Gaining Supply Chain Advantage in Emerging Markets

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Gaining Supply Chain Advantage in Emerging Markets

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Solving Efeso White Paper

Abstract

Emerging markets offer growth opportunities that FMCG and other brand builders cannot afford to miss, or to misunderstand. The right approach to supply chain development is fundamental to successful exploitation of these opportunities. This document addresses the key requirements to build Triple A Supply Chains in emerging markets.

Key considerations

Diversity The sheer diversity of the emerging markets cannot be underestimated. 'Emerging' is not a blanket term for a homogenous set of markets.

Fragmentation Reaching mass markets effectively will require the development and optimisation of dynamic channels. In many emerging markets, outlet penetration is challenging to achieve because of fragmentation. India for example has something in the order of 13 million outlets (the US by comparison has fewer than 950,000). As they build a supply chain to take their brands and products into the mainstream of emerging markets, FMCG (Fast Moving Customer Goods) and other players must keep the following issues front of mind.

Triple A-rated It is imperative to achieve a 'triple A-rated' supply network - delivering products that are affordable, available, appealing.

One size fits one Success demands awareness that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to work.

Service and cost to serve Close alignment with the needs of individual markets must be based on sustainable cost to serve.

Supply chain visibility Successful players need to achieve the same supply chain visibility they enjoy in mature markets. This demands an effective strategy, delivered through operational excellence.

Grow your own talent There is a need to leverage and mature management experience through 'on the ground' involvement. Managers themselves will benefit from personal development and experience gained at the emerging markets sharp end working closely with, and developing their local and regional talent.

Close the skill-gap The availability of quality skilled labour, whether in the cities or rural areas, is often in short supply. Companies must cultivate and progressively train to succeed in retaining and growing pools of skilled resources supplemented, where appropriate, by specialist external expertise and input

Buy in Acquisition presents one route to emerging market critical mass, although it is not likely to be cheap.[1]

Or settle in A second growth route is development of new distributor networks, supported by modernisation of existing on-the-ground presence.

Supply everybody, everywhere The rapid urbanisation of emerging economies creates 'instant' markets that are geographically concentrated. But newly middle class city dwellers are very far from representing the total opportunity. Reaching the still immense rural population is critical to growth.

Just Getting By Won't Get the Big Prizes 'Just getting by' in the emerging markets is no more acceptable than it would be in mature markets. There is a will and openness to understand and adopt best practices that help organisations to "leap-frog" the capabilities of their peers in mature markets as they work to continuously improve their KPIs around cost, service levels, quality, volume and sustained mass market penetration.

[1] *Kraft's initial outlay acquiring Cadbury has been compounded by the Indian government's capital gains tax stance. Vodafone is still contesting a claim for GBP 1.6 billion in CGT following their takeover of Hutchison Essar. Kraft is now facing calls for liability to a similar charge"* Belfast Telegraph, *Jan 05, 2011*

A Chance You Can't Afford to Miss

The Potential is Huge

The emerging economies phenomenon is well known in headline terms (although less well understood in more granular detail, partly because the pace and impact of change are so rapid and profound).

The so-called BRIC economies of Brasil, Russia, India and China are a major part of the story, although by no means the whole picture. Their data is nothing short of astounding. They are home to some 85% of the world's population. Around 77% of Asia's population lives in just two countries – China & India. They are experiencing massive growth but they remain heavily dependent on external rather than internal demand (although this is changing).

These exciting, dynamic and challenging countries cannot be treated as if they were all the same. On-the-ground understanding is vital to successful growth. Such leading FMCG brands as Coca Cola, Unilever, Danone and Pepsi Co are now earning 20% or more of their revenues from the largest emerging markets.

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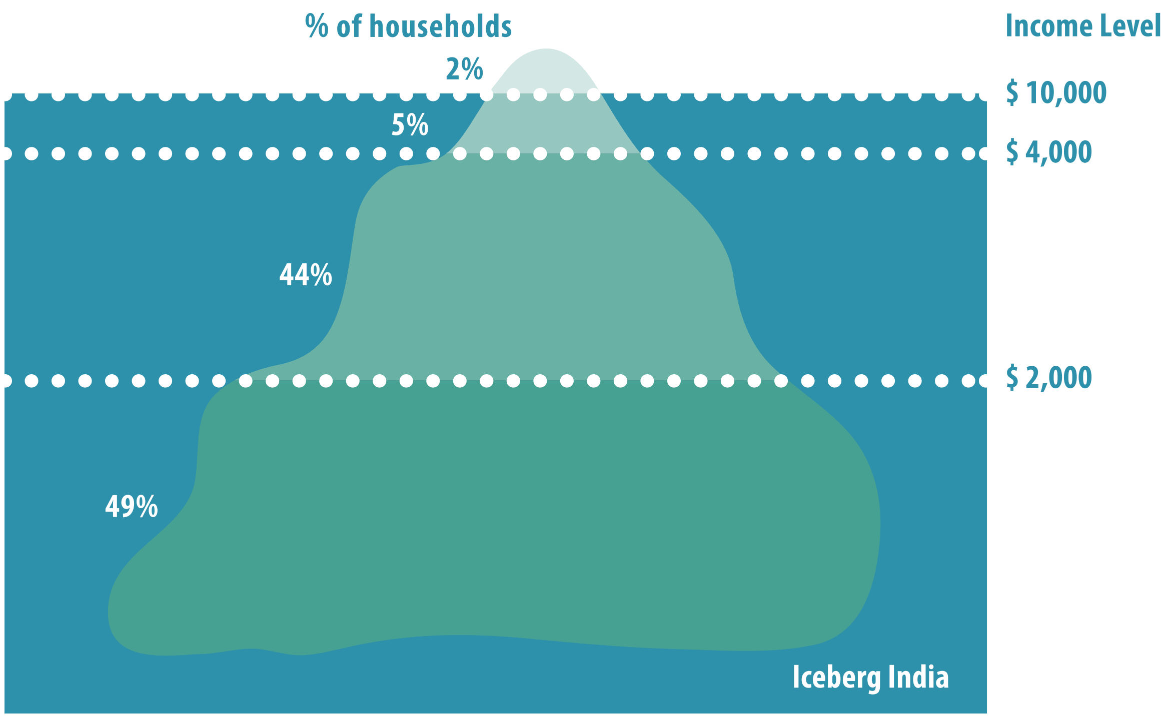

Source: various, FT Research, 2005 estimates

Mass Market Penetration is Imperative (growth isn't just about serving cities)

The story of China and India's fast-emerging urban middle class has a high profile. The move to the cities is prolific. At the end of 2008, around 45% of China's total population (600 million) lived in rural areas. By comparison, the rural fraction was around 75% in 1990. But urbanisation is still nowhere near developed market levels.

Companies need therefore to work out how to reach the large percentage of people living outside major urban areas. In India for example, nearly 75% of the population remains in the countryside. Put another way, some 12% of the world's human beings live in rural India. Much of the need for dynamic supply chains and flexibility of approach is driven by big differences between urban and rural population density. Reaching the high number of rural communities in Asia and Africa means companies need to maintain

Brasil, Russia, India and China are home to some 85% of the world's population extensive distribution networks. These often have to overcome lack of roads, very bad levels of road maintenance, other poor infrastructure and the sheer challenges of distance and other geographical features. Success involves adapting transport modes. For example, Unilever utilises a fleet of motorcycles to reach customers in remote villages in countries such as Indonesia.

An Environment You Can't Afford to Misunderstand

The Physical (and other) Challenges

The physical scale of many of the countries involved is immense. Distance, climate and the other challenges present in mature markets are all magnified and multiplied in the emerging economies (Sudan alone is approximately the size of Western Europe).

Uneven population densities have implications for manufacturing footprint, logistics planning and supply chain development. And geographical scale clearly impacts culture, as well as setting physical challenges. There are multiple culture variations across large geographical spaces and within territories as well. A range of even a couple of hundred kilometres can make a major difference to market profiles and consumer tastes. Volatilty of price is typically more pronounced in emerging markets, especially for agricultural crops and perishable produce. Five lettuce heads cost around $1.40 in previous seasons in the Middle East. After prolonged adverse weather, the same money would buy just a single lettuce in Jordan by the end of 2010.

Weather and water supply is not the only factor to influence continuity of supply and drive price volatility. Other contributors include: currency supply fluctuations (a major issue for example in China and Brazil); evolving regulation around production standards (pesticide residue legislation is closing off some sources of supply); and oil prices, which impact manufacturing, processing and transportation costs. All these factors need to be understood. They should shape the planning and development of operational capability for a supply chain delivering real advantages and optimal performance.

Reaching the high number of rural communities in Asia and Africa means companies need to maintain extensive distribution networks

How Does 'Optimal Performance' Manifest Itself?

In the emerging markets, a supply chain running at optimum performance and delivering real advantage will manifest itself through:

— Creating and sustaining a 'triple A-rated' supply network that provides accessible, affordable and appealing products consistently to all its target markets.

— Maximising operational capability such that high availability is maintained with minimised wastage (India is currently the world's leading volume producer of fresh fruit and vegetables, yet some 40% of all produce is wasted along the supply chain before it even reaches the market[2]).

— Fully leveraging "route to market" and distribution channel options, so the potential dependency on and limitations of the organised retail trade are avoided so that margin share can be retained for the longer-term.

— Developing and implementing built-in feedback mechanisms that capture front-line data fast and accurately, and enable rapid reaction to emerging consumer demand trends.

And all of this has to be done in a context of market diversity and channel fragmentation.

Accessible, Affordable and Appealing products consistently

Supply Chain Challenges: Upstream

As emerging CPG markets open up, there is clear strategic need for multinationals to be close to these major opportunities. They can get into the markets either through effective integration of local acquisitions, or by developing a base of world class suppliers to undertake local contract manufacturing and outsourcing. In every case, there will be a need to manage inputs around raw material specifications and technology: what comes out can only be as good as what goes in and the way it is processed. Equally, there is a need to manage output in terms not just of product quality but of brand consistency and brand representation as well.

The urbanisation trend creates a requirement to rethink the manufacturing and distribution footprints for the big urban centres of demand. A market of tens of millions of consumers in a relatively concentrated area makes a strong case for close proximity manufacturing and flexible, smaller scale plants. The potential benefits include cost efficiency, a shorter logistics chain, and greater product freshness.

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Supply chain effectiveness starts with production strategy and there is a need to drive deep structural cost efficiencies to be competitive in the emerging markets. A good example is Colgate's decision in the early 1990s to acquire a substantial stake in the Chinese tooth paste company Sanxiao. Colgate discovered a 30% cost advantage and reduced costs by some 60% through localising production.

The cost argument does have another side however: efficiency of the local production and distribution chain has to be balanced with the prospect of higher margins from competitive direct imports. Organized retailers are starting to import more products (personal care, foods and beverages) because they offer 20-30% higher margins than locally supplied products. For now, the imported product margin opportunity applies mainly to longer-shelf life products. Retailers take the up-front risk on inventory and they need to be sure they can sell the products out.

The upstream challenges can be even more pronounced in the case of fresh produce, which is subject to far more supply volatility factors. "We are trying to meet the short supply by establishing new sourcing centres in different countries and this has helped us

[2] *According to the president of Wall Mart India*

to an extent to keep the supply and prices steady in comparison to other competitors," said Asraf Ali MA, Executive Director of the Lulu hypermarket chain in UAE. "Now we have direct contracts with producers and farmers in many countries which help us to avoid middlemen and keep our prices low".

Supply Chain Challenges: Downstream

Working effectively downstream in emerging markets requires dealing with a range of challenges. Typically, these are physically and commercially fragmented markets that can be demanding in terms of achieving reach and coverage. They display rapidly evolving market dynamics and high growth rates (sometimes countered by relatively rapid decline in consumer spend, as observed in Russia during 2009). They are not always 'business friendly' in that they display inefficiencies caused by statutory levies such as entry taxes, central and federal taxes and levies etc.

The infrastructure issues to be overcome include planning and construction of reliable roads, railways, ports and suitable warehousing to support for example the food cold chain. Even the fast track approach to infrastructure development seen in some markets will take many years to 'fix' the issues. Yet, in the face of these multiple challenges, we are seeing the emergence of new channels and a modern approach to trade which is often distribution-led and intermediary-driven. Complex logistics models are being successfully developed using non-standard vehicles and dynamic routes that can cope with such issues as small order sizes that require aggregation and rapid change in physical conditions. The objective is always to bring the market what it wants, in the form it wants it and through convenient outlets (the triple A-rated network) always at a sustainable cost to serve.

The objective is always to bring the market what it wants

What Does Good Look Like?

Cadbury India provides an excellent example of business that has its sights set on success in emerging markets and getting a (relatively) luxury product into the mass market.

If the market potential is big then so are the challenges. Physical product quality has to be maintained in temperatures that regularly rise to 43 degrees (chocolate melts at 36 degrees). Wholesale networks either don't exist or are unsuitable - being more geared to non-perishables such as soaps and detergents.

Cadbury's distribution network used to comprise 2100 distributors and some 450,000 retailers. But they needed to avoid cannibalizing existing higher price point markets with their new pack sizes, designed to be more affordable to rural consumers. The solution was to establish two separate distribution channels, one dedicated to existing key accounts and one specifically for reaching the mass markets.

Pricing was seen as absolutely key to making chocolate accessible as well as desirable and rightpricing was crucial to product success. Cadbury has followed a clearly planned strategy of fuelling volume growth through introduction of smaller unit packs, at lower and market-aligned price points. Cost to serve becomes a critical part of the equation and economical distribution is essential.

Companies such as Cadbury are now proving that success in the mass markets can be achieved. But it does demand a focus on driving sales through the right product mix at point of sale, supported by significantly improved supply chain management.

Distribution channels also have to be configured in the right way financially. To work and survive, shopkeepers need access to acceptable cost of capital. India provides, through Micro Kirana Stores, an excellent example of the needs of the poor being served effectively and sustainably. Micro Kirana Stores are the shops that sell mainly FMCG, local brands and staple goods. The units for sale are small (either small packs or break-bulk from larger pack sizes) and they typically satisfy a single day's consumption need for customers lacking resources to buy in bulk.

This is a distribution system that is scaling fast. One of the key reasons for its growth (aside from strong market needs alignment) is that existing and potential store proprietors can gain access to microfinance, from providers such as SKS.[3]

Microfinance is enabling development of an entire 'root system' of retail outlets that can penetrate deeply, both into urban and rural markets. These outlets are convenient and realistic for customers. For manufacturers and brand builders, they remove the expense and logistical challenges of establishing their own points of sale. It is therefore not surprising this common sense solution is gaining round rapidly, both in India[4] and elsewhere. Indeed even in the most challenging markets, microfinance is creating opportunities for social advancement and sales development.[5]

For Cadbury's, the solution was to establish two separate distribution channels, one dedicated to existing key accounts and one specifically for reaching the mass markets

Developing The Right Supply Chain for Success in Emerging Markets

Introducing FMCG brands into the mainstream effectively and achieving mass reach means three key areas have to be addressed:

— Future-proofing distribution models

— Re-engineering traditional channels

— Building the triple A-rated supply network

3 *SKS has used the Grameen Bank model (microfinance -banking for the poor, origins in Bangladesh) to provide loans to 4.5 million borrowers – in the main entrepreneurial women. It is one of the microfinance providers serving the massive demand for micro credit in India*

4 *Since 1998, SKS Micro-finance-supported Kirana stores have developed a presence in 105 towns and cities across 14 states. There are some 1,500 branches in over 60,000 villages. The model is scaling very fast based on standard operating procedures and technology to automate and lower transaction costs. It is adding 50 branches and 300,000 members each month*

5 *Kabul: $831 contributed to Afghan mico-finance schemes (Microfinance Investment Support Facility for Afghanistan - MISFA)*

Future-proofing Distribution Models

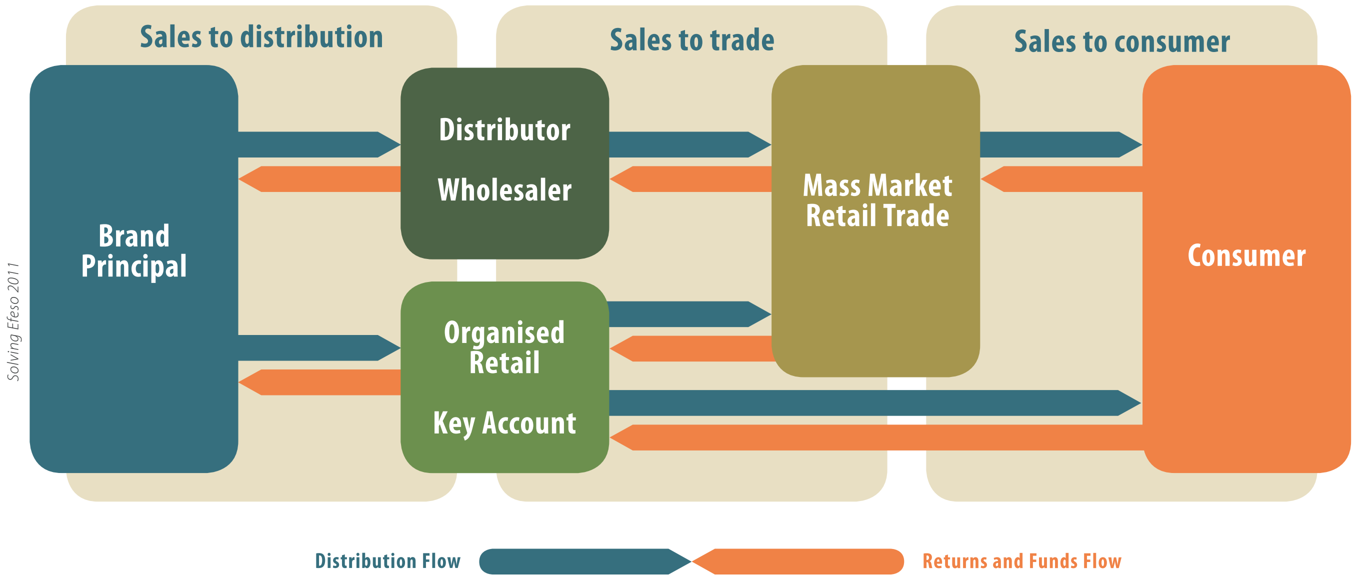
CPG brands need to future-proof their distribution models in the emerging markets. This begins with selecting channel options wisely, in order to minimise cost-to-serve and protect margins. In 'greenfield' markets there is a chance to avoid replicating the over-dependence on the organised retail trade, which is now the norm in the West.

Big Brands have shown themselves to be far more resilient to retailer pressure than on home territories. At the end of 2009 Kellogg's, which has 70% share of the Indian breakfast cereal market, found a retailer was demanding 3-4% margin improvement on current levels of around 12%.

Having de-listed Kellogg's, Future (the retailer concerned) was seeking to promote its Tasty Treat own label range instead. Kellogg's response has been to scale up its distribution footprint to tier two and tier three towns and cities, using local variants and low-priced packs. They aim to reach some 2000 towns and cities in the next few years – up from about 1200 today.

Today's Distribution Channel Structure

The current picture is typically one of disconnection, with silos rather than linkages between the main actors. There is no real visibility and a great deal of complexity. To improve the situation and prepare for profitable mass market growth, FMCG brands



must improve their downstream visibility and connect supply chain information across channel silos. The channel structure today is often a repository of 'latent knowledge'. It contains disparate data. Joined up, this data can play a much more productive role in key areas, such as ensuring consistent product availability. When availability and merchandising is poor, demand may not be satisfied and consumer awareness will be low. And while awareness remains low, loyalty to and involvement with the brand will be correspondingly depressed.

Brand builders cannot realistically expect the channel to do all this for them. A new approach is required. It begins with a profound shift in attitude: from "every one of my products in every outlet" (push model); to "I want an intelligent product assortment, one that's appropriate to outlet, customer catchment, route etc. (pull model). In future, effective distribution channels will need to offer consistent and high profile product visibility

FMCG brands must improve their downstream visibility and connect supply chain information across channel silos

– "Last Mile Visibility" - and brands will need to fight for retail shelf space. In a future-proofed distribution model, the role of the retailer as a key influencer in most cases will need to be acknowledged (and leveraged) through the buying process. In addition to new commercial behaviours within the channel structure, there will have to be operational advances.

These are needed most acutely in the area of product freshness (especially for short shelf-life products). The direct impact will be more efficient delivery and replenishment models, together with greater availability of cold chains where relevant.

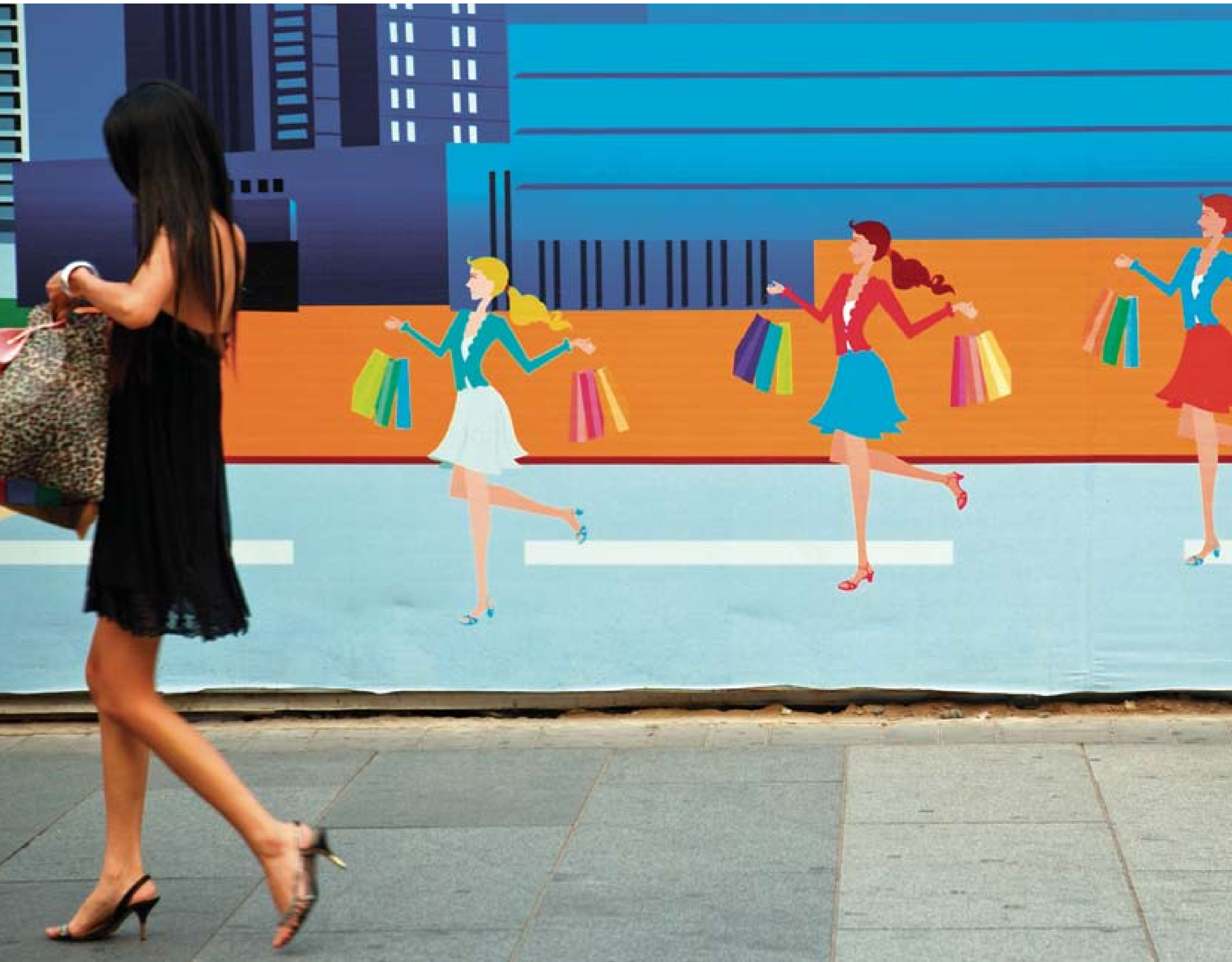
Raising Retail Standards

Where legislation and governance of retailing, environmental standards, health and safety falls short of the basic conditions that prevail in developed markets, it is the Brand owner that must set the benchmarks and standards for the supply chain improvement. At a basic level this may include training, audits or provision of equipment such as generators and chillers.

Wholesale / Distributor Needs

These should not be neglected and must be steered towards the value-added role that aligns with the mission of the Brand owner. Distributors should be encouraged and helped towards efficiency of operations in practical areas such as planning of delivery routes, replenishment and frequency of calls. Distributors should be distributing. An effective incentive is close linkage of earnings to stock rotation and high inventory turns.

Distributors must be steered towards the value-added role that aligns with the mission of the Brand owner



Re-engineering Distribution Channels

The purpose of this re-engineering is to drive channel performance, build sales force efficiency and increase replenishment through distributor partnerships. The relationships involved need to be active, not passive. To be successful, FMCG players need to work with wholesaler and distributor partners effectively.

Again, it is a question of transforming latent data into useful commercial information. For example, to understand demand signals necessitates current and accurate visibility of what is selling and what is sitting on the shelves. There is a need for real capability to perform the analytics around key issues such as product assortment, off-take by outlet and route.

The foundation for future profitable growth: reduced end-to-end cost to serve

How Should An Effectively Re-engineered Channel Perform?

A hard working and efficient distribution channel will present a number of positive key performance indicators. Outlet productivity, frequency of orders and sales call productivity should all increase, as should bill value and suggested orders. Penetration per outlet defined by SKU numbers should rise too.

The approach to product portfolio will migrate, from 'blanket' to precision, through focus products and 'must stock' items supported by well-executed promotions. Improvements at individual outlet level need to be matched by an increase in overall outlet coverage, distribution footprint and numbers of outlets per route. The positive impacts of these improvements will include increased inventory/ asset turns and optimisation of sales territories and delivery routes. All these individual improvements are desirable in themselves. But combined, they lead to the foundation for future profitable volume growth: reduced end-to-end cost to serve.

Transformation Requires Information

To achieve mature market levels of supply chain visibility requires radical reappraisal of current systems and approaches. Knowledge latent in the system must be captured, interpreted and leveraged. This requires a fresh look at methods of data capture, at the timeliness of currently available data (is it too old to be useful?) and at the causes of lack of visibility downstream.

Every key aspect of sales activity needs to be measured and its impact clearly understood. This will involve monitoring of specific campaigns and performance measurement of merchandising & sales force interventions.

Of course it is easy to prescribe these actions in theory. Often, the reality on the ground will include disparate systems at different distributors (exacerbating the silo effect). There will be varying degrees of sophistication. There will be assorted technologies that will have been implemented 'organically' - rather than according to any over-arching plan. So, in systems terms, there is unlikely to be anything approaching a 'level playing field' at the outset.

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Finally, to add to the technology-based communication challenge, there will be issues of commercial confidentiality. Given that most distributors are non-exclusive in the emerging markets, there will be obstacles when it comes to cross-silo collaboration & data sharing.

Can The Obstacles Be Overcome?

Yes. With the right strategy and operational development, enabled by appropriate technology, spectacular results can be achieved. An example of this is the sales force application implemented and supported by ITC Infotech, utilising a hand held device to improve productivity and information capture and to support connectivity and visibility up the supply chain.

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Client

One of India's largest FMCG companies, achieving a CAGR of about 20 % over the last 10 years. The company runs the biggest distribution network in India, with 1500 distributors covering more than 3.5 million outlets. They carry a large multi-category portfolio, with 8 main product categories, a diverse product range and some 800 active SKUs.

Solution Overview

The NewsPage Express Salesforce Automation System implemented and supported by ITC Infotech provides functionality to enable order capture and delivery, returns and collections, and retail audits and assessments. Coverage extends to more than 4000 sales representatives and the system works the length of the chain, integrating upstream & back-end. The application is fully compatible with distributor systems and Principal Client ERP.

Solution Impact

Product portfolio presence at the retailer is improved and time to market is shorter. Capital tie-up in cash and stock is reduced and there is greater visibility of daily stock positions. Replenishment into distributor is more satisfactory, resource productivity is up and sales representative time in the field is spent more effectively. And, aided by seamless data transfer across the chain, relevant and timely information is on-hand and ready to inform decision making. Emphasis was given to user training and adoption to ensure that the rich functionality provided by the solution could be exploited.

Results

The results measured post-implementation are encouraging. Outlet productivity has seen an 18% increase per sales representative. Call productivity has gone up, with an 14% increase per representative. Representatives are selling 10% more SKUs per outlet and invoice value has grown by 6% per representative per day. To complete the story of enhanced productivity, outlet coverage is up: a 16% increase per representative per day.

Developing a Triple A-rated Supply Chain

As we have seen, in order to develop a supply chain that consistently and predictably delivers products that are affordable, available and appealing (at lowest possible cost to serve) there are certain key requirements and success factors.

Serious growth demands development of a distribution footprint for the mass market. This will not always align with mature market supply chain and distribution models. It will involve creative use of alternative channels and partnerships with multi-tier distributors.

Profitability requires companies to achieve lower costs through economies of scale, both with own volume and through synergies brought about by collaboration and strategic partnerships. Companies need to work actively with suppliers and distributors. Instead of a passive or reactive relationship, they can 'save them money' by coaching them to improve efficiency and reduce waste. Benefits can then be passed on in lower cost to serve. It is imperative to master complexity and overcome the negative impacts of localization – often seen in a fragmented and seemingly undisciplined approach to retail and distribution channels.

Serious growth demands development of a distribution footprint for the mass market

Framework for developing the Triple A Supply Chain

Making a clear and over-arching strategy work in practice may require fundamental changes in approach to logistics, merchandising, pack sizes and production range. A single 'globalized chain' will not deliver in every context.

Instead, consider creation of regional or local loop supply chains. This approach will not only reduce food miles. It will better accommodate the local tastes and habits that tend to vary greatly over a range of even 200 kilometres.

Finally the one import that rarely, if ever, works in isolation is expatriate management. Grow local talent and build their capabilities step-by-step. Locally sourced and nurtured management offers unique market knowledge and insights. As a result, the organisation avoids the pitfalls that 'outsiders' inevitably walk into and it remains competitive. Don't confuse 'tradition' with change resistance. Local managers and workforces are very often enthusiasts for adapting best practice approaches to good effect on the ground. Given the chance, they are highly receptive to deploying new methods or technologies. See the example from NewsPage Express on page 12, or consider that a full 98% of P&G's workforce in China is locally recruited.

It is imperative to master complexity and overcome negative impact of localisation

Successful Change Can Require External Input

Grow local talent step-by-step

Many of the changes and innovations discussed in this paper require fundamental reappraisal of the supply chain and the ways in which it is designed, configured and operated. For serious competitors, supply chain optimisation opens the route into emerging mass markets and very appreciable volumes through selling affordable products.

The upside is a fundamentally different scale of business growth and the possibility of serious CAGR and profitability. But preparing for business on this scale, and in the face of all the challenges discussed, has major implications for every aspect of the supply chain operation — from strategy to detailed granular execution.

Experienced, proven external counsel can make an important contribution to helping clarify strategy and build internal operational capability. To access a broad base of industry best practice, serious competitors look for advisory partners who can help grow their emerging markets-based talent step-by-step up the learning curve, and then keep them at the leading edge. The challenges of supply chain advantage in emerging markets are such that a finite 'end point' is never reached.

In these dynamic environments, change is a constant. So too is the need to manage change and to leverage opportunities through continuous improvement. The outcome should be a move towards a 'one company standard'. This, as has been stressed, is not 'one size fits all'. Rather, it is one standard of excellence achieved flexibly in all situations. The triple A-rated supply chain is an achievable possibility. In the emerging markets, its rewards are compelling.

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For further information, please contact:

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An international scope and local delivery capability ensures that clients have access to the specialist skills they require whether at national, regional or global levels.

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