RETAIL OPERATING MODELS IN INDIAN AGRI-BUSINESS SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

The emerging economies constitute approximately 80 per cent of the global population and 20 per cent of the world economy, are going through a transformation phase due to the effect of globalisation. The effect is visible not just in metros but in rural markets also, particularly in the retail sector in India. The paper focuses on the growth of rural retail in India and changing face of rural marketing. The study was undertaken to know how the corporate giants tapped the latent potential hidden at the bottom of pyramid. ITC has come up with an innovative idea of 'Choupal Sagar' in rural areas of Madhya Pradesh; HUL is using its Project 'Shakti' initiative, leveraging women self- help groups to explore the rural market, which proves that big companies are ready to experiment to gain more and more market share. These companies understand that the success of organised retail in any country depends upon developing innovative retail formats according to the needs of that particular country and not merely by imitating the successful formats of other countries. Following suit, in the race are major Indian players like Godrej 'Aadhar', DSCL's 'Haryali', Cargill 'Saathi', Tata's 'KisanSansar' etc.

Today looking at the point of saturation in the urban markets, it is wise to step into the rural markets to tap the vast unexploited potential at the bottom of Pyramid. So the basic rationale behind this paper is to understand the reason of venturing into the retailing and to analyse the system of working of different models that are operational in agri-business sector and rural marketing. This study also addresses the factors which result in more number of footfalls like providing consultancy services, assistance in shopping experience and providing a one-stop solution to the end consumers. Not only forward linkage but an integration of both forward and backward linkage (like procurement of the farm produces thus giving a better earning choice to the farmers) is the basic objective of any rural retail giant.

"The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways"
-Anonymous

Indian Retailing - An Overview

"There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come" Victor Hugo rightly said, the retail wave in India is about to sweep over every other wave. Retailing is gearing up in full vigour and now it is only wise to welcome this timely idea named "Retailing". The key drivers fuelling the retailing boom in India are the growing Indian middle class (more than 300 million) with increasing

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disposable income, constantly changing life style and buying behaviour.

Indian organised retail market size is around $330 billion, accounts for only 4 per cent of the total retail sector. It is expected to be more than 25 per cent in the next 10 years, a phenomenal increase in the share of organised retail, an effect of globalisation. The unorganised retail will not be able to service this growth in terms of logistics, supply chain management, waste and consumer amenities. Further modernisation of retail is bound to happen. Retail is the second largest industry and the second largest employer after agriculture in India.

It's very clear that Indian retail industry is basically an unorganised industry. But now as the big corporates like Reliance, ITC, Godrej Agrovet Ltd., Tata, and DSCL venturing into the retailing (rural retailing), we can expect in the near future retailing will be the most lucrative sector in India. Fortunes will be found at the bottom of the pyramid by tapping the rural communities with retail models that suit the needs of the new Indian consumer.

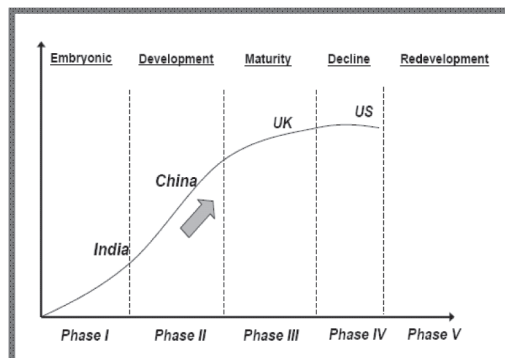"Keys to success will be location, infrastructure and the technology required to manage the supply chain (the back end)"

Indian Retail - Snapshots

❖ India tops the AT Kearney's annual Global Retail Development Index (GRDI), as the most attractive market for retail investment.

❖ Indian retail market is the fifth largest retail destination globally.

❖ Retail contributes 10 per cent of the GDP and employs 8 per cent of Indian population.

❖ Organised retail will create 2.5 million jobs in the next five years.

❖ Organised retail currently employs an average of one person per 250 square feet of retail space.

❖ The annual compounded growth rate of organised retail in the last three years is 46.64 per cent.

❖ India has a young population of median age 24 years, which spends more and saves less, giving a huge opportunity for retailing.
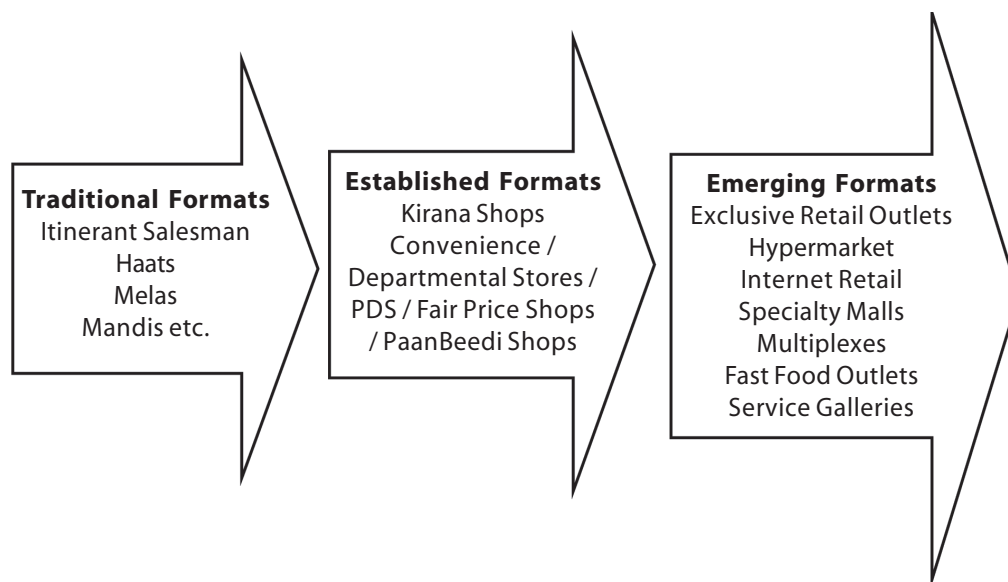
Retail Market	Market Size	Estimated Growth Rate
Total Retail	USD 330 Billion	9 per cent
Organised Retail	USD 13 Billion	25-30 per cent

Phases of Retail Development in the Four Biggest Economies of the World

Indian retail is in the introduction or embryonic phase, China in development stage, UK in maturity phase and US in decline stage. This clearly shows that Indian retail has sharp growth prospects, whereas US retail development is showing downwards trend.

Evolution of Retail in India

Traditional Formats
Itinerant Salesman
Haats
Melas
Mandis etc.

Established Formats
Kirana Shops
Convenience /
Departmental Stores /
PDS / Fair Price Shops
/ PaanBeedi Shops

Emerging Formats
Exclusive Retail Outlets
Hypermarket
Internet Retail
Specialty Malls
Multiplexes
Fast Food Outlets
Service Galleries

Rural Retail Formats

Retailing in India can be broadly classified as organised and unorganised retailing. Organised retailing can be further classified into Rural Retailing and Urban Retailing. More than 85 per cent of urban retailing is from big metro cities.

The formats used in rural retailing by retail giants come in three forms –

❖   Company Owned Company Operated **(COCO)**

❖   Franchisee Owned Franchisee Operated **(FOFO)**

❖   Company Owned Franchisee Operated **(COFO)**

Company Owned and Company Operated (COCO) : The company owns the retail outlets or the hubs under this category. As far as the operations and management is concerned, the company itself also carries it. All the costs are borne by the company (ITC e choupal, Tata KisanSansar, Godrej Agrovet's-Aadhar and Haryali).

Franchisee Owned and Franchisee Operated (FOFO) : This type of retail outlets are owned by the franchisee while as far as the operations and management part is concerned it is also done by the franchisee. The franchisee has to bear all the costs required to open the outlet. The initial installation costs are also borne by the franchisee. In some cases the company may come forward to bear some part of the costs (Mahindra Subhlabh).

Company Owned Franchisee Operated (COFO) : This type of retail outlets are owned by the company but the day-to-day operations are undertaken by the appointed franchisee. (Tata KisanSansar and Cargill Sathi)

A Brief Detail of Each of the Formats and the Players Involved :

1. Hub & Spoke -Company Owned and Company Operated (COCO)- Working System

There is involvement of both the forward as well as the backward linkage; Reverse trading in case of ITC's 'e-chopal' or DSCL'S 'HariyaliKisan Bazaar' has proved to be a good source of revenue generation.

Forward Linkage: The Company uses its own channel in the villages to sell its own products as well as products of many other companies with which it has tied up. It sells FMCG products, consumer durables, automobiles, electronic goods etc., to the villagers right in their villages. Through its newly launched shopping malls in these rural areas (i.e. the choupalsagars), the company tries to provide a one-stop solution to the end consumers under one roof. It is one of the best means of forward linkage in these rural areas. Through these malls ITC manages to provide a kind of pleasing shopping ambience to even the very poor. The farmer can shop here with full assurance of value for his money.

Backward Linkage *:* The company procures the grains directly from the farmers without any involvement of the intermediaries. Thus it is able to pass on the price advantage to the farmers. Here the *sanchalak* who is basically a farmer plays an important role in giving the price related information to the farmers 12 hours before selling hour. The price is normally higher than the *Mandi* prices, so farmers have a choice to exercise their own decision making power as to whom to sell their produce.

The *sanchalak* also gives information regarding the quality standards to the farmers who also take great care to maintain the mentioned quality standards. Through the *sanchalak* the produces are brought to the hub or the purchase point, where the quality of the produces are checked. To check the quality there are instruments like moisture meter, hectoliter.

There is an electronic weighing balance to measure the weight of the produces. If the produces do not match the quality specifications, then the whole of the produces are returned. The purchased wheat is then graded according to various grades. The farmers are paid across the counter right then by the *sanyojak* who collects cash from the company in the evening or afterwards. Then the different grades of wheat are bagged in gunny bags separately. Similar grades are stacked in similar stacks. The filled bags have a distinct colour to indicate the grade of the wheat it contains inside. The company provides gunny bags. Unloading charges are borne by the company.

Characteristics of the Format : The farmers are able to know the prices 12 hours before the sale of their produce. The farmers are benefited from accurate weighing, faster processing time, and prompt payment, and from access to a wide range of information, including accurate market price knowledge, and market trends.

❖ The farmers get a higher price i.e. on an average 2.5 per cent higher than the daily *Mandi* price per unit sale of their produce to ITC.

❖ It empowers the village farmer i.e. the *sanchalak* with the responsibility of associating villagers of 4-5 villages for the purpose of wheat procurement.

❖ The farmers are paid in cash across the counter.

❖ The closeness with which they work, the *sanchalak* and the *sanyojak* are respected a lot by the company personnel and the company personnel also know the farmers by their name.

Business Areas

a) Agri-Inputs : Seeds, Fertilisers, Pesticides, Insecticides

b) Outputs: Wheat, Soybean, Barley, Maize, Chilly, Fishes

c) Services: Soil testing, Price Information, Technology Dissemination, Internet facility

d) Non-Agri : Apparels, Consumer durables & FMCG, Energy-petroleum Products, Gas, Financial Services, Credit Facilities, Insurance.

2. Hub & Spoke - Company Owned Franchisee Operated (COFO) - Working System

The company has one spoke connected with spokes which provides different agri-inputs and services to the farmers. The hub and spoke have their own working areas but all spokes are regulated by the hub. By introducing the "Cargill; *SaathiKrishisamadhan Kendra"* Cargill wants to tap the untapped rural market. *'SaathiKrishisamadhan Kendra'* is based on the concept of franchisee models (Hub & Spoke) which works in the rural areas to procure as well as to supply the company products to the rural customers. Agri-input Retail outlets like *'SaathiKrishiSamadhan Kendra'* seeks to overcome the inefficiencies of rural market and aims to cater to all the occupational needs of farmers under one roof.

Generally one hub is placed in one district and 2-3 spokes to cover the area of around 25-30 kms. Where a farmer can avail of all agricultural products and services, in addition to the agricultural products and services, *SaathiKrishiSamadhan Kendra* also provide some other services like banking, petroleum products etc.

Retailing is a nascent industry in India: still in evolving phase. With numerous business houses entering in this business, competition is picking up fast. Each one is coming up with new strategies to entice the customers. Earlier companies were trying to copy western model in India but soon they realised a difference in consumer preferences, they expect a different kind of treatment and a feel of Indian's, and thus new trends have started emerging in food retailing business.

Characteristics of the Format

❖ To provide the farmer with a package of inputs and services for optimum utilisation of balanced primary nutrients; plant protection chemicals; water; seeds; post-harvest services; and to develop a genuine partnership with the farmer.

❖ To provide all agricultural inputs and services to the farmer under one roof.

❖ To assist the farmers for better and profitable agriculture.

❖ To provide quality products and services to farmers.

❖ To provide easy access to the market.

❖ To create new distribution channel for agri-inputs.

❖ To facilitate farmer by providing long term, low interest credit by becoming a part of self-help group called *Kisan Sahyog Parivar* (KSP). To provide after sales services.

❖ To extend output buy back service (contract farming).

Business Areas

a) Agri-Inputs: Seeds, Fertilisers, Agro-chemicals, and Agri-implements.

b) Agronomy Services: Soil testing, Water testing, Fertiliser testing, Training to the farmers about new technology and information, and Extension services.

c) Training & Information: Training by agronomist, and Farm practice programmes.

d) Other Services: Banking services like insurance, and Crop insurance.

3. Hub & Spoke - Franchise Owned Franchisee Operated (FOFO) - Working System

One hub is connected with several spokes. Initially, hub and the spokes were to be operated with the help of franchises. Franchises were expected to make huge investments, and pay a non-refundable sign up fees. Franchises were to reach the villages. The initial model's project was approximately

1 crore rupees. This included almost everything, the cost of property equipments, land for carrying out agri R&D, computers, tractors, other implements, office space and working capital required. The sign-up fees were rupees 5 lakh. This fee is non-refundable. Mahindra also had to invest to set up systems and procedures. Mahindra expected a lot of sign up by prospective dealers (franchises).

A wholly-owned subsidiary of tractor major Mahindra Subhlabh came into existence to provide total farm solution to the Indian farmers. There were two aspects to the business, one was the commodity trading and second one was to provide one-stop shop to the farmers for all his needs. This is like providing total solution to almost all the problems of Indian farmers. MSSL has revolutionised agri-business by aggregating the factors of production under the brand Mahindra *KrishiVihar* through farming solutions specific to crop, region, and market.

Characteristics of the Format:

❖ To provide good quality agri-inputs and services to the farmers.

❖ To provide quality assurance through farm solutions.

❖ To develop a viable farm mechanisation system.

❖ To provide services of financial institutions.

❖ To provide market access to the farmers.

❖ To remove the inefficiencies and problems of agriculture.

❖ To provide commercial agricultural extension by bi-weekly visits to the farms.

❖ To provide commodity trading in final produce of the farmers.

Business Areas:

a) Agri-Inputs: Seeds , Fertilisers, Agro-chemicals, and Agri-implements.

b) Services: Soil testing, Water testing, Consultancy services, Insurance- crop insurance, and Weather insurance.

Objectives of the Paper: All three formats of Hub & Spoke models are engaged in the rural retail marketing through networking in different areas. The business areas are also almost similar in all the formats. The farmers are involved directly or indirectly with all the formats. The farmers and other villagers are getting several benefits from these concepts adopted by different companies. Still, to know the accurate effectiveness and the efficiency level of these formats we have decided to gauze the performance and effectiveness of each of the formats. We have decided the following objectives:

To know the catchment areas of each of the formats;To know the average footfalls on weekdays and weekends; To know the quality of products available in each of the formats;To know the different services offered at each of the formats; Do the farmers have the sense of ownership at each of the formats?Are they comfortable with the management and day-to-day operation activities (modus operandi) at each of the formats?Is there proper financing and cost bearing facility available at each of the formats?Which of the formats has higher rate of success in terms of revenue generation? Which is more popular and why?What is the possibility of transforming of these rural retail formats i.e. can the urban farmers get some benefits from these formats? What are the investment opportunities for the other corporate giants including foreign players in this sector? What are the future prospects of these formats? and much more..

Since the topic is so much interested and wide, various questions can be raised and researched for a very longer period of time. So far we have focused only on the qualitative aspects of the research and tried to measure the effectiveness of each of the formats in

the form of (modified version of the 4 Ps of Marketing) the popularity, the quality of products available, the services offered and the prices charged at each of the formats.

Hypotheses

H$_1$: The average footfalls on weekdays are equal

H$_2$: There is no difference in the quality of products available at each of the formats.

H$_3$: There is no difference in the services offered at each of the formats.

H$_4$: The prices of the products are uniform at each of the formats.

Methodology

The farmers do not know about the format concept, yet they know the players involved in these processes. So to gauge the effectiveness of each of the formats we have selected 45 farmers (15 from each format) randomly as per our convenience and first observed their activities without informing them, after that we have discussed few issues related to our research with them and got the structured questionnaire filled. The survey was conducted during April-May 2013. The sample were selected from Bundi in Rajasthan (COCO), Moradabad in UP (COFO) and Sangli in Maharashtra (FOFO). Similar questionnaires were administered to all the respondents at each of the locations and almost same methods were adopted to monitor the effectiveness of the formats.

Steps Followed in Sample Selection

Levels	Sampling Hierarchy	Description
1	Primary Sampling Unit (PSU)	Store Catchment Area
2	Secondary Sampling Unit (SSU)	Particular Village
3	Tertiary Sampling Unit (TSU)	Household
4	Element	Farmers as defined in the population

The data were organised at overall as well as format level. To test the validity of the hypotheses, the one-way analysis of variance technique was applied to analyse the data.

Analysis and Findings

Catchment area plays a significant role in the market penetration. The greater the catchment area, the more difficult it is to establish the reach and it results into lesser proportion of footfalls out of the total population of the catchment area. So the conversion ratio also is very less in this case. If the company is into backward linkage, then distance does play a greater role, as it would add to the transportation costs.

So farmers would not prefer more distant outlets to sell their produces. Therefore, the farmers generally prefer COCO, which is located within tractable distance. It is also
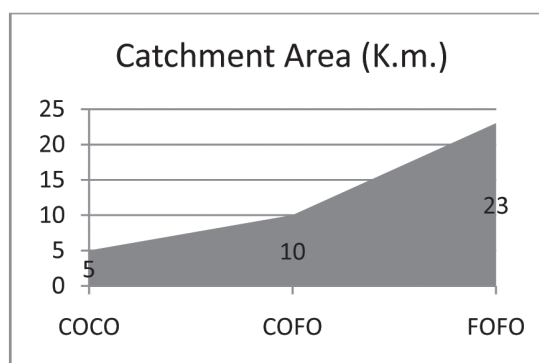
Catchment Area (K.m.)

easier for the company to provide consultancy services to maximum farmers during peak seasons, and to develop a sense of trust among the people in smaller catchment area than in larger catchment area.

From the graph it is understood that maximum footfalls during weekdays is seen in case of COCO *(Choupal Sagar),* followed by COFO and FOFO. In case of *Choupal Sagar,* it is doing backward linkage, so there are more number of footfalls. Location also plays an important role in the number of footfalls. As far as farmers are concerned, they are ready to go to even far off places for quality products for their farming requirements. But as far as their needs for FMCG goods are concerned, they would prefer nearer places and cheaper products.

Average Footfalls on Weekdays
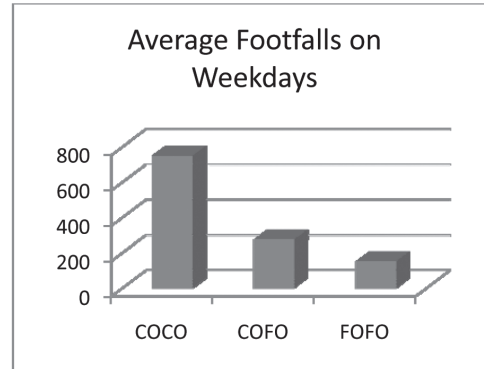
Consumers rate COCO outlet very high and would prefer this to others. There are many reasons behind such preference like - the ambience, the wide range of goods available there; a good market for their own produces, branded and quality products available. In case of COFO, though it is not involved in backward linkage, still many farmers rate it second because of the ambience, quality products, location and services. FOFO is rated third mainly because of the narrow range of products, its location (which is far off) and does not provide a one-stop solution. They have a very narrow range of products.

Results of Hypothesis testing (Footfall during weekdays - Across Formats)
H$_1$: The average footfalls on weekdays are equal

ANOVA

Footfall

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1243552.133	2	621776.067	340.252	.000
Within Groups	21928.800	12	1827.400		
Total	1265480.933	14			

Descriptive

Footfall

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	5	781.00	66.558	29.766	698.36	863.64	700	880
2	5	241.20	27.289	12.204	207.32	275.08	200	275
3	5	118.00	17.536	7.842	96.23	139.77	100	140
Total	15	380.07	300.652	77.628	213.57	546.56	100	880

At 95 per cent Confidence level, the significance value is 0.00. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. We cannot confirm that the average footfalls on weekdays at each of the formats are equal, since the average footfall depends on catchment area covered by the particular format, proximity of the particular outlet to villagers and availability of daily need products. The COCO completes all the requisite criteria and attracts the maximum number of customers followed by COFO.

Results of Hypothesis Testing (Product Quality - Across Formats)

H_2: There is no difference in the quality of products available at each of the formats.

ANOVA

Quality

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	84.933	2	42.467	19.586	.000
Within Groups	91.067	42	2.168		
Total	176.000	44			

Descriptive

Quality

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Lower Bound	95% Confidence Interval for Mean Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
1	15	8.13	1.506	.389	7.30	8.97	5	10
2	15	6.07	1.486	.384	5.24	6.89	4	8
3	15	4.80	1.424	.368	4.01	5.59	2	8
Total	45	6.33	2.000	.298	5.73	6.93	2	10

At 95 per cent Confidence level, the significance value is 0.00. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. We cannot confirm that the average quality of the products at each of the formats is similar. As per the observation, all the formats have almost similar products but with different brands. There is much difference in the ambience and layout of the formats which triggers the satisfaction level of the customers and once again COCO format was the first choice among consumers due to its wide variety of the much superior quality of the products.

Results of Hypothesis Testing (Services Offered - Across Formats)

H_3: There is no difference in the services offered at each of the formats.

ANOVA

Services

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	47.511	2	23.756	21.259	.000
Within Groups	46.933	42	1.117		
Total	94.444	44			

Descriptive

Services

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	15	8.20	.862	.223	7.72	8.68	7	10
2	15	7.40	1.183	.306	6.74	8.06	5	9
3	15	5.73	1.100	.284	5.12	6.34	4	8
Total	45	7.11	1.465	.218	6.67	7.55	4	10

At 95 per cent Confidence level, the significance value is 0.00. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected. We cannot confirm that the various services offered at each of the formats are same. COCO format provides much better services to its customers like, price information, weather forecast to the farmers, option to the farmers to sell their own crops to the company against the fast cash facility.

Results of Hypothesis Testing (Prices Charged - Across Formats)

H_4: The prices of the products are uniform at each of the formats.

ANOVA

Prices

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.711	2	.356	.511	.603
Within Groups	29.200	42	.695		
Total	29.911	44			

Descriptive

Prices

|	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
1	15	7.93	.799	.206	7.49	8.38	7	9
2	15	7.67	.724	.187	7.27	8.07	7	9
3	15	7.93	.961	.248	7.40	8.47	6	9
Total	45	7.84	.824	.123	7.60	8.09	6	9

At 95 per cent Confidence level, the significance value is greater than 0.50. Hence the null hypothesis is accepted. We can confirm that the prices offered for various products at each of the formats are same.

Since most of the formats sell the branded items at discounted prices to the farmers, the prices are almost same.

Conclusions and Recommendations

A distinctive feature of organised retailing in India is that it is largely an urban phenomenon. Organised retail has been more successful in metros and cities, more so in the south and west of India. The reasons for this regional variation range from differences in consumer buying behaviour to cost of real estate and taxation laws. Nonetheless, the case for Indian retailers to explore rural markets is strong. Factoring the size of the rural population and agricultural income growth in rural India, the rural market is certainly an opportunity for retailers with an innovative retail proposition. A clear indicator of this potential is the current share of rural market across major categories of consumption.
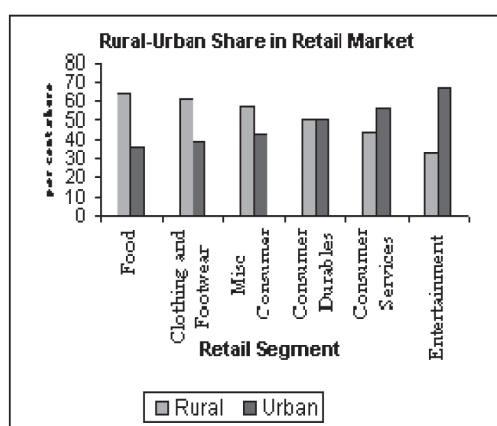
Share in Retail Market:
Urban vs. Rural (per cent)

Segment	Rural	Urban
Food	64	36
Clothing and Footwear	61	39
Misc. Consumer Goods	57	43
Consumer Durables	50	50
Consumer Services	44	56
Entertainment	33	67

Source: NSSO and KPMG Analysis.

Globalisation affected Indian retail industry more than any other industry. But the effect is more visible and talked about in the urban areas, and rural India is neglected from all discussions even though majority of India still lives in the rural areas. To reap the benefits of the globalisation and to tap the rural market potential, the following are recommended:

1. Further development of the organised retail sector, as it should lead to reduced role of middlemen. The direct procurement route results in a greater margin for the farmers, besides facilitating the creation of a market with multiple sellers and buyers meeting at same platform, eliminating the old fashion of few buyers and many sellers, thus resulting in monopoly after some time.

2. Farm incomes in India can double if organised retail enhances farmer realisations on food items from the current 30 to 35 per cent of retail price to the international norm of over 50 per cent. Thus, rural retailing should be encouraged and supported.

3. Rural organised retailing (a tool of rural marketing) should be encouraged by the government since rural retailing has a multiplier effect on the economy. It will lead to employment generation, setting up of food based processing industries, cool chain stores, other industries, which in turn will increase the income of people in rural areas and will help in stopping the migration of people from rural to urban areas. Once migration stops, the pressure on cities would reduce, pollution would reduce, and the growing disparities of income between rural and urban areas would decrease.

4. Government should act as a nodal agency for the development of rural retail, since

the fruits of globalisation should be shared by everyone in the country.

5. The higher purchasing power in rural and semi-urban areas has significantly modified people's lifestyle; for e.g. the sachet phenomenon is a thought to reach to the bottom of the pyramid. Lot of people in rural India are just not willing to buy a whole bottle of shampoo, but that does not mean they won't buy it. Thus, the key is in slicing the relevant customer segments and developing appropriate formats. If the specific needs of consumers are recognised, there would be a considerable market expansion, which would divert a part of retail business to rural areas and help in reducing rural-urban imbalance.

6. Easy and quick availability of finance at competitive rates is a key enabler for growth in retail. Retail space availability and costs are the issues to which probably the only answer is the diversification of retail business across the country instead of concentrating on already saturated markets.

7. Organised retailing just does not mean retailing by big companies and MNC's only. It is much more than that. Small traders, farmers, self-help groups etc., can join hands together, form a group and develop their own format of organised retailing. They too can reap the benefits of the effect of globalisation. Banks, micro-financial institutions and government should come forward to encourage such business ventures, finance them and disseminate information about the same.

8. FDI in retail should only be allowed with certain mandatory clauses like, a percentage of investment in rural areas, procurement of the agricultural produce from the local farmers (India), and setting up of cool chain storages in rural areas.

9. Not moving with time but moving ahead of time is the secret of today's success. For that, one has to take the advantage of the various advances made in science and technology. Use of IT-computers should be used to maintain the logistics and other things. Use of GIS (global information system) and use of GPS (global positioning system), use of remote sensing should be encouraged in rural retailing.

Limitations: The study has the limitations as all the data were collected through multiple sources and other reported measures. Therefore, common method variance may be a major problem. Responses of individual survey items may not be truly independent as there has been a chance of influence of group membership. From this perspective, it can be said that more research is needed to examine the generalisation of this study.

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