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ORGANIZED RETAILING IN SMALLER CITIES - THE NEXT MOVE

DR. C. S. DALVI
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
CHH. SHAHU INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS EDUCATION & RESEARCH
(SIBER), KOLHAPUR, MAHARASHTRA

SAYALI PATASKAR
ASST. PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES
H. N. COLLEGE OF COMMERCE
SOLAPUR, MAHARASHTRA

ABSTRACT

Retailing is the world's largest private industry with total sales of $6.6 trillion. In India too, the industry is large, accounting for around 10% of GDP which is the second largest after agriculture. India has one of the highest densities of retail outlets in the entire world. The organized retail space had increased to 16 million sq ft in 2008 from barely 1 million sq ft in 2002. International retail chains, such as Wal-Mart, Tesco etc. are waiting in the wings for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) being allowed in multi-brand retailing. Even though the Indian market holds a lot of promise, the penetration of organized retail has been comparatively quite low in India. Till now, the primary focus of organized retail has been tier I cities, which are characterized by high purchasing power and increased awareness due to international exposure. As markets in metro cities face saturation, organized retailing is moving to non-metros to make the most of changing behavioral patterns brought about by increased earnings, western influences, increased number of working women and desire for luxury items. Consumers in small cities want to eat shop and get entertained under the same roof like their counterparts in the metros. This paper studies the changes taking place in Tier II and III cities and also the factors that have facilitated this transformation.

KEYWORDS
Metro cities, Non-Metro cities, Organized Retailing, Smaller cities, Tier II and Tier III cities.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian market is quite lucrative for global players in the retail sector, and India has been placed at second position in AT Kearney's annual Global Retail Development Index (GRDI) 2008. During three previous years up to 2007, India had occupied the top slot as the most attractive market for retail investment in the world.

There are mere than 12 million retail outlets in the country. Over the past decade, there has been rapid expansion of organized retail formats. The customer profile too is quite young and spending patterns have shifted upwards, thus creating a growing opportunity for the retailers to serve and delight the customers. While 50% of India's population is less than 25 years old, 70% is less than 35 years of age. The implication is that there is a large complement of young working population, thus, resulting in increased retail spending. The organized retailers aim to capture a progressively increasing share of the total retail pie. The large number of players entering organized retail at such a pace is a cause of concern for the unorganized retailers.

EVOLUTION OF INDIAN ORGANIZED RETAILING

The development of organized retail started comparatively late in India. Single brand retail chains (such as those of Raymond's, Liberty footwear and such others) began to find a foothold in the major metros during the 1980s, multi-brand retail chains came into the picture mainly during the 1990s. Shopping centers began to come up around 1995. Shopping malls and hyper markets have begun to evolve primarily during the new millennium. Now, several large Indian business houses have made a foray into retailing, with multiple formats and in varied product categories. Multinational retailers are also trying to edge their way into the Indian market in whatsoever manner the present foreign investment norms permit.

However, gradually the interest of retailers is shifting to tier I and II cities, which not only have a more price sensitive population as compared to the metros, but also a substantial number of well-to-do customers. Marketers are gradually waking up to two major realizations; the first being that the Indian middle class does not live in the metros alone. It is worthwhile to note that of the 80 million households that constitute the Indian middle class, only 25 million live in tier I cities, whereas 55 million reside in smaller cities and villages. The second realization is that the non-metros are not made up of poorer cousins of the people living in the metros. Luxury cars sell more in small cities than in the metros. Big Bazaar's single largest bill till date comes from its store in Sangli, a little known town in Maharashtra and not from Mumbai or Delhi. Visualizing the immense potential of tier II and III cities, most retailers are now treading the path to entice the consumers in these cities. Small-town India has become the next big destination for retail business.

SPREAD OF ORGANIZED RETAILING TO TIER II AND III CITIES

The mall and multiplex culture has caught the imagination of the country's smaller cities across Kanpur, Ahmedabad, Indore, Agra, Vadodara and Surat, which in turn has been powered by the increasing purchasing power of India's middle-class population. India, today, has as many as 200 malls spread across large and small cities. Another 700 are expected to come up soon, of which 40% will be in the smaller cities. Organized retailing is growing at a phenomenal pace of 50-60% per year in small cities as compared to 35-40% in the larger metros, due to increased prosperity, and improved lifestyle and standard of living of small town Indians. Organized retailers are trying to make the most of this opportunity and hope to exploit the first-mover advantage to establish strong brand loyalties in these relatively nascent markets.

TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF CITIES AND TOWNS

Classification of cities and towns	Number of Cities	Population	Names of cities
Tier I : Major cities	8 cities	More than 4 million	Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi,Chennai, Banglore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Pune.
Tier II : Mainstream Cities	26 cities	More than 1 million	Surat, Kanpur, Nagpur, Lucknow, Jaipur, Kochi, Vadodra, Indore, Ludhiyana, Madurai, Bhopal, Patna, Nasik, Agra, Varanasi, Rajkot……
Tier III : Climbers	33 cities	More than 5,00,00	Tiruchirapalli, Amritsar, Faridabad, Aurangabad, Ahhahbad, Gwalior, Jodhpur, Raipur, Bhubaneshwar, Goa, Pondicherry, Aligarh, Moradabad, Manglore…
Tier IV : Small Towns	5094 towns	Less than 5,00,000	Rohtank, Rourkela, Udaipur, Anand, Hassan, Shimla……..

(Source: The Great Indian Middle Class, NCAER, MGI Analysis)

CLASSIFICATION OF CITIES

The report titled National Survey of Household Income and Expenditure (NSHIE) identified two sets of key cities - the boom towns and the niche cities. Although the boom towns and niche cities are quite small in terms of population, income and spending as compared to the mega cities, their rate of growth is definitely encouraging for organized retailers.

The characteristics of the boom towns and niche cities as mentioned in the study are:

BOOM TOWNS

1. High expenditure per household
2. Emerging as the largest markets following the mega cities
3. Characterized by younger population
4. Fastest growth in disposable income since 2000

Surat, Kanpur, Jaipur, Lucknow, Nagpur, Bhopal and Coimbatore are the cities that constitute this group. Surat is the youngest city in this group with 64% of the population below 30 years of age. Its population size matches that of a mega city and the household income growth exceeds the urban average by a comfortable margin. The consumption market here already exceeds that of Ahmadabad and Pune.

NICHE CITIES

1. Somewhat smaller in terms of overall population, but still high on spending per household
2. Household expenditure nearly the same as that found in mega cities
3. Have the highest spending propensity of the three city groups

Faridabad, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Chandigarh and Jalandhar are die cities in this group.

TABLE 2: MEGA, BOOM AND NICHE CITIES

City	Population 2007-08 (million)	Average Household Income (Rs. Per annum in 2004-05)	Average Household Expenditure (Rs. Per annum in 2004-05)
Mumbai	20.3	4,59,457	2,01,140
Delhi	15.5	4,08237	2,05,028
Kolkata	13.8	2,87,199	1,74,951
Chennai	6.9	3,37,059	1,55,286
Banglore	6.6	3,00,678	1,64,923
Hydrabad	5.7	2,73,353	1,49,251
Ahmedabad	4.8	3,17,856	1,34,497
Pune	5.1	2,10,458	1,26,958
Mega Cities	**78.6**	**3,54,090**	**1,76,977**
Surat	4.0	4,31,206	1,90,591
Kanpur	2.7	1,59,761	1,18,567
Jaipur	3.4	3,00,374	1,67,540
Lucknow	2.6	2,80,393	1,52,948
Nagpur	2.5	3,08,625	1,82,871
Bhopal	2.8	1,65,210	1,28,836
Coimbatore	1.7	2,19,846	1,52,050
Boom Towns	**19.8**	**2,83,071**	**1,59,407**
Faridabad	2.1	2,52,558	1,64,457
Amritsar	1.9	2,67,056	1,64,540
Ludhiyana	1.5	2,73,211	1,34,187
Chandigarh	1.1	4,84,775	2,12,805
Jalandhar	1.1	2,96,651	2,29,335
Niche Cities	**7.7**	**3,04,265**	**1,74,287**

(Source: www.fadaweb.com/twentycities_watch.htm)

The table provides much-needed insights into the spending and saving patterns as well as the changing demographics of these transforming cities. The data is a clear indicator of the trends attracting retailers to non-metros. It presents some interesting data on population, average household income and average household expenditure in 20 Indian cities, classified as mega cities, boom towns and niche cities.

TABLE 3: SHARE OF RURAL AND URBAN AREA

Share of Total %	Rural	Urban					All India
		Mega cities	Niche cities	Boom Towns	Other cities	Total Urban	
Households	69.3	8.1	0.7	1.9	20.1	30.7	100.0
Population	70.5	7.4	0.7	1.8	19.7	29.5	100.0
Income	56.0	24.6	1.7	4.5	13.1	44.0	100.0
Expenditure	63.9	16.4	1.3	3.4	15.0	36.1	100.0
Surplus Income	32.5	49.0	2.9	7.9	7.7	67.5	100.0

(Source: www.fadaweb.com/twentycities_watch.htm)

Above table provides summarized percentages indicating the share of households, population, income, expenditure and surplus income in these three classes of urban areas in comparison to the whole of India. This implies that around 70 % households reside in rural area. Their income and expenditure are also in proportion with the households. Consumers in small cities want to eat shop and get entertained under the same roof like their counterparts in the metros.

REASONS FOR SPREAD OF ORGANIZED RETAILING INTO SMALLER CITIES

There are numerous reasons that have led to the small cities becoming the center of attraction for organized retailers. Let us now look at some of these factors in greater detail.

I. Changing Demographics and Consumption Patterns

The Indian middle class accounts for 22% of the total population, and non-metros. Disposable incomes and aspirations of this class have shown considerable increase and fuelled consumption in these cities. The middle-class population exceeds 200 million.

II. Consumer Behaviour Trends

The behavior pattern displayed by small town consumers has undergone a sea change, the primary causes for this being the transition from an agricultural to a service economy, growth of backward classes, nuclearization of families, greater travel abroad, and the metros, the media and entertainment revolution.

III. Abundant Availability of Skilled Labor

Availability and cost of retail space is another major consideration n the development of organized re-;ailing. Prime locations in tier II and II cities are 30% cheaper than their counterparts in the metros. Average rental values for ground floor space :an be as low as Rs. 50-60 per sq ft a month, against Rs. 100-120 per sq ft in the bigger cities.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF SMALLER CITIES IN TOTAL ORGANIZED RETAILING

The contribution of smaller cities in total organized retailing was 15% in 2005 and is likely to grow much further. Vishal Retail, the Rs. 600 crores group opened its 100th retail outlet at Jabalpur in Madhya Pradesh. This was in line with the company's policy to expand its presence in the smaller cities. On similar lines, the Aditya Birla Group planned to invest more than $1.3 bn over a period of three years. The major focus areas identified by the Group are food, grocery and lifestyle. Reliance entered the non-metros attracted by low rentals. It is planning to start a hypermart chain in Ahmedabad following its success in Hyderabad. Woodland, a brand of the Aero Group, was earlier targeting only metros but following its success in tier I cities, it is now expanding to smaller cities as well. Making a beeline for the smaller cities, the garment retailer, Arvind Brands, is also planning to increase the number of outlets of its brands like Newport, Ruf n Tuf jeans and Excalibur shirts. With its low-end offering, the company intends to cater to consumers at the bottom of the pyramid and shift them from tailored to ready-made wear.

Not to be left behind, international players are also making a bee-line for the non-metros. Tommy Hilfiger India, which has entered into its second phase of expansion, is extending its footprint to tier II and tier III cities in the country. Reebok too is expected to follow this trend. Dominos was the first fast food chain that opened its outlets in smaller cities. Amazingly, its second highest sales in India were recorded in the industrial town of Kanpur, in Uttar Pradesh. Pizza Hut, owned by the global Yum's restaurant chain, has also become aggressive in its attempt to gain a foothold in the smaller cities. It expects a 20% growth from its outlets in these areas. Pizza Hut already has stores in cities like Jalandhar, Amritsar, Ludhiana, Meerut, Kochi, Mysore, Nasik, Coimbatore, etc. McDonald's fast food chain, which began its operations in New Delhi and Mumbai, is now expanding to the smaller cities of Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, customizing its offerings and promotions to gain faster acceptance

THE ROAD AHEAD

The success of organized retailing in tier II and III cities rests largely on further development of appropriate infrastructure. The success of organized retailing across the world has been due to efficient management and development of the supply chain. In case of India, poor roads, shortage of power, poor integration of IT functions across the supply chain and non-cooperation between states has greatly hindered the development of an efficient supply chain. Organized retailing is able to pass on benefits of efficient sourcing to customers by improving supply chain efficiencies. Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), Radio Frequency Identification (RFID), Geographic Positioning System (GPS) and Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) are technologies that form the backbone of an integrated channel system. However, all this requires infrastructure which is coming up gradually in most of the tier II and III cities.

Organized retailing requires considerable capital, and the business does not give immediate returns. Added to this, the non-cooperation displayed by some local governments - for instance, Reliance Retail faced obstacles in states like Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, makes the task of retailers all the more difficult. Organized retailing offers considerable advantages for the smaller cities. Besides being shopping destinations, they improve the standard of living of the local population by the practices of contract farming, local sourcing, aiding the growth of ancillary industries and by providing employment to locals. Farmers in Punjab have been greatly benefited by the arrival of large retailers like ITC and Reliance, who are creating a huge demand for fresh fruits and vegetables. These companies have signed agreements with farmers to source products directly from them.

Besides operational costs, another aspect that helps increase margins for retailers is the consumption of private labels. Small town markets provide greater opportunity for the growth of private labels. Due to the high awareness of national and international brands in the metros, most retailers have struggled to create successful private labels in heavily branded categories. The penetration levels of branded categories are lower in small cities, providing an opportunity for the retailers to fill the gap through their own labels. This makes operations in small cities more profitable as private labels provide greater margins.

The success of organized retailing is also dependent on an efficient logistics system. Rapid growth of the Indian retail sector has resulted in massive investments in logistics im-provement by companies like Concor, Gateway Distriparks Ltd (GDL), Allcargo, SICAL, Transport Corporation of India and Gati. Retail trade has also triggered growth across a host of organized ancillary industries, which include retail storage firms, supply chain management providers, retail design companies, manufacturers of air-conditioners, and IT hardware and software. Therefore, besides general transportation, Concor and SICAL are focusing on cold chain logistics, GDL and SICAL are looking towards container trains and TCI and Gati are focusing on warehousing. Hyderabad-based retail storage solutions major, Mekins Group, which boasts of a client list that includes retail majors like Pantaloon's Big Bazaar and Food Bazaar, RPG group's Giant and Food World, and Metro Cash & Carry, generated business worth Rs. 20.4 cr from its materials division last year. Thus, the spread of organized retailing into tier II and III cities holds benefits for all the concerned stakeholders. Earlier, marketers focused on the metros, which constituted 30% of the approximately Rs. 74,000 bn consumption market. However, they are now waking up to the fact that the remaining 70% of the consumption comes from the non-metros and the rural belt. This reiterates the fact that the might of the small cities is increasing, making them more lucrative to organized retailers.

CONCLUSION

The retail business scenario, as we see in India today, has evolved gradually in response to numerous environmental triggers, and is not an instant revolution of the twenty first century. The advent of organized retailing into smaller cities and the rural hinterland is a win-win situation for all the parties concerned. The retailers benefit from increased sales and higher profit margins for their premium brands and private labels by reaching out to the richer classes in the non-metros. The farmers and small and medium enterprises benefit as organized retailing makes sourcing possible at their doorstep. The establishment of logistics and warehousing systems reduce wastage and improve supply chain practices. Moreover, the threat of looming recession and closure of multiple stores in the metros makes it more important for retailers to spread their risks across geographies and not be confined only to the larger cities.

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