
Driving Inclusive Growth through Experiential Marketing: A Retail Perspective

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Introduction:-

The Bottom of the Pyramid has, in recent times, drawn a huge amount of attention from corporate houses in India. The attention is well deserved considering the fact that the 46 million households in the bottom quintile (lowest 20% by income) account for 51 % of the total income. “Inclusive Marketing” seems to be the way forward with companies striving to develop innovative and feasible business models which involve the consumers as co-producers. In India, the huge rural population seems to be a burgeoning market waiting to be tapped. Companies like Godrej Agrovet through its Aadhaar stores, DCM Sriram through its Hariyali Bazaar, Mahindra and Mahindra through Mahindra Subh Labh, IOC through its Kisan Seva Kendra and others have set up operations to capture value in this market. In the process of generating profits from these markets, the firms are also contributing significantly to inclusive growth by generating employment and providing technical know-how through advisory services for farm process improvements to the consumers, a majority of whom have agriculture as their primary profession. The present study aims at identifying the key factors influencing these businesses and their relative importance. A case Study based approach coupled with primary research has been done to arrive at the conclusions. An analysis of the different prevalent formats has been done and based on the findings a framework has been proposed for the business of retail in rural India.

Literature review:-

Considerable amount of research has gone into defining the key influencers of experiential retail and mechanisms for consumer engagement for business development. Verhoef et al. (2009) recognize the importance of past customer experiences, store environments, service interfaces, and store brands on future experiences. Research on converting a disinterested consumer into sales shows that involved customers likely focus on key product attributes rather than peripheral

cues like price promotions (Chandrashekharan and Grewal, 2003). Thus to attract disinterested customers, in-store activities and other promotional mechanisms go a long way in creating consumer involvement. Store atmospherics and the social environment are topics covered by Puccinelli et al. (2009) and Verhoef et al. (2009). The environmental factors, such as social features, design, and ambience, can result in enhanced pleasure and arousal (Baker, Grewal and Levy 1992, Mehrabian and Russell 1974). Verhoef et al. (2009) suggest the need to better understand the role of the other consumers in the shopping experience. Baker and Cameron (1996) and Sommer and Sommer (1989) proposed that managers must be sensitive to consumer-to-consumer interactions, both positive like social felicitation and negative like social intrusions. Specific behaviours including the behavior of service staff and other customers also function as “key determinants of perceived service quality and also of consumer satisfaction” (Andaleeb and Conway, 2006; Wu and Liang, 2009). Keng et al. (2007) personal interactions within the store as well as interactions with environmental factors have significant contribution to the experiential value of the customer. Smith and Colgate (2007) identified that experiential value is derived from how a product creates appropriate experiences, feelings and emotions in a consumer. Studies specific to retailing in rural markets of emerging countries have been found to be scarce in literature. Charles Blankson described the retail mix to be composed of six parameters namely store location, merchandise assortments, Store ambience, customer service, price and Communication with customers. This model is used in this research and has been depicted in the figure alongside. The present study aims to define the rural retail experience based on some of these parameters and some newly identified parameters suited to the nature of Indian Rural populace.

In order to identify the factors under each aspect of the retail mix as applicable to rural retail, a case based analysis was undertaken. In all 5 cases were analyzed in detail. These cases primarily involved companies from Agri-Business, Manufacturing or Banking, which had successfully ventured into rural retail. These cases are presented below.



Case Study 1: Manufacturing/farm equipment-Mahindra Subhlabh

The leading tractor brand in the world in terms of volume, it made perfect sense for Mahindra to extend its farm equipment business to address other needs of the huge customer base it already possessed. Mahindra SubhLabh, launched in 2000, is “a single source channel to access all the products, services, and knowledge they need to run productive farms”. From the planting stage to that of the selling of the crop, Mahindra Subhlabh is providing assistance to the farmers in seed supply, crop care and distribution services. ShubhLabh Stores are present in 11 states—AP, MP, TN, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Orissa, Chattisgarh, Bengal and Delhi.

Since rural India is a huge customer base for Mahindra, increasing their prosperity would, in turn, bring more business to them in terms of farm equipments and hence they are contributing to the overall development of the farm produce resulting to economic growth of the farmers. In the process they are also making money from this business, though that is not the primary objective. Using its expertise in the field and the procurement capacity it has got, it is supplying high quality seeds to farmers thus increasing the potential of farm productivity.

During the growing season, using its vast and powerful distribution network, it supplies the farmers with a range of crop care products like insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, nutrients, biologicals, and plant growth promoters for high yields.

After reaping, the huge distribution network is again leveraged for selling the harvest both domestically and abroad.

The business is showing good growth potential with 55-fold growth in the last six years from mere 85 MT (six containers) in FY 2004-05 to 4,725 MT (350 containers) in 2009-10 in terms of grape exports.

Case Study 2: Agri Business - TATA KISAN SANSAR

This case represents an Agri-business company's foray into rural retail centered on its core offerings and extended services. Tata Chemicals Ltd. is one of the leaders in agri-business in India today. Their initiative – “Tata Kisan Sansar” is one of the best examples of creating a sustainable retail model and ensuring inclusive growth through rural retail. The *Kisan Sansars* or farmer centres evolved from the simple retail outlet model named “Tata Kisan Kendra” in 2004. Under the aegis of “Tata Kisan Sansar”, Tata Chemicals provides farmers with a vast array of both agri-inputs as well as training and other value added services as described below:

AGRI-INPUTS	Fertilizer
	Pesticides
	Cattle Feed
	Farm Tools
	Seeds
TRAINING	Customized Training
	Integrated Nutrient Management
	Integrated Pest Management
AGRI-SERVICES	Soil Testing
	Advisory Services
	Contract Farming
	Own Seed Production
	Application Services
	Farmer Engagement Programs

While most of the goods under the agri-inputs category were already sold under the banner of *Kisan Kendras*, the training and other services like own seed production were introduced with an aim to not only get business but also generate and grow business.

Model

The operating model consists of the outlets at each village being run by franchisees. Each outlet is supplied by a resource centre named “Tata Krishi Vikas Kendras”. These resource centres act as hubs and the franchisee run outlets as spokes in a simple “hub and spoke” model. Each hub or resource centres services 20-25 franchisees, while each franchisee serves 30 to 40 villages. Currently, there are 32 resource centres, catering to 681 “Tata Kisan Sansars”, which reach 22,000 villages and approximately 2.7 million farmers. The “Tata Kisan Sansars” are spread

across 68 districts in the North Zone and 20 districts in the East Zone spanning 4 and 3 states respectively.

Key Differentiators

Tata places a lot of importance on relationship management. A customer engagement program – “Tata Kisan Parivar” which has more than 30,000 members is a key differentiator here. Members are given free training and other services, and they in turn act as brand ambassadors for “Tata Kisan Sansar” in their villages. Membership is extended to farmers who are opinion leaders in their villages and are open to new and progressive ideas.

On the negative side as each franchisee outlet tries to maximize its catchment area so that the model remains financially feasible. As outlets serve several villages, farmers may need to travel over larger distances thereby reducing convenience.

The last key differentiator in Tata’s model is the presence of value enhancing services. While the retail outlets do not stock FMCG or other consumer products (only agri-products are offered), they do offer an array of extended services like advice from agronomists etc. as shown in the table above. These services help the farmers grow and prosper and hence build a strong connect between the brand and the end user.

Case Study 3: Banking- ICICI Bank

Banks under the directive of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) are striving to provide financial inclusion through a variety of models. While not a retail format per se, ICICI’s rural banking model is one of the most successful amongst all private banks in India. In the context of this paper the model provides important insight into how inclusive growth can be driven by companies.

Two important facets of ICICI’s model are Partnerships and Process & Product Innovation.

“Partnerships” in their model represents the use of Banking Correspondents (BCs) to increase their reach and thus make their model financially feasible. Banking Correspondents were traditionally firms with a good reputation, like Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and various trusts. These organizations have allowed ICICI to extend its services to rural regions in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and several other states. ICICI has also tied up with several retail organizations to provide ATM and credit facilities at retail stores in rural regions. This has helped them further expand their footprint.

“Process & Product Innovation” revolves around providing products and services tailored to the needs of the rural consumer and superior customer service. Quick and reliable customer service which is easily accessible is one of the cornerstones of the bank’s service. ICICI’s offerings in the rural sector include Micro Credit facilities through Term Loans, Portfolio Buyouts etc. and Micro Savings facilities (Savings accounts). Their product portfolio also includes extended services like micro-insurance and crop insurance.

Case 4: Integrated Formats- Godrej Agrovat

A subsidiary of Godrej Industries limited, Godrej Agrovat started its operations with the “Aadhaar” stores in 2003 in Manchar, Pune. Today, Aadhaar centres are located in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Orissa and West Bengal.

The Aadhaar stores aim at providing a complete solution to the farmers like the Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar (HKB) outlets (refer to the next section). They offer services like technical guidance on farm processes, soil and water testing services and supply agri-inputs and animal feeds. Apart from these core businesses they also provide the customers with transfer of information on weather, price and demand supply along with facilitation of credit i.e. crop finance.

Serving around 20 villages along its radius, the Aadhaar stores educate the farmers on farm best-practices by a team of qualified agronomists interacting with them on a daily basis. Coupled with this, they have moved into the business of consumer goods retail to cover the whole pie. They are into grocery, apparel, Footwear, furniture, kitchenware, Home appliances along with value added services like banking, postal services and pharmaceutical. The stores follow the supermarket format prevalent in modern trade nowadays and range from 3000 sq. Ft. To 10,000 sq. Ft. Godrej also tied up with Apollo Pharmacy to offer genuine medicines at villages through Apollo Aadhaar Pharmacies at Aadhaar outlets.

However Aadhaar does more than just sell a variety of products. These stores undertake local sourcing from nearby villages. Godrej Aadhaar buys maize, fruits and vegetables from cultivators in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Punjab.

Currently Godrej is also in the process of offering other services in entertainment sector at Aadhaar outlets to provide the customer a more wholesome experience. In fact screening of movies have already begun at Aadhaar outlets.

The profits of Godrej Agrovat more than doubled in 2010-11 and they are planning to enter the micro-irrigation business by setting up a new subsidiary.

Case 5: Integrated Formats- Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar (HKB)

The evolution into the integrated retail format is epitomized by the Rs 2000-crore DCM Shriram groups Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar. First established in 2002, Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar aims at understanding and supplying farming families with all their agricultural as well as household needs. Quality products along with long-term advice are the hallmark of the enterprise. Moving on from advising customers and providing them with products and services for improved farm produce HKB has moved into a proper retail format addressing most of the needs a rural consumer might have.

Each outlet store is based on a campus of four to five acres, with a fuel station, banking facilities, farm demonstration area, green recreation zones, and the retail store. From the one site, farmers can obtain farm inputs and financial and agricultural advisory services. Day-to-day household goods are also available, as well as weather information and market prices.

So far over 275 Hariyali outlets have been set up across eight states- Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand , Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh The company is planning to rapidly scale up the operations and create a national footprint with over 500 centres across the country touching the lives of 10 million farmers.

The Bazaar sells consumer products like farm fuels like petrol and diesel, kerosene and gas, fertilisers, pesticides, seeds, farm implements, vet products, lubes, irrigation equipment etc. But along with this it has also moved into the business of selling auto parts, consumer durables, drugs, financial services like farm credit, retail banking, and insurance and integrated storage facilities. It also acts as a last mile agri-advice and customised agri-solutions. The idea is to tap the needs of the customer who is already visiting the store for farm-related purchases.

Each "Hariyali Kisaan Bazaar" centre operates in a catchment of about 20 kms. A typical centre caters to agricultural land of about 50000-70000 acres and impacts the life of approx. 15000 farmers

Thus the entry of big brands through retail is being made possible and the retail channel itself is getting stronger by the day, benefitting the rural population and contributing to their economic status.

The trust generated between the consumers and the firm by expert advice given to the farmers for better produce and quality farm products are being leveraged to attract them to consume unrelated goods and services available at the same location.

The marketing communication is different from the traditional media mix.

For a period of 7 to 10 days, a Hariyali Van sent into nearby towns and villages, with the journey charted out in terms of which towns and villages will be covered in a particular day. In these vans, 3 to 5 products, which sell the most, are kept and displayed for sale at these villages or towns from one end of the van and there are promotional posters of Hariyali on the other 3 sides. Now, when these vans reach the village, they select a central location which attracts maximum footfall and then, using the loudspeaker system, the Hariyali Sales Guy introduces the concept of Hariyali, mentioning benefits such as high quality of goods, availability of branded products to the people and higher discounts with the strategic focus on inducing a small purchase then and there, so that a non-customer becomes a Hariyali Customer and his details are available with Hariyali for any future communication to attract him to make further purchases, through the use of schemes such as providing a discount coupon which can be availed on his next Hariyali Purchase of over a specific amount.(2)

Hariyali has also launched its customer loyalty cards to ensure repeat purchase of the consumer goods, since the distance of the stores from the farmer households are often large. The brands available at these stores are mostly available at mom-and-pop stores as well and hence the brand value alone is not sufficient to bring them back for purchases.

In-store marketing communications like Live Media television feed, drop downs, Welcome gates, Standees or Simple product specific offer stick-ons etc are used extensively. Customer engagement programmes like educational trainings and contests are also organized on a regular basis to keep the consumers attached to the stores.

Overall revenues of HKB grew to Rs.202.4 Crore in 2012 as compared to Rs. 188.1 Crore. The retail and fuel segments registered strong growth.

Conceptual Model

The analysis of the cases mentioned above led to both identification of the aspects of the retail mix which were being focussed upon by companies in India and a conceptual model of the various sub-factors of the retail mix for rural retail. The factors identified were:-

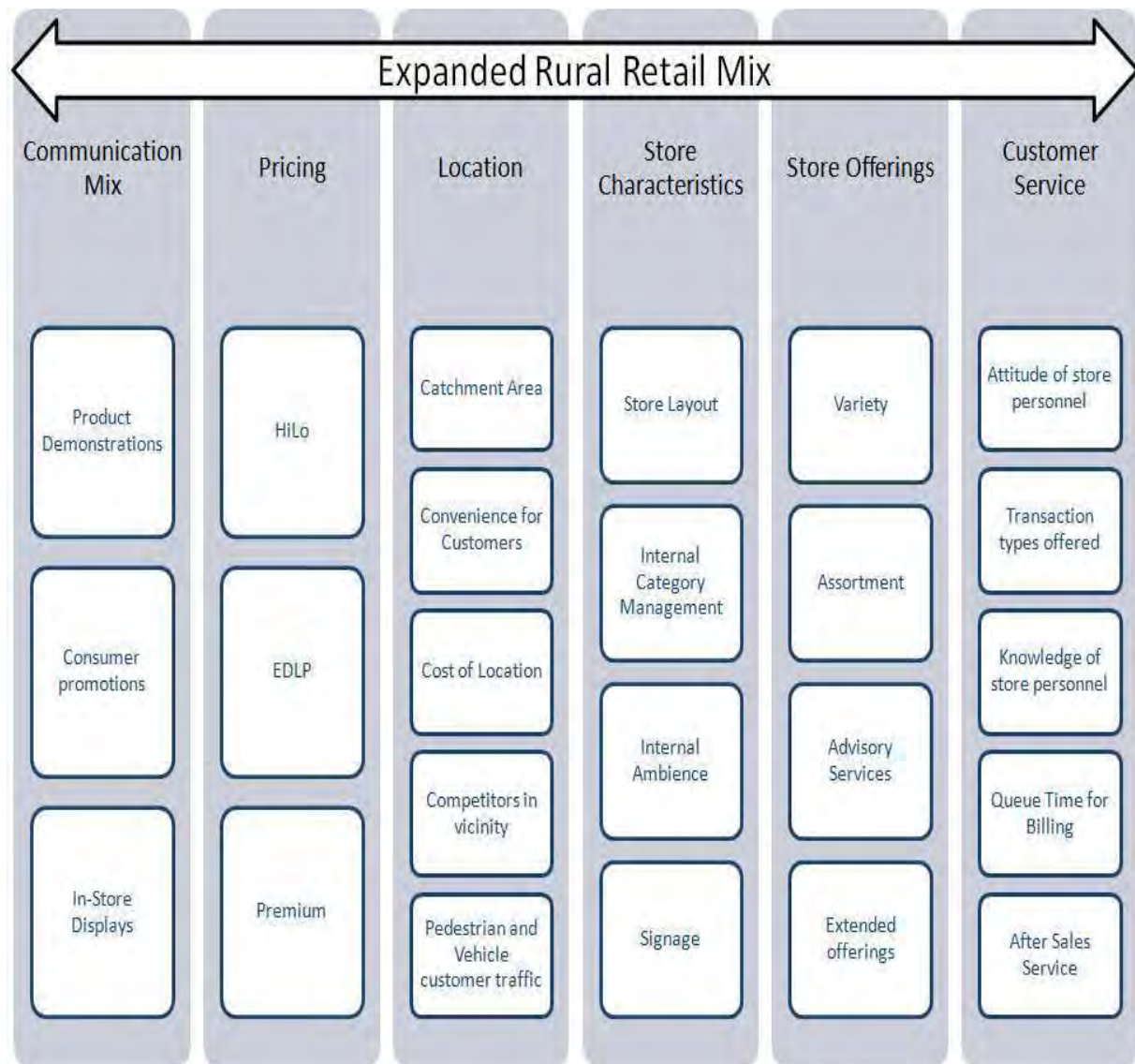


Figure 1: The expanded rural retail mix

Methodology:-

Research Framework-

Based on the literature review, and the case studies, the factors of rural Retail mix were identified and used in this study to determine the effectiveness of each for the retail in rural India. The research is conducted through primary survey based on questionnaire followed by statistical analysis.

The questionnaire was designed to have a combination of 5 point likert scale ranging from Unimportant to very important using questions for each of the sub-elements of the retail mix

identified. The survey was floated to 103 corporates working in companies ranging in three verticals:-

- ✓ Agri Products, FMCG
- ✓ Manufacturing and Consumer durables
- ✓ Banking

Data Analysis and Interpretations:-

For data analysis statistics and analytical tools were applied using SPSS 16.0 version. Attribute based perceptual mapping was executed using discriminant analysis to determine the impact of the macro-factors on the three different sectors. Simple frequency distribution was used to identify the relative importance of the sub-factors on each of the macro factors. The results and their interpretation are as follows:-

Analysis Case Processing Summary		
Unweighted Cases		Percent
Valid	103	100.0
Excluded		
Missing or out-of-range group codes	0	.0
At least one missing discriminating variable	0	.0
Both missing or out-of-range group codes and at least one missing discriminating variable	0	.0
Total	0	.0
Total	103	100.0

Figure 2: Case summary

The sample was validated to take all the data into consideration for the discriminant analysis.

The following figures are the results obtained from the SPSS analysis. The interpretation of the results is performed at the end of this section.

Group Statistics

Sector		Mean	Std. Deviation	Valid N (listwise)	
				Unweighted	Weighted
Agri Products & FMCG	Communication Mix	3.59	.948	44	44.000
	Pricing	4.48	.849	44	44.000
	Store Location	3.73	1.085	44	44.000
	Store Offering	3.61	.895	44	44.000
	Store Design	2.82	.922	44	44.000
	Customer Service	3.52	1.110	44	44.000
Manufacturing	Communication Mix	3.59	1.140	41	41.000
	Pricing	4.56	.873	41	41.000
	Store Location	3.76	1.087	41	41.000
	Store Offering	3.56	.950	41	41.000
	Store Design	2.61	.972	41	41.000
	Customer Service	3.98	1.080	41	41.000
Banking	Communication Mix	3.44	.984	18	18.000
	Pricing	4.33	.840	18	18.000
	Store Location	3.50	.985	18	18.000
	Store Offering	3.94	1.056	18	18.000
	Store Design	2.44	1.097	18	18.000
	Customer Service	3.67	1.029	18	18.000
Total	Communication Mix	3.58	1.026	103	103.000
	Pricing	4.45	.778	103	103.000
	Store Location	3.70	1.046	103	103.000
	Store Offering	3.65	.947	103	103.000
	Store Design	2.67	.974	103	103.000
	Customer Service	3.73	1.086	103	103.000

Figure 3: Group Statistics

Tests of Equality of Group Means

	Wilks' Lambda	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Communication Mix	.997	.144	2	100	.866
Pricing	.989	.535	2	100	.587
Store Location	.992	.398	2	100	.673
Store Offering	.979	1.086	2	100	.341
Store Design	.979	1.072	2	100	.346
Customer Service	.983	1.913	2	100	.153

Figure 4: Test of equality of Group means

Pooled Within-Groups Matrices

		Communication Mix	Pricing	Store Location	Store Offering	Store Design	Customer Service
Correlation	Communication Mix	1.000	.105	.247	.184	.184	.078
	Pricing	.105	1.000	.016	-.020	-.051	.054
	Store Location	.247	.016	1.000	.427	.331	-.044
	Store Offering	.184	-.020	.427	1.000	.481	.031
	Store Design	.184	-.051	.331	.481	1.000	.310
	Customer Service	.078	.054	-.044	.031	.310	1.000

Figure 5: Pooled Within-Groups Matrices

**Summary of Canonical Discriminant Functions
Eigenvalues**

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	.100 ^a	60.0	60.0	.301
2	.066 ^a	40.0	100.0	.250

a. First 2 canonical discriminant functions were used in the analysis.

Figure 6 : Eigen values

Wilks' Lambda

Test of Function(s)	Wilks' Lambda	Chi-square	df	Sig.
1 through 2	.853	15.521	12	.214
2	.938	6.272	5	.281

Figure 7: Wilks' Lambda

**Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function
Coefficients**

	Function	
	1	2
Communication Mix	.100	.015
Pricing	.215	.263
Store Location	.244	.551
Store Offering	-.927	-.476
Store Design	.973	-.316
Customer Service	-.519	.822

Functions at Group Centroids

Sector	Function	
	1	2
Agri Products & FMCG	.290	-.174
Manufacturing	-.055	.309
Banking	-.583	-.279

Unstandardized canonical discriminant functions
evaluated at group means

Figure 8 : Standardized Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients and Functions at group centroids

Structure Matrix		
	Function	
	1	2
Store Design	.454*	-.119
Store Location	.221*	.215
Communication Mix	.151*	.097
Customer Service	-.237	.701*
Store Offering	-.356	-.370*
Pricing	.170	.343*

Pooled within-groups correlations between discriminating variables and standardized canonical discriminant functions

Variables ordered by absolute size of correlation within function.

*. Largest absolute correlation between each variable and any discriminant function

Figure 9: Structure Matrix

Classification Results*						
Sector			Predicted Group Membership			Total
			Agri Products & FMCG	Manufacturing	Banking	
Original	Count	Agri Products & FMCG	19	12	13	44
		Manufacturing	11	19	11	41
		Banking	6	2	10	18
	%	Agri Products & FMCG	43.2	27.3	29.5	100.0
		Manufacturing	26.8	46.3	26.8	100.0
		Banking	33.3	11.1	55.6	100.0

a. 46.6% of original grouped cases correctly classified.

Figure 10: Classification Results

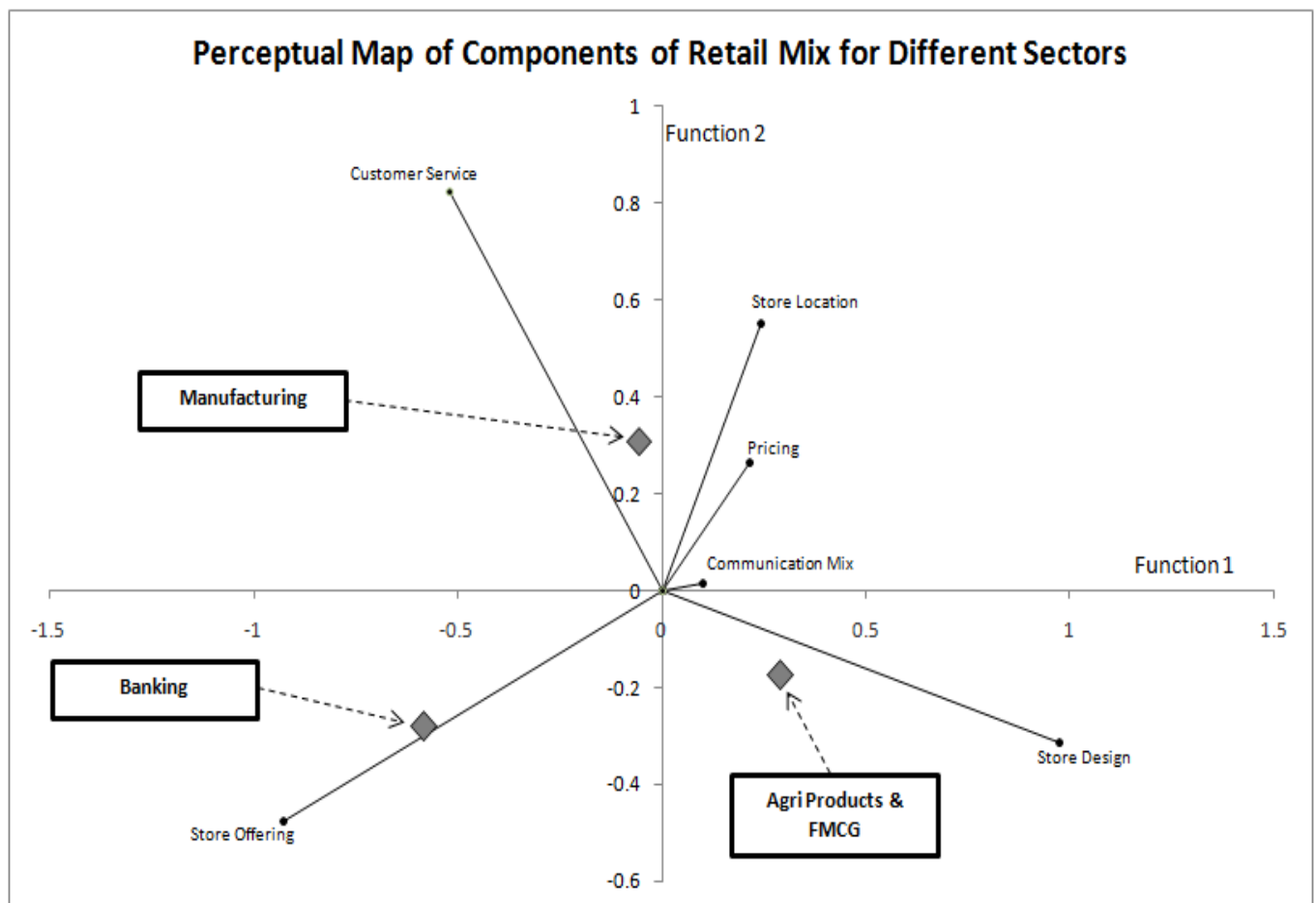


Figure 11: Perceptual Map

- The means and standard deviations of the different independent variables as shown in Fig.1 across the various sectors indicate that the effect of these brands varies greatly across the attributes.
- ✓ The univariate ANOVA test results in Fig. 2 indicate that the categories vary significantly across the various parameters. Communication mix, store location and pricing have lesser importance in distinguishing between the categories
- ✓ The pooled within group matrix in Fig.3 indicates low correlation among the independent variables. This implies that the variables chosen for analysis are distinct.
- ✓ The table for Eigen Value and Wilks' Lambda in Fig. 4 and 5 indicate that both the functions contribute towards explaining the variance in the input data.
- ✓ Using the standardised canonical discriminant function coefficients table and the functions at the group centroids table in Fig. 6 a perceptual map has been created.

- It appears that the Agri-products and FMCG sectors are strongly represented by the parameter of “Store design”. It can be concluded that Store design seems to be the most important parameter for a rural retail store from an FMCG perspective.
 - For the banking sector, the most important factor comes out to be the store offerings. The depth and breadth of financial products available at the retail store should be the most important consideration.
 - Customer service seems to be of paramount importance for the manufacturing and Consumer Durables sector. It appears that for farm equipments and white goods the service becomes a purchase influencing factor.
 - The contributions of pricing and communication mix were found out to have negligible impact on the business. A probable reason might be that the customers are more concerned with the product and service attributes rather than the communication mechanisms. For pricing, the attitude of rural consumers that they are at par with urban consumers and are capable of and interested in buying the same brands might have played a role.
- ✓ The classification results in Fig.8 show that only 46.6% of the samples were correctly classified. This is a limitation of the study. If the discriminant analysis was done for all the sub factors as well, it might have been eliminated. But that would have required a much bigger sample size.

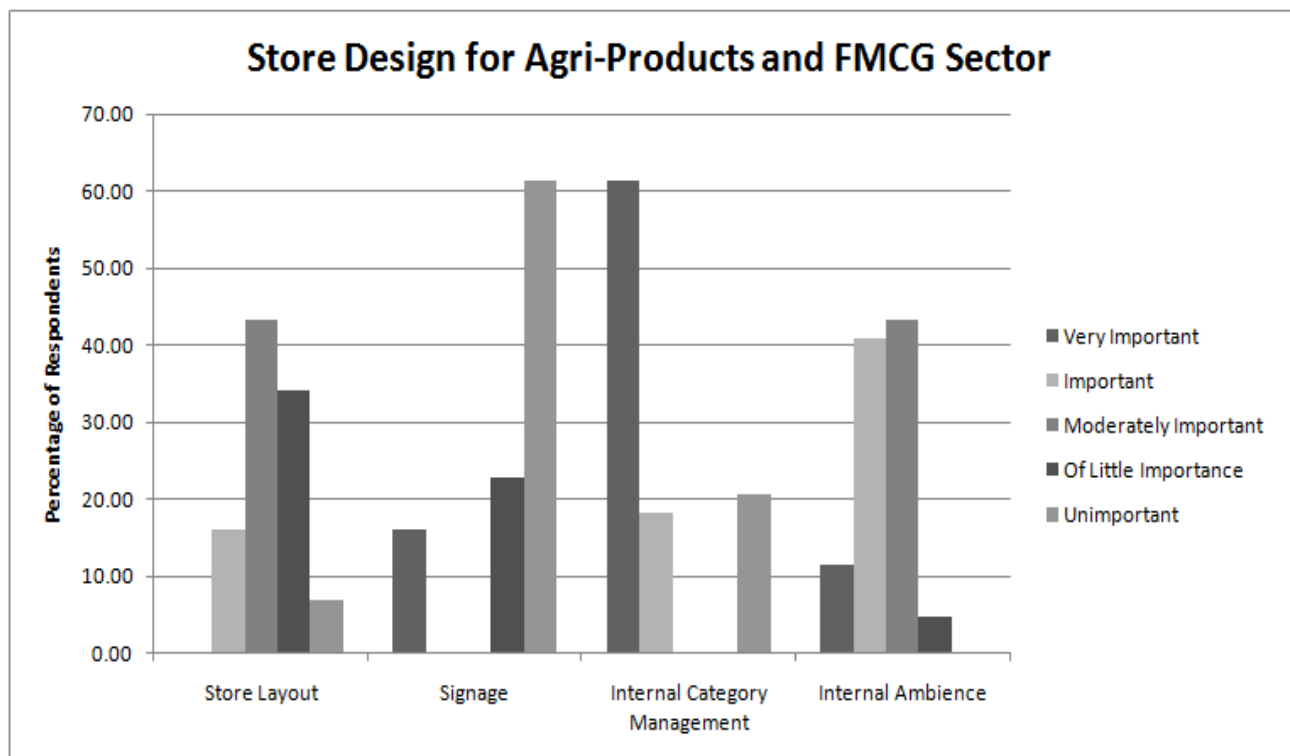


Figure 12: Store Design for Agri-products and FMCG Sector



Figure 13: Store offerings for the banking Sector

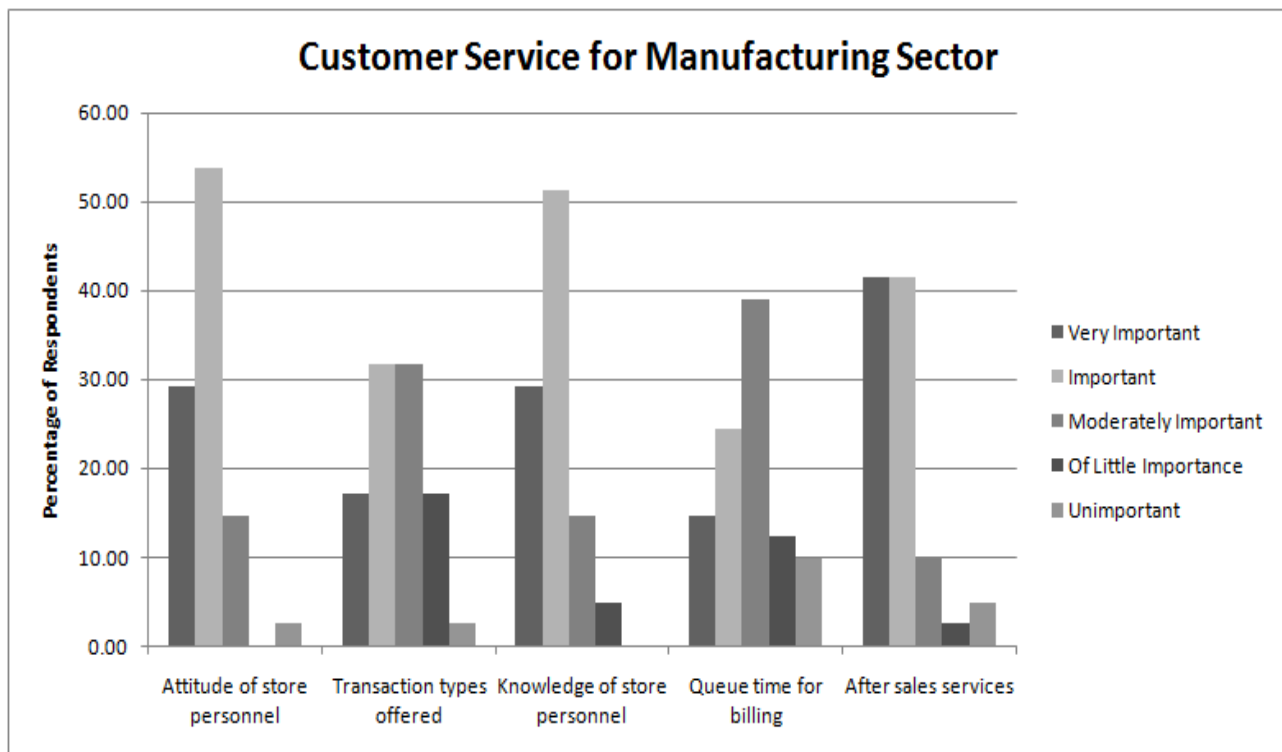


Figure 14: Customer service for manufacturing sector

- ✓ For the Agri-products and FMCG sector, Internal Category management seems to be the most important sub-factor followed by the internal ambience of the store as shown in Fig.11. Signage comes out mostly as an unimportant parameter. The importance of the store layout has been perceived moderately important for the sector
- ✓ For the Banking sector, extended offerings seem to be the most important sub-factor under store-offerings. ATM's and credit facilities seem to be good options for banks. Advisory services and assortment of goods also appear to be influencing parameters for this sector.
- ✓ After sales service emerges to be the most important parameter under customer service for the manufacturing sector. Knowledge and attitude of store personnel have also been founded to have significant contributions. The transaction types offered and long queues are not important influencers probably because the rural consumer does not care much about these factors.

Conclusion:-

Considering the above findings the following model have been proposed combining the effect of the factors and sub-factors on the different categories to identify the success factors for companies already present in or planning to enter the retail business in rural India:-

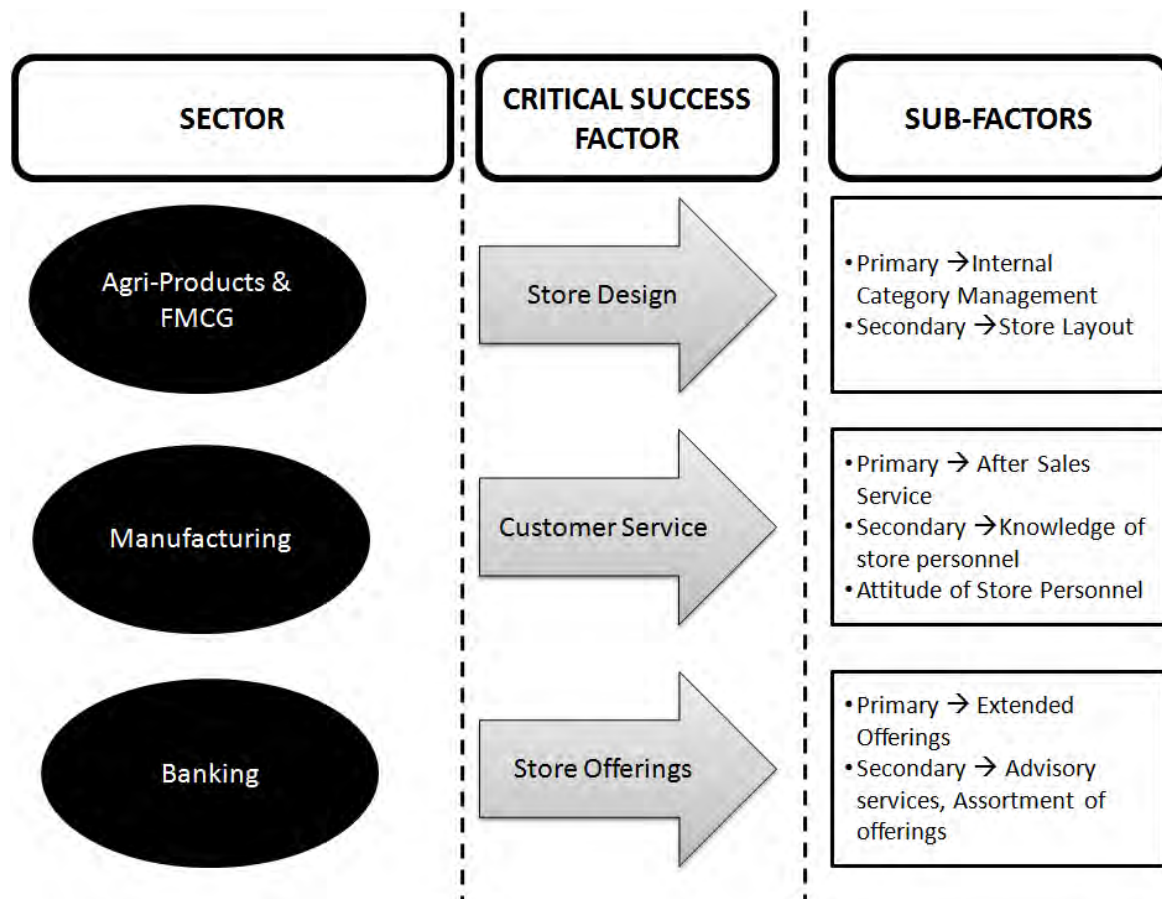


Figure 15: Critical success factors for rural retail

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