

COVER STORY: GROFERS TO INVEST US\$ 15 MILLION IN 'OWN BRANDS' OVER THE NEXT YEAR

Ahead of What's Next

Progressive GROCER

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KIRANAS** Kiranas
Upgrade Their Services,
Turn To Tech Solutions In
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C OVID-19, which has been disastrous for the retail industry all over the world, proved to be just the impetus the food and grocery segment needed to surge ahead. After the pandemic hit, grocers and CPG retailers experienced huge demand from a rapidly growing base of consumers – many of whom are expected to purchase from them even after the pandemic is over. But while pandemic may have opened the floodgates of opportunities, it also has altered consumer behaviour radically. The focus on health and hygiene has intensified and consumers are turning to e-commerce for their needs. Also, with the increasing relevance of grocery retail, new consumer purchasing trends are emerging. From mobile apps to manage inventory & store operations, adoption of self-checkout counters, contactless payment and endless aisles to data analytics and insights technology is steadily becoming the backbone of the Indian food and grocery industry today.

This issue of Progressive Grocer outlines how easily players of this domain can upgrade themselves by adopting technology solutions to serve their customers better. Inside, you will find comprehensive insights on new, easy-to-adopt technologies that can effectively bolster business banking on automation, artificial intelligence, data analysis, etc.

As always, we hope you find the issue informative and useful. Log on to our website www.indiaretailing.com/category/food/food-grocery/ for more features, analysis and expert opinions.

Amitabh Taneja
Editor-in-Chief

All feedback welcome at editorpgindia@imagesgroup.in

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Kiranas Upgrade Their Services, Turn to Tech Solutions in Pandemic

WITH THE ONSET OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, KIRANA STORES HAVE STARTED ENJOYING RENEWED LEVELS OF TRUST FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD COMMUNITIES, WINNING NEW CUSTOMERS – MANY OF WHOM ARE EXPECTED TO PURCHASE FROM THEM EVEN AFTER PANDEMIC IS OVER. WITH THIS NEW BOOM IN BUSINESS, KIRANA STORE OWNERS ARE OFFERING A HOST OF SERVICES TO THEIR NEW CONSUMERS – CREDIT, HOME-DELIVERY, HYPER-LOCAL APPS, HYPER-LOCAL MERCHANDISE – AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS.

By Charu Lamba

The onset of the pandemic has changed the way the Indian Retail Industry works and the Indian consumer shops. From researching online and buying in-store, the consumer moved to buying online and picking

up in-store. Now with COVID-19 forcing people inside the relative safety of their homes, the customer is buying online and getting every home delivered.

While the consumer wants greater freedom of choice and convenience – from ordering, to delivery, and payments – s/he also wants everything at his doorstep. There is a significant increase in the awareness and adoption of digital commerce and omnichannel buying.

“Consumers are buying what they need. The biggest trend in the post- COVID world is that people are mostly buying essential items. Staples, flour, and oil categories are growing. Snacks, health drinks and health foods are also doing well. The tea and coffee segment has

Grofers to Invest US\$ 15 Million In 'Own Brands' Over the Next Year

OVER THE LAST SIX YEARS, GROFERS HAS DEALT WITH A RANGE OF EXPERIENCES LIKE EUPHORIC HIGHS, TEMPORARY SETBACKS, AND A LOT MORE SATISFYING COMEBACKS. WHILE SOME PART OF IT IS FORTUNE, THE BRAND'S TEAM WAS ABLE TO FIGURE OUT WHAT LURKED BENEATH THE SURFACE AND EVENTUALLY WHAT IT TOOK TO OPEN UP ONLINE GROCERY TO MIDDLE INDIA, EXPLAINS GROFERS FOUNDER, SAURABH KUMAR IN A FREE-WHEELING CHAT WITH PROGRESSIVE GROCER...

By Charu Lamba

Grofers, one of India's largest low price online supermarkets in the grocery space, uses its in-house technology platform to manage a network of over 5,000 partner stores that enable the company to run a fast and lean supply chain – from manufacturers straight to customers in 27+ cities.

The brand utilizes its efficient supply chain to deliver over 25 million products to customers every month. A majority of these products belong to the company's 8 in house brands namely Grofers Happy Day, Grofers Happy Home, Grofers Mothers choice, Grofers Happy Baby, G Fresh, O'range and budget brands Savemore and Havemore.

“Over the last six years, we have dealt with a range of experiences like euphoric highs, temporary setbacks, and a lot more satisfying comebacks. While some part of it is fortune, our team was able to figure out what lurked beneath the surface and eventually what it took to open up online grocery to middle India. It happened to us when we moved to an inventory led model in 2017,” says **Saurabh Kumar, Founder, Grofers.**

“After realising that the consistent areas where we generated the highest customer loyalty were home to the lower middle class and middle class consumers, who were dependent on savings, we decided to serve these price-sensitive consumers without making them



compromise on the quality of products,” adds Kumar.

Shifting to an inventory-led model was also an important decision for Grofers to strengthen the supply chain capabilities, and over the last two years, the brand has grown at a staggering 800 percent to be on path to profitability.

In a candid conversation with Progressive Grocer, Kumar shares the journey of the brand, product and categories, strategies and learnings, impact of COVID-19 and the future course of action.

Excerpts from the Interview:

What is the USP of Grofers?

While others in the category work on a hyperlocal model, we work on an inventory-led model to cater to a large number of audiences who make planned purchases. The inventory-led model helps us to strengthen our supply chain capabilities and keep pace with the growth.

With our grocery specific supply chain built over the last six years, we aim to provide value to our customers through savings and value for money, lowest prices and quality items across various categories. We also have a wide portfolio of our 'own brands', which include quality household products across multiple categories such as staples and kitchen ingredients, FMCG items, personal hygiene products like soaps, shower gels, face wash, household needs like cleaning products, furnishing items to name a few. Close to 90 percent of our users are already using our 'own brands' (G-brands).

Festive Gifting: Bringing Back the Cheer Dulled by the Pandemic

INDIA HAS GONE INTO THE UNLOCK PHASE AND PROFIT-MAKING ACTIVITY HAS NORMALISED TO A CERTAIN EXTENT AND MAJOR PLAYERS ACROSS SECTORS ARE EXPECTING A SIZABLE DEMAND TO BE BACK ON TRACK IN THIS FESTIVE SEASON...

By Charu Lamba

Consumption patterns have changed significantly during the festive season so far, led by lockdown restrictions and lifestyle changes.

“India has gone into the unlock phase and profit-making activity has normalised to a certain extent. Major players across sectors are expecting a sizable demand to be back on track in this festive season,” says a Snapbizz report titled SnapPulse.

COVID-19 era has changed the way consumers purchased their groceries in the following ways:

- ▶ what they bought (product mix),
- ▶ how they bought (frequency of purchases/visits, size of each purchase) and
- ▶ from whom they bought (online/offline).

“Due to the COVID-19 situation, we are seeing that the consumers are making certain trade-offs in terms of spends during the festive season. Due to the lockdown/ movement restrictions/ lifestyle changes, they are spending more on certain categories and reducing their spending on certain categories for the festivals,” the report further reads.

Gifting - An Intrinsic Feature of Festive Season

The festive season is a time of spreading joy and happiness and gifting has become an intrinsic feature of this season. Festive season, through the medium of gifting, helps in nourishing our connections and this is a theme that plays across all product categories.

Both retailers and manufacturers aver that gifts have come to occupy an important part in our lives and gifting builds human relationships.

According to a report by InMobi, “This year, Indian consumers will spend Rs 15,000 on an average, the majority of whom plan to increase their budgets from the last year. Despite the pandemic, this

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Festive Gifting:

**BRINGING
 BACK**

The Cheer Dulled
 By The Pandemic

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEXT THREE ISSUES

OCTOBER 2020: HEALTH & WELLNESS: The COVID pandemic is even changing the way we eat. As healthy food takes precedence in consumer's preference, the segment is witnessing rapid growth. We chalk out the market dynamics and the opportunities.

NOVEMBER 2020: NEW YEAR SPECIAL: New years bring new trends — as well as new opportunities and challenges for retailers across the world. This issue will help grocers keep tab of the new trends expected to emerge in 2021 and stay ahead of the competition.

DECEMBER 2020: READY TO EAT: The trend of ready to eat has gathered momentum in recent times of Covid-19. Going forward, this category is expected to become an essential and will no longer be seen as a discretionary spends.

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Tech-Savvy Kiranas: The Way Forward for Retail in India

ALTHOUGH THE ADVENT OF TECHNOLOGY HAS NOT PUT KIRANA STORES ENTIRELY OUT OF BUSINESS, IT HAS CREATED AN URGENT NEED FOR THEM TO KEEP PACE WITH THE BREAKNECK SPEED AT WHICH DIGITIZATION AND AUTOMATION ARE GROWING...

By Samarth Agrawal, Founder & CEO, MaxWholesale

Since their inception, kirana stores have been a major contributor to the Indian retail industry both from the consumer as well as the retailers' perspective. They are considered one-stop destinations for day-to-day needs, providing consumers the basic essentials and non-essentials products. Owing to their indispensable nature, kirana stores and residential units have always coexisted. But, with technology's progress, several of us have turned to online shopping for groceries and other items we use every day. Technology has made it possible for us to browse through the products, choose what we want, and make the payment seamlessly with just a click of a button. Although the advent of technology has not put kirana stores entirely out of business, it has created an urgent need for them to keep pace with the breakneck speed at which digitization and automation are growing.

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has only accelerated this gap with the series of lockdowns hampering business and creating an adverse impact overall for kirana stores. With restricted movement, disruptions in the supply chain, shortage of labour, and safety concerns, several kirana stores have either shut shop or are struggling to source inventory and avoid overstocking of items. To help them maintain business continuity and boost sales and revenue, kirana stores have turned towards tech-driven B2B platforms that

are helping them source inventory, receive real-time updates, and avoid stocking out and overstocking. Recent times have seen kirana stores evolve to adopt technology and revamp their processes. We take a look at how tech-savvy kirana stores are the way forward.

Changing Consumer Preferences

Over the years, consumer preferences have evolved, and businesses are also constantly adapting to this change, for without the consumer, the business would cease to exist. Kirana stores, too, have kept pace with the changing times, and constantly strive to cater to the shifting consumption habits. For instance, between the 1970s and 1990s, kirana stores used to sell whole wheat grain that customers would purchase to make fresh wheat flour at home. Times changed and customers began to prefer ready-made, packed wheat flour that they could directly

Fresh Disruption From Amazon

ITS NEW GROCERY CONCEPT IS PART OF A MULTIFORMAT GROWTH STRATEGY.

Gina Acosta

T

hree years after it acquired Whole Foods Market, Amazon is planning to disrupt the grocery industry once again, this time with innovation not seen in any traditional food retailer — ever.

After months of speculation, the Seattle-based company opened its first stand-alone supermarket banner in late August: a 35,000-square-foot, digitally perfected store in Woodland Hills, California, called Fresh.

The Fresh banner isn't an offshoot of Whole Foods Market, nor does it

look like one of those checkout-less Amazon Go stores that have been popping up in urban areas across the United States, nor does it resemble the 365 banner that Amazon scrapped last year, either.

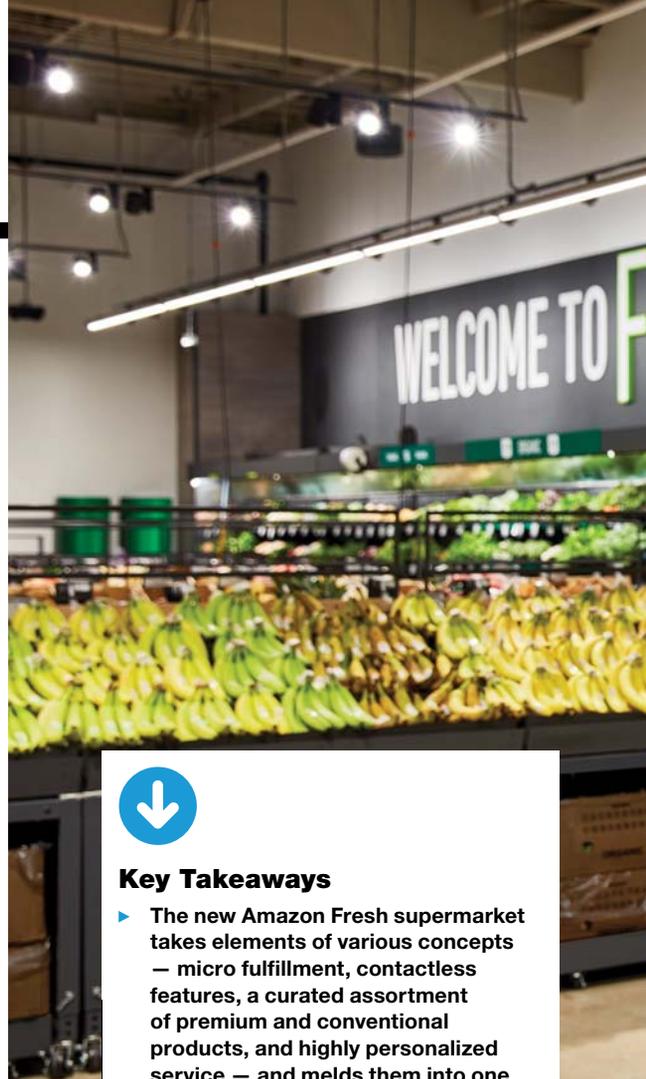
The new Amazon Fresh supermarket takes elements of all of those concepts — micro fulfillment, contactless features, a curated assortment of premium and conventional products, and highly personalized service — and melds them into one innovative store that offers something for every type of food shopper, from low-touch cashierless checkout to high-touch made-to-order prepared foods. This is a store designed to appeal to a shopper looking for the best of everything: the best product mix, the best technology and the best shopping experience.

“The Amazon Fresh grocery store is designed from the ground up to offer a seamless grocery shopping experience, whether customers are shopping in-store or online,” says Jeff Helbling, VP of Amazon Fresh stores, in an exclusive interview with *Progressive Grocer*. “We’ve taken our decades of operations experience to deliver consistently low prices for all, and free same-day delivery for Prime members.”

The Fresh store opened this past Aug. 27 to a select group of invited customers who could shop the store in Woodland Hills, part of the Los Angeles metro area, before it opened widely to the public in the coming weeks; an exact date had not been revealed at presstime. Store hours for the new Fresh store are from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day.

“The Amazon Fresh grocery store is designed from the ground up to offer a seamless grocery shopping experience, whether customers are shopping in-store or online.”

— Jeff Helbling, VP, Amazon Fresh stores



Key Takeaways

- ▶ **The new Amazon Fresh supermarket takes elements of various concepts — micro fulfillment, contactless features, a curated assortment of premium and conventional products, and highly personalized service — and melds them into one innovative store.**
- ▶ **As well as traditional checkout carts, checkout lanes and point of sale, the concept offers such features as the Amazon Dash Cart enabling customers to bypass the checkout line, and Ask Alexa stations throughout the store to help shoppers find items.**
- ▶ **Additional Fresh stores are planned for the Los Angeles and Chicago regions, along with dozens of smaller Amazon Go and Amazon Go Grocery locations.**

Helbling, who has held several high-level roles at Amazon, says that the company had been operating the location as a dark store, with hundreds of associates providing online grocery delivery out of the location over the two months prior to the opening, and was now ready to introduce Amazon's representation of the perfect grocery store to the world.

Of course, the new Fresh store will have pandemic safety measures in place for the foreseeable future. Helbling says that the

Aftershock: What's Next for a Hungry Nation

UNDERSTANDING THE PANDEMIC'S LASTING EFFECTS ON THE WAY AMERICA EATS, AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR RETAIL FOODSERVICE AND RESTAURANTS.

By Mike Troy



Key Takeaways

- ▶ **Progressive Grocer's parent company, EnsembleQ, conducted a major foodservice study to gain insight into Americans' future behaviors regarding retail foodservice and restaurant usage by gauging current sentiment across a range of eating and food preparation behaviors.**
- ▶ **The research findings suggest a high probability that nearly 40% of consumers will continue to cook homemade meals more often than they did prior to COVID-19.**
- ▶ **The study also found that one-third of Americans increased their use of prepared foods during the pandemic.**

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded this year, food retailers and foodservice operators experienced a massive swing in market shares. A situation that had taken decades to achieve, in which

food away from home had overtaken food at home, suddenly diverged sharply. Food retailers could barely keep shelves full as Americans ate virtually all of their meals at home, while restaurants with indoor dining sat empty due to social-distancing restrictions.

The extremes of this situation were most evident in March and April, before gradually lessening in May and June. By July and August, Americans weary of being exiled at home ventured out more regularly to restaurants that had reopened, many having found inventive ways to accommodate diners. Meanwhile, retailers also found inventive ways to adjust their foodservice operations with new approaches to presentation, packaging and service.



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