



Retail Execution, Availability, Visibility and Sales Performance in Indian FMCG: A Field-Based Case Study of ITC GR-2 Products in Akola

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Prepared from the author's internship field diary and OJT project records

Abstract

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Purpose: This paper examines the role of outlet-level sales execution in an Indian fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) context through a field-based case study of ITC Limited's GR-2 (Grocery 2) business in and around Akola, Maharashtra. The study focuses on market coverage, retailer engagement, order generation, competitor observation and a focused Availability–Visibility–Freshness (AVF) execution project for Vivel and Fiamia toilet soaps.

Design/methodology/approach: The study uses an exploratory, field-based case-study design. Primary evidence was generated through approximately 200 retailer visits, supplementary wholesaler interactions, order-taking activities, competitor observations and internship diary records collected during a two-month OJT. The study also documents two additional field activities: a focused AVF project for Vivel and Fiamia toilet soaps and the market introduction of Sambrani Dhoop and Savlon Handwash Pump under a Buy 1 Get 1 offer at ₹99. No statistically representative consumer survey was conducted; consumer behaviour is therefore interpreted through observed retailer interactions and market conversations.

Findings: The internship record reports 100% target achievement and sales/orders exceeding ₹10 lakh across the OJT. During the AVF project week, approximately ₹3 lakh in toilet-soap sales were reported. The field experience indicates that availability, retail visibility, product condition, retailer communication, competitive assortment and disciplined market

coverage operate as interconnected elements of FMCG sales execution.

Retailer interaction also functioned as a source of local market intelligence, not merely as an order-taking activity.

Practical implications: FMCG sales organizations can strengthen traditional-trade execution through systematic outlet prioritisation, AVF-based retail checks, structured competitor intelligence, retailer feedback capture, route productivity tracking and data-supported order planning. The paper distinguishes these managerial implications from causal claims because the underlying field data are observational and limited to one internship territory.

Originality/value: The paper converts an MBA OJT field experience into a transparent case study of last-mile FMCG execution. It contributes a practitioner-oriented view of how availability, visibility and freshness can be operationalised as a simple retail execution framework in a traditional-trade environment.

Keywords: FMCG; retail execution; traditional trade; retailer engagement; market coverage; availability; visibility; freshness; sales execution; ITC Limited; India; field study.



1. Introduction

India's FMCG market is characterised by high purchase frequency, broad product portfolios and a complex distribution structure connecting manufacturers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers and consumers. Recent industry evidence continues to highlight the importance of rural and tier-II/tier-III demand, while digital, quick-commerce and modern-trade channels are expanding alongside traditional retail. IBEF reports that India's FMCG market was valued at about US\$289 billion in 2025 and projects substantial growth through 2030, while noting the continuing importance of rural consumption and distribution reach.

Within this environment, the retail outlet remains an important point at which marketing strategy becomes visible to consumers. Research on Indian traditional trade describes the retailer as a critical channel and argues for structured point-of-sale strategies that use shopper insights, store clustering and retailer engagement. Research on small retailers likewise shows that assortment decisions are multidimensional and influenced by retailer economics, customer profile, catchment characteristics and limited shelf space.

The present paper is based on an MBA Marketing student's two-month OJT at ITC Limited in Akola, Maharashtra. The internship involved field visits, retailer and wholesaler interactions, order generation, competitor analysis and observation of consumer behaviour relating to ITC GR-2 products. The assigned GR-2 business, as used in the internship, refers to Grocery 2 products comprising PCP (Personal Care Products), Agarbatti and Matches. The fieldwork therefore provides a useful practitioner case for studying how FMCG sales execution operates at the last mile.

The paper gives particular attention to an AVF project undertaken for Vivel and Fiama toilet soaps. In the internship context, AVF means Availability, Visibility and Freshness. The project aimed to increase toilet-soap sales through systematic outlet-level execution and reported approximately ₹3 lakh in sales during the project week. The paper does not claim that AVF caused the entire sales outcome; instead, it treats the result as a field outcome associated with a focused execution intervention.

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2. Research Problem and Questions

The practical research problem is that strong FMCG brands still require consistent last-mile execution to convert product availability and brand demand into retailer orders and consumer access. In traditional trade, sales performance can be affected by stock availability, shelf/display visibility, retailer acceptance, competitive assortment, trade support and the frequency and quality of sales-team visits.

Research Question	Focus
RQ1	How does systematic market coverage support retailer engagement and order generation in an FMCG field-sales setting?
RQ2	What role do availability, visibility and freshness play in outlet-level execution for Vivel and Fiama toilet soaps?
RQ3	What retailer and market observations can be used as practical consumer-behaviour and competitor intelligence?
RQ4	What sales-management practices can be recommended from the field case without overstating causal evidence?

3. Literature Review

The literature supports the central proposition that the retailer is not simply a transactional endpoint but an active actor in the FMCG channel. Sitaraman's study of traditional trade in India argues that shopper marketing in kirana stores should be built around store segmentation, shopper insights, retailer leverage and disciplined POS testing.



This is consistent with the OJT observation that repeated market visits can generate both orders and local market information.

Aithal's study of rural India, based on more than 686 rural retailers across 103 villages, found that external environmental conditions and retailer purchase preferences influence distribution-channel length.

Although the present study is not a rural-channel survey, the finding supports the importance of treating the retailer and local market environment as part of distribution strategy.

Koul and Jasrotia's research on product adoption by small retailers found that retail margin, customer profile, catchment and store design can affect assortment decisions. This provides a theoretical basis for the internship's emphasis on retailer discussions, product movement and competitive assortment.

Das's empirical study of Indian shoppers found significant relationships between retailer awareness, retailer associations, perceived quality and consumer attitude, and between consumer attitude and purchase intention.

The present study does not replicate that statistical model; instead, it uses the insight to interpret why retailer-level execution can matter for the final consumer decision.

Kaushik's case study of Godrej Consumer Products Limited demonstrates the importance of coordination among distributors, retailers and suppliers in consumer packaged goods networks. This is relevant to the field case because order generation depends on information and product movement across multiple channel actors.

The literature therefore suggests three linked dimensions relevant to the case: (1) distribution reach and channel structure, (2) retailer decision-making and relationship quality, and (3) point-of-sale execution and shopper visibility. The present paper adds a field-level account of these dimensions within a specific ITC GR-2 territory.

4. Conceptual Framework

The paper proposes a simple retail-execution framework derived from the internship's AVF project and broader field activities:

Market Coverage → Retailer Engagement → Availability → Visibility → Freshness → Order Conversion → Sales Outcome

Market coverage creates contact opportunities; retailer engagement facilitates communication and order discussion; availability reduces the risk of missed sales; visibility increases the chance that a shopper notices the product; freshness supports product presentation and selling readiness; and these execution factors can contribute to order conversion. The framework is deliberately presented as a managerial logic model rather than a statistically tested causal model.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Design

The research follows an exploratory, descriptive case-study design based on a two-month field internship. A case-study approach is appropriate because the paper seeks to understand a real-world FMCG sales process in its operational context rather than estimate a population parameter.

5.2 Study Setting

Item	Details
Organisation	ITC Limited
Function	FMCG field sales / market execution
Internship role	Sales Intern
Location	Akola, Maharashtra
Period	18 May 2026 – 18 July 2026
Markets covered	Akola, Akot, Telhara, Murtizapur, Chota Bazar and other assigned areas



Retailer exposure	Approximately 200 retailers
Other channel participants	Wholesalers and other market participants
Portfolio focus	GR-2 (Grocery 2): PCP, Agarbatti and Matches

5.3 Data Sources

Primary field evidence consisted of the author's internship diary, market-visit observations, retailer and wholesaler interactions, order-generation activities, competitor observations and project records. The OJT record reports 100% target achievement and sales/orders exceeding ₹10 lakh. These figures are treated as internship-reported outcomes rather than independently audited financial data.

Secondary evidence was obtained from ITC corporate publications and industry/research sources. ITC's 2025 annual report identifies FMCG-Others as including Personal Care Products, Education and Stationery Products, Incense Sticks and Safety Matches, while its 2026 results describe continued growth in Personal Care Products and Agarbattis.

5.4 Analytical Approach

The analysis is primarily descriptive and thematic. Field observations were grouped into market coverage, retailer engagement, availability, visibility, freshness, competitor activity, consumer-behaviour indicators, order generation and product-launch activity. Quantitative results are reported only where the internship record supplied a figure. No inferential statistics are presented because the available field record does not contain a controlled sample, pre/post control group or complete outlet-level numerical dataset.

6. Field Activities and Case Evidence

6.1 Market Coverage and Retailer Engagement

The intern visited approximately 200 retailers across the assigned territory and interacted with wholesalers. The primary activities were market visits, taking orders, checking product presence, discussing product movement, observing competitor offerings and understanding retailer perceptions. This created repeated contact with the trade channel and exposed the intern to the practical discipline of route coverage.

Field Activity	Observed/Reported Output
Market visits	Approx. 200 retailers visited
Order taking	Orders generated from retailers and wholesalers
Competitor analysis	Observation of competing brands, prices, assortment and visibility
Consumer-behaviour learning	Insights inferred from retailer conversations and market observations
Territory exposure	Akola, Akot, Telhara, Murtizapur, Chota Bazar and other areas
Overall target	100% reported achievement
Overall sales/orders	₹10 lakh+ reported during OJT

6.2 AVF Project: Vivel and Fiama Toilet Soaps

The AVF project was the most clearly defined intervention within the internship. The intern focused on Vivel and Fiama toilet soaps and applied three execution checks: Availability, Visibility and Freshness.

Availability meant ensuring that the required products were present at the outlet and generating orders where stock was inadequate. Visibility meant improving the noticeability and retail presence of the products.

Freshness meant paying attention to the physical selling condition and presentation of available stock.



AVF Dimension	Operational Meaning in the Field	Expected Mechanism
Availability	Check stock presence and generate replenishment orders where required.	Fewer missed sales from stock-outs.
Visibility	Improve product presence/noticeability at the outlet.	Higher opportunity for shopper recognition.
Freshness	Check physical condition and selling readiness of stock.	Better product presentation and retailer confidence.

The reported outcome of the project was approximately ₹3 lakh in toilet-soap sales during the project week. Because the available record does not provide a control week or outlet-level pre/post sales series, this paper reports the figure as an observed project outcome and does not estimate a causal AVF uplift percentage.

6.3 Product Launch Activity

The internship also included market introduction activities for Sambrani Dhoop and Savlon Handwash Pump under a Buy 1 Get 1 offer at ₹99. The field activity involved communicating the product/offer to retailers, supporting product introduction, generating interest and facilitating market availability. This provided exposure to trade promotion and new-product introduction at the retail level.

Product	Promotion / Activity	Marketing Execution
Sambrani Dhoop	Market introduction	Retailer communication, availability, visibility and order generation.
Savlon Handwash Pump	Buy 1 Get 1 at ₹99	Promotional communication, retailer acceptance and order generation.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1 Finding 1: Market Coverage is a Foundation for Order Generation

The approximately 200 retailer visits demonstrate the scale of direct trade contact during the internship. In FMCG, the sales representative's physical presence creates opportunities to identify stock gaps, discuss product movement, collect orders and obtain competitor information. The case supports the practical view that distribution strategy becomes effective only when it is translated into consistent outlet-level execution.

7.2 Finding 2: Retailer Engagement Creates Both Sales and Market Intelligence

Retailer interactions served two functions. First, they enabled direct order generation. Second, retailers acted as local information sources about product demand, competitor presence, consumer requests and movement of different packs. This aligns with research showing that small retailers make assortment decisions using multiple economic and market factors.

7.3 Finding 3: AVF Provides a Simple Operational Checklist

The AVF model is useful as a field-management checklist because it translates an abstract objective such as 'increase sales' into observable outlet conditions. Availability asks whether the product can be bought; visibility asks whether the shopper can notice it; freshness asks whether the product is in acceptable selling condition. The approximately ₹3 lakh project-week toilet-soap sales outcome indicates that a focused execution project can produce a measurable sales result, although the case cannot isolate the effect of AVF from other factors.



7.4 Finding 4: Competitive Intelligence is Continuous

The internship showed that competitors are encountered outlet by outlet. Product range, price points, promotional offers, packaging and retailer push can vary by store. Therefore, competitor analysis is more useful when converted into a structured observation routine rather than treated as a one-time market study.

7.5 Finding 5: Product Launch Requires Retailer Acceptance

The Sambrani Dhoop and Savlon Handwash Pump launch activities illustrate that a new product or promotional offer must first obtain trade acceptance. Retailer communication, commercial attractiveness, availability and visibility are practical prerequisites for consumer trial. This is consistent with literature that treats retailers as influential actors in the final choice environment.

7.6 Alignment With ITC's Current FMCG Strategy

The field case is consistent with ITC's reported strategic emphasis on trade and marketing investment, personal-care growth, Agarbatti distribution and channel execution. ITC's FY2026 results reported double-digit FMCG-Others growth and specifically cited growth across Personal Care Products and Agarbattis; its Q1 FY2027 release reported mid-teens growth in Personal Care Products and highlighted channel-led trade inputs and retail distribution drives for Mangaldeep Agarbattis and Dhoop.

8. Managerial Implications

Recommendation	Implementation	Expected Outcome
AVF outlet scorecard	Use a simple Availability–Visibility–Freshness checklist for priority outlets.	More consistent retail execution and faster identification of gaps.
Retailer feedback capture	Record key retailer comments on demand, competition, packs and consumer requests.	Stronger local market intelligence.
Outlet prioritisation	Classify outlets by movement, potential, coverage frequency and stock gaps.	Better use of field-sales time.
Competitor tracker	Capture price, scheme, assortment and visibility observations in a standard format.	Faster competitive response.
Launch checklist	For new products/offers, track retailer communication, first order, availability and repeat order.	Better monitoring of market introduction.
UOB and productivity review	Track UOB alongside route coverage, order value and productive calls where data is available.	Improved sales-force productivity and management.

These recommendations are derived from the case observations and should be tested by the company before being adopted at scale. In particular, the AVF checklist should be treated as a managerial tool whose impact can be evaluated through a controlled pre/post or test-control design.

9. Limitations

- The study is based on one intern's OJT experience in the Akola region and cannot be generalised to all ITC markets.
- The approximately 200 retailer visits are a field-exposure count, not a statistically random sample.
- Consumer behaviour was inferred from market interactions and retailer observations; no formal consumer



questionnaire or statistically representative consumer sample was used.

- The reported ₹10 lakh+ overall sales and approximately ₹3 lakh AVF project-week sales were not independently audited within the study dataset.
- No control group or pre/post experimental design was available to isolate the causal effect of AVF.
- Some company-specific operational information is intentionally not disclosed because it may be commercially sensitive.

10. Conclusion

This field-based case study demonstrates how FMCG sales strategy is operationalised at the retail level. The internship at ITC Limited provided direct exposure to market coverage, retailer engagement, order generation, competitor analysis and consumer-behaviour observation across Akola and surrounding markets. The reported 100% target achievement and ₹10 lakh+ sales/orders indicate meaningful field performance, while the approximately ₹3 lakh toilet-soap sales recorded during the AVF project week provides a focused example of execution-oriented selling.

The central managerial insight is that FMCG growth at the last mile depends on disciplined execution rather than on brand strength alone. Availability, visibility and freshness provide a practical lens through which sales teams can evaluate outlet readiness. Retailer engagement adds a second dimension by converting the outlet into a source of both orders and market intelligence. The product-launch activities further show that trade acceptance is an important step between product introduction and consumer trial.

The paper should therefore be read as an exploratory case study and not as evidence that AVF independently caused a specific percentage increase in sales. A stronger future study could compare AVF and non-AVF outlets, collect pre- and post-intervention sales, track UOB and repeat orders, and combine retailer observations with consumer-level survey data. Such a design would allow the proposed framework to be tested statistically.

11. Future Research Directions

- Test AVF using a quasi-experimental design with treatment and comparison outlets.
- Measure changes in availability, visibility scores, stock-outs, UOB, order value and repeat orders before and after AVF implementation.
- Study retailer acceptance of new products using a structured questionnaire.
- Compare traditional-trade execution across Akola, Akot, Telhara and Murtizapur.
- Examine how trade schemes and promotional offers affect retailer order quantity and repeat purchase.
- Combine retailer-level observations with consumer interviews to separate trade push from consumer pull.

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Appendix A. Author and Field-Study Note

Author: Kareena Pariyal, MBA Marketing, School of Business, Indira University, Pune. The paper is derived from the author's OJT at ITC Limited, Akola, from 18 May 2026 to 18 July 2026. The underlying field record includes an internship diary and market-visit observations. Company-specific confidential information, retailer identities and commercially sensitive records are not disclosed.

Terminology used in the paper follows the internship context: GR-2 means Grocery 2 products comprising PCP, Agarbatti and Matches; UOB means total unique outlet bills of the day; DS means Dealer Salesman; and PSR means Pilot Sales Representative.

Appendix B. Suggested Publication Declaration

This manuscript is prepared as an academic case study based on an MBA OJT. Before journal submission, the author should verify the target journal's author guidelines, plagiarism/similarity requirements, disclosure policy, institutional requirements, and any requirement for company permission or ethics approval. The reported sales figures should be supported by documentary evidence where the target journal requires verifiability.