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Future of Businesses

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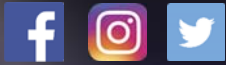


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NEW RETAIL:

Using Data Technology for
Seamless Engagement Between
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As technology and consumers evolve, the retail sector is racing against time to keep pace. The industry, today, is all about innovations – innovating in a way that consumers convert into loyalists. Retail and technology go hand in hand, retail dependent on technology so completely that success without it in the field is a tough target to achieve. And the key to all innovation leading to great consumer experience – personalisation. Personalisation refers to customising the experience of buying to the very last detail for the benefit of the shoppers, keeping every demand and requirement in mind, serving them exactly what they want, in the colours, sizes and portions they require. As the boundary between offline and online commerce disappears as retailers focus on fulfilling the personalised needs of each customer, a fresh version of retail is taking place, a retail which is far beyond the scope of Omnichannel and Phygital. It is 'New Retail' and this is the concept the May edition of IMAGES Retail explores in its lead story. 'New Retail' is a concept coined by retailer extraordinaire, Jack Ma, Alibaba's Founder. The concept works on the theory that no two physical consumers are the same and that the physical world will become a real-time manifestation of users' implicit as well as explicit commercial desires – in simpler terms, the supreme integration of offline and online commerce leading to extraordinary consumer experiences. Ma says, New Retail will transform the industry beyond imagination.

The issue talks about how New Retail works, with case studies and how the Indian market can adapt it in its context. The edition also brings an exclusive feature on the foodservice industry, which is fast changing and getting more and more competitive by the day. The feature highlights expert opinions and views from both technical and investment angles. Finally, the edition continues to bring readers a round-up of India Fashion Forum 2019, which was held on March 27 and 28 in Mumbai. Check out some notable insights and analyses from the thinkers and futurists of the Indian Fashion Retail industry who attended it in large numbers.

As always, we hope you find this issue informed and beneficial.



Amitabh Taneja

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New Retail: Using Data Technology for Seamless Engagement Between the Online & Offline Worlds

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Fresh Funding Leads to Expansion in Indian Retail Sector

New e-commerce policies, partnerships, investments, funding and acquisitions made headlines as big brands continued to make profits. Here's a look at some of the major activities in the retail sector in the last month...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

>RAYMOND Q4 NET UP 24.2 PC AT ₹67.70 CRORE

Diversified firm Raymond Ltd Tuesday reported a 24.26 percent rise in consolidated net profit at ₹67.70 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2019. The company had posted a net profit of ₹54.48 crore in the January-March period a year ago, Raymond said in a BSE filing.

According to a PTI report: Its total income during the period under review stood at ₹1,837.11 crore, up 10.99 percent, as against ₹1,655.12 crore in the corresponding quarter last fiscal. Raymond's total expenses were at ₹1,742.79 crore as against ₹1,578.96 crore in the year-ago period, up 10.37 percent. For the 2018-19 financial year, Raymond net profit was ₹174.77 crore as against ₹141.55 crore in FY 2017-18. Its total income came in at ₹6,707.65 crore in 2018-19, up 11.33 per cent, as against ₹6,024.91 crore in the previous fiscal.

Raymond

Meanwhile, in a separate filing, Raymond informed BSE that its board in a meeting held on Tuesday recommended a dividend of 30 percent on the equity share capital, which is ₹3 per equity share for the financial year 2018-19.

>FUTURE LIFESTYLE FASHION Q4 NET UP 40 PC TO ₹36.4 CRORE

Future Lifestyle Fashion (FLFL), part of Kishore Biyani-led Future Group, has reported a 40.4 percent increase in quarterly net profit helped by overall sales volume that rose 20 percent.

According to a PTI report: For the

quarter ended March, net profit stood at ₹36.4 crore while net sales grew 30 percent to ₹1,281 crore, helped by power brands and new Brand Factory stores. Same store sales growth grew 9 percent while EBIDTA margin dropped 80 basis points at 9.2 percent during the fourth quarter.

FLF FUTURE LIFESTYLE FASHIONS

“Revenue share of discounted chain Brand Factory rose from 27 percent to 35 percent in Q4 that impacted absolute EBIDTA margin. FLF business crossed ₹6,000 crore gross revenue milestone in 2018-19,” the company said in an investor presentation.

>MYNTRA ROPES IN VIRAT, ANUSHKA AS OFFICIAL BRAND AMBASSADORS

Star couple Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma have been roped in as the first official brand ambassadors of Flipkart-owned e-commerce platform, Myntra. Its campaign 'Go Myntra-la-la' brings alive the joyful experience of shopping and kicks-off with an ad film starring the star couple, read a statement.

Amar Nagaram, Head at Myntra-Jabong, said, "The association of Bollywood and sports with fashion needs no introduction and hence having Virat and Anushka as the face of this new campaign will enable us to build strong brand salience and establish the joy and convenience of shopping on Myntra."

>BIGBASKET TO INVEST US\$ 100 MILLION TO STRENGTHEN SUPPLY CHAIN

Alibaba-backed company BigBasket is pumping in US\$ 100 million (about ₹698 crore) to strengthen its supply chain by setting up vending machines and smaller distribution centres across various cities it operates in.

According to a PTI report, The online grocery platform — which is registered as Supermarket Grocery Supplies — had recently raised US\$ 150 million in funding, led by Mirae Asset-Naver Asia Growth Fund, CDC Group and Alibaba Group. Founded in 2011, BigBasket operates



in 25 Indian cities. It plans to utilise the proceeds of this fund raising — which has placed the Bengaluru-based company in the unicorn club (companies with valuation of US\$ 1 billion and above) — to further penetrate into existing markets with more investments in the first mile, scaling-up of its supply chain and for developing new re-seller channels.

"We want to enable two-hour delivery in top 10 cities that we operate in by July

this year. For that, we have been investing in strengthening our distribution centres. We have 18 large and 80 smaller distribution centres together with our re-sellers and this will be ramped to 20 large and 100 smaller ones by June this year. This move will help BigBasket reduce delivery time and ensure quality of dairy and fresh produce," added Vipul Parekh, Co-founder, BigBasket told PTI.

The company expects its capital expenditure towards these initiatives to be about US\$ 100 million this year.

>DABUR'S PROFIT FALLS 6.4 PC YOY TO ₹371.49 CRORE IN MARCH QUARTER

Homegrown FMCG major Dabur India Ltd on Thursday reported a fall of 6.46 percent in consolidated net profit to ₹371.49 crore for the fourth quarter ended March 2019. The company had posted a net profit of ₹397.18 crore in the January-March quarter a year ago, Dabur India said in a BSE filing.



According to a PTI report: Its total income stood at ₹2,194.25 crore, a rise of 4.18 percent as compared with ₹2,106.15 crore of the year-ago quarter. Dabur's total expense was ₹1,729.59 crore as against ₹1,603.56 crore a year ago, up 7.85 percent. Revenue from the firm's consumer care business rose 6.62 percent to ₹1,788.56 crore during the quarter, against ₹1,677.43 crore in the March 2018 quarter. Its food business stood fell 4.88 percent to ₹279.07 crore in January-March 2019 as compared with ₹293.40 crore in the year-ago period, while the company's retail business rose 12.80 percent to ₹31.46 crore from ₹27.89 crore a year ago. For the entire financial year 2018-19, Dabur's profit stood at

₹1,446.25 crore as against ₹1,357.74 crore in the previous year. The firm's total income in the last fiscal stood at ₹8,829.22 crore. It was ₹8,053.52 crore in 2017-18.

"Dabur's domestic FMCG business recorded a growth of 13 per cent in 2018-19. The performance of our international business was, however, relatively muted due to a challenging macroeconomic environment," Mohit Malhotra, Chief Executive Officer, Dabur India was quoted by PTI as saying.

>ZOMATO TO SET UP 20 MORE WAREHOUSES BY 2020

Online restaurant guide and food ordering firm Zomato Monday said it will invest around ₹56 crore to set up 20 more warehouses across the country by the end of 2020 under its B2B platform, Hyperpure. According to a PTI report: The company currently has two warehouses — one each in Bengaluru and Delhi — with a combined capacity of 9,000 metric ton (MT) per month.



"We will be adding 20 more warehouses by end of 2020 across the country. To set up a Hyperpure warehouse, the approximate investment is US\$ 400,000 (about ₹2.8 crore). There is a separate cost for operationalising and scaling up. With Hyperpure, the company has been able to disintermediate the supply chain, providing restaurateurs access to fresh, clean, fully-traceable food ingredients," said Gaurav Gupta, Co-founder and COO, Zomato told PTI.

The warehouses would be set up in Delhi, Bengaluru, Mumbai, Pune, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Jaipur, Ahmedabad, Chandigarh, Nagpur, Lucknow, Vadodara, Coimbatore, Kochi, Agra, Goa and Surat.

International Retail Majors Rejig Alliances for Positive Bottom Lines

As online and mobile commerce continues to drive the majority of retail growth across all sectors, international retailers are pursuing the integration of online and offline to create the most convenient and efficient customer experiences...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau



>AMAZON LAUNCHED IN UAE; REPLACES SOUQ.COM

Amazon and Souq recently announced the launch of Amazon.ae, which replaces Souq.com in the UAE nearly two years after the US giant's US \$580 million acquisition of the e-commerce platform. With the launch, shoppers in the UAE can make online purchases through the Amazon app or by visiting the new website, while customers who still use Souq.com will be redirected to the new domain.

According to the website, Amazon.ae will feature over 30 million products from global sellers – five million of which are from Amazon US. Customers will be able to shop in Arabic as well as English and a regional team of 3,600 people will

keep things moving. Amazon.ae brings together the best of Souq's local know-how and Amazon's global retailing experience.

Customers shopping on Amazon.ae will enjoy the same commitment to great prices as on Souq, fast and reliable delivery, and range of convenient



Eric Broder Van Dyke / Shutterstock.com

payment options. For the first time ever at Amazon, customers will have the option of shopping in Arabic on both the Amazon App and the website.

>WALMART PARTNERS WITH KIDBOX TO DELIVER PERSONALISED KIDS FASHION TO DOORSTEPS

Walmart has announced a partnership with KIDBOX to offer Walmart.com customers an exclusive, curated stylebox for kids, with the option to receive seasonally, without a styling fee.

The new Walmart KIDBOX stylebox will offer Walmart.com customers personalized style from more than 120 premium kids' brands, including BCBG,

Butter Super Soft, C&C California and Puma.

The stylebox will include four to five fashion items for US\$ 48 – which is approximately 50 percent off the suggested retail price for the group of bundled items. Walmart customers can order a Walmart KIDBOX stylebox by visiting Walmart.com and completing a short style quiz for their child. KIDBOX stylists use the style quiz to tailor each box based on the child's style preferences, the season and where the child lives, creating a truly personalized selection.



Jonathan Weiss / Shutterstock.com

"We are thrilled to partner with KIDBOX to introduce our first kids' subscription apparel service offering premium fashion brands at a substantial savings," said Denise Incandela, Head of Fashion, Walmart U.S. E-commerce.

The new Walmart KIDBOX stylebox will be available for sizes 0 to 14 for girls and 0 to 16 for boys, and includes a range of items, from sweaters and denim to dresses and graphic t-shirts. Parents can order a box and schedule delivery on demand or sign-up for automatic shipments of up to six boxes a year timed to seasons, back-to-school and holiday. For every Walmart KIDBOX stylebox purchased, KIDBOX will clothe a child in need through its partnership with Delivering Good.

>H&M LAUNCHES ONLINE SHOPPING IN MEXICO

H&M has launched its online operations in Mexico. For the H&M online launch, a local campaign was launched featuring four Mexican talents: Danna Paola (actress and singer), Mario Bautista (singer), Paulina Goto (actress and singer) and Jose Pablo Minor (actor). The campaign shows different characteristic



areas of Mexico City, which also reflect the personality of each of the celebrities involved.

Mexico's shop online will be offering a wide range of collections with exclusive 'online-only' pieces available all year-round, including ladies, men's, teens, kids, plus-size, maternity wear and a complete collection of lingerie, accessories and H&M HOME products.

Features will include scan and find where you can scan the barcode on the price tag of a product in our stores and find all sizes and colors available online.

"We are extremely excited to provide services to our customers 24 hours a day and 7 days a week accessing to our collections. Our online platform provides a unique experience that will be complementing our physical stores," says John Lackner, Mexico's Country Manager.

H&M now offers online shopping in 48 markets.

>BEYONCE PARTNERS WITH ADIDAS; TO RELAUNCH HER BRAND IVY PARK

Grammy Award-winning singer Beyonce Knowles has partnered with global sportswear giant adidas, through which she will re-launch her athleisure brand Ivy Park.

"This is the partnership of a lifetime for me. adidas has had tremendous success in pushing creative boundaries. We share a philosophy that puts creativity, growth and social responsibility at the forefront of business. I look forward to re-launching and expanding Ivy Park on a truly global scale with a proven, dynamic leader," said Beyonce, who will remain the owner of the brand, in a statement.

Beyonce will be a creative partner for the brand, and also develop new signature



footwear and apparel. The partnership will result in the co-creation of exciting new products — from performance to lifestyle. Eric Liedtke, Executive Board Member – Global Brands at adidas, said: "Beyonce is an iconic creator but also a proven business leader, and together, we have the ability to inspire change and empower the next generation of creators."

>TOMMY HILFINGER REVISITS COCA-COLA COLLECTION

Global fashion brand Tommy Hilfinger in collaboration with The Coca-Cola Company has launched the Tommy Jeans Coca-Cola capsule collection. It is a special re-edition of the styles by designer Tommy Hilfinger designed in 1986 to create the first Coca-Cola Clothes collection. The range will be available at select stores worldwide.



"The capsule collection celebrates an iconic milestone in Tommy Hilfinger's history. The collection that we launched in the 1980s was bold, bright, and instantly recognisable. This re-edition builds on the originals, celebrating the optimistic and youthful spirit at the heart of both brands, while adding a modern street-style twist for the next generation," said Avery Baker, Chief Brand Officer, Tommy Hilfinger Global.



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From L to R: **Mukul Bafana**, CEO, Arvind Internet; **Anil Shankar**, CCA & VP - IT, Shoppers Stop; **Deepak Kishanchand**, Head - IT, South Asia & Middle East, Levi Strauss; **Mridumesh Rai**, President, Sara Futura Group; **Rahul Vira**, CEO Skechers South Asia; **Lalit Agarwal**, CMD, V Mart; **Mahadevan Iyer**, SVP - Customer Loyalty & Analytics, and Business Transformation, Lifestyle - Landmark Group; **Pawan Sarda**, Group Head- Digital, Future Group India; **Sanjeev Rao**, Director Sales, Raymond Limited and **Prashant Bhatia**, Managing Partner, Cambridge

Building a Playbook for the Customer of the Future



In a Customer Experience session held at India Fashion Forum 2019 in Mumbai, leaders across the fashion retail industry deliberated re-designing individual 'business systems' to better understand and serve the needs of the new customer...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

The emergence of new channels and technology has resulted in debates on the future of stores and many retailers are stuck on a FOMO treadmill, focusing on their own microcosm, albeit without a clear understanding of the end goal — the customer of the future.

In a Customer Experience session held at **India Fashion Forum 2019** in Mumbai, leaders across the fashion retail industry deliberated re-designing individual 'business systems' to better understand and serve the needs of the new customer. The symposium also addressed novel ways of channel optimisation within businesses and on developing a framework to build a playbook to serve the customer of the future. The session was powered by Omuni, India's largest Omnichannel Retail enablement platform.

Moderated by **Mukul Bafana**, CEO, Arvind Internet, the panel consisted of the following dignitaries from the Indian Fashion Retail Industry:

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- > **Anil Shankar**, CCA & VP - IT, Shoppers Stop
- > **Deepak Kishanchand**, Head - IT, South Asia & Middle East, Levi Strauss
- > **Lalit Agarwal**, CMD, V Mart
- > **Mahadevan Iyer**, SVP - Customer Loyalty & Analytics, and Business Transformation, Lifestyle - Landmark Group
- > **Mridumesh Rai**, President, Sara Futura Group
- > **Pawan Sarada**, Group Head- Digital, Future Group India
- > **Rahul Vira**, CEO Skechers South Asia
- > **Prashant Bhatia**, Managing Partner, Cambridge
- > **Sanjeev Rao**, Director Sales, Raymond Limited

Somewhere in the near future, the retail customer is poised to be the common denominator across brands and retail sectors. The future customer's expectations from a brand will be juxtaposed against his exposure to experiences with various brands across industries. Naturally, it is indispensability for every retail identity to understand the nature of this future customer breed and stay at par with his expectations.

Pawan Sarada started the discussion by saying that the customer's lack of patience fueled by the 'mobile world' is one of the defining characteristics of the future consumer. He is lot more aware yet confused and yearns for assurance. "But we see a huge opportunity in this because this gives brands and retailers immense opportunities to create for customers and provide as a business. Earlier, brands created what the customer could wear, but the tables have turned now. Now the customer demands what we should create. Moving on, this is going to be the trend," he added.

The populace of the smaller towns too are at par with their metro peers when it comes to awareness and expectations. "These consumers are well acquainted with each brand's DNA and based on this does he choose his brand of preference. Their limited purchasing power is an extra appendage for brands catering to this customer because his excitation is seldom influenced by it. Just like his metro dwelling counterparts he expects significant clarity on products and services but communicated in a much simpler manner. This demands retailers to be more transparent, focused and accessible," said **Lalit Agarwal**.



"Earlier, brands created what the customer could wear, but the tables have turned now – now the customer demands what we should create."

– **PAWAN SARDA**, GROUP HEAD-DIGITAL, FUTURE GROUP INDIA



"Small town consumers are well acquainted with each brand's DNA and based on this does he choose his brand of preference."

– **LALIT AGARWAL**, CMD, V MART



"Naturally, customers are today aware and empowered at a global level and this is bringing in huge changes in his behaviour."

– **MRIDUMESH RAI**, PRESIDENT, SARA FUTURA GROUP



"Technology will be instrumental in what the future customer will be loyal towards. The traditional form of loyalty that a customer exhibits is bound to change."

– **ANIL SHANKAR**, CCA & VP-IT, SHOPPERS STOP

Fashion is an ever changing ecosystem -- just as trends change the customer and his expectations does too. While it is hard to predict the future, a retailer has to be agile enough to adopt to the changes. "Technology has, in recent times, created a knowledge revolution dissipating information at everyone's fingertips. Naturally, customers are today aware and empowered at a global level and this is bringing in huge changes in his behaviour. The modern customer is absolutely confident, is content specific and exhibits a growing penchant for luxury," says **Mridumesh Rai**.



“Consumers can programme the bot with all their preferences – right from preferred brands to price brackets.”

– DEEPAK KISHANCHAND, HEAD-IT, SOUTH ASIA & MIDDLE EAST, LEVI STRAUSS.



“In the offline world, we have been very successful in rationalizing our channels and collaborations, like as brands we sell together in MBOs and high streets.”

– MUKUL BAFANA, CEO, ARVIND INTERNET



“Today, a consumer is interacting with brands across industries – from banking, car rentals to food ordering.”

– MAHADEVAN IYER, SVP - CUSTOMER LOYALTY & ANALYTICS, AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION, LIFESTYLE - LANDMARK GROUP



“As a whole, the way India is progressing now, I believe these things will be a part of the retail world in the near future.”

– RAHUL VIRA, CEO, SKECHERS SOUTH ASIA.

Technology: Empowering the Consumer

The retail customer is going to be surrounded by a lot of technology in the coming future. And experts like **Anil Shankar** believes that this technology will be instrumental in what the future customer will be loyal towards. “The traditional form of loyalty that a customer exhibits is bound to change. The consumer’s connect with the brand will be based on how they resonate with the brand. It’s not about the best deal or value anymore, customers now display a lot of modern concerns like a brand’s commitment to ethical production, sustainability, CSR initiatives, etc.,” he says.

According to **Deepak Kishanchand**, just as technology is empowering the customer, brands and retailers will have to stay abreast and bank on technology to offer seamless solutions to their consumers. “Like what I am looking at now is a personal bot that can be programmed with our preferences for the future.

Consumers can programme the bot with all their preferences – right from preferred brands to price brackets. The bot, in turn, will take over the searching part and keep messaging the consumer with relevant preferences – right from their apparel needs to jewellery, footwear and grocery. Considering how every individual is pressed for time in today’s world, this bot will successfully emerge as a personal assistant to the modern digital consumer,” he says.

Today, we live in a world where we have tremendous network effects and there are tremendous collaborations. Considering how connected the future customer is digitally, brands and retailers will have to come up with ways to effectively tap into compliments, collaborations and network effects to create experiences.





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"We may have all the exposure we want and all the facilities for experiences at our disposal but our people are still not ready for it."

- PRASHANT BHATIA, MANAGING DIRECTOR, CAMBRIDGE



"The internet has been a harbinger of change that was hither to unseen, not just in retail but in lifestyle and consumer behaviour too."

- SANJEEV RAO, DIRECTOR SALES, RAYMOND LIMITED

According to **Mahadevan Iyer**, the retail world will also have to concentrate on building ecosystems by integrating data to understand the future consumer. "Today, a consumer is interacting with brands across industries -- from banking, car rentals to food ordering. Now, what level of alliances are we willing to come up with and build an ecosystem is something that depends upon us. We also have to backward integrate with our vendors and partners. This demands a shift of mindset of the entire industry and as retailers we will have to take a leap of faith in our respective capabilities to understand our consumer."

A Super Platform Across Verticals

Globally, the retail fraternity is playing with the idea of a super platform that effectively starts harmonising experiences across categories and retail verticals. Alibaba has been successful in doing it in China and in the US Amazon has been able to increase the average experience. "In the offline world, we have been very successful in rationalising our channels and collaborations, like as brands we sell together in MBOs and high streets. Where are we in the digital world in this aspect where this collaboration actually promises higher economies of scope and scale because we are already connected,?" asked **Mukul Bafana**.

Rahul Vira revealed that such collaborations are definitely going to manifest in the near future. "While there will be some early adopters and gradually it might catch up as a trend. If such collaborations prove to be beneficial for brands and retailers, it

definitely will be adopted. As a whole, the way India is progressing now, I believe these things will be a part of the retail world in the near future."

Prashant Bhatia expressed that India, as a whole, is far behind in a numerous aspects to be able to successfully execute a modern retail model as such. "We may have all the exposure we want and all the facilities for experiences at our disposal, but our people are still not ready for it. For example, India is known for its smartphone count globally, but we still are oblivious of countless features that our phones provide. In terms of value retail, we have a long way to go in terms of educating our consumers."

Sanjeev Rao pointed out that although we might have a long way to go especially in terms of educated small town consumers, things are progressing rapidly after the advent of the internet. The internet has been a harbinger of change that was hither to unseen, not just in retail but in lifestyle and consumer behaviour too. So it is but only natural that India will soon follow the footsteps of its global counterparts.



The panel also reflected on the world is moving towards a shared economy and its adoption in India in the near future. As one of the fastest business trends in history, the concept of sharing has been revolutionizing industries across the globe. Although the global fashion industry has already embraced this concept, it hasn't picked up momentum yet, especially in India. Although India is one of the world's largest 'hand me down' fashion markets, the panel concluded that Indians hitherto hasn't really opened up to the whole idea of sharing apparel.

Overall, the panel noted like any other industry, the retail world is expected to witness numerous changes in the near future as technology heralds changes in consumer behaviour. Although it is next to impossible to predict the future, it is clear that retailers and brands are bound to be agile and step along the changes to stay relevant to the changing retail eco-system. **R**

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From L to R: **Amin Kassam**, Chief-Retail Operations, Shoppers Stop; **Sarfaraz Miller**, Head – IT, Celio* Future Fashion; **Shambhav Chauhan**, Executive Director, JadeBlue Lifestyle; **Rajesh Sethuraman**, Head - Marketing, Easybuy Format, MAX Retail, Landmark Group; **Arun Gupta**, CTO, Praxis Home Retail and **Vinay Bhatia**, CEO - Group Loyalty & Analytics, Future Group

Decoding a 360° Perspective of the Customer Experience Journey



In a Customer Experience session held at India Fashion Forum 2019, a distinguished jury composed of time-honored luminaries from the retail industry deliberated on exploring the brand awareness and emotional engagement with a brand to determine strategies for driving sales...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

Brands and retailers have long been trying to understand what drives and changes a customer's relationship with a brand. In the modern retail era, where choices are exploding exponentially, it is indispensable for every brand to decode what drives and impacts customer experience and their expectations from a brand.

In a Customer Experience session held at India Fashion Forum 2019, a distinguished jury composed of time-honored luminaries from the retail industry deliberated on exploring the brand awareness and emotional engagement with a brand to determine strategies for driving sales.

The session was moderated by **Amin Kassam**, Chief Retail Operations, Shoppers Stop, and the panel consisted of the following eminent retail personalities:

- > **Vinay Bhatia**, CEO - Group Loyalty & Analytics, Future Group
- > **Rajesh Sethuraman**, Head - Marketing, Easybuy Format, MAX Retail, Landmark Group
- > **Sarfaraz Miller**, Head – IT, Celio* Future Fashion
- > **Shambhav Chauhan**, Executive Director, JadeBlue Lifestyle
- > **Arun Gupta**, CTO, Praxis Home Retail

Booming opportunities in modern retail have resulted in increased competition, especially with retailers realising that superior customer experience is and will be the key differentiator in the near future, so much so that in the years to come, retailers will measure the success of their business in terms of experience per square foot instead of sales per square foot. At the same time, the rise of the modern, discerning consumer, empowered through technology has compelled brands and retailers to significantly ante up the experience bar.



“While customers have huge amount of information at their disposal today, the interpretation is very subjective. And this is exactly the struggle that the retail fraternity has been facing for a long time.”

– **ARUN GUPTA**, CTO, PRAXIS HOME RETAIL



“I personally think technology can be an actual enabler only when we would succeed in simplifying it for everyone, especially in a country like India.”

– **VINAY BHATIA**, CEO-GROUP LOYALTY & ANALYTICS, FUTURE GROUP



“At the end of the day, a brand or a retailer has to ensure that everything he has to offer – right from technology, product, price parity to buying experience – culminates into an experience that successfully makes an impression on the consumer.”

– **SARFARZ MILLER**, HEAD-IT, CELIO* FUTURE FASHION

The Evolving Customer Journey

As technology is empowering consumers, brands and retailers are becoming more and more successful in tuning this to their advantage. However, this is not to say that there have not been limitations.

“Data is a boon, but what do we use data for? To gauge customers’ past performances which might tend to influence their behaviour in the future. On the customer front, while they have huge amount of information at their disposal today, the interpretation is very subjective. And this is exactly the struggle that the retail fraternity has been facing for a long time. I believe the future will be all about offering experiences that are seamless

across all channels,” said **Arun Gupta**.

Debunking a common retail myth, **Vinay Bhatia**, talked about how customers do not classify the various formats that they shop in. Retailers, on the other hand, tend to stick to terminologies – value format, departmental stores, MBOs, et all. Ultimately, retailers have to come up with novel ways to keep the customer engaged to their respective brands. “Since we have been deliberating on the role of technology since so long, I personally think, technology can be an actual enabler only when we would succeed in simplifying it for everyone, especially in a country like India,” he added.

“Along with the experience, customers’ attention today is progressively leaning towards ease of browsing and buying. At the end of the day, a brand or a retailer has to ensure that everything he has to offer – right from technology, product, price parity to buying experience – culminates into an experience that successfully makes an impression on the consumer,” stated **Sarfaraz Miller**

The Emotional Attachment

The Indian market is adapting to a change in dynamics in as far as the customer is concerned. Keeping this in mind, **Rajesh Sethuraman** believes that brands should actually focus on being a part of the customer timeline. “My suggestion will be to use the information available from the customer to interact and engage with him. We as retailers should look at evolving mediums like digital technology to interact with customers so as to help them to discover the brand,” he said.

Just like processing information, dealing with problems, and spending free time differ between the genders, it turns out that men and women have different shopping habits as well. “So does retailers need to focus on gender specific ways to





“We should also look up at evolving mediums like the digital medium, not purely on acquisition mode but to interact with customers so as to help them discover the brand.”

– **RAJESH SETHURAMAN**,
HEAD-MARKETING, EASYBUY
FORMAT, MAX RETAIL,
LANDMARK GROUP



“Retail earlier was all about 3 P's, mainly People, Product and Profit but now it is all about experience. Customer today is no longer loyal but he is royal. It's not about the products being offered, it's all about the experience”

– **SHAMBHAV CHAUHAN**, ED,
JADEBLUE LIFESTYLE



“As per KPMG, the five key game changers for international retailing will be customer experience, leveraging factor from AI, rise in discerning customers, retail evolution going forward and eastern retail revolution superseding west in coming time.”

– **AMIN KASSAM**, CHIEF-RETAIL
OPERATIONS, SHOPPERS STOP

ameliorate consumer experiences?” asked moderator **Amin Kassam**.

According to Vinay Bhatia, such measures of personalisation will definitely give brands and retailers an edge although it might be a little trickier to execute everything in store.

“It's little tough to do this in store because, unfortunately, most of our membership or loyalty programs come into play only after a consumer pays the bill. Although there now are apps that can help identify a customer and his choices when he comes into a store. Once these apps become the norm, I am sure this level of personalisation would be very possible,” he said.

Driving Frequency

The online market place has influenced footfalls and will continue to as it gains momentum. How does a brand use customer journeys, customer information and analytics to drive frequency?

While modern technology has armed retailers with the possibility, it depends upon the retailer or brand where it draws

the line in terms of knowing the customer and infringing on his privacy.

“General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has already been imposed in Europe and India is expected to adopt it by the end of this year. Once that is implemented, everything you do has to have consent. Consent and concern based architectures obviously have a very different challenge compared to what we currently see,” said Gupta.


Consumer Opinion

In the interactive segment of the session, moderator Amin Kassam asked the audience if there is anything that they think retailers need to work on. A very valid point that was voiced was the lack of quality product description both in physical and digital retail. Especially in e-commerce, consumers seek accurate, reliable and robust descriptions with significant product information. Lack of content might prove to be a major purchase deterrent.

At the same time, while a basic form of product description is a staple feature

in e-commerce, the importance of crisp product content has always eluded physical retail. While brands and retailers invest heavily on advertising with in store media like radio and television, little importance is given to content about the product.

Vinay Bhatia responded that the physical retail world is fast picking up on the lack of content. “It's a part of the digital world as data has been a huge part of their business traditionally. I can assure you that the offline players are working on it and this is a trend that is fast catching up. We are working on QR Codes for individual products; so in the future you can just scan the code and have access to all the product information,” he said.

To sum it up, understanding the modern consumer is joint learning session for all brands and retailers and it is an evolution happening at a very fast pace. Technology will play a massive part in the future, but it has to be symbiotic and it has to be growing complementary. In the end, brand who are willing to listen to their consumer and cater to their evolving needs will emerge victorious. 

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First it is much more than simply about facilitating supermarket shopping and having someone prepare your meal with fresh sea food. For instance, New Retail would really serve a car fanatic well – he could have the convenience of booking a car for test driving without having a salesman pursue him to buy something he isn't really sure of. All a customer needs to do is take a selfie for face recognition, select a car he wishes to test drive and voila! He's all set. He then reaches a car vending machine where



NEW RETAIL:

USING DATA TECHNOLOGY FOR SEAMLESS ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN THE ONLINE & OFFLINE WORLDS

The journey of retail transformation has hit its most exciting phase with the advent of New Retail. Born and bred in China and the brainchild of Jack Ma, New Retail is a concept that retailers across the globe can imbibe and implement for a complete transformation with very little effort. IMAGES Retail takes a look...

By Zainab S Kazi

Shilpa Ahuja is always pressed for time. There's work and then there's home! And when she's home, she wishes she had some help sourcing fresh fish and cooking it for dinner. But then, no supermarket in Bengaluru, the city she lives in, offers her convenience to source fresh fish, let alone cook it to her specifications, her particular tastes. And this isn't true for just Bengaluru. Across

India, we cannot think of such luxury. So, although Shilpa wishes for a miracle in retail to help satiate her cravings, wishes don't really come true – or do they?

There is a chance that Shilpa's silent prayer and that of scores of other individuals could be answered and her dreams become a reality with the advent of New Retail. It already has in China, so why can't India follow suit?

So, what is the concept of New Retail?

the face recognition software will give him the car he has chosen and allow him to simply test drive it for three days, upon which he will return the car to the vending machine with a decision taken on buying it.

New Retail is a boon for such customers.

Understanding New Retail

A brainchild of Jack Ma, Co-Founder & Executive Chair of the Alibaba Group (China's multinational technology conglomerate), 'New Retail' is all set to transform retail beyond imagination.

Ye Guohui, General Manager of Tmall New Retail Products Business Unit explains, "New Retail is best described as the trend where boundaries between offline and online commerce disappear and focus is purely on improving customer experience and fulfilling personalised needs of each customer. The concept is an intersection between the 'consumer value proposition' and 'merchant value proposition', which becomes intrinsic when online and offline commerce are properly integrated.

For the consumer, it simply is a more seamless experience, which makes it easier to shop, as the brand works better to cater to their individual needs. On the other hand for the merchant it ensures everything is connected and consumer insights are observable which increases efficiency and productivity.”

Today, New Retail is one of the core strategies at Alibaba, which stems from the company's efforts to constantly innovate in the field of machine learning, deep learning and neural networks. From an AI chatbot to smart investments led by AI-enabled learning, it wouldn't be an understatement to say that Alibaba's innovations are currently unmatched.

The New Retail idea is changing the face of retail in China. Apart from being implemented at the very stores that Alibaba has created that are based on this concept, it is also driving a massive transformation of the traditional retail industry by digitising the entire retail operation, with a focus on in-store technology, digitised inventory and supply chain systems, consumer insights and mobile payments, a thing that perhaps India too can avail off and benefit from considering every street in India has a mom and pop store.

Guohui states that the concept of New Retail, enables retailers to be ready for the future using consumer insights generated on different platforms to develop informative and entertaining content for Omnichannel delivery.

CASE STUDY: THE HEMA STORY

With its birthplace being China, New Retail has taken over the country's retail thus transforming not only the way people shop but also the way people set up their shops/stores.

“In order to facilitate the growth of both online and offline commerce, New Retail is imperative,” says Guohui.



He elaborates with a case study: “Freshippo (known as Hema in China) is a good example. Freshippo provides consumers with a 3-in-1 retail experience that encompasses technology-driven fulfillment for online delivery, seamless in-store purchase and in-store consumption. The experience starts once the consumer has downloaded the Freshippo mobile app. With the help of this app, customers can shop from the comfort of their homes. Thanks to the New Retail technologies deployed by Freshippo, for consumers who live within a 3 km radius from the

store, orders placed in the app will be delivered within 30 minutes. Those who prefer an in-store experience, can visit the supermarket to hand-select their fresh food, such as seafood, and eat it, after the store's kitchen cooks it, of course, on the spot, in the store's dining area.”

Further explaining the concept of New Retail with another case study, Guohui states, “Another good example would be that of Tmall's auto vending machines in partnership with American carmaker Ford Motor. In March 2018, Tmall unveiled its ‘Super Test-Drive Center’



in Guangzhou, where consumers can choose from over 100 Ford cars from an unmanned car vending machine through the Tmall or Taobao mobile app, a process that can take less than 10 minutes. Customers can take a car for a 3-day test drive to experience the vehicle fully before they decide to purchase.”



How's New Retail Different from Omnichannel Retail?

To understand New Retail, it is imperative we do not confuse it with Omnichannel retail, a concept that Indian retailers have somewhat mastered. Guohui explains the difference between both the concepts.

“If you look at Omnichannel Retail, it is about multiple checkout options for a consumer through one brand. Omnichannel retail became popular in the West where it was a mesh of what large physical retail stores could offer online and make the shopping experience a little bit better and through that make it more targeted for each user. But if you take New Retail, what it does

is enhance the experience, whether it is offline or online. And looking at what we have done with our stores - Freshippo, it ends up happening within the store itself. You can buy fresh food, eat in or order home delivery. So the level of experience an average consumer will get from New Retail is far ahead of what exists in Omnichannel retail," he says.

Transforming Mom & Pop Stores the Alibaba Way!

India is a land of millions of mom and pop stores spread across the length and breadth of the country. Strong hand holding can lead these local stores to transform themselves and come at par with the changing dynamics of modern retail.

Citing the solutions in place for the Chinese mom and stores, Guohui says,



NEW RETAIL AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION IN FASHION & BEAUTY SECTOR

Intime Smart Ladies' Rooms

In February 2018, Tmall and mall operator Intime partnered to create a New Retail-driven model for restrooms. The 'Smart Ladies' Rooms' at West Lake Intime Shopping Mall in Hangzhou City allow customers waiting in line for the bathroom to use technology, such as augmented-reality-powered digital screens which let them virtually try on and purchase cosmetics, including lipsticks, eyeliners and eye shadows, from a nearby vending machine.

INTERSPORT

In May 2018, Tmall's New Retail technologies and solutions helped INTERSPORT, one of the world's biggest retailers of sporting goods, transform its flagship store in China into the first New Retail

Megastore for sportswear. "Tmall x INTERSPORT Megastore" combines a range of technologies and systems by leveraging Tmall's fully-fledged New Retail infrastructure covering customer insights, supply chain management, retail technologies, smart logistics and electronic payments. The megastore was able to create interactive window displays, an AI shopping assistant, smart shelf and virtual shopping bag to offer customers a seamless online-to-offline shopping experience.

innisfree

In July 2018, Tmall partnered with innisfree, Korea's leading natural cosmetics brand, to open a "innisfree x Tmall New Retail Store" in Hangzhou, which includes a number of innovative and interactive features, such as smart skin analyzer, magic mirror for virtual makeup try-out, cosmetics sample vending machine, AR interactive photo booth. By infusing New Retail technology into a traditional brick-and-mortar store, Tmall and Innisfree jointly built an agile operating model, provide insights for innisfree and an entirely new shopping experience for its customers.

Fasion AI

Alibaba has built a Fashion AI concept

store in its Xixi headquarters to showcase the digital transformation of fashion retail. With an ability to "learn" the latest fashion trends and tips from analysis of data generated by Alibaba's eco-system,



the proprietary model behind the FashionAI technology is built on consumer insights from the ecosystem, images of more than 500,000 outfits put together by stylists on Taobao, as well as fashion expertise from Tmall partner brands. Cross-brand recommendations are also provided by consumers looking for the most fashion forward creative advice. In addition, the concept store features a smart locking system and a new fitting room setup to offer consumers a forward-thinking experience.



SMALL TOWNS ARE THE NEW BIG DEAL



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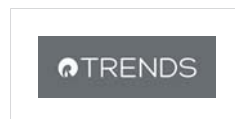


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“LST (Ling Shou Tong) is Alibaba’s one-stop solution designed to help mom-and-pop stores by providing a platform where operators can crunch sales and operations data, analyse it and turn it into insights. The LST platform effectively erases the friction and layers between FMCG (fast-moving consumer goods) brands, distributors and shop owners.”

What makes LST even more desirable is the fact that it is equipped with Alibaba’s Big Data.

Guohui elaborates: “LST is capable of advising store owners on customer preferences, pricing strategies and inventory levels. As a component of the Alibaba ecosystem, LST also allows shop owners connected to the platform to bring their business online, enabling these stores to be found on the Taobao app, Tmall, AutoNavi Map, Alipay and Ele.me, greatly expanding their reach. Shop owners can also lease unmanned vending machines from LST to generate more revenue during non-operating hours.”

So far, 1.3 million convenience stores in China are now using LST as their one-stop solution for digital transformation, embracing New Retail and offering better services to their local neighborhoods.

What makes New Retail have this universal acceptance is the fact that the concept is not sector dependent. Guohui says, “We have already seen examples across industries like Automobile, F&B, Publishing, Fashion and Beauty, Home Furniture and others. Enabled by leading-edge technology, New Retail has created an imperative for brands. For any market, we see that the consumers prefer a convenient, customised end-to-end shopping experience across offline to online. For brands to win in such a scenario, New Retail is the solution.”



NEW RETAIL AND GROCERY SECTOR

Hema

Hema is an example of the New Retail model that Alibaba has successfully incubated since 2015. Hema stores have been digitized, providing consumers with a 3-in-1 retail experience that encompasses technology-driven fulfillment for online delivery, seamless in-store



purchase and in-store consumption. Customers can buy fresh food, eat in or order home delivery. For consumers within a 3 km radius from the store, the delivery time can be as little as 30 minutes. There are now 65 Hema stores in China, located in 13 cities including Shanghai, Beijing, Ningbo, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Guiyang. Hema provides a data-driven selection of fresh food to customers, based on their location.

At Hema’s robotic restaurant in Shanghai, diners can get a table through the Hema’s app, and the system is aware of where they will be sitting. Diners can select fresh seafood for their meal, and a robot-controlled refrigerator will keep the seafood cold and fresh while diners wait to be seated. When the dish is ready, the robot server delivers it directly to their table. After the dish has been served, the robot automatically returns and waits for its next order.

RT Mart

In June 2018, Alibaba digitised 100 RT-Mart Stores in China with New Retail solutions. The digitised RT-Mart stores leverage Alibaba’s New Retail infrastructure, offering store operators customer insights, supply chain management, retail technologies, smart logistics and electronic

payment. The digital makeover underscores Alibaba’s commitment to empowering its partners to move up the value chain.

Customers will benefit from a wider variety of products and better services. They will also enjoy a hassle-free shopping experience, whether through buying through the Taobao app, which offers most of the products on the RT-Mart shelves, or at a brick-and-mortar store. The upgraded RT-Mart stores will offer one-hour delivery for customers living within a 3 km radius.



Hema has also partnered with RT-Mart on its supply chain, helping it source high-quality fresh produce directly from suppliers. This ensures RT-Mart shoppers have access to a host of Hema’s “Daily Fresh”-labeled products, including fruit, vegetables, meat and dairy products, which are supplied every morning.

Tmall Corner Store

The mom-and-pop stores in China are leveraging Alibaba’s LST (Ling Shou Tong), a data technology solution to optimize and streamline their operations by digitized customer insights, supply chain management, sales and marketing. Tmall Corner Stores have appeared in a number of cities and provinces across China, including Tianjin, Chongqing, Zhejiang, Jiangsu, Guangdong, Shandong, Anhui, Henan, Sichuan and Hubei. By September 2018, over one million convenience stores in China, around one-sixth of the total market, are now using LST as their one-stop solution for digital transformation, embracing New Retail and offering better services to their local neighborhoods.



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Distribution Redefined



Why Should Modern Retail Stores be Left Behind?

One may think that 'New Retail' is only for traditional retailers but then the benefits of New Retail are equally relevant for modern retailers as well. A case in point here is what Alibaba and Starbucks have done together in China.

Guohui shares: "In August 2018, Alibaba and Starbucks formed a deep, strategic 'New Retail' partnership that enabled a seamless Starbucks experience and transformed the coffee industry in China. Starbucks collaborated across key businesses within the Alibaba ecosystem, including Ele.me, Hema, Tmall, Taobao and Alipay, to significantly elevate the Starbucks experience for Chinese customers."

The partnership announced plans to leverage Ele.me's on-demand platform to pilot delivery services in Beijing and Shanghai; delivery program to expand across 30 cities to more than 2,000 stores by end of 2018. Starbucks also partnered with Hema supermarket to create 'Starbucks Delivery Kitchens' specifically designed for Starbucks delivery order fulfillment, further expanding delivery capabilities while ensuring the highest levels of the third-place in-store customer experience.

"The two companies will also co-create an unprecedented virtual

Starbucks store that will integrate multiple platforms across Starbucks and the Alibaba eco-systems, to enable a seamless and even more personalised experience for members to register, redeem benefits and enjoy an extensive range of services," Guohui adds.

New Retail in India & Beyond

On why New Retail needs to be considered by retailers in India, Guohui explains, "India is also following the same path that China took for its digital evolution although it is still at a nascent phase. It is about creating the right impetus within the ecosystem, which includes bringing together payments, malls, brick-and-mortar retail and delivery as well. Once you have all these nuggets together, it becomes easier to see how a



user has a seamless experience when it comes to engaging with an ecosystem. For example, currently in India, if a user wants to pick up something from the local market, he or she has to rely on the market having a delivery service which has to be integrated with the payment service and then depending on the stock availability, he or she gets the item. But in the New Retail world, on one platform users have access to all of these services at one point in time. That is where India can benefit from New Retail. Essentially,

In August 2018, Alibaba and Starbucks formed a deep, strategic 'New Retail' partnership that enabled a seamless Starbucks experience and transformed the coffee industry in China. Starbucks collaborated across key businesses within the Alibaba ecosystem, including Ele.me, Hema, Tmall, Taobao and Alipay, to significantly elevate the Starbucks experience for Chinese customers.

for anybody who's a Millennial, it becomes easier because their habits are engrained on the smartphone, on which the concept of New Retail is based."

Though New Retail is yet to be adopted by retailers in India, we have DLF Shopping Malls touching upon it.

"Alibaba Cloud partnered with DLF Shopping Malls as the technology enabler in their journey to transform new retail in India. On September 05, 2018, DLF Shopping Malls launched their first ever Phygital app 'Lukout', which offers features such as one touch parking payment, valet and concierge services by presenting engaging content around latest looks, trends etc. which are personalized and based on real time location. Alibaba Cloud with its leadership in big data, artificial intelligence and high-powered computing capabilities, helped DLF Shopping Malls with new-age cutting edge technologies and retail solution stacks to enhance their digital

F&B SECTOR BENEFITTING FROM NEW RETAIL

Ele.me

The leading Chinese on-demand food delivery platform, fully acquired by Alibaba in 2018, is an important part of Alibaba's New Retail strategy. Via the Ele.me app, customers can find nearby restaurants and place delivery orders. Real-time order tracking and estimated delivery time are available to ensure consumers can follow the progress of their food. Operating in 670 cities and more than 1,000 counties, Ele.me has two million active merchants and three million registered riders on the platform.



West Lake Smart Tea Shop

The historic Hangzhou Tea Factory introduced a range of New Retail concepts to its tea shops with the help of Tmall. Before entering the stores, customers can take part in interactive games. Inside the store, the origin and price of the tea leaves are shown on the cloud-based shelf. The store also features smart cabinets and offers great flexibility through online ordering, offline tasting, and offline pickup and delivery.



Wu Fang Zhai Restaurant

Through Alibaba's Koubei site and Alipay, the traditional restaurant in Hangzhou launched online pre-order, pre-pay and self-pickup functions. Customers can set their arrival time or order in the restaurant by scanning QR codes, which saves customers time queuing and waiting for their food. The Wu Fang Zhai smart restaurant also features a smart food cabinet. In addition to these features, Alibaba's AI technology helps the restaurant to collect data intelligence, which can be used to offer a more personalized service, better manage membership programs and develop more targeted marketing campaigns.

doubt its implementation. Though, the very fact that 1.3 convenience stores in China have benefited from it, gives us reasons to believe in its success.

On the implantation technicalities, Guohui shares, "It varies on different projects. For example, the first Freshippo store was open in Shanghai in January 2016. As at the end of 2018, there were 109 Freshippo stores in China, located in 18 cities including Shanghai, Beijing, Ningbo, Shenzhen, Hangzhou and Guiyang and that number continues to grow."



He further adds, "To give you an example: In January 2018, Alipay teamed up with Wu Fang Zhai Smart Restaurant, a 100-year-old traditional Chinese food brand, to offer a self-service restaurant model and a 24-hour operating schedule with its vending machines. Today the restaurant operates pre-order, pre-pay and pick up order options, allowing customers to open smart lockers used to store orders with a smartphone. The RFID-enabled vending machines, opened through a smartphone, automatically detect items removed from the fridge and are charged through Alipay. In just four months the restaurant increased its business by 40 per cent."

Conclusion

The adage 'nothing is permanent, but change' is apt to justify the revolution being initiated by New Retail in the world of retail. From traditional retail to modern to online retail and then Omnichannel retail, the journey of 'retail' has seen it all. But then New Retail supersedes all of this to offer a completely new face of retail and India is a country that can benefit leaps and bounds from it. **IR**

transformation journey," says Guohui.

Apart from India, the concept is also being tried in Singapore. Elaborating on this, Guohui shares, "At a leading shopping center in Singapore, we have piloted the program by launching an

Alibaba Cloud partnered with DLF Shopping Malls as the technology enabler in their journey to transform new retail in India. In 2018, DLF Shopping Malls launched their first ever Phygital app 'Lukout'.

offline home and living store called Taobao Home. We believe that it was an excellent opportunity for us to take our concept of New Retail outside of China for the first time for a longer period of time and have shoppers be able to experience this vision with a fresh perspective on the retail landscape in Singapore. Also, via the store, we wanted to give homeowners inspirations for new interior design ideas and styles."

Technicalities of Implementation

Considering the concept is relatively new for all, (except for that it has been tried and tested in China), it isn't wrong to

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The Virtualisation of Retail: Tapping VR, AR for Immersive Brand Experiences

An esteemed panel discussed how brands are applying these technologies to aid them in various aspects of the business including increasing revenues and designing business strategies, helping in consumer communications, streamlining inventories and tailoring offers as well as in shaping product development...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

A session on 'The Virtualisation of Retail: Tapping the Power of VR, AR and Other Emerging Technologies to Create Immersive Brand Experiences' at the recently concluded India Fashion Forum 2019 in Mumbai, highlighted the potential these technologies hold and how they help in redefining retail.

An esteemed panel discussed how brands are applying these technologies to aid them in various aspects of the business including increasing revenues and designing business

strategies, helping in consumer communications, streamlining inventories and tailoring offers as well as in shaping product development.

The panel, which was moderated by **Parag Dhakan**, Head IT, Tommy Hilfinger and Calvin Klein, consisted of:

- > **Pooran Jaiswal**, Group CTO, TBZ
- > **Mahadevan Iyer**, SVP-Customer Loyalty & Analytics, and Business Transformation, Lifestyle- Landmark Group
- > **Gunish Chander Jain**, MD, Bluekatus
- > **Navin Pandey**, Senior Vice President, KW Group



"With the help of Augmented Reality, now our customers can visit any of our shops as per convenience and can check out all the available designs easily via iPads. They can even see designs which are yet to arrive in store."

– POORAN JAISWAL, GROUP CTO, TBZ



"There are three way in which retailers can go about consumer identification. First is identification, second is understanding the consumer with the use of devices like AR, and finally using technology to help with customer engagement."

– MAHADEVAN IYER, SVP - CUSTOMER LOYALTY & ANALYTICS, AND BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION, LIFESTYLE - LANDMARK GROUP



The Technology Revolution: AI, AR & ML

Navin Pandey kick started the session by highlighting the changes the retail industry is witnessing as far as the technology is concerned. “Keeping oneself differentiated from others is the first priority for every brand and retailer these days. To do this in an organized manner, we use technology. We explore and implement technological parameters by the budget and wait for things to turn around. In most of the cases, retailers get amazing and outstanding results in a very short interval of time. There may be some technologies, however, which require more time to give returns. Going by the situation and seeing the technology revolution around us, it won't be wrong to say that in the coming five to ten years, we will be more dependent on bots rather than our family for shopping as well as communication,” he said.

Gunish Chander Jain added to this saying: “I think winners here would be retailers who have understood technology and aligned their standard operating procedure (SOPS) on it. For eg: if we consider the costing module, there are so many elements involved, products, fabric, trimming, processing etc and for all these tasks, we need time so that they are done properly. AI can do this work in no time by automating the process.”

AR & its Impact

Pooran Jaiswal explained: “We started with the idea of AR as it was in demand. Ours is a jewellery brand and we have more than 2,000 designs up for the customer in any category. Going by the demands and requirement of the consumers who always want more, it is very difficult for us to keep all the designs in one place. However, it

is very hard to remember which consumer likes which design. So, with the help of Augmented Reality, now our customers can visit any of our shops as per convenience and can check out all the available designs easily via iPads. They can even see designs which are yet to arrive in store. AI and AR also help in getting the design in front of the customer and they can also try it virtually. Customers can try up to 2 lakh designs in one go and can order simultaneously. Besides this, they can share these designs with friends and families and get their opinions as well. We capture all data with the consent of the consumer.”

On being asked about reduction in manpower, efficiency or the functional costing due to AI involvement in the industry/organisation, Jaiswal adds, “It is cost saving in numerous way. It saves time, money, effort both on the retailer and the customer part. If a particular product is



not available at the store, the retailer can show the design virtually to the consumer, rather than asking him to wait for couple of hours/days till he can ask someone to get it from a different store. Even the sales staff are feeling more positive about this change as due time has reduced along with the cost of transportation. They can show more designs to the customers, resulting in keeping them engage for a longer period of time in the store. This result in the upliftment of the sales as doubt elements from the mind of consumer is also taken care of.”

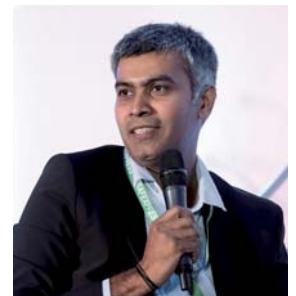
Role of Data in Technology

Elaborating on the role of data in technology, Mahadevan says, “Consumer today walks into the store only after doing a good research on products. Also they are quite tech savvy in their approach and have a clear idea in their mind about they are going to buy. We encourage our customers to use their mobiles and engage with us in most of our stores. This helps in guiding them in their shopping journey. A specific data



“From a technology prospective, it is our responsibility to ensure that data is taken care of to the best of our ability. This is a massive challenge for the organised retail sector.”

– GUNISH CHANDER JAIN,
MD, BLUEKACTUS



“Going by the situation and seeing the technology revolution around us, it won't be wrong to say that in the coming five to ten years, we will be more dependent on bots rather than our family for shopping as well as communication.”

– PARAG DHAKAN, HEAD
IT, TOMMY HILFIGER AND
CALVIN KLEIN



“VR is not just virtual reality, but visualisation reality. Today, to an extent, we can visualise everything and possibly convert it into virtual reality. By holography and VR, customers can choose the ambience they want to eat / shop in, the server / retail associate they want to communicate with in the restaurant or store they plan to visit.”

– NAVIN PANDEY, SR VP, KW GROUP

base helps in knowing the consumer better, so that the store can prepare in advance to serve him better and that too without much delay. It helps in personalizing the service to a greater extent. By using AR, we capture information within the privacy norms, habits, likes and the dislikes of the consumer. Even the buyers demand tailored and personalised services in exchange of data sharing. So it's a two way process, we just don't collect data and sit on it. We work on it, covering all aspects. It's not just feedback about product experience but it is also digital engagement that you do which has to be a continuous process.”



How Brands, Malls & Restaurants will Use Tech

Navin Pandey explains, “VR is not just virtual reality, but visualisation reality. Today, to an extent, we can visualise everything and possibly convert it into virtual reality.”

He says that retailers restaurateurs can use holography and VR to help the consumer choose the, ambience they want to eat / shop

in, the server / retail associate they want to communicate with in the restaurant or store they plan to visit.

Pandey is confident that a few years down, the restaurant industry will be able to display the entire preparation of food ordered by consumers in a restaurant in front of them with the help of VR and holographic technology.

“I feel that in the next few years, the humanoid of your choice will be serving your order and without a doubt, consumers will love this experience and happily pay for it. Fashion retailers will replicate this VR technology in stores so people can simply see what particular clothes and accessories would look like on them. This is bound to create a huge impact on the retail industry. In order to convert this dream into reality, the retail sector needs to seriously align itself with global technological developments,” he stated.

Emerging Technologies & Challenges

With new technologies come many challenges. Gunish Jain said that there were many privacy concerns related to the storage of the database.

“With the amount of data that is collected, people do have privacy concerns, security concerns. Aside from that, systems have sensitive data like costing information, business plans and other business related data and many



of these systems are vulnerable to hacking. From a technology perspective, it is our responsibility to ensure that this data is taken care of to the best of our ability. This is a massive challenge for the organised retail sector,” he said.

He however said that there are solutions to the problem, for instance, a huge amount of data is converted into de-identified data, which basically means the data actually captured is lacking any essence.

“The data is captured without actually capturing or storing personal information. For





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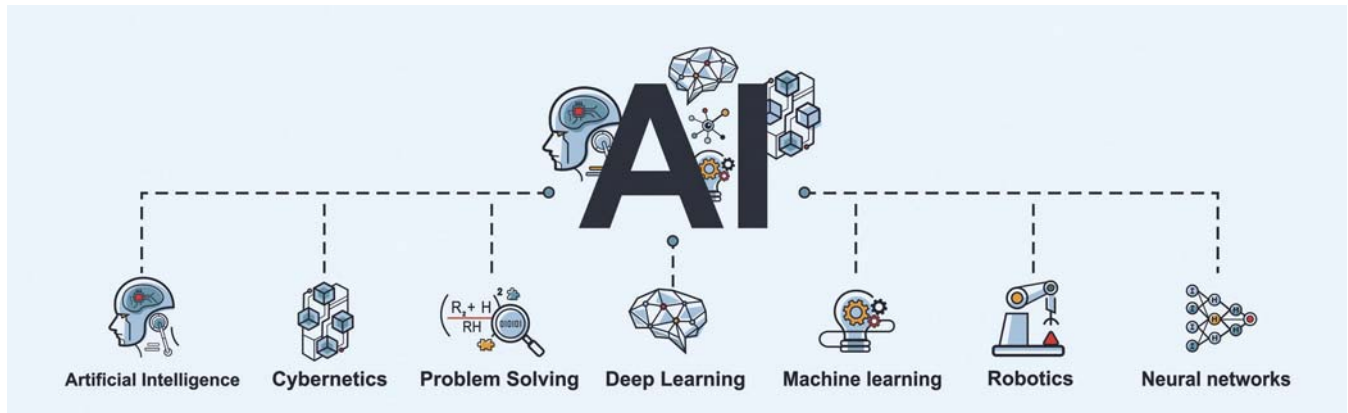
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eg: if you capture data of a leading retail expert, the data will identify and address the person as unnamed individual from a renowned company with listed amount of educational background and experience – all information other than identifying him as a human being with a name. Machines capture the matrix and store it, using that in from of AI and machine learning. These are the ways in which companies are taking care of the concerns and challenges,” Jain stated.

Mahadevan added to this saying, “Today I can identify the customer by his mobile number. As Gunish pointed out, we obviously have to take care of privacy, but probably in terms of being able to enable these concerns as far as customer identification is concerned. A lot of technological enhancement is evolving in the lifestyle segment, in the form of mechanism, which a customer can tap into with a mobile phone or using a QR code before making a purchase. Once a customer does this, a message goes to the brand/retailer to alert them to the fact that a consumer has logged in. The retailers in return give benefits to consumers with some sort of incentives. With the help of technology like Facial Recognition, retailers are thriving to increase their popularity in the market on grounds of ideation and executing these ideas in a better way.”

There are three ways, according to him, in which retailers go about consumer identification. First is identification,

second is understanding the consumer with the use of devices like AR, and finally using technology to help with customer engagement – which is a digitally exhausting process and needs special attention.

“Today, I think there is a huge journey in terms of having integrated understanding of customer experience, like what the customer is really looking for and can we find a solution to that. The last part and the most important part is the delivery of experience. Many companies lack in this despite having huge data and a sense of how to utilise this data. The strategy, ability to capture information, ability to synthesise it and deliver at the right place, all these factors have to work in tandem otherwise customer journey and experience will be very disjointed. This is the real challenge,” he stated.

On the impact of VR on malls, Navin Pandey said, “I would like to add the negative aspect of this technology within the retail sector. The basic point differentiating an online and physical store is touch and feel. However, take the example of Lenskart. A customer can check how frames look on their face on a mobile app, instead of going to the store and trying it spectacles. If more such technologies are created, the number of online shoppers will increase rapidly. Touch and feel will be available online to almost 80 percent of shoppers, which will result in a massive reduction in the number of offline shoppers. This will

result in brands laying off retail associates as well as reducing the size of stores. This will impact builders like us.”

Making AI Accessible

Today, almost the entire world is on social media and no one needed a tutorial to become an expert. Similarly, AI is nothing new, it’s not something that users can’t understand since they are becoming more and more tech savvy.

“If we search for a product online, we start getting ad notifications of the same on all social media / Internet platforms with improved variations and varieties if possible. This happens with the power of AI, which is tracking every movement of the potential consumer and retailers are replicating this offline. If a customer visits a store, they leave a digital footprint – either by giving their mobile number or through face recognition. Shopping malls use CCTVs to record all possible actions of shoppers. Everyone is collecting data in name of security. They track customer activities, the stores people visit, brands they buy and places where they eat,” explained Pooran Jaiswal.

Gunish Jain concluded the discussion by saying, “While using technology is essential, I think we need to have two separate teams to create this technology and experience – one for innovation and the other which actually does the on-ground implementation to make sure the experience is smooth for shoppers.”

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Disruptions and Innovations in Indian Retailing



Technology-supported innovations made even small retailers at least learn the art of connecting with their customers using their smart-phone-enabled social media communication tool such as WhatsApp.

By: Dr. Gibson G Vedamani

The words disruption and innovation are lavishly used in the current business scenario where changes in patterns of consumer behaviour occur fast or where even changes in business context, they have their specific meanings. While 'disruption' means problems or a disturbance that interrupt an event, activity or process—a word that has a negative connotation innovation as we all are aware means something new—an idea or an invention—that brings transformational change to give better results and enhanced success. The term 'disruptive innovation' augurs well with its usage in business, which refers to the dictionary meaning, 'an innovation that creates a new market and value network and eventually disrupts an existing market and value network, displacing established market leading firms, products and alliances'.

'Tsunami' Disruptions

In the recent times, a few disruptions made a big impact on the retail business in India. I call them 'tsunami' disruptions. The major one was demonetization resulting in the sudden withdrawal of currency notes of a few denominations overnight in November 2016. Since then, for over six months, the small retailers went out of business. Cash was not available for transactions. They were seen running from pillar to post to find new payment systems so that they did not disappoint customers. A total of 80 percent of Indian's retailers are small with shops measuring less than 50 square feet in size. A majority of them run stores that are less than 50 square feet in size! They were totally dependent on cash transactions. For close to a year, the turmoil of transactions remained a big challenge for retailers to win over. The brighter side of demonetization for the retailers was the fact that they began to install electronic data capture or swipe machines in collaboration with banks and credit card companies. They started accepting Paytm

payment transfers. The small retailers looked up banks, opened their accounts, many for the first time. The first step of organization/modernization of very small retailers began with demonetization. Some of them have realized that they can avail bank funding through cash credits and term loans.

The second major 'tsunami' disruption that impacted and, perhaps, is still impacting the retail trade is the implementation of Goods and Services TAX (GST) with differential tax slabs on various categories of products. The realignment is yet happening in terms of percentages levied, 0 percent, 5 percent, 12 percent, 18 percent and 28 percent. The various approved agencies of the Government of India facilitated the adoption of the new GST and the filing of returns. The seamless input tax credits were a boon to retailers as the new GST resulted in the avoidance of 'taxation over taxes' or 'cascading-effect' of the incident taxes the system added to the burden of everyone in the supply chain. State and central taxes applicable such as Service

Tax, Octroi and Excise Duty separately caused the cascading. This rendered the supply chain tax heavy and the extra tax paid on the already taxed amount was finally charged to the end consumer. Retailers suffered consequent to lower quantum of purchases from customers as a result of consequent inflation. GST has become a friendly taxation system making retailers transform themselves into organised entities filing proper GST returns.

The third major disruption that happened in the Indian business scenario is the 'technological invasion' as I call it, which has completely changed the way consumers shopped for their products and services. Companies were waiting for laptop and tab penetration and the Internet adoption but when smart phones made their way into the Indian market at very low prices, when the services provides slashed data charges to bare minimum and when every business



organization has introduced its own apps, the way consumers shopped changed completely. Retailers especially the small ones are taking their time to adapt to these new styles of shopping by consumers as products and services are exposed to absolutely transparent pricing. Many retailers are yet flabbergasted and dazzled as technological innovations propelled the growth of online retailing in India. The Indian consumers began to buy books and music online to buy books and music online, progressed to make their bus, rail, flight and movie booking online and now they buy all kinds of products online. They come to brick-and-mortar electric

stores, brows models, compare prices and buy them online using their mobile phone. The look and feel are rendered by the brick-and-mortar stores but the benefits of the sales are reaped by online retailers who can afford cheaper prices consequent to their huge saving on infrastructure and other operational costs. This too made even small retailers, at least, learn the art of connecting with their customers using their smart-phones-enabled social media communication tool like WhatsApp.

The communication on social media changed the way retailers looked at their sales promotions. They have been able to make products shots themselves or even shoot videos on their own and communicate with their customers. Retailers abroad closed many of their stores and consolidated their efforts with a mix of online and brick-and-mortar retail. Payless Shoe Source closed almost 400 stores-Macy's 68, Penny 138, Abercrombie & Fitch 60, Guess 60, Radio Shack 550, Sam's club 63, etc.-according to recent reports as they consolidated themselves. On the other hand, Amazon was seen looking for opportunities to open physical stores in a few markets with a reported acquisition attempt in France. A mix of store formats both online and offline seems to be the trending consequence of the global retail consolidation.

Store Format Innovation

Innovation of experiential retail formats in India seems to be working well. One of the examples is the Decathlon store. Decathlon sports stores are almost 60 in number, spread across most of the cities of India. They are located in malls and as freestanding destination stores alongside highways as well. The specialty of the Decathlon store is its offer of a great customer experience. Customers can

The look and feel are rendered by the brick-and-mortar stores but the benefits of the sales are reaped by online retailers who can afford cheaper prices consequent to their huge saving on infrastructure and other operational costs.

check a product by trying it inside the store. Kids can cycle inside or table tennis player can actually play the game before buying the game's wares. Some stores have a model putting area to check and buy golf gear. The highway format has a huge parking area and the store sports all outdoor adventure merchandise as well. The customers are bound to have a truly enjoyable shopping experience. While the old mundane, mass, commercial stores are struggling to offer the right experience and, hence, facing closure, stores that provide the right shopping experience are seen to flourish in the Indian retail landscape.



Disruptive Innovations in Cabbing in India

When one speaks of disruptive innovation in business, one cannot ignore Uber or Ola, a similar cab business in the Indian market. These brands have been seen to have completely taken over the local conveyance business. In a city like Chennai, people no longer use autorickshaws but use only Ola or Uber. The Chennai autorickshaws have earned a bad name for themselves and they have been notorious of charging higher fares from time immemorial.

But in Mumbai, commuters use local auto-rickshaws along with Ola, or Uber. The destruction has not been complete. In Kolkata too, similar to Mumbai, People use yellow cabs as well. They have been true to following the rightly metered pricing. Customers patronize both old and the new depending upon convenience and value. Technological advancements have been seen as disruptive tools innovatively supporting business and retailing is one of them. Business Analytics, Big Data, Small Data, Internet of Things, etc. Have been supporting the growth of retailing by offering seamless and result-oriented products, service and consumer connectivity.

Disruptive Innovation in Product Development

Product innovations have been helping the growth of retailing in a big way. 'Vada' is a much popular South India snack. But many in the modern days find it difficult to make them at home. A company by the name ID Fresh Foods in Bengaluru began its operations in 2006 by making and selling freshly made 'idli' and 'dosa' batter. The company's vision was to prepare and share healthy batter with the whole world, their customers worldwide, just the way they make the batter at home. The product becomes a big success because people loved the healthy, preservative-free batter. The company now serves millions of homes across India and the Middle East.

After the success of the batter now, the company focused on its innovation in 'vada' making. A ready batter filled in a squeeze container which, on inverting and squeezing into the vessel full of oil during preparation, forms the automatic shape of the 'vada' with a hole in the centre, as it should be. This makes it very convenient for anyone to make the age-old traditional 'vadas'. The product has become an instant success in the marketplace and it has found space in the shelves of many supermarkets in South India. Such product innovations augment demand in the market and retailers fulfill such demands by stocking and selling these innovations.

Consumer Power and Disruptive Innovation Impacting Retailing

'Jallikattu' is a popular traditional Indian sport in which strong men who have the capability to control overcome the raging bulls. This has been a dangerous sport played in the southern parts of India, especially in Madurai in Tamil Nadu on every 15 January, one day after the Tamil festival of Pongal. The day is devoted to decorating and honouring the cows and bulls that help farmers in the farm. It is also the day when people test their capabilities to overcome the raging bulls in an open area. People have been seen to die and get hurt too in the process of overcoming and controlling the strong bulls, So the Supreme Court banned this sport a few years ago. In December 2016,



Tero Vesalainen / Shutterstock.com

The communication on social media changed the way retailers looked at their sales promotions. They have been able to make products shots themselves or even shoot videos on their own and communicate with their customers. Retailers abroad closed many of their stores and consolidated their efforts with a mix of online and brick-and-mortar retail.

crowds and crowds of people joined together in a massive gathering over a fortnight in protest of the ban in the marina Beach in Chennai. Day by day the gathering gained momentum and the number of people especially the youth, the college students gathering from all over Tamil Nadu became uncontrollably huge. It was a massive protest and finally the Government of India allowed the sport to be played with a reversal of the decision of the Supreme Court. Such is the power of a mass movement. Now look at the products of Patanjali, which has a similar mass consumer movement in its favour. Patanjali with its innovative, natural, healthy and organic product

range started giving many global FMCG majors a big run for their money. Healthy, natural and organic products may sweep the minds of consumers and those making and selling these products in retail may become greatly successful. Recent news carries the information of the readiness of one more spiritual guru, Pandit Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, who also plans to open 500 of his retail stores selling products that may be very similar to Patanjali's merchandise sold in their retail stores. Responding to such natural and healthy competition, even the multinational companies have come up with the launch of similar products. Colgate's Vedshkti toothpaste is a relevant example of a recent launch that is targeted to compete with Patanjali's toothpaste 'Dant Kanti'. Such product innovations may centre on good quality, proper pricing, great service and timely fulfillments.

A mass consumer movement may happen in future towards sustainability. It may be a huge sway in favour of recyclable, organic and eco-friendly products. Innovations in these areas would disrupt old products on the shelves and retailers along with consumers would readily adopt them. While process innovations may help manufacturers in big ways, product and service innovations would make huge result-oriented disruptions in retailing in India. **R**



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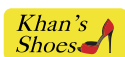


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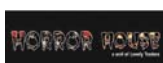
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India's Restaurant Business: Tasting Success or Bleeding Money?

With food lovers opening restaurants instead of the professionals, the success rate of the industry has been drastically hit. Since the foodservice industry is fast changing and competitive, it requires a massive amount of knowledge and skill to run the business – just a passion for food is not cutting it anymore...

By Charu Lamba

Investing time and money in any industry without proper knowledge can turn out to be a major error in judgment. This, unfortunately, is something that has become a common phenomenon in the foodservice industry. With food lovers opening restaurants instead of the professionals, the success rate of the industry has been drastically hit. Since the foodservice industry is fast changing and competitive, it requires a massive amount of knowledge and skill to run the business – just passion for food is not cutting it anymore.

“Any service industry can be called a ‘sin’ industry. With increasing competition and more and more people wanting to invest in the business, not all tend to taste success. A restaurant venture isn’t for the faint-hearted, as more than half of new restaurants fail within the first year, and a little more than that close down before they’ve reached five years of business. Understanding any business, before dipping one’s financial toe into the water, is necessary for any industry,” states **Priyank Sukhija**, Owner, CEO and MD, First Fiddle Restaurants.

Success of a restaurant in today’s time lies in its concept along with the consistency.



“We have one of the highest mortality rates in the restaurant industry – that is, out of 10 restaurants that open, 8 shut down and only 2 survive. The only way to survive is to do your homework well, be very consumer-centric and work very hard,” says **Rahul Singh**, President, NRAI and Founder and CEO, The Beer Café.

“For the success of restaurant business in India, the RSS effect is needed – a Replicable, Scalable and most importantly Sustainable model. If you build your business model on these lines, then it is bound to survive,” he adds.

Resonating Singh's same thoughts, **Riyaaz Amlani**, CEO & Managing Director, Impresario, says, “The restaurant business is not something that one can do as a side business. It is necessary that restaurant owners should constantly focus on good food, good service and good storytelling - which are the basics for the success of any restaurant. I think that you have to have that kind of hospitality mindset where you need to have a big heart and not be afraid to take a risk and if you focus on food and service you will definitely taste success.”

In bigger cities, where failure rates are even higher, the proportion of fixed operating expenses are also so high that restaurant owners often bleed money even if their revenue dips marginally.

“We have come up with concepts that were already in demand, but the demand was unfulfilled, so, it is about finding the gap in the market and then bridging that gap. Apart from this, opening restaurants at the right locations has helped us in attracting the right consumers,” explains **Zorawar Kalra**, Founder

& Managing Director, Massive Restaurants.

Similarly, **Vikrant Batra**, Co-Founder, Cafe Delhi Heights, has tasted the success on the basis of staying true to the concept, complementing this concept with excellent food in terms of both taste and quality, hearty portions, friendly staff, customer engagement activities and consistency.



According to **Varun Puri**, Owner, Viva Hospitality, “It is of utmost importance to know your clientele and their preferences, and accordingly the restaurant owners can plan different operational strategies and offers. Excellent guest relationship and customer service is also equally important for any restaurant to ensure repetitive footfall.”

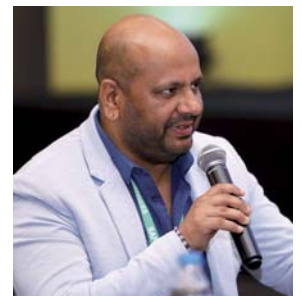
How Has Foodservice Industry Changed?

The foodservice industry is undergoing a rapid change as the way the consumers used to dine out has changed drastically despite the fact that



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- **RIYAAZ AMLANI**, CEO & MANAGING DIRECTOR, IMPRESARIO



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- **ZORAWAR KALRA**, FOUNDER & MANAGING DIRECTOR, MASSIVE RESTAURANTS.



many restaurant have closed in the recent past.

"The Indian food industry is flourishing day-by-day due to the boom in consumer spending power, innovations and new cuisines being introduced to the segment. With changing lifestyle, awareness, experimentation is moving at par. Rise of social media and Internet awareness along with aggregators and other channels are helping shape the industry well," says **Umang Tewari**, Founder, Big Fish Ventures.

Earlier, people used to go out for dining only, but now dining out has become an experience in terms of not only food but ambience, service, programming, activities, offers etc all in one place. A lot of casual dining places are doing remarkably well too, which was not the scenario before.

Apart from this, a lot of fresh food or farm to table food culture has become trendy, which is a sign of healthy improvement for the industry. Various technical tools such as online booking apps, delivery apps, deals and offers etc have also helped the industry to go in upright direction.

"The Indian F&B industry is one of the most vibrant industries that has seen unprecedented growth in the recent past and continues to grow

rapidly. With people celebrating every occasion at restaurants, eating out is a part of work, casual meetings and more over an all-day, every time affair. With the rise in food awareness through online and offline media, food shows, blogs, videos, new trends have come up," adds Sukhija.

Another big change that has been observed is that now drinking is out of the closet. Consumers don't shy away from drinking in public which in return has given a boost to the drinking out culture.



Concluding the changes that have taken place in the industry in the past decade, **Anurag Katriar**, Director, deGustibus Hospitality Pvt Ltd says, "In the past decade or so, everything has changed in the restaurant industry like consumers, eating out patterns, the taste and one of the biggest change that I see is organised aggregators who are changing the way market is consuming."

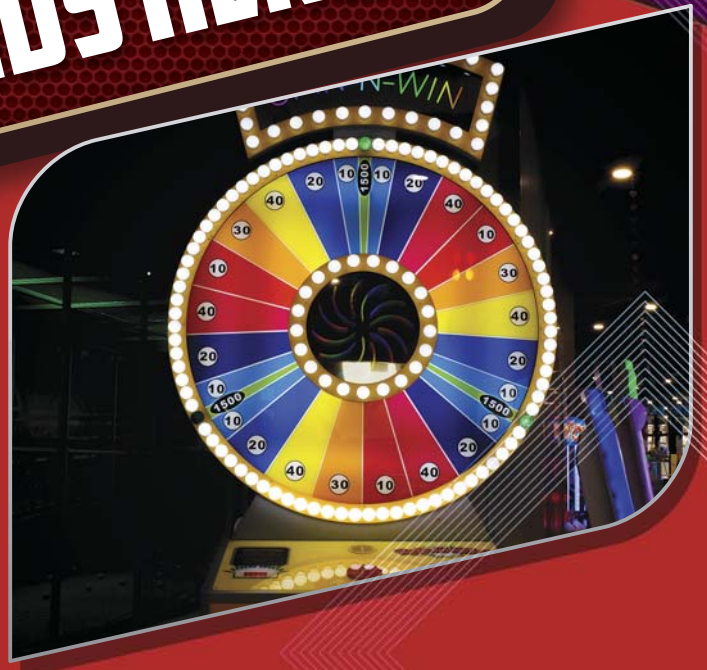
Food Aggregators - Bane or Boon?

Technological disruptions in the foodservice market are taking place with web-based ordering, and it is taking the home delivery





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“Staying true to the concept, complementing the concept with excellent food in terms of both taste and quality, hearty portions, friendly staff, customer engagement activities and consistency ultimately brings success.”

- VIKRANT BATRA, CO-FOUNDER, CAFE DELHI HEIGHTS.



“It is of utmost importance to know your clientele and their preferences, and accordingly the restaurant owners can plan different operational strategies and offers. Excellent guest relationship and customer service is also equally important for any restaurant to ensure repetitive footfall.”

- VARUN PURI, OWNER, VIVA HOSPITALITY

option with storm. Home delivery and online ordering are together moving the needle on consumer convenience, but how is it affecting the dining out scenario?

“Well, I believe there is always an ecosystem to follow for everyone whether its foodservice aggregators or any other concepts. We cannot survive for long if we try to break the system or does not try to coexist,” says Puri.

However, Batra believes that for restaurant owners, food aggregators could be a blessing in disguise, although he’s quick to add that there are many complications as well. “With the motive of reaching out to more people and providing an additional services to our customers, online delivery was added as a service at our brand. Food aggregator services have certainly created a win-win situation for both customers and restaurants, making the process of ordering out easy and fast. However, with low-accountability and ownership issues, the food aggregators industry might be bane more than a boon in future.”



Resonating the same thoughts, **Dinesh Arora**, Managing Director of MT Hospitality says, “With the rise in food delivery apps, the consumer market has turned lazy and discount centric. A win-win situation for consumers, food aggregator services have proved to be a boon for them, however, it has mixed opinions for restaurant owners. Adding another source of income and a method of reaching to more customers, these aggregators have surely brought in more sales for restaurants, however customer confidentiality and non-accountability of riders towards restaurants, puts the brand in a tricky situation at times.”

Ordering restaurant meals for delivery is becoming an everyday part of life for many. Providing an ever-broadening range of eating choices delivered right at the door, Foodservice aggregators are on a rise like never before.

“Foodservice aggregators have definitely destructed the market. They have changed the dining dynamic - they have not only affected



“Rise of social media and Internet awareness along with aggregators and other channels are helping shape the industry well.”

- UMANG TEWARI, FOUNDER, BIG FISH VENTURES.

the kitchen business but also the dine out business. As now they are into the system, it is better for the restaurants to start delivering with them or to come up with delivery only brands,” states Kalra. However, Katriar feels that food aggregators will only grow as the years pass by.

Casual Dining vs Fine Dining

Online delivery options aside, restaurateurs are betting big on the casual dining business in a big way today. For example, deGustibus Hospitality has recently made a foray into value dining and the QSR segment with **Indigo Burger Project**. Similarly, **Mocha**, which is present in 13 cities currently, will have presence in 18 different cities in the next two years.

Explaining the reason behind this, Katriar says, “As the Indian dining out culture is changing, casual dining is taking over fine dining. Earlier, fine dining ruled the roost because eating out for a family was an occasion, people used to dress up to go out for dinner, but now people



eat out everyday because it’s more a matter of convenience and need. This is one reason why the affordable casual dining segment is growing and will continue to grow in a big way.”

“Another benefit is that the casual dining segment is low on capital, involves low risk, is an asset light model and that is where we need to go,” he states.

Casual dining has been able to play with different cuisines, including regional, to create

low cost, hassle-free dining experiences. With an easy and all day ambience, casual dining offers quality food that can be served at a comfortable price, while, fine dining creates more of a formal setting usually focussing on different kinds of experiences.

Talking on the same lines, Puri says, "People are looking for easier, approachable places where they can have good food and service along with some fun activities. As fine dining has certain attributes to follow and a certain decorum to maintain, people feel the overall experience that they can get at a casual dining place is much better."

Where are Investors Investing?

Restaurateurs overall feel that fine dining is set to become a niche segment, while casual dining will be the flavour of the industry in the times to come. As a result, investments in fine dining have also gone down and the organic growth into the fine dining segment has dwindled in comparison to what is happening in the casual and value dining segment. Casual dining with scalability in business and rising profits is making the segment more alluring for investors. With increasing innovation, diverse menus and more success stories, casual dining is in great demand.

"Looking at the current scenario, casual dining is preferable for investments as investing in fine dining requires huge amount of capital and getting good returns in this challenging economy stature is not an easy task. Apart from this, casual dining gives an opportunity to expand the company at a faster pace than fine dining does," explains Puri.

However, Arora has a different opinion, as he says, "Casual dining can bring a faster return for investors, but fine dining is a safer and long-term investment bet."


Going Forward

A lot of promising new concepts and trends are taking shape in the vibrant foodservice market and people who will play fair, be innovative, ready to adopt and who get their basics right will always be in a commanding position in the times to come.

A few restaurateurs expect that easier rules and regulations from the Government will also boost the industry.

"In the next five years, I feel that the consumption is going to grow. Indians are consuming still far less than what other top economies are consuming," asserts Katriar.

"In the next five years, there will be a lot of correction in the industry, the people who are considered strong will have to consolidate their businesses - they will run only profitable restaurants and loss making properties will be shut down. There will be rationalisation of the market, the rents will have to corrected. The dine-out market will increase. Millennials and GenZ will rule the roost. Locally-sourced and micro-regional Indian food will become very big, and Indian QSRs will come into the play," states Kalra.

The restaurant business by nature is very capital intensive, so as the industry grows there will be a need to continue infusing capital. "To grow exponentially, the restaurant owners will have to go for private equity," concludes Amlani. 



"In the past decade or so, everything has changed in the restaurant industry like consumers, eating out patterns, the taste and one of the biggest change that I see is organised aggregators who are changing the way market is consuming."

- ANURAG KATRIAR,
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- DINESH ARORA,
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF MT
HOSPITALITY



How to Be Supply Chain Ready for the Next Level of Retail Evolution

Striking a balance between speed and efficiency, managing logistics and supply chain to deliver cost efficient and timely services are of utmost importance to run a successful retail business...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau



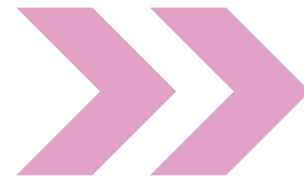
Suresh Nayak, Head - Sales and Marketing, Logic ERP Solutions

In the business of retail, optimising operations to maximise both speed and efficiency is essential to the success of a business. While customers value fast service, increasing speed can sometimes cause costs to skyrocket. Striking a balance between speed and efficiency, managing logistics and supply chain to deliver cost efficient and timely services, is therefore, of utmost importance. Extensive networks for global marketplace and handling huge shipments on tight schedules, require innovative strategies at different planes to execute operations in desired manner.

At the India Fashion Forum 2019 held in Mumbai, **Suresh Nayak, Head - Sales**

and Marketing, Logic ERP Solutions, talked about how Logic ERP Solutions for logistics and supply chain management help businesses become efficient round the clock, with functionalities to influence operations at an organisational level and boost management controls.

The features of Logic ERP help retailers to meet shipping requirements, optimise the physical flow of materials, track inventory and articles, schedule purchase cycles and much more. A number of planning and analysing modules provide powerful forecasting functionalities to streamline logistics execution processes. Indicators like client specifications, break of stock, date of delivery, and changes in



production line, provide the flexibility to adhere to changing market conditions and customer needs. Smart features like self-service requisitioning, business reporting and invoicing, returns and refurbishment processing, warehousing and order processing, article movement tracking, provides dynamic controls to manage business activities.

Expounding on this, Nayak presented insights into the supply chain management and its role in enhancing retail businesses.

Responding to CX Capabilities

“From the statistical viewpoint, the supply chain has to be nimble and precise to respond to the customer experience capabilities. For Omnichannel retailers, syncing offline and digital retail to create a seamless experience is a key concern. It requires a single view of the inventory. It’s a known fact that acquiring a new customer is five times costlier than retaining the old one. The retention is much more dependent, it is related to different aspects and portfolio along with good consumer/best consumer



experience module. The good consumer experience is completely dependent on optimal elementary and short span of delivery time,” explained Nayak.

Consumer Experience Capabilities:

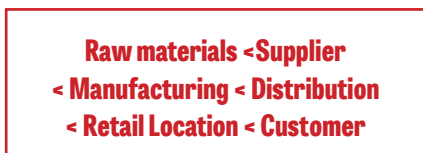
So, what are the corresponding customer experience capabilities? The capabilities, stated Nayak, come from collection of people and processes in an organisation



as well as the technology. The three points that define consumer shopping capabilities include:

- > **Collection of People:** Does the company have the right skill sets in each department to drive measurable supply chain improvements?
- > **Processes:** To what extent are there inefficiencies within departments and in the interfaces between departments?
- > **Technologies:** Does the company have IT systems (eg ERP that support enterprise integration and process automation)?

Supply Chain Management

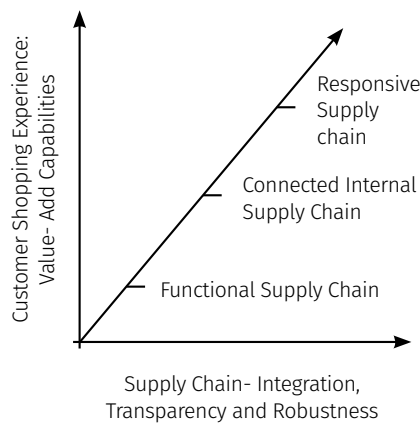


What is supply chain management? Going by the definition and the process, order fulfillment is not only the process which describes the supply chain. Gone are the days, when supply chain used to be just the physical movements of goods. Currently, there are three different aspects which define the supply chain:

- > Physical Goods
- > Informational Process
- > Financial process

Developing strong customer relationships, which in turn drives revenue, future booking and new businesses explains the new model of supply chain. To be successful, companies need to develop integrated, transparent and responsive robust supply chain that enables them to deliver goods and value added services to their customers.

Customer Service Capabilities: Supply Chain Maturity model



Supply Chain Maturity Model

“I want to justify this with the other business model which is the supply chain maturity model. Here in the X axis, I am putting the supply chain integration, technology that is transparent and the robustness and on Y axis, I am putting the capabilities, the value added points which is enhancing our customer service capabilities.”

Explanation: When we are putting this, the first one will be on very initial level of a supply chain with some customer satisfaction which will be achieved by a functional supply chain model. Second is connected internal supply chain model, third one which is the best one is responsive supply chain.

Functional Supply Chain is a very basis provision shopping enhancing model. It provides basic customer experience.

Information flow: These companies generally rely on standalone, custom developed or excel based systems to help them satisfy orders. Systems neither support process automation nor



the collection and analysis of real-time data. Companies at this early stage of technological sophistication are incapable of leveraging information technologies to deliver meaningful value add.

Physical distribution/ Goods Flow:

The absence of enabling technologies generally results in significant process inefficiency, characterised by manual and redundant data processing. Flowing goods through distribution and/or production processes requires several instances of manual and error prone data entry, re-entry, and reconciliation. Inventory counts are generally a rough approximation. Planning and scheduling activities involve ongoing, cumbersome data aggregation from disparate business and informational silos.

Financial flow:

The absence of real-time operational visibility limits the ability to implement effective cost controls. Companies in this category generally establish pricing based on gut-feel or high level cost-plus margins. An inability to price based on actual material costs and overhead restricts an ability to effectively manage profitability. Further, an absence of effective inventory control generally results in excessive cash tied up in working capital.

Connected Internal Supply Chain is an enhanced Customer Experiences provision:

Information flow: These companies leverage process automation to improve operational efficiency. Further, with robust real-time reporting, management can keep its finger on the pulse of enterprise health by simply monitoring exceptions to normal operating conditions. Companies at this stage of maturity have strong

internal data and may even have strong external transactional data. However, they seldom have reliable data about external factors that could materially affect their business, including following examples: data that could support an analysis of supply chain disruption risks and market trend data that could impact long term capacity requirements plans.

Financial flow: These companies tightly manage costs and margins on project, line of business, or product bases. They leverage their integrated environment to improve inventory turnover rates by effectively timing material receipts with actual demand requirements (whether production or distribution). The depth of data and the sophistication of analytical capabilities allow them to make measured business decisions based on margin, opportunity cost and other considerations.



Interpretation: Although capable of providing enhanced customer experiences, a company with an internally connected supply chain is exposed to certain weaknesses and risks. Less visibility into matters outside of their organization exposes them to supply chain shock risks. For example, an unforeseen disruption that comprises order fulfillment might irreparably jeopardize customer relationships and profitability.

Responsive Supply Chain: Exceptional Customer Experience

Information flow: Companies in this category are best in class and turn modern information technologies into a competitive advantage. They share critical analyses with their customers and help them drive performance improvements.

Physical distribution/ Goods flow: These companies successfully run continuous improvement and high quality operations. They utilize both enterprise-wide and external data in an effort to optimize all production and distribution decisions over which they have influence. They may, for example, seek to stabilise their own supply sources by driving quality improvements at the supplier level. At the customer level, they may provide advice relating to the efficient storage and distribution of goods.

Financial flow: These companies understand that cash flow and customer service place conflicting demands on their organization. By leveraging data-driven decision making, they define strategically optimal levels of cash flow by balancing corporate financial objectives with customer service requirements. Any operational decisions must maintain this strategic balance. These constraints propel companies to creatively find cost effective ways to improve customer service requirements. Doing so enables them to drive long-term relationships while maintaining or improving profitability.

Interpretation: Companies in this category, apply the philosophy of integration throughout the supply chain, and are consistently stretching continuous improvement efforts both upstream and downstream- to their suppliers' suppliers and to their customer's customers. These companies develop business- partnerships in the true sense of the term.



Three Capabilities for a Responsive Supply Chain:

Nayak talked about enhancing consumer shopping experience. He explained that the key drivers of exceptional customer experiences are:


Capability #1: A Segmented Supply Chain

Devising an effective supply chain strategy requires an analysis of customer requirements and of how operations should be structured to respond to those requirements. Companies should look to answers questions. Who do we serve? What do they require? How can we make their lives better? What should we improve- internally, with our supply sources, and with our customers- to drive these objectives?

Capability #2: Transparent Supply Chain

The supply chain should be transparent and visible across the entire network of business.

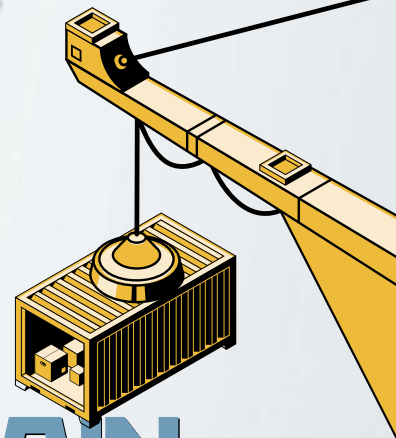
Capability #3: An Integrated, Optimised Supply Chain

Companies with responsive supply chains are planning daily, in real-time. Integrated systems and automated processes remove many of the bottlenecks inherent in manual processing. For example, when non-conforming materials are received, the system automatically issue production and or distribution requirements. And to the extent that there are resultant scheduling changes, an automated message can be pro-actively pushed out to the customer. 

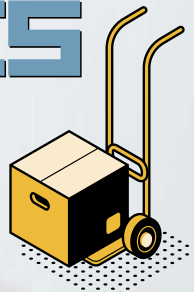


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IMAGES RETAIL'S JUNE 2019 ISSUE takes an in-depth look at supply chain management and the role of a responsive supply chain, logistics and warehousing in retail that can enhance businesses.

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From L to R: **Viren Razdan**, MD, Brand-nomics; **Arun Goel**, VP, Product Management, ShopClues; **Anand Aiyer**, Business Head – Easybuy, Landmark Group; **Amit Choudhary**, Co-Founder, Lenskart; **Rajesh Seth**, COO, FBB, Future Group; **Rahul Vira**, CEO Skechers South Asia; **Sunil Naik**, CEO, Reliance Jewels; **Lalit Agarwal**, CMD, V Mart and **Debhashish Mukherjee**, Partner & Head, Consumer & Retail Industries, India, A.T. Kearney

Opportunity to Expand in Newer Markets: Intelligence & Insights from Retailers Expanding to Tier II & III Cities

While an increasing number of both domestic and international retailers have been vigorously expanding into India's vast hinterland over the last few years, penetration into smaller cities as such needs rehashed retail strategies as well as an in-depth understanding of the consumer...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

The retail sector is experiencing exponential growth, with development taking place not just in major cities and metros, but also in Tier II & III and smaller cities and towns. With rising incomes, lifestyle changes and increased digital connectivity, these smaller towns are often touted to be the future epicenter of retail growth in India. While an increasing number of both domestic and international retailers have been vigorously expanding into India's vast hinterland over the last few years, penetration into smaller cities as such needs rehashed retail strategies as well as an in-depth understanding of the consumer.

At the second inaugural panel of India Fashion Forum 2019, a session was held with retailers who have ventured into and tasted success in Tier II & III cities. The panel, which was moderated by **Debhashish Mukherjee**, Partner & Head, Consumer & Retail Industries, India,



As consumers evolve, the tech factor will start bringing a greater confidence role versus the touch factor. So, it's an equilibrium of tech and touch, and as the market matures, it will move towards tech and disruption will have to happen.

As more and more people are getting onto the digital wave, commerce, in its true sense, is on its way and once it starts there will be a whole new amount of disruption. Basically, the digital medium is a channel that nobody can ignore and if any organisation fails to adapt it, it might have to bear severe consequences.

fbf sells more ladies western wear in Tier II and III towns. They have witnessed huge penetration in kidswear and menswear and surprisingly, the only category where Tier II and III towns have a lesser contribution in terms of business revenues is ethnic wear.

A.T. Kearney, shared its valuable insights on translating the fashion business into these new retail destinations. The panel included **Sunil Nayak**, CEO, Reliance Jewels; **Lalit Agarwal**, CMD, V Mart; **Rahul Vira**, CEO Skechers South Asia; **Rajesh Seth**, COO, FBB, Future Group; **Anand Aiyer**, Business Head – Easybuy, Landmark Group; **Amit Chaudhary**, Co-Founder, Lenskart; **Arun Goel**, VP, Product Management, ShopClues and **Viren Razdan**, MD, Brand-nomics.

fb operates in 160 cities in the country, and out of them only eight metros account for Tier I towns. About 65 percent of its revenue come from Tier II and III towns. Of this, around 35 percent business comes from only Tier III towns.



“You will be surprised to know that we sell more ladies western wear in Tier II and III towns. This is a contrast to the normal belief that youngsters in these markets are not as fashion; which actually is not the case. We have witnessed huge penetration in kidswear and menswear and surprisingly, the only category where Tier II and III towns have a lesser contribution in terms of business revenues is ethnic wear. Also, our productivity in Tier II and III towns is at par with Tier I towns. So on any matrix when I cut the data and look at the business, Tier II and III towns have immense potential and I think so this number is only going to increase dramatically. In fact, we have dedicated teams in smaller towns and smaller cities to expand business. We, as a

team in Big Bazaar, travel five days a week and I have been to almost 150 towns in the last seven years, and all I can tell you is that it’s unbelievable how these cities are turning around,” Rajesh Seth said kickstarting the discussion.

Shopclues currently is clocking hundred thousand audience a day hundred and about a million customers a month. About 60 percent sixty percent of its orders are registered from Tier II and III cities.

“This shift of smaller town outpacing the metros and Tier I cities was inevitable and honestly there still is a huge market coming in the near future from this segment. We expect a growth of about 8X in physical retail and in the years to come.

Also, in the years to come affordability will increase and these markets will be teeming with opportunity,” stated Arun Goel.

Market Strategy: Tier I vs Tier II vs Tier III

Tier II and III towns are large opportunities in small pockets. There obviously is no doubts about the aspirations of these markets but to be relevant to these markets, it’s very important to build a strategy imbibing the specific aspirational qualities. While consumer aspiration is at par with metros and Tier I cities, they still want a little bit of customisation relevant to the smaller markets.

“Landmark’s Max has been a quite



The new format, Easybuy, is comparatively smaller, more compact and has features reduced prices (about 20 percent lesser than Max) so that it easier to expand to the smaller market and we can take chances.

a successful value fashion brand, yet in the last 13 years, we have not been able to penetrate deeper into small towns, mainly because of profitability – considering the large format, operating cost and the sales that comes in, it wasn’t very viable economically. So we came up with Easybuy to get to the small town. The new format is comparatively smaller, more compact and has features reduced prices (about 20 percent lesser than Max) so that it easier to expand to the smaller market and we can take chances. if you really want make scale it up I think little bit of customisation keeping aspirational elements of the Metros goes a long way,” stated Anand Aiyer.

Reliance Jewels is focusing more on Tier II and III cities and will continue to do so in the years to come. As a young brand, Reliance Jewels enjoys a better brand recall and assurance in these markets when compared to metros along with easier profitability. “As for retail strategies and product mix, we ensure that the assortment and products differ from location to location even within the metros depending on what profile we cater to,” said Sunil Nayak.

Often, most brand depend on their respective planning department, who bank on parameters like local preferences, preferred price band with, etc., to work on strategies and product assortment for different markets. “But the reality can be a

stark contrast, at least that what we have noted,” added Rahul Vira.

Consumers from smaller cities and towns display similar preferences as compared to their metro peers. Although, a certain level of customisation is done in terms of the market profile, brands have to consider the evolved preferences that these customers have today.

“From what we have gathered from our store managers, we tend to undermine the preferences and buying capacity of these markets. To sum it all, these customers are as aware as their metro counterparts thanks to the internet and the penetration of mass media. It’s a learning process as everything is evolving very fast and every time we move into a new market, we have a lot of things that can be learned only on ground,” he added.

According to Amit Chaudhary, it’s practically impossible to define a retail strategy for Tier II and III cities – one has to learn on the go. “Our total economy of the country sits in Tier II and III cities and not on Tier I primarily. When these towns and cities are consuming so much of the economy, we as brands which need to be present there and our bring our accessibility. Like crowded Big Bazaar stores across the length and breadth of the country. It’s because people understand that power of a brand and when they have access to it, they consume,” he added.

India’s is an amalgamation of many different markets, all of which are at different stages of evolution and marketers have to adapt to that. “I think it’s a matter of timing. The market is there all right but the challenge for brands and retailers is to answer whether Tier II and III calls for massification or does it really mean going there and being present,” said Viren Razdan.

In a culturally diverse country like India where preferences change with every few miles, an infallible marketing strategy is near impossible to conceive. “We need to understand that what works in one Tier II market might not work in another Tier II market. Preferences of a small town in Gujarat will definitely be very different from that of a North Eastern state. We operate more than hundred 210 stores in 160 towns out of which almost 142 towns are Tier III. We see immense differences between all these markets. The market is there for sure, all we need to do as brands



and retailers is be confident enough to understand what works and how do we tweak it,” said Lalit Agarwal.

As a whole, the potential of smaller towns and cities are clearly apparent. But, aspirations are not turning into numbers for organised retailers at a pan India level, at the level of growth of the market. “India will probably be a combination of big brands and many regional players who piggy back on their designs and pricing and to create the local markets. The fact is 85 percent of the market is still out there and they have been catering to their own

constituencies. These different markets which are going to exist, and I can understand organizations can’t have split personalities by town type or color type or size type which is understandable so that’s the takeaway. I wish the representation we’re also with players who have more wholesale channels and etc., you will find a completely different SQ mix,” said Debashish Mukherjee.

Is Digital Disruptive?

Lalit Agarwal revealed that V Mart has been least affected by digital commerce, owing to both its low income target group and its niche product mix. “Yet, I think feature digitalization will penetrate more in the years to come and we need to be ready to be capable enough to serve them on both online and offline channels,” he added.

In the jewellery sector too, brand and retailers have been least affected by digital commerce. Yet, Sunil Nayak believes that brands across this sector will have to gear up to be able to seamlessly cater to their customers in the years to come.

Feature digitalisation will penetrate more in the years to come and we need to be ready to be capable enough to serve them on both online and offline channels.





Skechers' digital strategy revolves around three C's -- Content, Communication and Commerce. "Right now, the disruption I see is more in terms of content because you are consuming a lot of content every day. As more and more people are getting onto the digital wave, commerce, in its true sense, is on its way and once it starts there will be a whole new amount of disruption. Basically, the digital medium is a channel that nobody can ignore and if any organisation fails

The total economy of the country sits in Tier II and III cities and not on Tier I primarily. When these towns and cities are consuming so much of the economy, we as brands which need to be present there and our bring our accessibility.

This shift of smaller town outpacing the metros and Tier I cities was inevitable and honestly there still is a huge market coming in the near future from this segment. Also, in the years to come affordability will increase and these markets will be teeming with opportunity.

As for retail strategies and product mix, Reliance Jewels ensure that the assortment and products differ from location to location even within the metros depending on what profile the brand caters to.



to adapt it, it might have to bear severe consequences," stated Rahul Vira.

fb's motto is digital first. The brand has even digitised all its designs, which helps it to take decisions on new collections very easily. "We are drawing on digitisation in a big way. We have digitized our entire inventory management process we have an indigenous app which we've given to 365 of our stores managers we can they can do multiple functions at a press of a button. In the commerce front, we are seeing a huge amount of business traction in our online channel and in the long run. Omnichannel strategy is going to be critical for our business," Rajesh Seth added.

Lenskart, a born and bred digital brand that now has 500 brick-and-mortar stores, believes that Omnichannel is not about adding channel; rather it is actually about using channels to complement each other and grow mutually, and making a seamless experience for of moving from one channel to the other for consumers.

Taking about digital adoption in the smaller terms from the consumer perspective, Arun Goel said that there is consistent growth in the number of visitors coming from the smaller Tier II and II towns. Also, there has been a consistent growth in number of orders happening from these locations, which is a testimony of the growing penetration of digital in these areas. "Also, I want to add that, fashion brands and retailers need to work on the technology front and team up with partners who can increase scales for them because we cannot afford to experiment and then grow in this competitive age. And I think, this is where digitisation is going to help," he adds.

Especially in fashion, brands and retailers need to work on two paradigms - touch and tech. "In India too, as consumers evolve, the tech factor will start bringing a greater confidence role versus the touch factor. So, it's a equilibrium of tech and touch, and as the market matures, it will move towards tech and disruption will have to happen," said Viren Razdan. 

Junction Mall, Durgapur Offers Quality With Value For Money

The middle-class consumer has been elevated to a higher level, therefore shopping malls are focusing more on Tier II & III cities now, and Junction Mall, Durgapur is an excellent effort to meet these expectations and demands of consumers...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau



With the change in shopping trends in Tier I & II cities, there is a wave of emerging aspirational brands in East India. The middle-class consumer has been elevated to a higher level, therefore shopping malls are focusing more on Tier II & III cities now. The young generation is shopping and demanding both fashion and quality along with value for money. Junction Mall is an excellent effort to meet these expectations and demands of consumers.

In an exclusive interaction with IMAGES Retail, **Arijit Chatterjee, COO, Junction Mall Durgapur**, talks about the expansion plans of the brand in the Tier II & III cities and towns.

From a developer point, how do you choose a location for expansion in Tier II & III cities?

Being a developer, we follow the basic thumb rule of retail which is 'Consideration of Place and People'. From People's point, we conduct research, i.e. socio economy study of prospect customers of the location in three-time frames – present, five years from now and ten years from the present time. Since population count in the immediate catchment is cooperatively less in Tier II & III cities, we consider or take a study on daily population flow to that particular city from other locations, i.e. and daily traffic penetration to that city from neighboring places or event districts. Also, a study on the trend of their lifestyle, expense pattern, aspiration to upgrade etc. is other several factors of consideration. From place point of view, we give the first importance to the look to

the accessibility of the property. Preferred location is such where people from the city can come easily and also its easily accessible for the people coming from surrounding cities/locations.

How different is the retail catchment in these cities in comparison to Tier I and Metro cities?



In Tier I or Metro cities, the retail catchment is majorly consisting of the immediate catchment with a high density of population. Mostly the shopping behavior is the same for maximum pie. But, in Tier II or III cities, the catchment is very spread out. Although a major portion of the customers are definitely from immediate

catchment i.e., the city where the shopping establishment belongs to, but there is a strong influence of customers coming from surrounding towns up to 150kms-200kms depending on the transport system the city has. Taking the example of Junction Mall, apart from the population of Durgapur which is six lakhs, we experience customers coming

from Bardhaman, Asansol, Dhanbad, Bokaro, Bankura, Siuri, Bolpur etc. which belong to our surrounding districts, or even neighboring states.

Do you have separate marketing strategies for different cities?

We have to follow different marketing strategy for different cities that we



Junction Mall: At a Glance

Junction Mall, located right at the intersection of Durgapur's commercial centre and NH2, is slowly but gradually becoming a retail hallmark in South Bengal. Adding more to its popularity, it has been ranked as No. 1 place to visit in Durgapur city by popular website Trip Advisor. The mall is the brainchild of Primarc, in association with Shrachi Group. Stephen Coates, a globally acclaimed architect from Singapore, executed the structural design and space renditions for the facility. The mall design includes capacious stores, a rooftop multiplex, expansive food court, children's play zone, spacious corridors, airy walkways and multi-level car parking facilities to accommodate local and outstation visitors. The infrastructure is well equipped in terms of modern technological inclusions and supported by management staff and security.

With 95 percent occupancy, the mall has the presence of premium brands with TRENDZ Women, PEOPLE, Senco Gold & Diamond being the mini-anchor stores. Binge and Mumuso are the vanilla stores.

consider as our catchment as every city or town has their own shopping behavior and customer profiling. Since we experience a vast spread out catchment, we also follow different promotional tools. When we plan for cities like Bolpur or Bankura having a good catchment of students and young earning groups, we try to engage



our brand with various social events, and we plan our OOH locations accordingly. For cities like Asansol, Raniganj we prefer to go micro level BTL activities to ensure our reach directly to their house, etc.

What attracts more crowds in Tier II cities – the lure of shopping or the FEC segment?

As per our past experience and learning phases, we came to know that FECs attract more crowds in Tier II cities. Here, a customer looks for a destination where

they can go for shopping, entertainment for kids and for themselves as well along with good options of F&B and having good facilities as well. Since in Tier II the catchment is spread in a large geographical area, people look for spaces where they can spend longer periods of time which FECs offer them.

Do you think international brands make for a good business there in comparison to the national brands?

This is not always true. It completely depends on the socio-economic class of the catchment and the buying behavior. India is a growing market and always there is a scope of performance for aspirational brands. People always look for up-gradation in lifestyle. International brands attract people, but the end word always stands depending on how it matches the expectation of the customers.



Have you added any new technologies in the mall? Do you plan to in the future?

We are in a phase of introducing new technologies in our mall. Apart from the influence of the digital platform of promotion and Google navigation, recently we converted our parking system with complete end-to-end tech support for better performance in terms of safety, security, time management, etc. Also, we are in framing work to launch "Junction Mall APP" which will be having very the interactive interface which will help customers to know all happenings in the mall along with live navigation, offers running, placing an order in the Food Court, booking tickets for a movie, etc. It will also be rewarding to customers.

PRM Marketcity: An Opportunity for Brands to Reach an Untapped Consumer Base

PRM Marketcity addresses the emerging lifestyle of people living in semi-urban areas by providing the right mix of shopping, food & entertainment...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau



PRM Marketcity a marketplace model designed to suit the needs of people residing in Tier III towns across Eastern India. It is an opportunity for brands across the country to access millions of untapped customers who are still not exposed to such lifestyle centres. It addresses the emerging lifestyle of people living in semi-urban areas by providing the right mix of shopping, food and entertainment.

PRM BEGRAJ Group plans to open seven such Marketcity by 2021. The group is one of the leading Real Estate Developers in the North East India. It recently launched Erestwhile Sunflower Mall in Siliguri as India's Largest FBB store. Built over 3 levels, the store has a total area of 40000 sq.ft. **Umang Mittal, Executive Director (PRM Begraj Group) & Founder (PRM Marketcity)** talks about the expansion plans of the brand in Tier III cities and towns.

From a developer point of view, how do you choose a location for expansion in Tier III cities?

Before entering any new city, we spend a considerable amount of time understanding the existing shopping patterns and city hotspots. We always target to remain as close as possible to the heart of the city. This helps us in achieving very high occupancy rates since retailer and investor confidence remains very high. A good location also prevents future competition. However, ample parking space is a challenge in these prime locations.

How different is the retail catchment in these cities in comparison to Tier I and metro cities?

The geographical segmentation is limited in smaller cities as travel time from one corner to the other does not exceed 30 minutes on average. It results in the entire city becoming the catchment unlike Metros which cater to different locations via multiple retail centres. The cities beyond the vicinity of metros also draw significant floating crowd from nearby towns helping boost mall footfall and revenues. People in smaller cities have greater aspirational value which reflects huge potential as far as consumption is concerned.

Do you have separate marketing strategies for different cities?

Yes, we do have separate marketing strategies for different cities. Every city

responds differently to a particular strategy hence we always customise our strategies according to our study of the catchment.

What attracts more crowds in Tier III cities – the lure of shopping or the FEC segment?

There has been a significant evolution in this aspect when it comes to smaller cities. Until a few years ago, the top priority of customers used to be new and aspirational brands which the city had never seen before. Brands like Shoppers Stop, Lifestyle, Forever 21, H&M used to be the key footfall drivers in the mall. As online businesses emerged and the city profile grew, the priorities have evolved to FEC as families started to visit mall for a complete family experience rather than just shopping. All our upcoming centres have significant space for FECs.



Asansol Centrum: Big Millennial Hotspot in a Small Town

In a consistent endeavor to make the mall more appealing and sophisticated, Asansol Centrum constantly engages in adding new and state of the art technologies and features in terms of audio visuals and marketing communication...

By IMAGES Retail Bureau

Spread across 2.50 lakhs sq.ft. of retail space, Asansol Centrum – Bengal Shristi Infrastructure Development, is the largest shopping centre in Asansol. The mall has several international and national brand outlets and offers exclusive restaurants and food courts to its visitors. With ample car parking space available for everyone, the mall is very

the employability factor is another important point that has propelled the development of the retail sector in Tier II and III cities as these cities are brimming with Millennials looking for employment opportunities. Also, with the advent of the Internet and India being the country with the highest number of mobile users, the aspiration factor in Tier II and III cities is high, which in turn has generated

Do you have separate marketing strategies for different cities?

Marketing strategies are obviously different for Tier II and III cities. Tier II and III cities have a different target group that requires a more direct and targeted strategy. For Tier II cities, we focus more on creating awareness of our brands locally.

What attracts more crowds in Tier II cities – the lure of shopping or the FEC segment?

The FEC segment is rapidly gaining popularity in Tier II and III cities. While entertainment plays a pivotal role in attracting footfalls in the mall, branded shopping has the aspiration factor associated with it that drives more crowds to the mall. So, both the segments hold equal importance in these cities.

Do you think international brands make for a good business there in comparison to national brands?

While international brand presence escalates the mall in terms of value proposition, in Tier II and III cities, it's the national brands that appeal more to the customers because of their affordability and value for money.

Have you added any new technologies in the mall? Do you plan to in the future?

In our consistent endeavor to make the mall more appealing and sophisticated, we constantly engage in adding new and state of the art technologies and features in terms of audiovisuals and marketing communication. In terms of safety and security, we have deployed state of the art technologies as well.



popular amongst the Millennials in the region. **Sahil Saharia, Chief Executive Officer, Bengal Shristi** talks about the expansion plans of the brand in Tier II & III cities and towns.

From a developer point, how do you choose a location for expansion in a Tier II & III cities?

There are several factors that have prompted developers to choose Tier II and III cities for expansion plans. Firstly, the huge untapped market and consumer base in Tier II and III cities have attracted developers. Retail sector is one of the top three employers in the country,

a demand for branded fashion, food and entertainment. This demand has paved the path for developers to venture into Tier II and III cities with expansion plans.

How different is the retail catchment in these cities in comparison to Tier I and metro cities?

In terms of retail catchment, Tier II and III cities are quite different from Tier I and Metro cities. Tier I & III cities are slightly more price sensitive compared to metro cities, so the retail mix in malls are a combination of national and local brands. Value formats do really well in these cities.



The Omnichannel Battleground:

Empowered Associates are Key Differentiators for Brick- and-Mortar Stores

While retail stores are co-managed by a combination of store associates, AI robots, intelligent systems and self-service technology, it is essential to note that humans have to be in control for all these technologies to work in tandem. The crux of it all, therefore, is in how retailers train and engage digitally native associates to work together with in-store technology...

By Sivakumar Thiyagarajan, Managing Consultant and Somraj Choudhary, Consulting Partner– Retail, Wipro Limited

Retail associates have long been seen as a cost lever that need to be optimised and automated. However, the explosion of channels and a changing customer landscape is forcing brick-and-mortar retailers to look at every lever differently and treat their physical assets (including associates) as a key to providing better service and diving efficiencies.

Some years ago, a large retailer such as Nordstrom could pride itself on being



the benchmark for customer service through dedicated and loyal employees. But can this work today for traditional retailers? That is the big question. While retail stores are co-managed by a combination of store associates, AI robots, intelligent systems and self-service technology, it is essential to note that humans have to be in control for all these technologies to work in tandem. The crux of it all, therefore, is in how retailers train and engage digitally native associates to work together with in-store technology. This is one of the key determinants of the success of a store.

Changing Workforce Dynamics

Retail associates today demand the same experience as customers. They tend to be loyal to organisations that address their basic professional needs but also provide a fun, organised and safe environment to work. Gone are the days where an associate would spend months to learn processes, toggle between different excel sheets to get information or look at a job sheet to check tasks.

A recent report *'Big Demands & High Expectations: The Deloitte Millennial Survey'*, suggests that by 2025, 75 percent of the workforce would comprise of Millennials, and a significant part of the remaining 25 percent made up of Gen Z-ers. The report says that Millennials and Gen Z-ers are naturally tech savvy. Devices and technology have been their companions everyday ever since they were born. Their motivations aren't monetary alone. They care a great deal about social trends, experiences and the ethical quotient of the brands they are associated with.

Keeping the findings of this report in mind, here's what retailers need to think about:

1. Seamless Transition From Day-To-Day Tech to Workplace Tech:

For a generation that has grown up on smartphones and seamless connectivity, it is demotivating to work on archaic systems that are non-intuitive or reflective of life outside work. Retailers



must adopt a design-led approach keeping employees at the center of the decision making process and re-imagine the workplace tech instead of quick and easy fixes. There are multiple retailers who migrate from a RF gun in stores to an android-based device, only to see a different set of problems with the new device.

2. Tech-Enabled Onboarding & Training:

Retail in-store attrition is at around about 20 percent – 30 percent a year and there are temporary workers due to seasonality, promotions and new launches. Training, therefore, becomes an important part of associate engagement. As this new workforce is more known for instant and granular consumption of information, and not known very well for

Retail associates today demand the same experience as customers. They tend to be loyal to organisations that address their basic professional needs but also provide a fun, organised and safe environment to work.



human relationships, technologies such as voice-based assistants, AR/VR-based training tools must be imagined and brought into practice. This would not just enthruse the employees, but also result in a huge reduction of cost associated with on-boarding and training.



3. Collaborative Work Environment:

With physical stores continuing to serve the Omnichannel needs of the customer, the range of activities that a store associate performs have grown manifold in the last few years. Apart from selling, associates spend more time today in activities such as receiving, stockroom/shelf replenishment, picking, packing, manning customer pickup counters, aisle checkout, answering customers' Omnichannel queries etc. All these point to a solution that should help an associate work with people across functions and departments. Having an associate focused social network and collaborative tools and structuring policies that promote collaboration will ease the work environment.

4. Enabling a Gig Economy at Work:

Global economics today is majorly driven by 'sharing'. With respect to the workforce, employees are looking at alternate means to engage in interesting tasks, and to earn money through them.

Role of Technology at Brick-and-Mortar Stores

Technology decisions are made with clear decision-making criterion that has stood the test of time even today across industries based on personal experience. The key parameters considering all the important prospects under one roof are:

Customers: Customer Satisfaction, experience, Net promoter Score

Employees: Serve customers better, customer delight, ease of doing business

Revenue: Increase average ticket number of transactions

Capability: Enter new markets, attract new customers, create new categories

This is more relevant in a store setting, where associates can pitch in on a busy day (or when their colleagues are on unplanned leaves) and earn money through that. Workforce scheduling and labor management at stores is still a top-down approach at most retailers, with the respective store managers 'pushing' work to the associates. Instead, if retailers can make associates bid or qualify for some jobs, that will create the right 'pull'.




5. Gamification of Work: We are already seeing retailers employ this at stores. Developing a scoring mechanism where associates can team up, compete and earn points with productivity numbers are measured against each other and overall organisational KPIs can go a long way in improving the productivity.

6. Transparency in Business Decisions:

Engaging associates in business decisions, and frequently communicating updates and developments specific to a region or a store through platforms such as podcasts, blogs can build the emotional connect between an associate and a retailer. This transparency in decision making has the potential to instill a sense of ownership in each associate, which can then keep them motivated.



In the fight for dominance in the Omnichannel world, associates have the potential to turn the store network into an asset. Customers love coming to stores and an empowered associate can build brand loyalty, help provide the right experience and enable convenience in ways that machines will struggle to do for the next 10 years. Investing into associates to build the right infrastructure for the stores involves investing in people, technology and processes, and re-imagining the store with the customer and the associate as the key stakeholders. 



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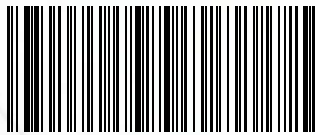
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How Cinépolis is Revamping India's Family Entertainment Experience

The brand has recently launched 10-screen megaplex in Forum Shantiniketan, Bengaluru. It is the third in India after Pune and Thane. The megaplex has also launched first Cinépolis Junior in India...

By Charu Lamba



Cinépolis, India's first international and the world's second largest movie theatre circuit by attendance, has always been recognised as a technologically driven cinema exhibitor with innovation at the forefront.

Standing true to its commitment, the brand has recently launched 10-screen megaplex in Forum Shantiniketan, Bengaluru. It is the third in India after Pune and Thane. The megaplex has also launched the first Cinépolis Junior in India.

"In sync with changing customer needs, Cinépolis continually innovates with new and interesting entertainment formats. The new formats offer families an innovative and fun way to connect at one-of-a-kind spaces which are designed keeping children in mind," says **Javier Sotomayor, Managing Director, Cinépolis Asia.**

"Cinépolis has redefined the movie-going experience by introducing many industry firsts in India such as the concept of Megaplex in November 2013, the 4DX format in 2014 and the first wireless VR gaming zone (Pune) to name a few. With focus on ensuring usage of globally disruptive technologies, we boast of the finest technologies like IMAX, RealD 3D and Dolby Atmos," he adds.

In its first decade of operations in India, it has established its position as the third largest cinema exhibitor.

Who's Who

Javier Sotomayor has been with Cinépolis for 15 years and has worked in Mexico, Central America and India. He was part of the initial team of Cinépolis India and has been part of the Board of Directors since its inception in 2007.

He was in charge of the first international expansion of the company to Central America in 2002 and has occupied various positions at a global level like Marketing, Supply Chain and Business Development. He created and led Cinépolis low-budget cinema concept in Mexico, which accounts for more than 300 screens, so far. He has over 20 years of experience in start-ups, marketing, business development and strategic planning in the industries of retail, entertainment and financial services. He is an Industrial and Systems Engineer from Tec de Monterrey, with an MBA from "IPADE Business School.



"We believe that a higher number of screens in a multiplex are more beneficial for the consumers as they can go watch a movie at any given time. It also gives the exhibitors like us the opportunity to showcase different and niche content."

– JAVIER SOTOMAYOR
Managing Director, Cinépolis Asia

A Chef-Designed Menu

Just like the brand has been introducing new technologies time and again, it has also revamped its entire food menu and has introduced food innovations in collaboration with celebrated chef Saransh Goila.

“Understanding the importance of a quality culinary experience, we constantly innovate with our offerings. Recently, we have partnered with celebrity chef Saransh Goila to launch over 100

dishes as a part of its new lip smacking menu,” Sotomayor states.

“Apart from this, our signature ‘Coffee Tree’ brand provides a gourmet menu of delectable food and beverages offering a plethora of cuisines from Italian to Mexican,” he adds.

A host of innovative and first-of-its-kind services are also being devised by the brand, endorsing their own commitment of setting new benchmarks in the ever-expanding cinema exhibition industry.



Location Strategy

Aggressive expansion is a vital part of Cinépolis’ commitment towards building its India growth story. There are multiple factors that influence location finalisation; one of the prerequisites being prime/central locations as it ensures easy accessibility, higher footfalls and promises a high return on investment.

“We also conduct psychographic and competitive analysis and utilize the insights to finalize the location of the next screen release,” Sotomayor reveals.


“We believe that a higher number of screens in a multiplex are more beneficial for the consumers as they can go watch a movie at any given time. It also gives the exhibitors like us the opportunity to showcase different and niche content; be it Hollywood, Bollywood or regional. We are in sync with the demand have up to 15 screens in our megaplexes,” he adds.

Cinépolis gives preference to malls where the promoters retain their interest in the mall by offering 100 percent lease and not selling spaces.

“Based on the revenue potential of the mall, we do offer minimum guarantee. However, revenue sharing is the most successful model which has worked globally, and it results in a win-win situation for mall developers and cinema owners. Hence, we do offer a reasonable minimum guarantee or revenue share, whichever is higher,” he states.

Future Plans

The brand, which boasts of 371 screens, has aggressively pursued expansion in prime locations of not only Tier 1 cities but also Tier II and III cities.

“We are currently focusing on aggressive expansion backed by the strategic move of opening multiplexes at prime locations. In terms of numbers, we are looking at increasing our footprint to 600 screens in India by 2022,” Sotomayor concludes. 



Cinépolis to Target Tier II & III Cities

Cinépolis total screen-count now stands at 371 screens with 87 multiplexes across India. The newly inaugurated, Cinépolis Saket has a total capacity of 894 seats. Cinépolis Saket is the first multiplex by Cinépolis in North India to have a 4DX screen which is considered to be the biggest innovation in cinematic technology to date. 4DX provides the largest number of multi-sensory effects among 4D cinema brands.

While revealing plans on acquiring more screens, Sotomayor said, “We look at each and every opportunity that we have, whatever makes sense both financially and strategically, we will make our best to make it happen. Not many opportunities are left in the market, but having said that, we are still looking out for the best opportunities. We are planning to end this year with around 400 screens and adding 40-50 screens every year going ahead. We are targeting areas like Bhubaneshwar, Bengaluru and Hyderabad.”

Apart from this, the brand which has 4 megaplexes, is introducing one more megaplex with 11 screens in Forum Mall, Bengaluru next month.

“We pioneered the concept of entertaining kids by introducing kids special cinema halls abroad and now we will be replicating the same in India by opening our first Cinépolis Jr screen in Bengaluru next month.”

Cinépolis India has created a strong footprint across 57 Indian cities with strong presence in major metros: Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, and Bengaluru. Cinépolis extends a contemporary approach which seamlessly weaves the entire range of cherry-picked cinema formats from across the world under one roof offering an unmatched experience to all movie patrons.

“India not only has the potential for the years to come but for the decades to come is enormous. There is no other country which offers the potential of growth the India does. We want to have a strong footprint in India to face the future and we are very confident that this country is taking the necessary steps to capture the potential,” he concluded.



New E-commerce Policy: Retailers Seek to Override the Fallout

Formulated and cited to usher in price parity between online and offline retailers, the policy also intends to address the major issue of data colonisation...

By Anuj Kejriwal

The advent of e-commerce in India 'smartly' altered the shopping habits of Indian netizens. Anything and everything - from groceries to apparel to electronics etc. - is now just a click away. For a while, it appeared that 'couch potato shopping' was gaining prominence and disrupting the entire brick-and-mortar business.

It now emerges that this has not really happened. Despite causing disruptions, the 'e-commerce effect' was not enough to have a significant and lasting impact on the conventional retail formats.

For a while, online giants like Amazon and Walmart-owned Flipkart were basking in the rising success of the effervescent Indian e-commerce business arena. They were maneuvering strategies to penetrate deeper into newer markets by way of discounts for their customers. And then, the government pulled out a wild card - and thereby threw a major spanner in the works - with the new e-commerce policy.

It came as a shock for the affected entities, including consumers who were buried deep in the world of cash-backs and deep discounts. However, thanks to the new policy, traditional retailers now had a more level playing field and could regain a significant share of their brick-and-mortar stores.



Anuj Kejriwal,
MD & CEO - ANAROCK Retail

New E-commerce Policy: Advantage Physical Stores?

Formulated and cited to usher in price parity between online and offline retailers, the policy also intends to address the major issue of data colonisation. Major policy highlights include:

- > Online marketplaces must treat all vendors at par; the policy prohibits e-retailers from selling products via vendors in which they have an equity interest
- > The concept of 'exclusivity' wherein players preferred to promote, market



and sell certain products exclusively on their platforms shall no longer prevail.

- > No e-retailer can control the inventory of the vendors.
- > E-commerce players cannot influence the sale price of goods or services, directly or indirectly. Thus, special provisions of quick delivery and cashback presented by the e-tailers must now be applicable for all vendors on their platforms.

This move in some way aims to promote fair trade. While online giants will now need to urgently re-strategise their business, physical stores will benefit from this move. For instance, in absence of 'exclusivity', vendors will scout for alternate options such as physical stores to reach out to a wider network, including

in the country's hinterlands. By opting for the offline route, they will now give a hitherto lacking 'look and feel' effect of their product to consumers. This will invariably create more demand for retail real estate and boost brick-and-mortar retail formats, which in some way are trying to adjust to level up with the new online revolution.

As is, the market share of online players is more than 12 percent of the overall retail market. This is expected to reach at par with physical stores over the next 5 years.

What Next for E-retailers?

Even before the announcement of the policy, e-commerce biggies including amazon and alibaba were striving to capture a larger pie of the physical stores in order to stay relevant in the ongoing

E-commerce players will also look to create new tie-ups with offline retailers or buy a stake in them. For instance, amazon bought a 5 percent stake in Shoppers Stop way back in 2017.

retail boom in India. Rising consumerism in India is continuously prompting them to alter their business models. This policy change will now make them more 'serious' about investing in offline stores.

E-commerce players will also look to create new tie-ups with offline retailers or buy a stake in them. For instance, amazon bought a 5 percent stake in Shoppers Stop way back in 2017. Today, its most-



anticipated deal with Kishore Biyani-led Future Retail may see some positive signs. Whether or not this deal happens, it will eventually intensify competition in the market - and this will invariably benefit the consumer.

Last but not the least, vendors (smaller brands) who couldn't afford or opt for 'exclusivity' and were eventually losing their visibility, will now have less to fear as they will slowly and steadily regain and retain relevance in the overall retail market place.

That said, there are certain loopholes in the policy which could be used by online players to 'save their day'. Even if we do away with the 'exclusivity' in online retail, players may still continue to give offers and discounts. New Indian brands entering the market can still tie up with online players to market their products who, in turn, can limit their supply to physical stores. The norms on this are still not clear in the new policy. After all, it boils down to survival tactics that may eventually save the day for online players. With billions of dollars at stake, they will surely work to find alternatives so as to remain relevant in the Indian retail growth story. **IR**

Benetton Launches New Collection on Instagram; Will Introduce Tech-Friendly Store in India

Benetton India has unveiled an exclusive collectible line in collaboration with established artists of the country on an Instagram Live Auction. The ground-breaking launch of this collectible line, #UnitedbyArt, was supported by popular Bollywood stars as well as fashion influencers on Instagram...

Charu Lamba



“We have always kept creativity and social relevance central to our culture and we have consistently strived to do business in a way our associates, partners and customers are proud of.”

– SUNDEEP CHUGH,
MANAGING DIRECTOR &
CEO, BENETTON INDIA

Benetton India has done what no other brand in the country has – unveiled an exclusive collectible line in collaboration with established artists of the country ... on Instagram! The brand has titled the collectible line #UnitedbyArt.

The collection was revealed at an Instagram live auction with actress Rhea Kapoor and popular fashion influencers including Pallavi Ruhail, Bahaar Dhawan Rohatgi, Rasna Bhasin and Sherry Shroff coming forth to support the technological initiative.

Echoing the brand's long standing dedication to art, **Sundeep Chugh, Managing Director & CEO, Benetton India** said, “Benetton is a brand built on innovation. We have always kept creativity and social relevance central to our culture and we have consistently strived to do business in a way our associates, partners and customers are proud of. Art is very close to our cultural fabric and this special collectible line is our commitment to empower the artists and bring them to the forefront. We are proud to see the paintings coming alive with the first collectible line, every artwork has a creative story to tell keeping the core of Benetton in mind.”

Since 1965, Benetton has strived to promote identity through equality, diversity and optimism. And art has a somewhat deep and complex relationship with identity. The brand's latest project reinforces the theme of 'Social Integration', something which has long been dear to the Benetton brand, imbuing it with new meaning.

"Indian consumers are keen to own the best of fashion trends today, especially since their fashion sense is rapidly evolving, all thanks to a digital wave which is increasing awareness. To address their growing needs, we introduced this Collectible line on Instagram," Chugh stated.

Reinventing its India Stores

Along with reinventing itself with the help of technology, Benetton – which gained glory because of its iconic, solid yellow sweater – is planning to revamp its existing stores in India on global lines. It

will replicate its London store concept in all Indian stores. The first concept store for the brand will be launched in New Delhi.

"Our store in London has no cash desk. We use technology to raise invoices along with making sure that if a garment is not available in store, we should still be able to deliver it to customers. The London store also boasts of a knitwear theatre displaying the brand's extensive knitwear collection, LED-screen clad 12 ft arches, a lounge area and touchscreen interactive tables. The idea is to give consumers a seamless experience, hassle-free and convenient," explained Chugh.

Brand custodians are confident that by the end of 2019, they will have at least six stores in India which are aligned to the global direction, with a focus on technology.

Innovating its Product

Since Benetton was launched, the quality

of product has been one of the key pillars of the brand.

"We constantly keep on working on how do we give consumer a better fabric feel and better quality experience, so there is a lot of innovation which keeps happening on the quality front," Chugh said.

"The latest that we have done has cotton fabric on the front and net fabric at the back, that is how actually we are looking at evolving. Apart from this, the current collection - A Heritage Line - inspired by what we have done in the 80s. We are doing what we did in 80s but in a way that will appeal to Millennials," he added.

The Importance of Visual Merchandising

Visual Merchandising (VM) is a store's calling card. Even before a customer walks in, talks to a salesperson, browses leisurely through a store, it is VM that would decide whether he will enter the store and buy something.

"All our collections are divided into three parts: Foundation Line – which is the core of the collection, Fashion Line and Fashion Forward. Our VM exercise is integrated at the time of conceptualising of this collection structure. For us VM is not something that starts in store but begins along with the brand's story for the season," explained Chugh.

However, Chugh firmly believes that for VM to be a hit and bring in a desired number of footfalls, a brand's product has to be great. If the product is not good enough then no amount of formatting, technology implementation or visual merchandising can help.

Future Plans

Benetton, which is planning to launch its Omnichannel strategy by the end of 2019, has around 400 exclusive stores in India and 5,000 stores globally.

"We are looking forward to open 50 stores this year and over the next three years, we will open nearly 150 new doors. As a brand we have been growing at high double digit CAGR for the last 8 years and our objective is to maintain this statistic," Chugh concluded on a high note. **R**



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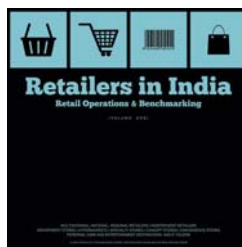
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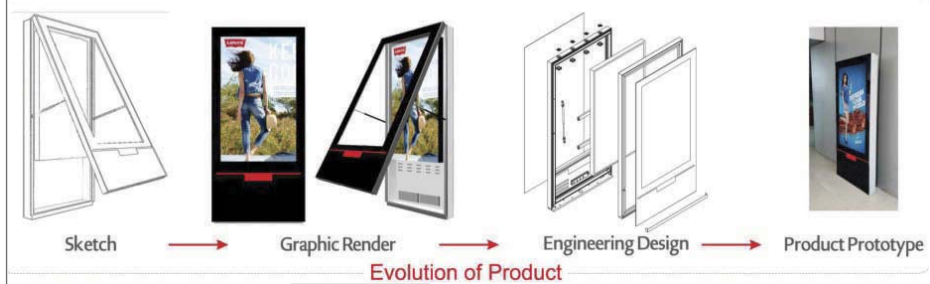
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