on how to operate on a day-to-day basis," said Philip Auld.

Going forward, there is also a perceptible drive towards the omni-channel model by many pure-play retailers. Omni-channel business is becoming increasingly relevant and has its roots in the connected customer equipped with smartphones, tablets and computers. Customers expect a seamless experience and do not tend to distinguish between online and physical channels when shopping. After the initial period of doubt and hesitation, the realization has finally set in that each channel has its fair share of challenges and opportunities and adopting the right combination of omni-channel retailing is the way forward. Those really quick to adopt the omni-channel play can expect to be a winner in the retail universe.

talent part is certainly a constraint and one needs to work within that framework. Imagine, for a country like India, what would be the challenge," he said, pointing to the capability crunch confronting the retail sector. "7-8% growth can be achieved, but it will take a lot in terms of capability building," he added.

B.S. Nagesh, Founder, TRRAIN, and the moderator for the panel discussion, concurred with the observations of Harriet and Iyer. He emphasized the need for skill development and capacity building and for creating talent pools across the organization. Observing about the role of skill development as an important driver of future growth, he said: "We talk about the population and the demographic dividend and, importantly, how we employ people. We need to build the skills and the confidence of our people so that they can help drive growth and innovation. And if you get the right technology to go along with it and work together, then we can grow the business very well."

While retailing is one of the pillars of the economy, shortage of skilled manpower is one of the challenges facing organized retailers in India. Retailers face great difficulty in finding skilled manpower and for which they have to pay more in order to retain them. "Building the skills and capabilities is probably what we all are missing out on in most of the retail business. Instead of really building the capability of our people to grow, we are always looking at building capacity by adding up stores. So I think there has to be a balance of both," said Nagesh.



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There are implications for development of skills, infrastructure, internet of things and implications for some of these ground-breaking technologies...

— Harriet Green
OBE, IBM General Manager of Watson Customer Engagement, Watson Internet of Things and Education

Building the skills and capabilities is what we all are missing out on in most of the retail business. Instead of really building the capability of our people, we are looking at building capacity by adding up stores.

— B.S. Nagesh
Founder, TRRAIN

It is important to note the critical role that the government has to play in supporting the growth of retail. It can do so by creating national platforms and fostering an enabling environment. The central government should adopt a supportive attitude in the form of relaxing the sourcing requirements for foreign companies. Similarly, state governments can help to attract investment capital through the policies they implement. "The key thing for the industry is to impress upon the government to recognize retail as an industry. That could be the turning point for the retail sector in India and for which government support is required," observed Govind Shrikhande, Chairman, IRF'17 and CCA and MD, Shoppers Stop.

The impact of governmental support has been most felt in the Eastern region of the country, which until recently was considered lacking in initiative. Shashwat Goenka, Retail Sector Head, RP-SG Group, which has presence in the Northeast and south of the country besides the East, said: "We are seeing highest growth in the East and the highest cooperation from governments in those regions. There is a lot that is happening, not just in the major cities of the East but also in the rural areas as well and that is what is leading to higher growth in the East."

India, with all its challenges, complexities and problems, continues to remain an attractive investment destination and is gaining traction with global brands. It is a hugely contrasting country – while being one of the biggest outsourcing countries in the world responsible for running big plants, the back-end systems of big corporate still struggle to manage the roads during flooding or even to declare results in time for our premier universities. But despite the myriad problems, India has demonstrated the ability to register higher growth.

"If you are passionate about the retail theatre, marketing and making of brands, or are an aspiring designer, or analyst or a supply chain specialist, then there is no better place to be in today than India. The opportunities here are huge. If we look at parts of Europe, then countries there would die for having the kind of growth there is in India. Many of these countries have an exceptional talent pool and they do excellent work but find it elusive to achieve high growth. But here, when the team gets it right, then the upside is absolutely huge. Also, not to forget that the consumer is just as critical. I think his/ her expectation that you deliver the authentic product is just as acute as anywhere else in the developed markets. But if you can do it, then the opportunity is huge," said Philip Auld, MD, Tata Trent, elaborating on his experience of doing business in

India and the growth of the economy. "For anybody who is considering this dynamic market, it's all about the product. If you have a product and if you can deliver it effectively to the consumer, then there is no better market than the one we are in," added Auld.

Changing profile of consumers in retail

Consumers today have high aspirations and are increasingly savvy in the choices they make. The value conscious and digitally connected consumer is empowered to demand change. This profile of an increasingly aware, savvy and ambitious consumer has created a strong need to address the cause. And a key implication of this rapid consumer evolution is that Indian retailers should sharply identify the emerging opportunities and customer segments.

To consider, the retail scene in the East has changed drastically in the past 10-15 years. A lot of youth who earlier used to migrate to other parts of the country for job opportunities, education and growth are now coming back. Brain drain has given way to brain gain and there is a lot more action, ground energy and buzz in the East. "Consumers, particularly in Southeast Asia, are much exposed to the Western world. Besides being aspirational, they are increasingly demanding. This aspirational need to consume brands that represent higher value and class or even consume more than what they can afford has resulted in a shift towards premiumization in the last six years. As a retailer, there is a big pull factor as opposed to push factor," said Shashwat Goenka, summing up the situation in the East.

The Indian retail market is very heterogeneous in nature. The dynamics of various segments change with the geography and other cultural factors. The challenge for the retailer is to keep this heterogeneous nature of the target market in mind


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Even if we take Walmart and look at the growth numbers, the extent of capability building that we need to do in terms of talent, digital, logistics, supply chain, is quite a task.

— Krish Iyer
President & CEO, Walmart India, and IRF Chairman 2016

In India, we have the advantage of a young population. So the future should be about creating many small entrepreneurs and ensuring how they can become feeding systems for bigger enterprises.

— Arvind Varchaswi
MD Sriveda Sattva Private Limited

and identify the opportunities in different segments. Nagesh said: "We often look at India as one homogenous entity. But many a times there are huge opportunities that are actually emerging in different segments of India. Where there is a top end segment, there is also a conservative India comprising a very rich segment and willing to spend on very expensive gourmet food, high-end products and absolutely top end offerings and services. You have to identify your opportunities and position your product."

Thanks to ever-greater access to the internet and mobile connectivity, India has entered the dawn of mobile influence. Improved availability coupled with easy financing schemes has accelerated the smartphone adoption rate in the country. Two decades ago, owning a mobile was a huge talking point, an exception. Today, mobile phones are ubiquitous so much so that retailers use it as a lever to influence, to suggest, to tempt the huge mass of potential consumers with their offerings. Smartphones have made it easier for consumers to compare prices and decide where to shop; they are every retailer's shop window because they are available in every hand, can be accessed anytime and anywhere and can serve different needs of the consumer throughout the day. It has not just enabled online shopping but increased the experiential value of the same. On the other hand, it has helped retailers to expand their consumer catchment and grow faster, something that the brick-and-mortar store alone could not have been able to achieve. Online retailers have been able to grow by retaining control of the customer experience and proactively supporting what information consumers need at each stage of the shopping process.

The fast rising smartphone penetration, increased adoption by shoppers and improved mobile functionality for retail applications present a huge opportunity to value retailers for speaking directly to the customers. "Mobile phones have democratized access to the very latest trends. People have worked very hard for what they have got and they are very savvy. People are looking for only the authentic products at different price points; the value part is so breathtaking that it is an opportunity. It will be only very few exclusive ones who will be able to command that differential," said Philip Auld.

From a technology perspective, a need is being felt to think about the elements of data and its security as well as how it can be done. There is a general agreement that India has a very special set of challenges around issues such as building a huge scale, price points, and on data information security notwithstanding the size of the enterprise. Harriet Green had an interesting take about the notion that the future of data, information security, consumers, and retail was driven by the mobile phone or that enterprises simply are reluctant of and don't wish to share their valuable data with other providers. "As an enterprise, you need to ensure that at the core of your business is the security of the data or the information of your providers because that data is the DNA of your enterprise and it is something not to be sacrificed for any price point," said Harriet.

Safe handling of consumer information has become all the more important considering that post demonetization, there has been a spike in the number of customers who prefer paying by card. "Before demonetization, credit card business for us was about 55 per cent and 45 per cent was in cash. Post demonetization, when you look at the December-January period, credit card went as high as 90 per cent and as 92 per cent in January. Then it fell down and currently it is back to the 50- 55 per cent in cards. Which means that card payment has come back as strong or even stronger than it earlier was," noted Govind Shrikhande. Concurring with Shrikhande, Shaswat Goenka said: "I completely agree. We were 50-55 per cent in cards payment before demonetization, which went up to 90-98 per in the December-January period. Today, we are back to 50-55 per cent for payment through cards."


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If we look at parts of Europe, then countries there would die for having the kind of growth there is in India. But here, when the team gets it right, then the upside is absolutely huge.

— Philip Auld
MD, Tata Trent

An economic boom over a sustained period of time has several positives: it has the impact of lifting a whole mass of people languishing at the bottom of the pyramid and improving lives by raising their per capita income. But the grim reality is that India as country is so underinvested in health, education and infrastructure that the basic needs of the rural poor are unmet. So when growth comes to the bottom of the pyramid, not only is there a rise in the per capita income but also on other fronts such as access to better health facilities, higher savings for rainy days and small investments in property. Also, all this talk of mobile technology and internet of things are largely irrelevant for the rural poor as what they have is a basic instrument used primarily as a means of verbal communication. So upgrading to a smartphone when the benefits of growth percolate to the bottom isn't a priority for the poor. "The opportunities at the bottom of the pyramid are severely limited but if we talk of the middle there is a big opportunity, which is 300-400 million and may grow up to 600 million. And that opportunity needs to be tapped," said Krish Iyer, speaking from his experience of extensive travelling in rural and semi-rural areas and meeting a lot of customers and end consumers.

But with the kind of mobile penetration and coverage now prevalent in India, there are always opportunities if you have a problem solving and innovative mindset. Walmart is making the most of this mobile penetration opportunity by helping small retailers go tech savvy, so that connectivity with suppliers or wholesalers is established and auto replenishment is ensured for the retailers, i.e., whatever gets sold can automatically get replenished from the wholesale channel. "I believe the fundamentals in terms of technology adoption need to be put in place. Simple things are what they are looking for at this point in time and bigger things will come in the next ten years or so as far as the majority of population is concerned," opined Iyer about retail opportunities expanding to include the population at the bottom of the pyramid.

To make the most of this kind of growth, India needs to cultivate entrepreneurs. And it needs to be carried out on a scale unprecedented so as to also percolate into smaller towns and districts throughout the country. The approach will help tap into a larger pool of talent available to feed the growth ecosystem and to keep the country on the path of growth. It will also help build new capabilities essential for ongoing innovation of new products, services, and business models that are integral to the making of a vibrant future economy. "In India, we have the advantage of a young population. So the future should be about creating many small entrepreneurs and ensuring how they can become feeding systems for bigger enterprises. I think that's where even mobile technology could play a huge role. Rather than there being growth only in spurts in certain segments or enterprises, the entire country as a whole can grow together," said Arvind Varchaswi, Managing Director, Sriveda Sattva Private Limited, emphasizing on the need for inclusive growth and develop solutions to meet India's challenges. "I think there is a need for a shift in the minds of our rural youth – from a job seeking mindset to an entrepreneurial mindset. There is a need for a lot of encouragement for entrepreneurship. It is something that all of us as retailers should take upon ourselves; that we create growth but not jobless growth but inclusive in nature," said Shashwat Goenka. **PG**

We are seeing highest growth in the East and the highest cooperation from governments in those regions. There is a lot that is happening, not just in the major cities of the East but in the rural areas as well.

— Shashwat Goenka
Retail Sector Head,
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A peep inside the grocery shopper's mind and her basket

The retail environment today is characterised by constant and intense competition. Every retailer wants a higher share of the customer's wallet. An AT Kearney report calls India the numero uno retail destination in 2017 but it also says that the competition is set to intensify in the foreseeable future. Most retailers will be confronted with the challenge of attracting more customers to their store, converting them to buyers, and getting a fair share of their basket.

By Premjit Mohapatra

"Identifying the consumers and the location where you can find the intended footfalls starts with defining who and what your consumer is. This description is arrived at by looking at their income.

— Peeyush Bajpai
Director, Micromarketing & Economics, Nielsen India

Market consultancy and research firm Neilsen, with a wealth of experience in understanding consumer behaviour and retail, has come out with a study titled the Three Pivots of Retailing, which details interesting facts that a retail business in India needs to look at in order to be successful. The study also provides valuable insights into the mind of the consumer.

Three pivots of retailing

- Increasing the number of footfalls
- Increasing the frequency of people coming to the store
- Increasing the basket size of customers

Increasing the number of footfalls is about being in the right location. For identifying the location, the parameters to be keep in mind are to look at areas where you have the high income or the affluent or the mid income consumers. High affluence areas mean high potential for the retail store to meet its objectives. So the first step is to identify the consumer affluence level out there and identify the consumer potential. The next is to account for retail potential, which is a combination of retail density out there and retail sales happening there. The important thing to keep in mind when considering income is the change in consumption baskets.

"Identifying the consumers and the location where you can find the intended footfalls starts with defining who and what your consumer is. This description is arrived at by looking at their income. At Neilsen, we use a lot of methodologies to estimate income. We don't ask about the income, we estimate it. We ask about expenditure, we look at the savings rate and then estimate the income," says Peeyush Bajpai, Director, Micromarketing & Economics, Nielsen India.

Today, one could get a lot of economic signatures from spatial data (maps & satellite imagery) to understand the consumer around the catchment area. But identifying the location is not enough. You may have the best location, right product, staff and everything else but it's all about getting more customers to walk in and more frequently. Persuading them to spend more in the store is equally important. But for all of this to happen, it is paramount to understand how a shopper's mind works because it is this kind of understanding that will bring in the sales.

The human brain hates complexity and has an innate need to simplify. Shopping excursions can induce decision fatigue because the brain is constantly assimilating, deciding, accepting and rejecting decisions at the retail level, which translates into impulse buying or not buying at all. The former has a good impact in the short term but both are not desirable and have a negative impact in the long run. So a continuous, conscious engagement with shoppers is necessary for long-term growth of the category.

Neuroscientists have proven that a retail store is the harshest environment for the human brain with an overload of products, SKUs, colors, promo offers, etc. A shopper's brain gets tired from navigating the array of aisles and brands and they stop processing effectively after a few minutes of shopping. To deal with this, shoppers generally follow the auto-pilot mode because it is simpler to do what has worked before until something really catches their attention. That could range from a product, brand, pricing, packaging, POS, promotion, etc.

"Today, studies have shown that two thirds of the decisions are taken in the store and that 67% is your shopper opportunity where your ability to influence

that shopper is higher," says Punit Mittal, Lead - Shopper, West and South India, Nielsen India. Several studies have shown that in-store triggers are a lot more impactful than pre-store triggers, including ATL and word of mouth. When in the store, triggers kindle interest. And the trigger for the final purchase decision (brand /SKU, choice, etc) is at the point of purchase. So in-store purchase drivers are more important than those that are pre-store. Yet the impact of critical in-store investments is limited because in-store communication is often missed out by shoppers in the clutter of multiple messaging.

"We did a global study using advanced techniques and found that a person was exposed to 450 different types of POS in a single store in a single trip and

only 15, i.e., 3% caught his attention and for less than 1.5 seconds. So that's the span you have to grab the attention, make your impact and create the pull," says Mittal. To engage and attract the time-strapped customer of today, the need of the hour is to break the clutter and have one or two clear, concise and differentiated messages. The average customer spends about 15 minutes shopping so she is not really looking for information. So a simple and effective message that grabs attention will work wonders. Retailers often don't understand the impact of simplicity in the stores and not just in communication. Shoppers tend to interact with assets that are well organised and also end up purchasing more. So a simple planogram devised to enable an easy decision making is what the customer is looking at because what they don't understand, they will ignore.

Another critical aspect of capturing the customer attention is to recognise the importance of the eye level. Shoppers scan products at the eye level area first and then run through the shelves below, and rarely above. So anything new or differentiated should be placed at the eye level as a visibility cue and an in-store trigger.

The battle for the consumer's wallet and mind share is fiercest at the shop floor and the yardstick, as always, is sales. Only those retailers who are aware enough to ensure that their brand is not lost in the labyrinth of retail clutter can distinguish themselves with unusual and exciting store atmospherics, which offer a pleasant and convenient shopping experience. Such retailers will be able to command a competitive advantage and a larger share of the consumption basket. It is therefore important for retailers to understand their shopper's journey. **PG**

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— Punit Mittal
Lead - Shopper, West and South India, Nielsen India

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Honoring the best in Retail in India: IMAGES RETAIL AWARDS 2017

The 14th edition of IMAGES Retail Awards, powered by Vegas Mall, were presented at the Renaissance, Mumbai, on September 20. A day earlier, it was the turn of IMAGES Retail Technology Awards (IRTA 2017) that was unveiled at the same venue. The Awards marked a befitting climax to this year's edition of India Retail Forum (IRF) 2017, India's largest retail intelligence business congregation.

Recognising excellence in the business, IMAGES Retail Awards were conferred through 30 very stylish trophies in 21 categories from a roster of over 150 nominations for retailers and professionals across categories. The awards were presented to recognize and felicitate India's most forward-looking and exciting retailers who fuelled growth and innovation across multiple categories in fiscal 2016-17. On its part, IMAGES Retail Technology Awards celebrated some of India's most outstanding achievements in retail and honoured excellence in digital innovation and implementation in the retail industry. Today, technology deserves a stand-alone status as both a key challenge and facilitator for consumer-facing businesses and IRTA aims to serve as a benchmark in the Indian retail industry by bringing in best practices in honouring the efforts of the retail and technology fraternity.

The awards served as the high point of the two-day India Retail Forum 2017, which was powered by MAPIC. The annual conclave brought together delegates from India and the world. More than 200 distinguished speakers from across the globe, 100+ exhibitors of next-generation retail innovations attended the event this year, which offered innumerable opportunities to tap into India's high potential retail market. Eminent retailers, including Govind Shrikhande, Chairman, IRF'17 and CCA and MD, Shoppers Stop; Krish Iyer, President & CEO, Walmart India, IRF Chairman 2016; Arvind Varchaswi, Managing Director, Sriveda Sattva Private Limited; Philip Auld, MD, Tata Trent; Rakesh Biyani, Joint MD, Future Retail; Shashwat Goenka, Retail Sector head, RP-SG Group; William Bissell, Co-founder & MD, Fabindia; and B.S. Nagesh, Founder, TRRAIN were among the speakers at the event.

"IRF is truly the only forum which matters in India when it comes to retail leaders sharing game changing insights, world-class concepts, as the breaking ground for India entry strategy for global players, and as the incubation ground for fruitful multi-million-dollar partnership ideas and alliances," said Govind Shrikhande. He further stated, "Over the past two decades incredible transformation in Indian consumer markets has been witnessed by the retail industry. We're the world's fastest growing major market, and populated by demanding, aspirational, globally-connected, and 'living-for-the-now' consumers. For brand marketers and retailers, as if that were not enough, there is now the added complexity of digital consumption. I believe that,

this is the most opportune moment to harness our passion, and innovation to create an immersive and experiential setting for our consumers and rekindle the 'Romance' in retail. India Retail Forum (IRF) has chronicled and even catalyzed ahead-of-the-curve innovations in consumer experiences and fashioning India's consumption story across retail categories."

Referring to the ongoing shifts in consumer behaviour brought on by technology, Amitabh Taneja, Chief Convenor, India Retail Forum said, "Customers' growing acceptance of different channels and high expectations for seamless shopping & fulfilment experiences are putting unprecedented pressure on retailers to retain its customers. The once single channel purchase path has been scrambled as consumers are distracted by devices in store, at home and on-the-go. In this always-on, omnichannel digital age, retailers must create the best experience to meet consumers' needs and capture their hearts, minds and ultimately, their wallets."

IMAGES Retail AWARDS 2017 CELEBRATING RETAIL EXCELLENCE

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IMAGES MOST ADMIRED RETAILER OF THE YEAR:

- ★ Department Store: **LIFESTYLE**
- ★ Hypermarket: **BIG BAZAAR**
- ★ Food & Grocery: **24 SEVEN**
- ★ Fashion & Lifestyle: **MAX FASHION**
- ★ Fashion & Lifestyle Accessories: **AYESHA**
- ★ Footwear: **SKECHERS**
- ★ Jewellery: **TANISHQ**
- ★ Foodservice: **BURGER KING**
- ★ Beauty & Wellness: **ENRICH SALONS AND ACADEMY**
- ★ Consumer Electronics: **CROMA**
- ★ Entertainment: **INOX**, **PVR**
- ★ Turnaround Story: **MANJUSHA**, **PANTALOONS**
- ★ Customer Relations: **LANDMARK GROUP**
- ★ Marketing & Promotions: **JEALOUS 21**, **MCDONALD'S**
- ★ Store Design & VM: **BEING HUMAN**, **SPENCER'S**, **THE RAYMOND SHOP, JEKEGRAM W**
- ★ Employee Practice: **HYPERCITY**

IMAGES MOST ADMIRED CONCEPT OF THE YEAR:

- ★ Retail Innovation: **HOME COURT CONCEPT - ADIDAS**
- ★ Campaign Innovation: **DO THE STRECH - FBB**, **RE.1 CAMPAIGN - NATURALS SALONS**
- ★ Product & Service Innovation: **MY FIT - VAN HEUSEN**

IMAGES MOST ADMIRED

- ★ Retail Launch of the Year: **PIZZA HUT EXPRESS - WESTEND MALL, PUNE**

IMAGES MOST ADMIRED

- ★ Concept Presentation of the Year: **FEEDBACK MECHANISM - ENRICH SALONS AND ACADEMY**, **SELF CHECKOUT - HYPERCITY**, **WOW! MOMO ON WHEELS**

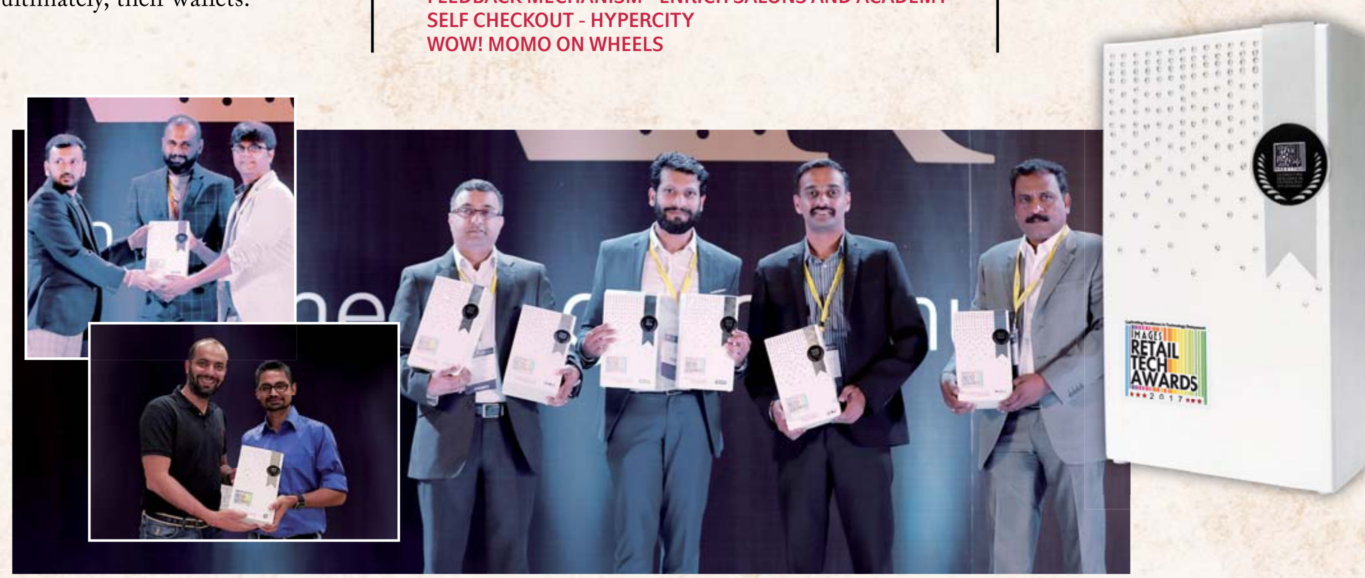
Celebrating Excellence in Technology Deployment
IMAGES RETAIL TECH AWARDS 2017

IMAGES MOST ADMIRED RETAILER OF THE YEAR:

- ★ Loyalty program implementation: **TRENT LIMITED**
- ★ In-Store Technology Deployment: **SPAR - KIOSK**, **TANISHQ**
- ★ Mobile Technology Implementation: **INOX**, **RAYMOND**
- ★ Digital Marketing Campaign: **PIZZA HUT**
- ★ Technology Innovation (<50 cr): **TRAVEL FOOD SERVICES**
- ★ Enterprise Solution Implementation **RAYMOND**

IMAGES MOST ADMIRED

- ★ Omnichannel Retailer of the Year: **SPENCER'S**
- ★ CIO of the Year: **JITENDER VERMA, CIO, INOX**
- ★ Young Retail Professional of The Year: **SHASHWAT GOENKA, RETAIL SECTOR HEAD, RP-SG GROUP**



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Who Should Exhibit?

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CONFECTIONERY & DESSERTS | DAIRY PRODUCTS | NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS & BEVERAGES | GLASSWARE / FLATWARE
HALAL FOOD | HEALTH & ORGANIC FOOD | MEAT, POULTRY, SEAFOOD | PROCESSED AND CONVENIENCE FOOD
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New Launch

Sri Sri Tattva to launch exclusive franchise stores with new products across categories

The company has embarked on a major expansion drive across its personal care range, food, incense and fragrance and home care range.

Sri Sri Tattva, formerly Sri Sri Ayurveda has introduced a range of healthy cookies in strategic tie-up with Unibic Foods India Pvt. Ltd. The products, which include Digestive cookies, Kesar Badam cookies, Milk cookies and Coconut cookies, were unveiled at the recently concluded India Retail Forum 2017 in Mumbai. Also, unveiled was Ojasvita Choco Malt cookies, which will be launched soon. The digestive cookies are made with the goodness of whole wheat flour, rolled oats, wheat bran and carom. Kesar Badam cookies have the classic combination of saffron and almond; milk cookies are a wholesome blend of milk, vanilla and butter whereas coconut cookies is a crunchy and flavorsome confection of coconut and milk.

A new range of Sri Sri Tattva products, which include Digestive cookies, Kesar Badam cookies, Milk cookies and Coconut cookies, were unveiled at the recently concluded India Retail Forum 2017 in Mumbai.

As a healthy choice for all cookie lovers in India, Sri Sri Tattva range of cookies will also be exported to overseas countries. Already a global brand, its products are being retailed – apart from India – in countries such as Argentina, Australia, Canada, Columbia, Europe, Iraq, Japan, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Oman, Peru, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Taiwan, UK & USA. "We will launch Sri Sri Tattva brand of products in 30 new countries with a focus on Latin America, including Brazil and Argentina. We are already present in countries in the Middle East, Far East, and Russia, where we will further expand our range," said Arvind Varchaswi, MD, Sri Veda Sattva Pvt. Ltd.

At the same time, Sri Sri Tattva is also expanding its personal care range, food, home care and incense and fragrances range even as it sells its apparel line exclusively online. The 300+ products from Sri Sri Tattva are also sold through its website srisritattva.com and its mobile app available on iOS and android. Apart from online channels, Sri Sri Tattva is expanding both through the general retail and regular distribution channels.

Given the growing demand for its products and the positive response from the market, the company is focusing on general trade, modern trade, e-commerce and franchise stores for expansion. The company plans to open 1,000 new Sri Sri Tattva franchise stores in the coming months through the franchise route. These stores will exclusively sell Sri Sri Tattva brands besides also launching new products in the existing categories.

Sri Sri Tattva is established by committed individuals who have nearly four decades of experience. The company has a holistic approach to health and wellness with a 360-degree focus across its operational gamut that includes FMCG brands, a College of Ayurvedic Science and Research, a state-of-the-art hospital, inspired doctors and therapists, panchakarma wellness centers, spas and clinics, manufacturing facilities driven by technology and stringent control systems and a widely growing franchise and retail presence.

Modern lifestyles call for any offering to be user friendly, and in that, Sri Sri Tattva products ensure maximum touch points across the nation, be it by way of highly experienced Ayurveda Vaidyacharyas, health and pulse diagnosis (Nadi Pariksha) camps, ailment specific as well as rejuvenating treatments at its multiple centres. PG


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Make it Better

With nutrition increasingly on the minds of shoppers, grocers need to up their game.

By Bridget Goldschmidt

Most food retailers have some sort of health-and-wellness program in place, but as consumer interest in clean labels, nutritious eating and healthy lifestyles increases, grocers' current offerings may not be enough.

A responsive, dynamic approach to health and wellness is crucial for grocers. As Karleigh Jurek, corporate dietitian for Lubbock, Texas-based United Supermarkets, observes: "A well-established health-and-wellness team can be beneficial for retailers by providing a needed service that resonates with today's guests that could promote stronger loyalty from these shoppers and ultimately increase sales."

Citing "several educated assumptions" from her organization's Health and Wellness Council, Susan Borra, chief wellness officer at the Arlington, Va.-based Food Marketing Institute (FMI), executive director of the FMI Foundation and a registered dietitian (RD) herself, affirms that "consumer values around health and wellness will continue to grow in importance and continue to be a key purchase driver. Riding the trend for consumer-centered health care, more customers than ever before are looking for health care options, and the neighborhood grocery store has the ability to fulfill this need and serve as a wellness advisor."

In terms of products, Carl Jorgensen, director, global thought leadership-wellness at Stamford, Conn.-based Daymon, points out that "health and wellness is the fastest-growing trend at retail. Natural and organic sales are projected to grow 11 percent annually through 2020. Retailers are seeing the opportunity for their private brands to offer consumers a less-expensive entry point to health-and-wellness products."

So, what can grocers do to address consumers' evolving needs?

First, they need to realize that there's no one-size-fits-all solution. Elisabeth D'Alto Jalkiewicz, supermarket/retail subgroup chair of the Food and Culinary Professionals dietetic practice group at the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, in Chicago, urges retail dietitians to "learn about your associates, your customers and the community you are serving. I think it's important to not generalize that all retail dietitians should be taking the same cookie-cutter approach. Depending on things like your geographic region or your primary shopper, you have to tailor programs to meet those specific needs."

St. Cloud, Minn.-based Coborn's is already on board with this directive. "We are focused on meeting our communities where they are at," notes Amy Peick, who oversees the Midwest grocer's health-and-wellness program. "Our communities have both similarities as well as differences. Each of them has different needs and expresses their interest in different areas of wellness. Our supermarket dietitians in the store have the capability to be flexible with events and activities that are offered to our guests."

This program customization should extend to the various demographics served by supermarkets. "In recent years, a major topic of discussion is the rise of Millennials as consumers, and how best to reach this group while still resonating with older age groups," says United's Jurek. "This will continue to grow and develop, especially with Generation Z beginning to reach adulthood. Health-and-wellness teams will need to continue to adapt the messaging to methods that appeal to these different groups."

Additionally, when publicizing their health-and-wellness offerings, retailers should directly address convenience. "The key is to really resonate with consumers' needs by targeting your promotions or merchandising efforts to provide meal solutions like quick weeknight dinners, one-pot meals or top-10 pantry staples," suggests Jalkiewicz.

Accordingly, Coborn's is touting the convenience of a new feature in its newest locations. "As we follow trends within health and wellness, we see that individuals are searching for convenience," says Peick. "However, we are finding that many of them still want to be engaged in a simple form of the overall cooking process. From these trends we have implemented a Chop Shoppe in our next-generation stores. The Chop Shoppe is the spot where we chop your fresh produce however you'd like it. This is extremely convenient for our shoppers to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables without having to take the time to prepare them."

There's also the issue of visibility. "It's both difficult and expensive for dietitians to be personally on the floor at all times," notes Jorgensen. "However, they can be visible in other ways, such as through at-shelf communications like 'Our dietitian recommends' and 'Did you know?' signage." He additionally advises that dietitians offer store tours for customers, incorporate access to their services into telephone and online customer service offerings, and work hand-in-hand with store pharmacists to better connect grocery and pharmacy.

Partners in Health

As Jorgensen indicates, health-and-wellness programs enable retailers to engage with customers beyond the food aisles. Jalkiewicz also urges in-store dietitians and pharmacists to work together more.

"Building an excellent referral system between dietitians and pharmacists is a great way to grow your one-on-one consultations with customers, and also for dietitians to refer customers back to the pharmacist if they have questions regarding medications," she explains. "Dietitians and pharmacists can also team up during health screenings in the store and in the community."

"Drug interactions, diet regimens and supplements are all areas of the store where the pharmacist can help guide the shopper and work more strategically with the supermarket RD to positively influence their shoppers' lifestyles," notes Borra. "There are excellent opportunities for pharmacists and dietitians to help patients with their diet questions and treatment needs."

Pharmacists can boost their visibility through at-shelf communications similar to those suggested for dietitians, Jorgensen observes, as well as offer private-brand precision wellness services. "Pharmacists can make personalized dietary and lifestyle recommendations based on data from wearable activity trackers, DNA test kits, blood biomarkers and microbiome analysis," he says. "This is also an opportunity for retail dietitians."

The idea is that "the dietitian can perform the role of the pharmacist's extension throughout the store," asserts Jorgensen. "Daymon believes that bringing pharmacy and grocery together is one of the most compelling opportunities for retail in the next few years."

He further advises that category managers and merchandisers also get involved in health-and-wellness programs "to get dietitian- and pharmacist-recommended products and communications in front of shoppers," and that "training of store employees by pharmacists and dietitians will help activate health-and-wellness programs across the store."

Health and wellness is the fastest-growing trend at retail. Natural and organic sales are projected to grow 11 percent annually through 2020. Retailers are seeing the opportunity for their private brands to offer consumers a less-expensive entry point to health-and-wellness products.

WELL TO DO
Coborn's health-and-wellness team consists of, from left, RDs Amy Peick, Ashley Kibutha and Emily Parent.

When publicizing their health-and-wellness offerings, retailers should directly address convenience. The key is to really resonate with consumers' needs by targeting your promotions or merchandising efforts to provide meal solutions like quick weeknight dinners, one-pot meals or top-10 pantry staples.

Change Agents

Meanwhile, in the retail trenches, many supermarket health-and-wellness programs are perpetually being refined to better meet consumers' needs.

"As we see an increase in demand for health-and-wellness resources, Coborn's plans to expand the dietitian program," notes Peick. "This would include hiring additional RDs, building more next-generation stores with continued emphasis on fresh departments around the perimeter of the store, and healthier options in convenient foods and ready-made meals."

Coborn's "continually expanding" program features three RDs, each covering a different region of stores, who network with local businesses and organizations, along with offering such services as store tours, personal consults, lunch and learns, classes, and nutrition education presentations and events. Other health-and-wellness efforts at the grocer include the NuVal nutrition guidance system, healthy checkstands selling only Dietitian's Choice items, and free fruit available in the produce department for kids to snack on.

"We will be [further] implementing our Dietitian's Choice program in our stores by having shelf tags on all of those items," says Peick. "With the trends [of] looking for healthier convenience food items, we will potentially add more healthy checklanes [and] more Dietitian's Choice items in fresh departments, as well as develop programs for kids that focus on healthy eating, physical activity and an overall healthy lifestyle." Coborn's additionally plans "to expand on corporate wellness initiatives and healthier break-room options," she continues, further noting the "many opportunities to be innovative with our fresh departments."

STOP AND CHOP
Next-generation Coborn's stores will feature a Chop Shoppe to address consumer demand for convenient produce items.

To get the word out about its program, Coborn's uses such channels as social media outreach, radio shows, TV segments, blogs, newsletters, brochures, handouts and recipes, according to Peick.

When it comes to communication, spurring greater digital engagement is key. "In the future, we hope to continue to grow our media presence as well as developing a voice on different digital platforms through social media outlets, blog posts and online videos," says Jurek, of United, whose current health-and-wellness initiative consists of three full-time registered dietitians and nine contract dietitians providing such services as store tours and themed media segments across various outlets; Health Tags, which quickly identify at the shelf those foods that are beneficial to specific health conditions and dietary preferences; and Dietitian's Top Pick items.

"Our team also hopes to see more point-of-sale advertising through digital messaging found directly in the stores," adds Jurek. "We hope this will helps us create more interaction with our guests and engage them with our health-and-wellness team."

Jalkiewicz predicts even more activity in cyberspace. "I think we may see more health-and-wellness efforts integrated into the online shopping programs for many retailers," she says. "If customers are using a delivery system to order groceries through the retailer, and not stepping foot in the store, those are missed opportunities for dietitians to have an impact and educate those customers on their health-and-wellness needs." Again, Coborn's has begun to move into this space with its To The Table meal kits, available through the CobornsDelivers delivery service. The kit, according to Peick "contains a recipe with everything needed to cook a quick and easy meal in your own home."

Through such endeavors to adjust their programs to shifting consumer demands, Jurek believes that "health-and-wellness teams have a very unique opportunity to help differentiate [their companies] from other competitors in the industry." PG

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"We are a community-focused store and expanding within this segment"

Eby Mathews, COO, Foodworld Supermarkets (P) Ltd, a chain of supermarket stores in Bangalore speaks to Progressive Grocer about the retail journey of the chain and its current focus and positioning. With over twenty years of retailing experience, Foodworld has come to establish itself as a strong community store chain, and is looking to expand and strengthen its positioning by operating from smaller spaces within communities such as clubs, offices, campuses, apartment complexes, etc, in order to better meet the needs of these specific segments.

EBY MATHEWS
COO, Foodworld Supermarkets (P) Ltd

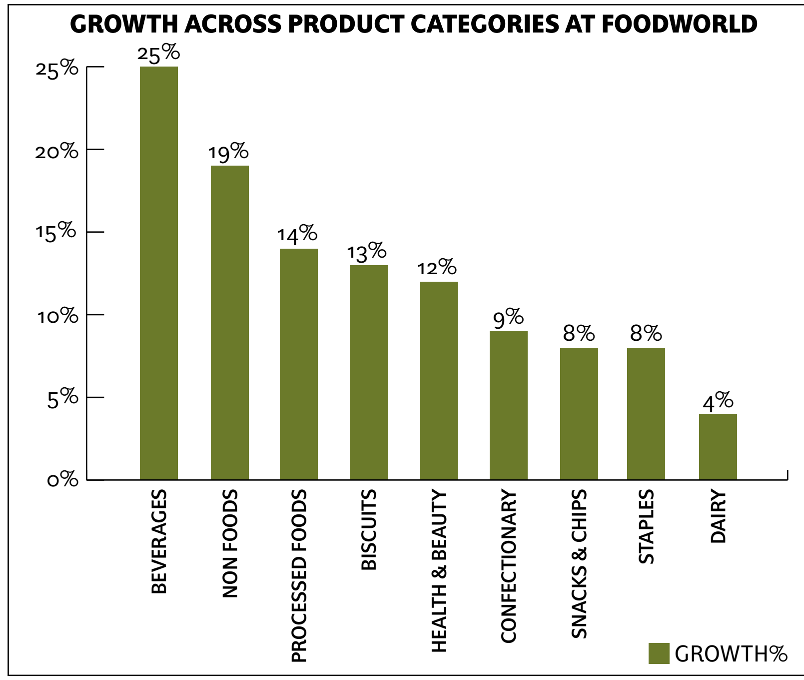
Describe the journey of your store chain and how it has grown over the years.
Foodworld (FW) is a chain of supermarket stores in Bangalore. The first store was launched in 1996 in Bangalore as a neighborhood convenience store of 3,000 sq. ft. to cater to the daily needs of a family. Over the years, it has positioned itself as a strong community store chain, focusing and expanding within communities like clubs, offices, campuses, apartment complexes, etc.

Currently, Foodworld operates 37 stores in four store formats – Supermaket; Gourmet; Superstore; Express. Foodworld Supermaket store is the main format store with 3,000-5,000 sq. ft. size and it operates as a regular supermarket. Foodworld Gourmet store is a new concept store with 2,800 sq. ft. size in Bangalore. The store caters to customers seeking a selection of gourmet products. Available in-store are produce and a selection of international food and beverage items sourced both from domestic and international suppliers. We also operate in smaller formats - Foodworld Express is a convenience store of 750 - 1,500 sq. ft. It carries basic fresh range offers, wider ranges in drinks, snacks bakery, confectionery and impulse products.

What kind of people frequent your stores and in which age group? Has the customer profile been changing in any way over the years?
The customer profile at our stores comprises all age groups. About 60% of the customers are women and 40% are men. About 70% of our customers are in the age group 25–45 years and 30% belong to 45+ age bracket. We find that shoppers today know what they want to buy due social media awareness and general exposure. Also, customers don't mind paying more for buying quality products and healthy food.

What do you feel are the marked differentiators for your stores that put you apart from the other F&G retail players?
Today, the market dynamics are changing fast. Foodworld has positioned itself as a community focused store and we will continue expanding within this segment. We are looking at operating from smaller spaces in order to better meet the needs of specific communities.

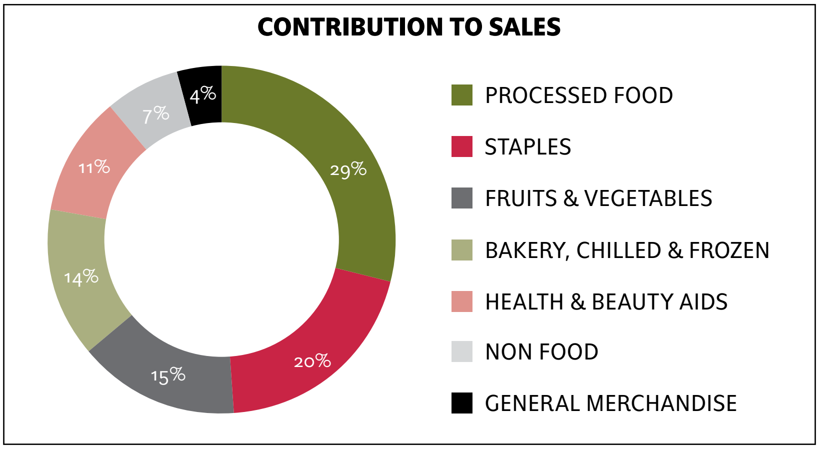
What is the location strategy for your stores?
We are focusing on small format gated communities stores to create a world of convenience for our consumers.



Are there any interesting concepts or innovations you have introduced at your stores?
To create a world of convenience for our customers, we have developed Foodworld app for Apple and android users. Customers can order their daily requirements from their home or office and get their products delivered within three hours.

Which are the categories and range of your merchandise you specialize in as a retailer?
Our product basket comprises processed food, staples, fruits & vegetables, bakery, chilled & frozen, health & beauty aids, non-food, general merchandise, fresh meat, processed meat, dairy, among others.

Organic is a major emerging category. The market for organic is growing @ 25-30% and is expected to reach $1.36 billion by 2020, from $0.36 billion in 2014.



To create a world of convenience for our customers, we have developed Foodworld app for Apple and Android users. Customers can order their daily requirements from their home or office and get their products delivered within three hours.

Which are the new and emerging categories at your stores and how do you see their market potential?
Organic is a major emerging category. The market for organic is growing @ 25-30% and is expected to reach $1.36 billion by 2020, from $0.36 billion in 2014.

What are the consumption trends for health foods at your stores?
There is definitely an increase in awareness of health and fitness, especially in the age group 30 to 40 years. We find more numbers of people in this age bracket looking for specialty breakfast cereals like Special-K , muesli with yogurts and organic food & millets. On the other side, the younger generation is moving from regular breakfast cereals to breakfast bars/ drinks to catch up with the time lag.

Due to the change in people's lifestyle, an increasing number of working professionals prefer to have on-the-go breakfast and leisure breakfast on weekends. So there is huge demand for products like ready to eat, ready to cook, breakfast bars, protein shakes and processed meat, which are healthy and full of proteins that is needed for a healthy body.

Which are the fastest-moving product categories in your stores?
The fastest moving product categories are fruits & vegetables, organic products, beverages, biscuits, snacks, staples, masala spices, breakfast cereals, personal care, skin care, hair care, detergents and household cleaning products.

Give us an idea of how much space you allocate to the different sections and what is your strategy for allocating space?
The store space is finite and new products' proliferation is very high. So product-wise performance is reviewed every quarter and non performing products are removed to accommodate the new ones. New categories also get added. In our case, we have added categories such as organic range, fresh meat, gourmet/ imported range as and when we noticed that there was high customer preference for such products.

What is your private label strategy? In which categories do you have private labels?
Our private label range is designed to give the customers the best quality products at right pricing. Currently, we have private labels in staples and household cleaning categories. We are planning to introduce private labels into the snacks category also.

What kind of margins do your private labels offer you compared to national brands?
Margins in private label products are higher than those for national brands by over 10%.

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What are you doing to promote your private labels?
We promote our private labels through in-store branding and special displays.

What are you doing to rope in more quality suppliers for different categories?
We are in continuous hunt for quality suppliers. We do a complete background check and inspect the vendor's premises before on-boarding new suppliers. A vendor is blacklisted in case three consignments get rejected due to quality issues.

We have broken the current trend by moving out of extant modern trade-warehouse model to direct store supply model. The new model is helping us to showcase better offerings and fresher products to customers.

How do you monitor and keep track of the customer feedback loop at your stores?
We have a toll-free number for customer feedback and complaints. All feedback is escalated to the department head concerned and we ensure that complaints are resolved and closed within 24 hours. If the complaints are registered at the store, the store manager along with cluster manager coordinates with the respective departments and closes the loop with 24 hours. As COO, I personally review all the complaints and the remedial measures taken on a weekly basis.

How do you ensure that suppliers stick to quality standards and efficiency norms?
To maintain and check the quality standards of suppliers, we have an in-house quality team to monitor all quality norms and ensure high efficiency in the entire process – from receipts to dispatch of stocks to stores. We also have periodical in–store inspections to check the hygiene of products in the stores.

What is the extent of your direct sourcing and how do you oversee this process?
About 23% of our business is done through direct sourcing. We have laid out a very stringent process for selecting the vendor for sourcing the products. Each and every consignment is checked by our quality team and tested in our in-house lab before it is accepted.

Have you made any recent innovations in your supply chain model?
We have broken the current trend by moving out of extant modern trade-warehouse model to direct store supply model. The new model is helping us to showcase better offerings and fresher products to customers.

Which marketing and promotional activities do you prefer for pushing sales in your stores?
Primarily, we focus on BTL activities (radio campaigns, neighborhood walks and paper insertions). We also have a monthly activation calendar in the stores. The entire activities and promotions are based on the monthly themes.

What steps and measures you have been taking with regard to digital and social media, etc?
Currently, we are focusing on BTL & digital media.

Have you developed your own loyalty program/ schemes/ offers for pushing sales and strengthening your loyal customer base?
We are developing a loyalty program for our customers and will be launching it soon.

What are your future plans for expansion?
We will be expanding within Bangalore, especially in the gated communities. We are also focusing on growth of both online (mobile app) and brick and mortar stores. Next year, possibly, we might look at expanding to other cities.

Tell us about your strengths and achievements so far.
Foodworld has grown to become a household brand for quality products with a very strong loyal base of customers. Our strength is our presence within different communities – gated communities, clubs and office campuses. Our current focus and plans are to grow in this segment. **PG**

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A $40-billion pot that retailers can encash profitably

The gift-card industry in India has grown by leaps and bounds in the past years, with 10 million cards sold annually. The purchase of gift cards has risen exponentially, displaying a 41 per cent growth in 2016-17 over the previous fiscal. G-cards is a growing segment and a regular source of revenue generation for retailers and e-commerce portals.

By Sachin Goel

The total size of Indian corporate & personal gifting market put together is about Rs. 250,000 crore today, more than five times the Delhi State Budget proposal for the ongoing fiscal.

With the festive season on, gift cards are trendsetters in terms of their ease-of-use. The novelty lies in making them appear sensitive and caring enough so as to offer the receiver a wide range of presents to choose from. In more ways than one, the value of gift cards go a step beyond the essence of O Henry's classic tale, The Gift of Magi, which underscores the immense value of gifts in spreading love, trust and compassion in the world we live in.

The Gift of the Magi story goes like this: Della Dillingham Young is a beautiful woman with brown, knee-length hair. She is poor and has only $1.87 in her household. Come Christmas, she has to gift something to her loving husband Jim. Della sells her hair and with the money she buys him an elegant chain for his pocket watch he so covets. All happy and excited, Della returns home with the precious gift and waits for her husband's return from work. But alas! Jim had sold his pocket watch in order to buy an ornamental comb for his lovely wife's long tresses! With the touching story, O Henry brought alive the poignancy of precious sacrifices. It reminds you of the Gift of the Magi, the three wise men who were first to see baby Jesus after his birth. The wise men brought gifts of gold, symbolizing the Son of Lord's kingship on earth; frankincense, a symbol of the deity that Jesus was to become, myrrh and embalming oil, for Jesus died at the cross for the sake of mankind.

The practice of gifting is ingrained in our value system. Gifts have always been important in festivals, anniversaries, weddings and on other special occasions. Interpersonal relationships are a centrifugal force in India, be it in our daily lives or in business. Gifts, within that realm, are an extension of this whole process. Management consultant Technopak estimates that the total size of Indian corporate & personal gifting market put together is about Rs. 250,000 crore today, more than five times the Delhi State Budget proposal for the ongoing fiscal.

No wonder that the gift-card industry in India has grown by leaps and bounds in the past years, with 10 million cards sold annually. The purchase of gift cards has risen exponentially, displaying a 41 per cent growth in 2016-17 over the previous fiscal. The industry is estimated to have the potential to touch the $40-billion mark.

These days, the gifting culture goes beyond showing happy intentions to your loved ones. People are far more sensitive and rational about their choice of gifts. The sender of the gift takes into consideration several things before making a decision – the personality, likes and dislikes of the receiver, need of the gift in one's life, etc. Many a time, these aspects are tough to analyze. In this situation, gift cards come to the rescue.

In the e-commerce and start-up industry, gifting through 'g-cards' is now a growing segment. It generates impressive sales and is a regular source of revenue generation for the portal and new businesses. Popular online shopping destinations and single-brand retailers keep coming up with 'Gift Card Programs' for their consumer base – be it for promotional purposes, bonus or top-up incentives. The cards can be redeemed instantly and they are sometimes time-bound too to catch the pleasant element of surprise and wonderment.

The e-commerce industry has actually further eased the process of gifting with digitization. With e-gift cards, one sometimes feels that the emergence of 'Digital India' was much before the official campaign was ushered by the government. India's new-found interest in digital payments has encouraged people to prefer e-cards and gift cards over the traditional practice of money-in-envelopes.

Now, it does not matter if gift cards have physical or virtual forms. For, they offer choices, often online to offline and vice-versa, in terms of giving the 'gifted' the right and will to exercise the right to choose. With the advent of digitization, geographical divides are no longer a barrier in the gifting industry today. E-gift cards come to the rescue of consumers who wish to ship away their love and care to their loved ones via gift cards.

What has also happened is that with the spread of consumer culture, we are seeing a rise in the willingness, potential, ability, and the affinity to pay for innovative products. This has further created a distinct space for long distance gifting. Along with

the rapid adaptation of the virtual world, online gifting has become a reality. At a time when there's the stress and busy-ness to consider, what better way to enhance the online gifting experience further by adding the matter of choice with it? **PG**

The writer is CEO, Homepunch.com, an Indian online home appliances megastore, offering a wide variety of small appliances.

With the advent of digitization, geographical divides are no longer a barrier in the gifting industry today. E-gift cards come to the rescue of consumers who wish to ship away their love and care to their loved ones via gift cards.

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What to check before buying home-made chocolate

Although, they have more of the refined and distinct taste and come with exotic fillings, buyers need to ensure that home-made chocolate manufacturers follow FSSAI standards and regulations and their products carry proper labeling with information about ingredients

By Dr. Saurabh Arora

Home-made chocolates in the unorganized sector do not carry any label information. There is no list of ingredients, so consumers with food allergies must take precautions or avoid eating home-made chocolates that contain unknown ingredients.

Chocolates are best for celebrating happiness as well as for expressing love and gratitude towards our loved ones. The delicately moulded, artistic pieces are not only good to look at but something that most Indians find irresistible. But while you may not mind paying the premium that specialty home-made chocolates command, have you given a thought about how safe these chocolates are to consume?

The home-made chocolate industry comprises the organized as well as unorganized sector. Even in the organized sector, various varieties of chocolate are called home-made simply because they cannot be mass produced. They have to be made in batches and are limited to no more than a few kilograms. They are different from the mass-produced industrial chocolates because they have less sweetness and less of a smooth texture. At the same time, they have more of the refined and distinct taste and come with exotic fillings.

However, no one knows if these chocolate makers have a license from the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) and if their manufacturing units or kitchens have been inspected by the health and food inspectors for hygiene and sanitation. Other markers for food safety are whether FSSAI permitted flavours and colors are being used in home-made chocolates as non-permitted additives are a health hazard. So before buying home-made chocolates, ask the seller if they have an FSSAI license or not.

Another food safety norm that comes to mind concerns the ingredients used in home-made chocolates and if they are free from adulteration and contamination. Cocoa is the main ingredient used in making home-made chocolates, followed by dry fruits. Some chocolatiers also use herbs and other fillings of fruits and jams. It is a well-known fact that unless cocoa beans are roasted adequately and handled hygienically, they have the potential to be contaminated with Salmonella spp. bacteria. Other raw materials like milk and eggs also need to be adequately heat-treated and handled hygienically to keep them free from bacterial contamination. Personal hygiene can cause major issues as home-made chocolates are made by hand-dipping. There are other ways that microbial contaminants can be introduced into chocolates and these are from:

- Contaminated ingredients like mouldy dry fruit
- Contaminated and unclean processing equipment and moulds
- Unhygienic handling
- Inappropriate packaging material
- Adulteration can occur from inferior quality milk, sugar or starch used in chocolates
- Cocoa beans, nuts and other ingredients can be contaminated by insects, rodents, and mycotoxins unless stored properly
- If the machinery is not cleaned and washed thoroughly and sanitized it could lead to infestation by insects or microbial contamination

It is quite clear that home-made chocolates carry the risk of contamination, which is a real threat to our health. Since young children consume large quantities of chocolates, it is important to safeguard

CHOCOLATE BRANDS FOCUS ON **HEALTH**

As the Indian confectionery market continues to evolve, strong trends have come to the fore, which are expected to drive and propel the growth potential of the confectionery market and the categories within it. One of the major trends is towards sugar-free, healthy products, and manufacturers are launching innovative products in the segment. With consumers becoming increasingly health-conscious today, they seek health and well-being in everything they consume, including confectionery. Now they are demanding sugar-free candies and chocolates.

Health consciousness has certainly caught the attention of manufacturers, as a result of which , the market is seeing cereal bars being introduced, which are currently amongst the fastest growing category in the Indian confectionery market, even while toffees, candies, caramels and nougat continued to record the fastest growth.

This fast growth in sales is mainly due to the growing popularity of caramels and their growing acceptance as cheaper alternatives to chocolates. Additionally, the increased visibility of caramel brands like Alpenliebe, in modern retail stores and kirana stores, has helped them gain more sales. Another visible trend is that of adult consumers' demand for premium chocolates continues to grow. To tap this segment of consumers, manufacturers of premium chocolates are expanding their brand presence in premium stores such as Brown Tree and other modern stores in urban areas.

Interestingly, gourmet chocolate manufacturers have also made a foray into India's premium chocolate segment. Sales of premium chocolates have been supported further with consumers preferring to gift premium chocolates on festive and celebratory occasions. During the festive season, the confectionery segment generates about 50-70 per cent sales revenue. Till 10 years ago, people believed in gifting traditional Indian sweets or mithais, but now, the younger generation especially believes in gifting chocolates and confectionery products due to their longer shelf life, ease of storage and handling, and also because of healthy options available. Over the years, festive packs of confectionery products have become quite popular among consumers with many shifting from mithai to chocolates and other confectionery gift hampers.

their health. Therefore, chocolate manufacturers should take the utmost care in maintaining high standards of quality. Moreover, standards and regulations must be followed so consumers can be provided with safe chocolates and chocolate products.

Chocolates need to be stored at the right temperature or they can deteriorate in appearance and texture. A crack or a whitish cast or sheen on the chocolate means it has not been stored at the right temperature.

Label information

Home-made chocolates in the unorganized sector do not carry any label information. There is no list of ingredients, so consumers with food allergies must take precautions or avoid eating home-made chocolates that contain unknown ingredients. The packaging in some home-made chocolates has no manufacturing, expiry or best before date. As such, there is no way to know how much of shelf life they have and when they are past their sell-by date. Home-made chocolates in specialty stores usually have a shelf life of only 2 to 3 weeks when kept at room temperature.

Storage at the right temperature

Chocolates need to be stored at the right temperature or they can deteriorate in appearance and texture. A crack or a whitish cast or sheen on the chocolate means it has not been stored at the right temperature. Home-made chocolates can also develop moulds and therefore they need to be visually inspected before you buy them. Since the chocolates are likely to be wrapped, it is difficult to detect the flaw before you open the covering.

To sum up, enjoy your home-made chocolates and gift them by all means but ensure that you buy them only from a licensed outlet so you do not fall prey to health concerns. **PG**

The writer is founder of Food Safety Helpline www.foodsafetyhelpline.com and has a number of national and international research publications and patents to his credit.

Chocolate

New flavours of chocolate gifting

The appetite for chocolate in India hasn't stopped expanding and consumers today have more exposure to chocolate products than ever before. Also, the demand for specific ranges of chocolate products has intensified.

By Masud Samandari

Working with chocolate is now considered both a science and an art, requiring a mastery of the look and feel of chocolate as well as a fine-tuned appreciation of the taste, texture, and compatibility of chocolate with a range of different ingredients.

When we don't have the words, chocolate can speak volumes," it was once said. The sentiment rings so true, especially during the festive season in India. Cacao seeds, the main ingredient in chocolate, were once used as currency in Mexico as their value was perceived to be very high. It was popularly known as the "Food of the Gods". Chocolate has been a culinary wonder for thousands of years. In fact, cold chocolate drinks and other cacao-based delicacies were a part of the culinary heritage even way back in 1500 BC. The use of this aphrodisiac has been perfected over the years. Working with chocolate is now considered both a science and an art, requiring a mastery of the look and feel of chocolate as well as a fine-tuned appreciation of the taste, texture, and compatibility of chocolate with a range of different ingredients, from coffee in cakes to the use of berries in a number of cakes and tarts.

The appetite for chocolate in India hasn't stopped expanding. A growing number of Indians with increased disposable income have more exposure to chocolate products than ever before. Also, the demand for specific ranges of chocolate products has intensified. Dark chocolate, although bitter, is often considered

INDIA AMONG FASTEST GROWING CHOCOLATE MARKETS

While the global chocolate confectionery market posts slow growth, new research from global market intelligence agency Mintel reveals that India is defying the odds. Indeed, India is now one of the world's fastest growing chocolate confectionery markets.

Sales of chocolate confectionery in retail markets grew by 13% between 2015 and 2016 in India, followed by Poland which saw sales growth of 2%. In comparison to the rest of the world, Poland and India were the only two markets to see sales of chocolate grow in 2016, with sales in the United States (US), United Kingdom (UK), Germany and France flat over this period, while sales fell in Russia (-2%), Brazil (-6%), and China (-6%).

Data from Mintel also reveals that India's chocolate confectionery market has had a strong CAGR (compound annual growth rate) of 19.9%, in retail market value, between 2011 and 2015, and is expected to grow at a CAGR of 20.6% from 2016 to 2020.

When it comes to chocolate confectionery consumption (volume sales), it seems India is a nation of chocolate lovers. Mintel research reveals that India consumed 228 thousand tonnes worth of chocolate in 2016. Other markets that have consumed in excess of 200,000 tonnes of chocolate last year include France (251 thousand tonnes), Brazil (236 thousand tonnes), and China (202 thousand tonnes). Meanwhile, Australia and Indonesia consumed 95 thousand tonnes and 94 thousand tonnes worth of chocolate in 2016 (respectively). The US and the UK, on the other hand, consumed 1.3 million tonnes and 555 thousand tonnes of chocolate (respectively).

Marcia Mogelonsky, Director of Insight, Mintel Food and Drink, says: "Chocolate confectionery had an uneven year in 2016. Volume sales in developed markets remained flat, while the picture was a bit brighter in emerging markets, like India, where sales generally fared better. Our research indicates that consumers in India believe chocolate to be beneficial and convenient – seemingly the key reasons behind the growth of the country's chocolate confectionery market both in value and volume."

Indeed, according to a consumer study by Mintel, 42% of Indian consumers have eaten sweet or sugary snacks (other than biscuits) like chocolates and cakes between April and June 2016, rising to 53% of consumers aged 18 to 24. On the benefits of chocolates, Mintel research reveals over two in five Indian consumers (44%) find sweet or sugary snacks like chocolates and cakes to be healthy, while over one in three (35%) Indians believe these snacks provide them with energy.

Meanwhile, as many as one in two (49%) Indian consumers associate sweet or sugary snacks like

chocolates with convenience. Data from Mintel also reveals 43% of Indians consume sweet or sugary snacks like chocolate and cake between lunch and dinner, with over half (53%) of Indian consumers reporting that they tend to snack in between meals because they get hungry.

Overall, global launch activity in the confectionery category was somewhat restrained in 2016. The number of chocolate confectionery launches globally grew by just 3% between 2015 and 2016, with seasonal chocolate launches accounting for one quarter (25%) of global chocolate new product launches. This was the biggest area of chocolate new product development (NPD) in 2016, according to Mintel Global New Products Database (GNPD).

"Our research shows that seasonal chocolate tops all chocolate new product development, a testament to the popularity of seasonal treats among consumers across the globe. This reflects the fact that these products are typically bought to help celebrate holidays or special occasions. With this in mind, seasonal chocolate is somewhat immune to recessionary pressures as these products are bought on an occasional basis."

Given the fact that chocolate lovers have a heart, interest in ethical products remains relatively strong, with 17% of new products claiming some sort of "ethical-human" positioning, which could include fair trade, Rainforest Alliance, or some other independent "bean-to-bar" certification. Although, still a small part of the category, accounting for less than 6% of global new product introductions in 2016, launches of chocolate confectionery with an organic claim increased 6% between 2014 and 2016.

Finally, Mintel research shows that consumer demand is likely to be the major impetus for more conversion to organic offerings. In India, as many as 19% of Indian consumers would like to see a wider variety of natural snacks that have no additives or preservatives, for instance.

"Providing organic cocoa is proving to be a challenge for the industry. In order to satisfy the growing demand, it will become necessary for more cocoa growers to switch to organic farming methods. As interest in healthy sweets continues to rise, the availability of chocolate that offers organic or all natural positioning will be desirable as consumers look for better-for-you options." Marcia concludes.

to be finer than its creamier milk variant, or its sweeter white alternative. Health benefit is one of the major catalyst for increasing the demand and changing consumer choices as dark chocolate is a powerful source of antioxidants and lowers the risk of heart disease. Unlike its milk and white cousins, it isn't sweet and has a much lower calorie count, an enticing fact for the ever-increasing health-conscious population. Chocolate is also an environment-sensitive product; heat and humidity can have devastating effects on it. Handling it, therefore, requires more care and attention than other gifting products, making for a more praiseworthy gift.

As the country prepares for Diwali, some gifting trends have started to change. The shift from traditional mithai as gifts has started to consolidate; moreover, given our current globalized world, chocolate gifting ideas from abroad often percolate down and influence people's minds. For example, festive colors for decorating chocolate are becoming more popular so as to celebrate in style and with a touch of sophistication. Macarons, a sweet French delicacy, have also seen their popularity grow. The chocolate variants of these are often instant bestsellers. With a more well-travelled clientele, who will only settle for the highest quality, bakeries need to provide top quality macarons.

Another rising trend is chocolate-coated nuts and dry fruits; from pistachios and almonds to cranberries and even more exotic variants such as Wasabi, these make for a varyingly colorful gift, and refined, crunchy snacks for the festive season. One of the great things about chocolate, after all, is its versatility and how it combines with an array of different textures, aromas and tastes, allowing it to complement other ingredients with its earthy tones, without overpowering the other components. **PG**

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The writer is promoter and member of the founding family of L'Opéra. He is passionate about Food & Beverage industry. His multicultural background and exposure to several culinary cultures has increased his appreciation for the diversity of food.

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Taste Sensation

Increasingly sophisticated palates are making grocers rethink the beer and wine category.

By Randy Hofbauer

Although U.S. consumers continue to enjoy beer and wine as frequently as always in the comfort of their homes or in bars, at-home consumption clearly rules. Between 66 percent and 76 percent of consumers drink beer, wine or spirits at home at least once per week, compared with the 23 percent to 26 percent who go out to imbibe once per week, according to a new report from Chicago-based IRI.

There's a certain amount of confusion in the aisles, however: Beer, wine and spirits shoppers make in-store shopping trips more than once per week, and 40 percent of buyers walk in undecided as to what product to purchase. This suggests that grocers have an opportunity to take stronger control over the category to help grow overall sales.

> **In 2017, the beer industry has the opportunity to win by refocusing and executing on category management fundamentals.**
>
> — **Tim Burke**
> MillerCoors

All About Lifestyle

Beer is all about matching lifestyles. And lifestyle trends are forcing manufacturers and retailers alike to rethink their approach to managing the beer category.

Tim Burke, director of category solutions at Chicago-based brewer MillerCoors, notes that consumers have increasingly sophisticated palates, enjoying more upscale and craft offerings. This growth in sophistication shows that more than ever, the customer truly is king.

"In 2017, the beer industry has the opportunity to win by refocusing and executing on category management fundamentals like balanced assortment discipline, price gap management and impactful displays to delight our shoppers," he says. "Shoppers' expectations are evolving and intensifying, their occasions and lifestyle needs are changing, they have more access at their fingertips, and they are redefining their demands for value. So we need to amplify our displays, simplify and improve shopability, and ensure we are delivering value across our portfolio of beer."

Vikas Sayal, senior director of commercial marketing with White Plains, N.Y.-based brewer Heineken USA, also notices such consumer trends, adding to them the growing relevance of lighter options for consumers focused on healthy living, and Mexican brews to match the growing prevalence of Hispanic culture.

Of course, while speaking these consumers' language is key to better reaching them, it's also critical for grocers and suppliers to speak the same language with one another. Sayal stresses the importance of doing so when aligning a joint business plan — the primary step to becoming shopper-centric.

"This means understanding their organization's key pillars, strategy, leadership team needs, and coming to them with customer- and shopper-focused solutions that increase traffic and cross-category purchases," he explains.

For the shopper, the best thing grocers and their supplier partners can do is work together to communicate with shoppers more effectively via a true path to purchase: pre-store, in-store and post-purchase.

"Part of this is through in-store, online and digital means," Sayal says. "The other is seeking to understand our shoppers' attitudes and behaviors in everything we do by talking directly to them."

Appealing to the shopper involves such methods as developing platforms that attract by consumption occasion, segmentation according to consumer type and lifestyle, and reinventing the beer aisle via lighting, space usage, signage, educational engagement, and more, all to better grab shopper attention. This can't be a one-size-fits-all approach, as what works for one grocer may not for another.

As for tools to aid in managing the beer category, Burke notes that MillerCoors is leveraging several new ones alongside a blend of traditional and nontraditional research with its retailer partners. These include virtual testing, receipt capture, in-store behavioral advances and geo-locating.

A Balancing Act

Much like beer, wine has both large-scale producers and smaller operators in the mix.

"The challenge is to balance offerings from the larger corporate entities, as well as extremely small operations, which only make tiny amounts of wine," but can offer more exciting bottlings, says Scott

Atkinson, wine consultant for Western Supermarkets, a Birmingham, Ala.-based independent chain that won "Best Wine Shop" in Birmingham magazine's 2016 Best of Birmingham awards.

It's about balancing not just the big with the small, but also the old with the new.

"Those values from the familiar Italy, Spain and France, as well as relative up-and-comers such as Portugal, South Africa, Greece and even Slovenia ... continue to engage the consumer," Atkinson says.

Additionally, grocers are finding that they're having to work with suppliers to stock and promote sparkling wines more often during the year than just around holidays, as sparkling wine is now more of a year-round treat. And not just any sparkling wines: Atkinson stresses that his customers are getting more selective and savvy about the types of sparkling wines they want, pushing his company to widen selection in this segment. Sales of sparkling Prosecco wine have been climbing for a few years, but it's serving as a gateway to the entire sparkling wine category, which includes such items as Spain's cava.

Rosé wines, too, are seeing their status rise as seasonal purchases begin to fade. Atkinson recalls when customers wanted dry rosés only during hotter months: His team would start "Rosé Season" in the spring, with stock diminishing through Thanksgiving.

"We still carry more rosé wines during warmer weather, but consumer demand has led us to maintain a strong and diverse core of rosé wines from various geographies and price points," he says.

Curtis Mann, Raley's director of wine, beer and spirits, also sees rosé's popularity gaining at the West Sacramento, Calif.-based grocer, which Wine Enthusiast magazine recently named Wine Retailer of the Year. He warns, however, that the wine type also is seeing issues with quality inconsistency.

But no matter what the selection, it's a grocer's ability to listen and respond that determines its success in wine. Raley's prides itself — and has built its award-winning wine department — on analyzing data to understand trends and optimize in-store sets, looking outside the data to be in front of and even create trends, and being generally active on social and other forms of local media to educate consumers about wine. But within its stores, Raley's certified wine stewards lend an ear and answer questions to help customers find their perfect wine.

Listening and responding also helped Western Markets grow its renowned wine department. Atkinson notes that his team works hard to listen to requests from customers, even intuiting what the customer doesn't say but might truly mean.

"We often help our customers," he says, "by asking four or five — or more — questions for every question they ask us." **PG**

For more about beer and wine category management, visit progressivegrocer.com/beerwinecatmanextra.

"The challenge is to balance offerings from the larger corporate entities, as well as extremely small operations.

— Scott Atkinson
Western Supermarkets

Is In-store Digital Ready for Prime Time?

Consumer-facing tech garners mixed reviews.

By John Karolefski

The supermarket setting is gradually becoming more digitized, with beacons, video screens, and at-shelf electronic pricing. Although deployment of consumer-facing technology is generally considered modest in grocery stores across the country, there's enough of a track record to study its early performance.

What's the report card?

Rajeev Sharma, president of VideoMining Corp., a State College, Pa.-based provider of in-store behavior analytics, believes that many of the digital technologies deployed in supermarkets are still in their early phases, so the net impact on the shopping experience is minimal. So far, however, in-store digital signage has been used effectively by several retailers to improve the shopper experience, while at-shelf signage and electronic pricing are undergoing pilot testing by many retailers, with some positive initial results, Sharma adds.

Evaluating effectiveness is challenging because the purpose of such technologies is often unclear, according to David Shukri, "retail champion" at Mindtree, a Warren, N.J.-based IT services and consulting firm.

"Do they help to increase basket spend or support loyalty and retention?" he asks. "We have to be careful as market observers and technology vendors not to overplay the 'wow' factor at a time when an increasingly tech-native population will view something either as business as usual or unnecessary noise."

TAGS, THEY'RE IT
Interactive shelf tags, like these at Kroger's Cold Spring, Ky., store, are emerging as a key component of the in-store digital experience.

Kroger's intent is to provide the best digital experience.

— Brett Bonner
Kroger

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WEIGHING OPTIONS Kroger's Scan, Bag, Go system allows shoppers to input their product prices, including produce.

> **As the hesitation around proximity marketing erodes further and infrastructure evolves, the capabilities become limitless.**
>
> **— Mike Puffer**
> Hello World

Shining Beacons

For his part, Barry Stone, director of marketing at New York-based Digital Social Retail, is more enthusiastic about emerging technologies in grocery stores.

"The latest digital technologies, such as beacons and digital signage screens, have enhanced the consumer's grocery shopping experience by making it easier for customers to be notified of special promotional coupons, and provide an easy way for consumers to navigate grocery stores for specific items," he says. "These tailored technological interactions with the customers result in increasing customer loyalty. The best customer to have is one who keeps coming back."

To illustrate his opinion, Stone points to an excerpt from an article in Forbes magazine that discusses the rising trend of beacon technology: "Beacons — sensors that are embedded throughout a retail store's digital touchpoints like shelves, signs and product displays, and can interact with mobile devices using low-energy Bluetooth signals — will continue to gain momentum in the next 12 months."

Indeed, while beacon technology has yet to be widely deployed in grocery stores, surveys show that about a third of consumers are receptive to receiving in-store notifications from beacons, with the highest concentration among 25- to 30-year-olds, notes Mike Puffer, who leads product strategy at New York-based Hello World, an engagement platform.

"Kroger, Walmart, Whole Foods and Target are among the top grocers and retailers to watch," he asserts. "They have made a significant investment of time, energy and capital into their digital innovation."

For example, Kroger's 55,000-square-foot supermarket in Cold Spring, Ky., 10 miles southeast of its hometown of Cincinnati and a December 2015 PG Store of the Month, serves as a testing lab for the latest in-store technologies, enabling the country's largest traditional grocer to set the standard for how shopper engagement will be conducted in the future.

"We are interested in creating a better shopping experience," asserts Brett Bonner, the retailer's VP of research and development.

To achieve that goal, Kroger has put together a digital ecosystem that blends shopper-facing hardware with sophisticated technology behind the scenes. Here are two of the most promising applications:

Shelf Edge: The center store is outfitted with "smart shelves" in the form of small rectangular tags that display digital prices and ads. There are some 2,000 Edge tags that replace paper tags, eliminating the need for store associates to change them periodically by hand. In the future, the tags may be able to provide nutritional information and motion video, as well as communicate with a shopper's smartphone.

Scan, Bag, Go: At the entrance of the store, customers are greeted by a Scan, Bag, Go kiosk loaded with hand-held scanners to use while shopping. They can scan and bag products, including fruits and vegetables in the produce department. When finished, they scan a special barcode on a terminal at the front of the store that transfers their order to the checkout.

"We're still in the test-and-learn phase," notes Bonner. "There's a lot we learned in this store, and we are still learning. Kroger's intent is to provide the best digital experience."

Meanwhile, Dollar General, in partnership with Coca-Cola and Hello World, has deployed beacons in 13,000 store locations to provide a unique experience and deliver value for both the shopper and the retailer. Shoppers who download the store's app and opt into the program receive messaging and/or coupon offers triggered by the shoppers' proximity to in-store beacons.

The messaging encourages Coca-Cola purchases when shoppers are in certain locations, such as near a Coke beverage display, and aims to increase basket size. Not only has this solution been rolled out nationally, but Goodlettsville, Tenn.-based Dollar General continues to evolve and refine it. Several promotional strategies and individual marketing content tied to the initiative have been advanced throughout the year, tying into key shopping periods such as holidays.

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> **Retailers should first ask the question, 'Does this technology make shopping easier for my customers, or is this technology for technology's sake?**
>
> **— Mark Heckman**
> Consultant

"As the hesitation around proximity marketing erodes further and infrastructure evolves, the capabilities become limitless," explains Hello World's Puffer. "Consider a retailer's ability to shift traffic from the perimeter and drive center store sales by directing users to the shelves and sections of the store to find the items on their wish lists. Think about the ability to highlight a product at shelf when a user has identified it as an item on their list, when the consumer nears that shelf location. These experiences are being experimented with today."

STRIP MINING
Ways to get shoppers out of the store more quickly include paying for groceries from a hand-held device.

FUTURE IN THE PHYSICAL

Investing in cutting-edge in-store technology can be intimidating for grocers, especially when many are focusing more on e-commerce expansion as part of an omnichannel survival strategy. It should never be overlooked, however.

Although digital retail is capturing headlines, physical stores remain critical, according to "On Solid Ground: Brick-and-Mortar Is the Foundation of Omnichannel Retailing," a July 2014 report from Chicago-based consultancy A.T. Kearney. Some 90 percent of all retail sales are transacted in stores, and 95 percent of them are captured by retailers with a brick-and-mortar presence.

"Stores provide consumers with a sensory experience that allows them to touch and feel products, immerse in brand experiences, and engage with sales associates who provide tips and reaffirm shopper enthusiasm for their new purchases," A.T. Kearney says.

Additionally, two-thirds of consumers who purchase online use the store before or after their transactions. In these cases, the store makes a significant contribution to converting the sale, even though the transaction eventually is registered online.

"The debate should not be a question of digital or physical," A.T. Kearney notes. "Successful retailers understand how each customer touchpoint adds value ... and develop omnichannel strategies — with stores as the foundation — that maximize customer satisfaction with profitability."

—Randy Hofbauer

According to Digital Social Retail's Stone, beacons enable retailers to do the following:

- Track the location of customers as they enter the store, browse and complete their shopping
- See what aisles customers are spending the most time in while in the store
- Understand how many customers open the push notifications, redeem coupons or sign up for loyalty reward programs
- Conduct customer surveys to instantly obtain valuable customer feedback and data on their shopping experience

Moving Forward

Obviously, there are plenty of grocery stores without any of these new in-store technologies. What's the thinking of these retailers? Why don't they invest?

"Many grocery stores may not be employing this type of technology yet due to a lack of understanding of how beacons or digital signage can increase store revenue and foot traffic," Stone suggests. "Pushing coupons directly to a consumer's mobile device can increase impulse buys by 19 percent, says Nielsen Media Research."

Consultant Mark Heckman believes that retailer reluctance can be traced to the nature of the technology. For example, non-customer-facing technology that works behind the scenes to reduce out-of-stocks, shorten checkout lines, and better manage merchandising and inventory isn't optional for long-term success. Retailers must invest in these to compete.

"But customer-facing technology such as in-store touchscreens and the emerging locational targeting technology of beacons and WiFi are another story," he's quick to add. "Retailers should first ask the question, 'Does this technology make shopping easier for my customers, or is this technology for technology's sake?'"

VideoMining's Sharma surmises that some retailers are naturally cautious about investing in technologies that are as yet unproven. That could be a mistake, however.

"I do think they should invest in new in-store technologies, because it would be a huge competitive disadvantage to be a slow adapter," he cautions, "especially as the younger generation of shoppers come into their stores expecting access to some of the new technologies and applications that they see and use in other stores and channels.

"Grocery stores are now beginning to feel the impact of competition from online retailers," continues Sharma. "In-store digital technologies provide new ways to begin to counter those challenges, along with good omnichannel strategies." **PG**

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Canned mushrooms for cooking

Neo Foods, specializing in pickled vegetables and fruits, has added button mushrooms and pieces & stems mushrooms products under its canned food range. These canned mushrooms have been launched in 400 gm and 800 gm easy open cans. Mushrooms are rich in vitamins and minerals and used extensively in cooking many cuisines like Chinese, Korean, European, and Japanese. They are also used as garnish in meals. Mushrooms. Neo canned mushrooms are available at all the leading online and offline retail outlets across the country.

Instant dhokla mix

Home-grown food brand Mother's Recipe has recently added Mom's Style Dhokla to its instant mixes portfolio. This instant mix needs only a few minutes to prepare, and tastes similar to the homemade dhokla. This nutritious snack option is available in two variants such as Khaman Dhokla and Khatta Dhokla packed in 200 gm pouches and are priced Rs. 45 and Rs. 42 respectively. These packs are available at leading retail outlets and online portals.

Organic quinoa by El Olivo

El Olivo Organic Quinoa is grown in Peru, South America, where quinoa originates. Quinoa is naturally gluten-free and its versatile nature makes it easy to use in a variety of cuisines. Try using El Olivo organic quinoa to put your own spin on traditional Indian dishes such as vegetable pulao, upma and even idlis. It can also be used in breakfast porridge, soups and salads, served with grilled meat and fish, or even milled into flour to make homemade quinoa pasta, chapatis and baked goods. Choose from a selection of El Olivo organic red, black and white quinoa, and transform your diet today! Available online at olivetreetrading.com and select retail stores across India.

Premium festive gifting

Leading French pastry and bakery chain Lopera has recently launched a whole new range of luxury gift boxes and hampers with new festive confections such as Dragées, which are chocolate-coated nuts, dried fruits and coffee beans. The range includes Hazelnuts, Pistachios, Almonds, Wasabi Peas, Raisins, Cranberries, etc. These confections come in four pack sizes and the prices start from Rs. 500. Besides, these are available at all Lopera outlets.

Monsoon brand basmati rice

Kohinoor Foods has launched a full range of premium basmati rice under brand Monsoon which, apart from its top of the range quality, comes with a unique packaging design. The company – one of the oldest food companies in India with over four decades of operations – is a trusted brand globally. Its vision is to bring authentic Indian flavors to its customers and be among the most admired food brands globally. "Customers across the globe trust our brand and have helped us to grow to where we are today. We have a presence in over 65 countries and are a household name in many," says Puneet Mahajan, VP, Marketing, Kohinoor Foods Ltd.

Nachos festive hampers

Cornitos, from the house of Greendot Health Foods Pvt Ltd, has launched Nachos Fiesta - a premium gift pack for the festive season. Nachos Fiesta gift pack contains Salsa 4 in 1 tray, two 150 gm and two 60 gm Nacho Crisps packs, each in different flavours. These nacho crisps are gluten-free, zero cholesterol, zero trans fats and are made from non GMO corn and cooked in healthy corn oil. Corn is a good source of fiber and has digestive benefits, which make for a healthy snack choice. Available at all leading retail outlets across India. This festive pack is priced at Rs. 350 for a 620 gm pack.

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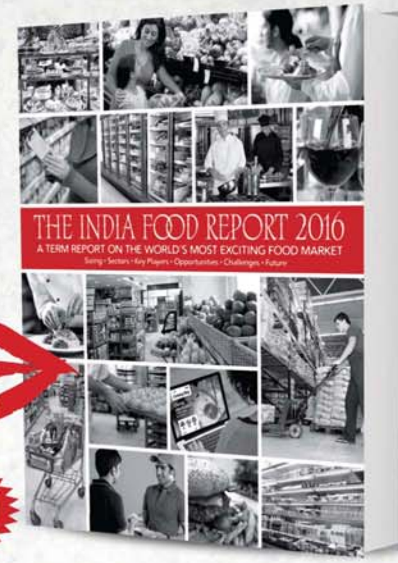

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Column

Consumers' retail therapy moving online

In these hyper-competitive times, brick and mortar retailers, including those in the food and grocery domain, continue searching for new ways to keep growing across the country. The one thing that they should take special note of is to understand and respond to the changing habits and behaviors of their customers. Retailers should take into account the consumers' new-found preference for online shopping, mobile phone ordering, emerging tastes for consumables like electronic gadgets, consumer durables, apparel, home appliances and also their gifting choices on festive occasions such as Diwali. According to industry estimates, retail sales in the run up to Diwali this year will likely touch Rs. 30,000 crore compared with Rs. 22,000 crore last year.

A survey conducted in 10 cities – Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad, Chennai, Bangalore, Chandigarh and Dehradun – has revealed that online shopping in India is fast catching on, not just in the larger metros but also in tier II and tier III cities. The respondents in the survey included 350 professionals – officers and executives across various industry sectors, including manufacturing, real estate, automobile, health care, retail, hospitality, among others.

The findings of the survey indicate that cities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru are the leaders in terms of retail sales. But there is also a huge surge of interest from tier II and tier III cities like Pune, Gurgaon, Noida, Chandigarh, Nagpur, Indore, Coimbatore, Jaipur and Vishakhapatnam. Retail sales in these cities have increased by 60-65 per cent year-on-year, points out the survey.

The findings highlight that 35 per cent of regular shoppers are in the 18-25 age group; 55 per cent in 26-35; 8 per cent in 36-45; and 2 per cent in the age group 45-60. About 65 per cent of online shoppers are males as against 35 per cent females. As per the report, men and women between the age group 25 and 34 years shop online the most during the festive season.

According to the survey findings, most products bought and sold through online range from mobile phones (78 per cent), electronic gadgets (72 per cent), consumer durables (69 per cent), gift articles (58 per cent), accessories (56 per cent), apparel (49 per cent) and home appliances (45 per cent).

Another interesting find from the survey says that during the festive season, on-ground shopping has taken a back seat. There are various reasons for this trend: an evolving and convenience seeking lifestyle, lack of time, being away from home for work, nuclear families, etc. That they have brought about a change in the festive shopping methods is for sure. About 65 per cent of Delhi-ites have expressed their preference for online shopping over regular shopping this year. With a plethora of attractive deals available online than those found in brick-and-mortar stores, along with the advantage of free shipping at the press of a "click" option, it is really a no brainer why shoppers in crowded metros prefer to buy online than waste time driving down to the stores through clogged traffic.

No wonder that e-commerce sales has grown five-fold as compared to the sales last year. More often than not, the prices of branded apparels, accessories, jewelry, gifts, etc, are more competitive on online shopping platforms. Also, there is the added advantage of doorstep delivery thrown into the package.

Brick-and-mortar retailers must start growing their own online platforms to cater to the customers of tomorrow. It is a sure way to consolidate and retain their customers. **PG**

The author has over 30 years of learnings and winning experience with Food Retail, New concept/ brands, FMCG and Organised Retail. Currently he heads Dubai Overseas Trade office in India and is on the Board of Skill Development – SME for Retail – besides also advising on international food retailing in India. He is reachable at rakeshgambhir@imagesgroup.in

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IMAGES Most Admired Category Performer of the Year
For Category Heads / Managers in the following categories
- Staples
- Processed Food & Savories
- Beverages & Confectionery
- Fresh Foods - Fruits and Vegetable
- Grocery - Non Food
- Frozen & Ready to Eat
- International Foods
- Meat Fish & Live Stocks
- Tobacco & Liquor
- Dairy

IMAGES Most Admired Food & Grocery Professional of the Year

IMAGES Most Admired Food & Grocery Retailer of the Year
Chains Stores:
- Large Format Chains
- Supermarket Chains – National & Regional
- Specialty Stores
- Convenience Stores
- Multiple Formats

IMAGES Most Admired Independent Retailer of the Year
North / East / West / South

IMAGES Awards for Excellence in Operations
- Effective Technology Application
- Supply Chain Management
- Human Resource Policies & Initiatives
- Marketing, Consumer Promotions
- Customer Service

IMAGES Most Admired Brand - Retailer Partnership of the Year
(Live Presentation to Jury)

IMAGES FOOD SERVICE AWARDS

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Chain of the Year
- QSR: Indian Origin - North/East/ West/South
- QSR: Foreign Origin
- Cafes & Juice Bars
- Ice-cream & Dessert Parlours
- Fine Dining
- Casual Dining
- Pubs & Bars

IMAGES Most Admired Restaurant of the Year: (One Specific Outlet)
- QSR: Indian Origin - North/East/ West/South
- QSR: Foreign Origin
- Cafes & Juice Bars
- Ice-cream & Dessert Parlours
- Fine Dining
- Casual Dining
- Pubs & Bars

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Outlet Launch of the Year

IMAGES Most Admired Food Court Operator of the Year

IMAGES Most Admired Food Court of the Year (One Specific Food Court)

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Chain of The Year

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Group of the Year

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Personality of the Year

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Professional of the Year (Entrepreneurs, Chefs, Buying/ Operations)

IMAGES Awards for Excellence in Operations
- Effective Technology Adoption
- Supply Chain Management
- F & B Quality & Safety
- Menu Planning
- Marketing, Promotions
- Customer Service

IMAGES Most Admired Food Service Retail Innovation of the Year
(Live Presentation to Jury)

IMAGES AWARDS FOR FOOD STARTUPS, ENABLERS & INNOVATIONS

IMAGES Most Admired Startup
- Food & Grocery Retail
- Food Service

IMAGES Most Admired Startup Innovations
- Food Production, Display & Presentation
- Food Ordering, Payment & Delivery

IMAGES Most Admired Food Startup Enabler

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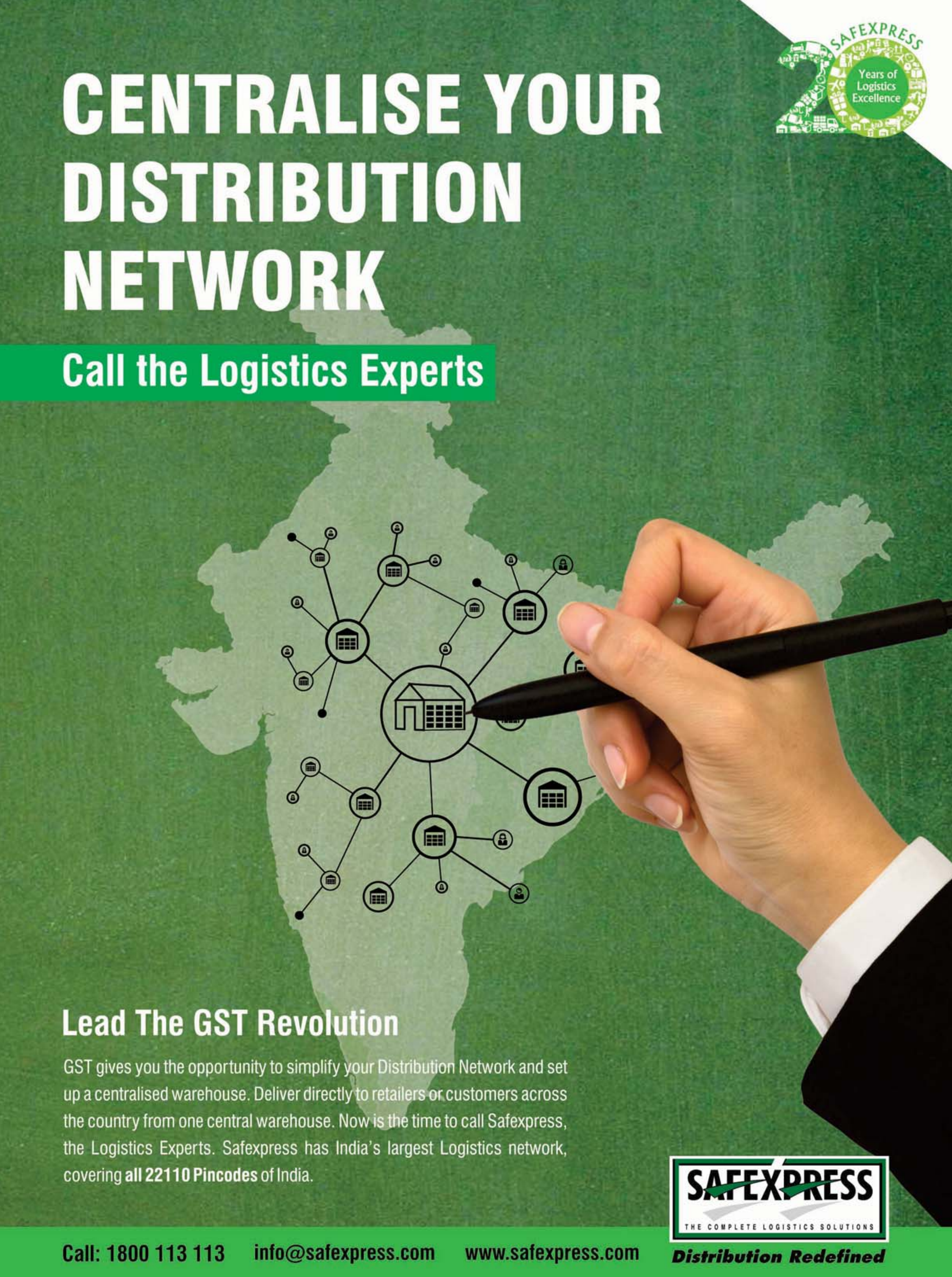
Awards date and venue are subject to change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