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“We want to  
*delight*  
our  
customers.”

**DR ASHOK KUMAR TYAGI,  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
OF HALDIRAM  
SNACKS, BELIEVES A  
COMPANY CAN ONLY BE  
SUCCESSFUL THROUGH  
A COMPREHENSIVE  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
THE MARKET AND WHAT  
CUSTOMERS WANT.**

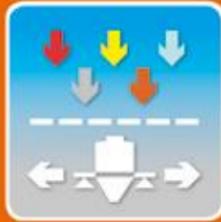
WORDS OLIVER FEATHERSTON

IMAGES ABHISHEK BALI

**B**eating huge multinationals is no mean feat for a homegrown company, especially in a market worth INR 17,000 crore (US\$2.5 billion). But that’s exactly the kind of accomplishment that snack producer Haldiram Snacks has under its belt as of 2017, having maintained its status as India’s largest snack company.

That success is paving the way for further expansion and innovation, and has helped the company achieve an international reach in the years since it was founded eight decades ago. Along with its pan-India reach, Haldiram Snacks is available in another 80 countries, including Japan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the UK, Australia and the US. Within India, Haldiram Snacks’ success is credited to its ability to offer snacks that cater to the Indian palate, a move that multinationals have failed to exploit.

But Dr Ashok Kumar (AK) Tyagi, Executive Director at Haldiram Snacks, believes the key to worldwide success is a keen sense of which way the market is blowing. “We’ve been constantly watching market data, quarterly, for the past seven, eight years,” explains AK. “What is our market share? What is our competitors’ market share? What is our»



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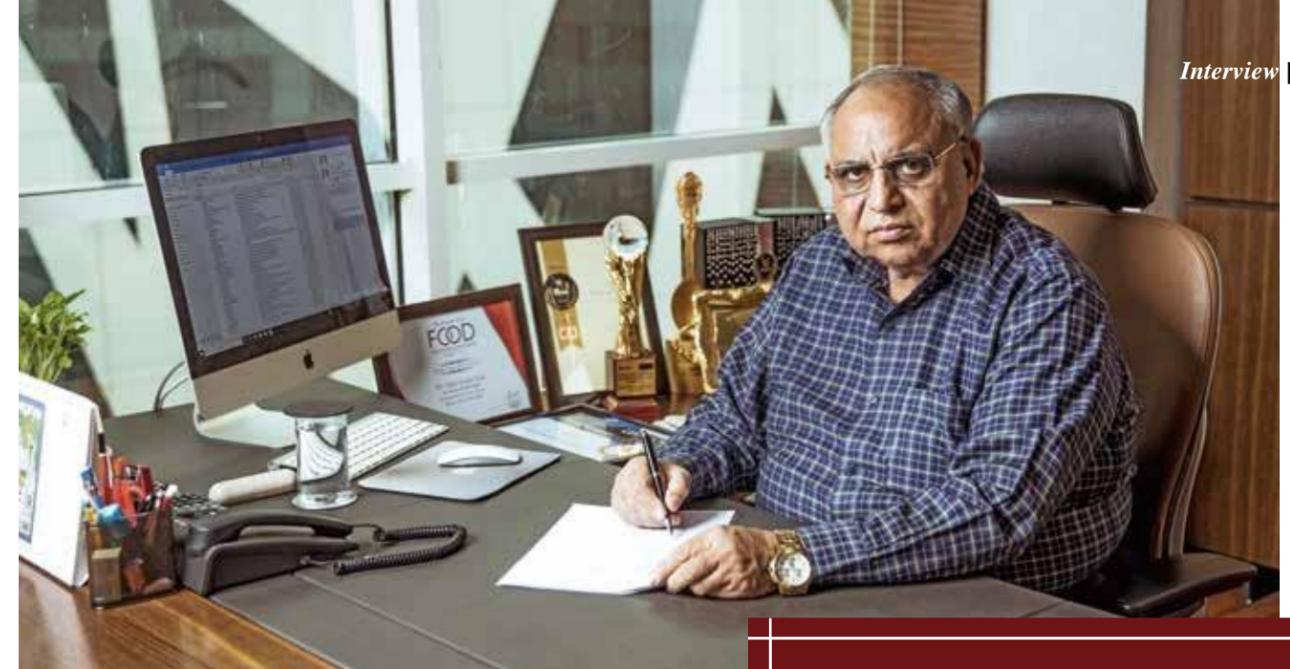
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**"IT'S A JOINT EFFORT BETWEEN US AND OUR SUPPLIER TEAM."**

numerical distribution? What is our competitors' numerical distribution? Similarly, we're looking at weighted distribution and share among the handlers. We're trying to make sales and marketing objective-based rather than subjective."

As well as this broader view of the industry, AK takes a more personalised view of Haldiram Snacks' customer base, analysing who buys its snacks, how its products taste and the convenience of those products. AK's focus on in-depth market analysis allows the company to continually innovate, whether by improving the quality of existing products or through introducing new creations. This strategy, says AK, has taken Haldiram Snacks to the number one market position and, though he acknowledges that it's difficult to maintain this, he believes it's on the right track.

As far as AK is concerned, this isn't about customer satisfaction; if anything, that term is far too unambitious. "We want to delight our customers, not just satisfy them, so we think about what customers want and need," he says. "For example, customers wanted a low-fat traditional snack, so we launched one about three years ago, in addition to our regular snacks."

"We were the first in India to introduce frozen snacks, and we've started that within the global market. If you go to any part of the globe, whether that's the US or Europe, you'll find our snacks in packs and frozen as well. You can get the same taste in the US that you get in India, because our products are totally fresh."

Haldiram Snacks' success can also be attributed to its aggressive distribution. With 2.5 million outlets across the country, the brand is almost omnipresent, and that's just on the fast-moving consumer goods side. Haldiram Snacks also has a quick service restaurant chain in about 50 locations, offering typical Indian cuisine with its own snacks.

Without suppliers to provide the raw materials, however, Haldiram Snacks' internal efforts would be meaningless. The

manufacturer, therefore, maintains deeply interconnected relationships with suppliers, and these partnerships can extend right to the source of this long, complex supply chain. For example, Haldiram Snacks maintains integration with thousands of potato farmers, offering training, helping with selection of seeds, fields and crops, and carrying out harvests. While it has a less involved relationship with other farmers, the manufacturer still has dedicated vendors and shares technological developments with partners.

"Our team works jointly with our suppliers to develop new equipment," says AK. "We provide an understanding of the production process and they understand the engineering. Any tailor-made machine can be developed if you have knowledge of the process and the engineering, so we'll go to one of our partners and provide the process data, material, temperature, time and reactions. Based on that, they will try to develop the equipment. It's a joint effort between us and our supplier team."

AK acknowledges that while this way of doing business isn't unique to Haldiram Snacks, the company stands out with ongoing reappraisal and revamping of its supply chain to maintain efficiency. The snack maker has taken a similar approach internally, restructuring, retraining and investing in automation. But what really makes Haldiram Snacks unique, says AK, is its customer-centric innovation, vast distribution and authentic taste.



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