



Retail Execution, Asset Visibility, and Market Coverage in FMCG General Trade: A Field-Based Study of Coca-Cola Outlet Performance in the Ujjain Territory

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Abstract

General Trade (GT) remains the primary route to market for Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) companies in India, and within the beverage category, outlet-level execution — product availability, cooler and asset visibility, and retailer engagement — substantially shapes whether distribution reach converts into consumption occasions. This paper presents a field-based, descriptive-exploratory MBA research study conducted during an On-the-Job Training (OJT) engagement with Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. (HCCB) in the Ujjain sales territory of Madhya Pradesh, from 18 May 2026 to 18 July 2026, in the role of Sales and Marketing Intern in the General Trade channel. The research problem is the extent to which Coca-Cola asset presence, cooler availability, and outlet-level execution are associated with retail market performance in General Trade, and what execution gaps most affect outlet productivity. Primary data was gathered through outlet visits, retailer interactions, and a structured field survey of 124 unique retail outlets across 22 market areas, supplemented by company records, official HCCB publications, and academic literature on trade marketing and distribution. The survey recorded Coca-Cola asset presence at 74.2 percent of surveyed outlets (approximately 92 of 124 outlets), 67 outlets (54.0 percent) with no major competing brand present, and 32

outlets (25.8 percent) without a Coca-Cola cooler. Approximately 27 percent of outlets were recorded under a distinct outlet-classification category during the survey; the precise classification basis could not be verified from the available project records and is treated here as an open methodological question rather than assumed. Pepsi was observed as the primary competing brand and Campa as an emerging competitor; delivery delays and stock shortages were the most frequently cited retailer concerns, and availability gaps were noted for selected stock-keeping units (SKUs), including Rim Zim Jeera. Because outlet coverage followed the assigned beat structure rather than random or statistically designed sampling, and no comparison data from other territories or time periods was available, the findings are treated as descriptive of the surveyed market rather than as a generalisable or causal account. The paper closes with field-grounded recommendations on outlet categorisation, cooler deployment, distribution responsiveness, and competitive execution, together with an explicit account of the study's methodological limitations.

Keywords: General Trade, FMCG, Retail Execution, Route-to-Market, Cooler Visibility, Asset Management, Beverage Distribution, Trade Marketing

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

General Trade accounts for the majority of FMCG sales in India, and this is especially true in the beverage category, where purchases are frequently tied to immediate consumption occasions rather than planned shopping trips. In this setting, the retail outlet is the final and most decisive point of contact between a beverage brand and the consumer: availability, chilled accessibility through a cooler, visible brand assets, and the retailer's own



recommendation jointly determine whether a consumer's preference for a brand is actually realised as a purchase. Distribution effectiveness therefore does more than move stock; it translates upstream brand investment into an outlet-level presence that can be seen and bought at the point of sale.

1.2 Industry/Business Context

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. (HCCB) is the principal bottling partner of The Coca-Cola Company in India, operating a manufacturing and distribution network that, per the company's own published information, spans 14 bottling plants across 10 states and works with more than 2,000 distributors. HCCB's portfolio in the surveyed territory includes Coca-Cola, Thums Up, Sprite, Maaza, Kinley, and Rim Zim, competing in a category marked by intense rivalry from Pepsi and by the growing presence of the re-entrant brand Campa, alongside regional players. HCCB also operates a digital retailer-engagement platform, Coke Buddy, that supports ordering, scheme visibility, and order tracking, and the company reports supporting several thousand shipments per day across its distribution ecosystem. For HCCB's General Trade performance, this scale of infrastructure depends on outlet-level execution — coverage, product and SKU availability, cooler placement, and retailer willingness to prioritise the brand — to convert into actual sales.

1.3 Problem Context

Against this backdrop, the project addressed a practical execution problem observed in the field during the internship: uneven Coca-Cola cooler and asset presence across outlets, outlets with unclear or inconsistent categorisation, active and growing competitive pressure from Pepsi and Campa, recurring retailer concerns around delivery delays and stock shortages, availability gaps for selected SKUs such as Rim Zim Jeera, and a manual, time-consuming approach to RED (retail execution and distribution) score calculation that limited how quickly execution gaps could be identified and corrected.

1.4 Research Problem

The research problem is formulated as follows: to what extent are Coca-Cola asset presence, cooler availability, and outlet-level retail execution associated with market coverage and retail performance for HCCB in the General Trade channel of the Ujjain territory, and what outlet-level, competitive, and distribution-related factors appear to influence this relationship, given that the available project data permits a descriptive and observational account rather than a controlled or causal test of this question.

1.5 Purpose of the Study

The study examines outlet-level retail execution — asset and cooler presence, product availability, and competitive positioning — as it was observed across a structured field survey, identifies the distribution and retailer-relationship factors that appeared to support or constrain execution during the fieldwork, and uses these field-grounded observations to generate practical, evidence-based recommendations for General Trade management at HCCB.

1.6 Research Objectives

- Objective 1: To study Coca-Cola's General Trade market execution in the Ujjain territory, including product availability, visibility, and retail outlet coverage.
- Objective 2: To analyse retail outlet performance through a structured field survey covering product availability, competitive presence, and asset and cooler visibility.
- Objective 3: To evaluate cooler purity, planogram compliance, and Coca-Cola asset management as determinants of product visibility at the point of sale.
- Objective 4: To understand FMCG sales operations, Route-to-Market (RTM), and retail execution through direct interaction with the Area Sales Manager and Market Growth Representative teams.
- Objective 5: To identify market execution challenges observed during fieldwork and recommend practical, field-grounded measures for improving outlet-level retail execution and market performance.



2. Literature Review

2.1 Trade Marketing and Push–Pull Strategy

Trade marketing theory describes the activities manufacturers undertake to influence distributors, wholesalers, and retailers so that products are effectively stocked, displayed, and made available to consumers, and is commonly understood through the interaction of push and pull strategies: a push strategy motivates channel partners to stock and sell through retailer support, merchandising, and distribution, while a pull strategy builds consumer demand through advertising and brand communication (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Within HCCB, field-level retail execution and distributor servicing represent push-oriented activity, while Coca-Cola's consumer-facing advertising and brand campaigns operate on the pull side; the present study is concerned primarily with the push dimension as observed at outlet level.

2.2 Distribution Channel Theory

Distribution channel theory explains how products move from manufacturers to consumers through intermediaries such as distributors, wholesalers, and retailers, a function made necessary because a manufacturer cannot efficiently reach a large, dispersed retail base alone (Kotler & Keller, 2016). HCCB's distribution structure can be represented broadly as manufacturing plant → warehouse → distributor → retailer → consumer, and the company's published network scale — 14 bottling plants, 10 states, and over 2,000 distributors — illustrates the infrastructure this theory describes. The theory is directly relevant to the present study because outlet-level product and asset availability depend on this distribution system consistently reaching and replenishing outlets.

2.3 Route-to-Market and Channel-Facing Segmentation

Route-to-Market (RTM) theory addresses the methods and structures an organisation uses to reach customers through appropriate channels, including outlet classification, territory allocation, beat planning, and delivery frequency. Recent research on Indian retail markets indicates that channel-facing segmentation — differentiating distribution and service approaches according to outlet type and capacity — can improve retail performance relative to a uniform coverage model. This literature provides the conceptual basis for examining outlet classification and beat-based coverage in the present study, and for the recommendation, in Section 7, that outlet categorisation be periodically reviewed.

2.4 Retail Visibility, Merchandising, and Consumer Behaviour

Retail visibility and merchandising theory holds that product presentation — including coolers, point-of-sale material, displays, and placement — shapes consumer attention and purchase behaviour at the point of sale, which is particularly consequential in the beverage category because many purchases are linked to immediate, on-the-spot consumption. A study of beverage impulse-buying behaviour among retail shoppers in Pune and Mumbai found that demographic and purchase-related factors influenced the likelihood of impulse purchases, reinforcing the practical importance of ensuring beverages are visible, chilled, and accessible at the exact point where the purchase decision is made. Within HCCB, this relationship can be summarised as availability → accessibility → visibility → consumer purchase, and it directly informs why cooler presence and asset visibility were treated as central execution variables in the field survey underlying this study.

2.5 Relationship Marketing and Technology-Enabled Distribution

Relationship marketing theory identifies trust and commitment as the central variables determining whether a channel relationship endures and performs (Morgan & Hunt, 1994); in FMCG distribution, this is reflected in the frequency, communication, and cooperation that sustain the manufacturer–distributor–retailer relationship. HCCB's Coke Buddy platform is a practical instance of technology-enabled relationship management, allowing retailers to place orders, view schemes, and track fulfilment digitally. Technology-enabled distribution theory more broadly explains how digital tools improve the efficiency and responsiveness of distribution systems; the AI-based RED (retail execution and distribution) scoring concept explored during the internship, and discussed qualitatively in Section 5.9, sits within this same theoretical tradition, though it remains a proposed rather than



an implemented or empirically tested system.

2.6 Synthesis and Research Gap

Existing knowledge. The literature reviewed above establishes that trade marketing, distribution channel structure, route-to-market design, retail visibility, and relationship quality jointly shape channel and retail performance, and that these constructs are interdependent (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

Existing limitation. Much of this literature is conceptual, or is drawn from general FMCG or multichannel retail settings, and offers limited field-level evidence of how asset visibility, cooler availability, and outlet categorisation interact within a single beverage bottler's General Trade operations in a specific Indian territory.

Specific gap. There is limited publicly available, verifiable field evidence connecting outlet-level Coca-Cola asset presence, cooler availability, and competitive positioning to General Trade market coverage, within a single bottler's territory-level operations of the kind examined here.

Contribution of this study. This study contributes field-level, descriptive evidence from an HCCB General Trade context by combining structured outlet survey data, cooler and asset-recovery observations, and retail-execution findings gathered directly during fieldwork. It does not claim to be a controlled or causal study; rather, it offers a bounded, transparently limited empirical account from a specific territory and period, intended to complement — not replace — the broader theoretical literature on trade marketing and distribution.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study follows a descriptive and exploratory, field-based observational design. The descriptive component addresses outlet coverage, asset and cooler presence, and competitive positioning as recorded in the structured field survey; the exploratory component addresses retailer concerns, distribution issues, and execution challenges observed during fieldwork. The design does not include a controlled experiment, a matched comparison group, or formal inferential statistical testing, and findings are reported accordingly as observational and descriptive rather than causal.

3.2 Research Context

The research was conducted during a structured OJT engagement with Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd., in the General Trade channel of the Ujjain sales territory, Madhya Pradesh, over the period 18 May 2026 to 18 July 2026, in the role of Sales and Marketing Intern under the guidance of the Area Sales Manager, Mr. Nilesh Singawat.

3.3 Data Sources

Primary data: Collected through market visits, direct retailer interaction, outlet-level observation of Coca-Cola asset and cooler presence, competitor observation, product and SKU availability checks, and a structured field-survey format covering 124 unique retail outlets. No independent third-party validation of retailer responses was undertaken.

Secondary data: Company-provided operational information available during the OJT, official HCCB publications on distribution, cooler management, and the Coke Buddy platform, along with industry reports (India Brand Equity Foundation; Ministry of Food Processing Industries) and academic literature on trade marketing, distribution, and consumer behaviour. Secondary company-level information is distinguished in the text from project-specific field data.

3.4 Sampling/Field Coverage

Field coverage was determined by the assigned General Trade market and route structure allocated for the OJT period; outlets were covered following the Permanent Journey Plan (PJP) rather than a statistically designed or randomly drawn sample. A total of 124 unique retail outlets across 22 market areas were surveyed, with each



outlet counted only once to avoid duplication. This non-probability, beat-based field coverage should be read as the assigned territory covered during the internship rather than as a representative sample of HCCB's wider General Trade universe in Madhya Pradesh.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

The field process followed a consistent sequence: outlet identification, outlet visit, product and SKU availability check, Coca-Cola asset and cooler observation, competitor-brand observation, retailer interaction and feedback collection, order support, recording of survey data, and subsequent compilation and analysis leading to findings and recommendations. A parallel process applied to cooler asset recovery: review of pending missing-cooler and QR-audit cases, retailer contact, collection of photographic evidence, escalation for physical verification by Sales Team Leader/Market Growth Representative teams, and status update.

3.6 Data Analysis

Field survey data was compiled and analysed using Microsoft Excel, with descriptive statistics — counts and percentages — applied to outlet coverage, asset and cooler presence, competitive positioning, and outlet classification. The comparisons presented in Section 5 are drawn directly from the project's survey record. The underlying record does not specify the precise basis on which the 27 percent outlet-classification figure discussed in Section 5.5 was determined; this detail could not be verified from the supplied project files and is treated as an open methodological question rather than assumed, and is carried forward as an explicit limitation in Section 8.

3.7 Research Ethics/Data Considerations

Company and retailer information gathered during the OJT was used responsibly and in aggregated form for the purposes of this study; confidential company- and retailer-specific information, including outlet-wise sales, margins, and distributor economics, was not disclosed and was in most cases not accessible to the intern. No formal institutional ethical review was sought, consistent with the standard confidentiality expectations of an academic internship engagement rather than a funded research study.

4. Case/Company Context

Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt. Ltd. (HCCB) is the largest bottling partner of The Coca-Cola Company in India, manufacturing and distributing a portfolio that includes Coca-Cola, Thums Up, Sprite, Fanta, Maaza, Kinley, Rim Zim, and other beverage brands. According to the company's published information, HCCB operates 14 bottling plants across 10 states and works with a distribution network of more than 2,000 distributors, supporting several thousand shipments per day. The company has also invested in digital retailer engagement through its Coke Buddy platform, which allows retailers to place orders, view trade schemes, and track fulfilment.

Within its General Trade operations, HCCB competes against Pepsi as an established national rival and, during the study period, against Campa as a fast-growing re-entrant brand, alongside regional players, in a category where chilled availability, shelf and cooler visibility, and retailer preference substantially influence consumer choice at the point of sale. The Ujjain sales territory of Madhya Pradesh, where this study was conducted, operates through the standard HCCB manufacturer–distributor–retailer structure, with Sales Team Leaders and Market Growth Representatives responsible for outlet-level coverage under the Area Sales Manager. This territory-level General Trade operation, together with the associated cooler and asset-management activity observed by the researcher during fieldwork, provided the empirical setting for the present study.



5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Outlet Survey Coverage

Table 1 presents the field-level outlet survey coverage recorded during the OJT.

Indicator	Value
Unique retail outlets surveyed	124
Market areas covered	22
Average outlets per market area (derived: $124 \div 22$)	≈ 5.6

Because each of the 124 outlets was counted only once, the survey provides a de-duplicated, outlet-level view of the assigned territory. The spread across 22 distinct market areas indicates reasonably broad geographical coverage within the assigned beat structure, though, as noted in Section 3.4, this coverage reflects the routes allocated for the internship rather than a random draw from the full territory.

5.2 Coca-Cola Asset Presence

Coca-Cola assets — including branded coolers, signage, and point-of-sale material — were recorded as present in 74.2 percent of the 124 surveyed outlets, or approximately 92 outlets. This relatively high level of asset penetration indicates a strong existing physical footprint across the surveyed market. The remaining outlets without recorded assets — roughly 32 outlets, consistent with the cooler-availability figure discussed below — represent outlets where placement decisions would need to be evaluated against sales potential and consumer footfall before further asset deployment.

5.3 Cooler Availability

Of the 124 surveyed outlets, 32 outlets (25.8 percent) did not have a Coca-Cola cooler. Given that beverage purchases in General Trade are frequently linked to immediate, on-the-spot consumption, the absence of a cooler at roughly one in four outlets represents a meaningful constraint on chilled availability and, by extension, on visibility at the point of sale. Field observation suggested that certain market areas within the Ujjain territory had a disproportionate concentration of non-cooler outlets, making them a natural starting point for prioritised cooler deployment, subject to standard placement criteria such as outlet footfall and sales potential.

5.4 Competitive Positioning

The survey identified 67 outlets (54.0 percent of the 124 surveyed) with no major competing brand present, indicating a substantial share of the surveyed market where Coca-Cola faces comparatively limited direct on-shelf or in-cooler competition. Among the outlets where competition was observed, Pepsi was identified as the primary competing brand, while Campa was observed as an emerging, fast-moving competitor gaining retailer and shopper attention during the study period. These are field observations recorded during outlet visits rather than the output of a structured competitor-tracking instrument, and should be read as indicative of conditions during the internship period rather than as a stable, long-term competitive map.

5.5 Outlet Categorisation

Approximately 27 percent of surveyed outlets (roughly 33 to 34 of the 124 outlets) were recorded under a distinct outlet-classification category during the survey. The project documentation available for this study does not specify the precise criteria used to assign outlets to this category, and this detail could not be independently verified. Consistent with the transparency principle applied throughout this paper, this figure is therefore reported descriptively — as a recorded proportion of the surveyed outlets — without inferring a specific classification rationale that the underlying records do not support. What can be stated with more confidence is the qualitative field observation that some outlets appeared to be inconsistently categorised relative to their actual sales potential and product mix, a pattern that motivates the recommendation on periodic outlet re-categorisation in Section 7.



5.6 Product and SKU Availability

Core brands — Coca-Cola, Thums Up, Sprite, Maaza, and Kinley — showed strong availability across the outlets visited. Availability gaps were observed for selected SKUs and pack variants, most notably for Rim Zim Jeera, which required focused attention during market execution visits. These availability observations are qualitative field notes recorded during outlet visits rather than a SKU-by-SKU quantitative audit across all 124 outlets, and should be interpreted as indicative rather than exhaustive.

5.7 Distribution and Retailer Feedback

Retailer interactions during the fieldwork most frequently raised delivery delays and stock shortages as concerns. Delayed delivery can directly reduce product availability at the outlet during the window when a consumer would otherwise purchase, and stock shortages create an immediate opening for competing brands, particularly Pepsi and Campa, to fill the resulting gap on the shelf or in the cooler. These retailer-reported concerns were not independently verified against distributor-side delivery records, which were not accessible to the intern, and are therefore reported as retailer perception rather than confirmed operational fact.

5.8 Cooler Asset Recovery

A distinct component of the internship involved reviewing pending missing-cooler and QR-audit cases, including cases that had remained unresolved for more than three months. The activity involved reviewing records, contacting retailers, obtaining or reviewing photographic evidence, escalating unresolved cases for physical verification by Sales Team Leader/Market Growth Representative teams, and updating recovery status. This activity is reported qualitatively: no summary count of cases resolved during the internship was available in a form suitable for inclusion in this paper, and the finding here is limited to the observation that asset accountability required structured, cross-functional follow-up between field sales and the Cooler Department.

5.9 AI-Based RED Compliance Concept

A separate, exploratory output of the internship was a proposed AI-based RED (retail execution and distribution) Score Calculation and Compliance Monitoring concept, developed with guidance from the Area Sales Manager in response to the manual and time-consuming nature of existing RED scoring. The proposed workflow envisages a field executive visiting an outlet, answering standard RED questions, uploading an outlet photograph, and receiving an automated RED score and RED/GREEN compliance status, with a corresponding report generated for management review. Proposed features include automated score calculation, photo-based verification, manager approval, and outlet-improvement suggestions. This concept was developed at a conceptual stage during the internship; it was not piloted or tested against live outlet data, and no performance results can therefore be reported. It is presented here as a qualitative, forward-looking contribution rather than as an empirical finding, and is carried into the recommendations in Section 7.

5.10 Summary of Key Indicators

Indicator	Observation
Unique retail outlets surveyed	124
Market areas covered	22
Outlets with Coca-Cola assets present	74.2% ($\approx$ 92 outlets)
Outlets without a Coca-Cola cooler	25.8% (32 outlets)
Outlets with no major competing brand	54.0% (67 outlets)
Outlets under distinct classification category	$\approx$ 27% ($\approx$ 33–34 outlets); classification basis not fully documented
Primary competing brand observed	Pepsi
Emerging competing brand observed	Campa
Most frequent retailer concern	Delivery delays and stock shortages

6. Discussion

Asset and cooler visibility. Retail-visibility and merchandising theory argues that in-store presentation and chilled accessibility shape purchase outcomes at the point of sale. The relatively high Coca-Cola asset presence



recorded across the surveyed outlets (74.2 percent) is consistent with a strong existing physical footprint, but the 25.8 percent of outlets without a cooler represents a specific and addressable gap, since cooler absence most directly affects the immediate-consumption purchase occasions that the beverage category depends on. The field evidence and the theory point in the same direction, though the project's descriptive design cannot establish how much of any given outlet's sales performance would change with cooler placement, since no before/after or matched-outlet comparison was available for this study.

Competitive positioning. The finding that just over half of surveyed outlets (54.0 percent) carried no major competing brand suggests meaningful headroom for HCCB to strengthen its presence without directly displacing an established rival at those outlets, while the identification of Pepsi as the primary competitor and Campa as an emerging one is consistent with wider industry reporting on a re-energised competitive landscape in Indian carbonated soft drinks. Where availability or visibility gaps existed at outlets carrying competing brands, those brands had a more direct opening to gain retailer and shopper preference, consistent with the retail-execution literature reviewed in Section 2.

Distribution and route-to-market. Retailer-reported delivery delays and stock shortages, read alongside distribution channel theory and route-to-market theory, point to the same underlying mechanism as the visibility findings: coverage and physical presence alone do not guarantee sales if replenishment is inconsistent. This reinforces the relevance of channel-facing segmentation — differentiating service frequency and support by outlet type and potential — as a route-to-market lever for HCCB in this territory.

Relationship marketing and technology. The cooler-recovery process and the proposed AI-based RED concept both sit within a relationship-marketing and technology-enabled distribution framing: recovering missing assets depends on sustained retailer communication and follow-up, while the RED concept is intended to make execution monitoring faster and more consistent, mirroring the role that HCCB's existing Coke Buddy platform already plays in retailer-facing digital engagement. Both remain, at this stage, execution and conceptual activities rather than tested interventions with measurable outcomes.

7. Recommendations

1. Prioritise Cooler Deployment at Non-Cooler Outlets

Finding: 32 outlets (25.8 percent) did not have a Coca-Cola cooler. **Recommended Action:** Prioritise cooler deployment at suitable outlets currently without one, using outlet footfall and sales potential as screening criteria, beginning with the market areas identified during fieldwork as having a higher concentration of non-cooler outlets. **Managerial Implication:** Improved chilled availability and visibility at the point of sale, directly supporting immediate-consumption purchase occasions.

2. Review and Standardise Outlet Categorisation

Finding: Approximately 27 percent of outlets were recorded under a distinct classification category whose basis was not fully documented, and field observation suggested some outlets were inconsistently categorised relative to actual sales potential. **Recommended Action:** Periodically re-verify outlet categorisation against current sales potential and product mix, and ensure the classification criteria used are consistently recorded for future analysis. **Managerial Implication:** More accurate allocation of sales-team effort and execution resources.

3. Convert Low-Competition Outlets into Execution Priorities

Finding: 67 outlets (54.0 percent) had no major competing brand present. **Recommended Action:** Treat these outlets as priority opportunities for strengthening Coca-Cola's assortment, cooler presence, and retailer relationship before a competitor establishes a foothold. **Managerial Implication:** Reinforced market share in outlets where the competitive cost of doing so is currently lowest.

4. Strengthen Execution at Competitively Contested Outlets

Finding: Pepsi was the primary competitor observed, with Campa emerging as a fast-moving rival. **Recommended Action:** Direct focused visibility, availability, and cooler-execution effort toward outlets where



Pepsi or Campa maintain a strong presence, supported by continued competitor observation during routine visits. Managerial Implication: Reduced risk of retailer and shopper preference shifting toward competing brands at contested outlets.

5. Close SKU Availability Gaps

Finding: Availability gaps were observed for selected SKUs, notably Rim Zim Jeera. Recommended Action: Track SKU-level availability more systematically during outlet visits and flag recurring gaps for distributor follow-up. Managerial Implication: Fewer missed sales opportunities arising from stock-outs on specific, in-demand pack variants.

6. Improve Distribution Responsiveness

Finding: Delivery delays and stock shortages were the most frequently cited retailer concerns. Recommended Action: Strengthen coordination between the sales team and distributors to reduce fulfilment delays, using retailer feedback to identify recurring supply issues at specific outlets or market areas. Managerial Implication: More consistent product availability and stronger retailer confidence in HCCB as a reliable supplier.

7. Sustain Structured Cooler Asset Recovery

Finding: Missing-cooler and QR-audit cases required structured, cross-functional follow-up between field sales and the Cooler Department, including cases pending for more than three months. Recommended Action: Maintain a regular review cadence for pending asset cases, supported by photographic verification and timely escalation for physical checks. Managerial Implication: Reduced asset leakage and more reliable cooler-availability data for future planning.

8. Pilot the AI-Based RED Monitoring Concept

Finding: Manual RED-score calculation was time-consuming and limited the speed of execution-gap identification. Recommended Action: Take the proposed AI-based RED Score Calculation and Compliance Monitoring concept from a conceptual stage to a small, controlled pilot, with photo-based verification and manager approval built in from the outset. Managerial Implication: Faster, more standardised identification of low-performing outlets, subject to formal evaluation once piloted.

Overall Recommendation

A combination of prioritised cooler deployment, more consistent outlet categorisation, focused execution at competitively contested outlets, SKU-level availability tracking, stronger distribution responsiveness, sustained asset recovery, and a piloted data-driven monitoring tool can jointly improve General Trade retail execution and support more sustainable outlet-level performance in the Ujjain territory.

8. Limitations

The findings of this study are subject to several limitations that a reader should weigh when interpreting the results.

- Geographical scope: The study was conducted within the assigned HCCB routes and market areas in the Ujjain territory during the internship, and the findings may not generalise to other HCCB territories where retailer behaviour, competition, and distribution practices may differ.
- Time constraint: The internship covered approximately two months, which restricted the ability to study seasonal variation in beverage consumption or the sustained, longer-term impact of any execution changes.
- Limited access to confidential data: Outlet-wise sales, margins, and distributor economics were not available, so the study relies primarily on field observations and the operational information accessible during the OJT.
- Non-random sampling: Outlets were covered according to the assigned beat and route structure rather than a statistically random or designed sample, so the observations may not represent the complete population of HCCB retail outlets in the territory.



- Retailer response variability: Some retailers had limited time or willingness to share detailed information, which may have affected the completeness and consistency of certain field-level observations.
- Dependence on point-in-time field observation: Product availability, visibility, and cooler condition were assessed during physical visits and can vary with stock position, footfall, and time of day; individual observations may not always represent an outlet's typical operating condition.
- Unverified classification basis: As noted in Section 5.5, the precise criteria underlying the approximately 27 percent outlet-classification figure could not be confirmed from available project records, and this figure is reported descriptively rather than analytically.
- No consumer-level data: The study focused on sales, distribution, and retail execution; no direct consumer surveys were conducted, so consumer-level purchase motivations and brand-switching behaviour fall outside its scope.
- Field conditions: Extensive outdoor market visits were affected at times by heat, rainfall, traffic, and outlet operating hours, which could influence the time available for completing outlet visits and observations.

9. Conclusion and Future Research

9.1 Conclusion

This study examined Coca-Cola asset presence, cooler availability, and retail execution in the General Trade channel of HCCB's Ujjain territory, drawing on field evidence gathered during a two-month OJT engagement. Across 124 unique outlets surveyed in 22 market areas, Coca-Cola assets were present in 74.2 percent of outlets, while 25.8 percent lacked a cooler and 54.0 percent faced no major competing brand — together pointing to a market with a strong existing footprint but clear, addressable execution gaps. Pepsi was confirmed as the primary competitor and Campa as an emerging one; delivery delays, stock shortages, and selected SKU availability gaps were the most consistent retailer-facing concerns. The approximately 27 percent outlet-classification figure is reported with an explicit caveat about its undocumented basis, consistent with the transparency this paper has tried to maintain throughout. The parallel cooler-recovery activity and the proposed AI-based RED monitoring concept extend the study beyond outlet-level survey data into asset accountability and execution-monitoring innovation, though both remain reported qualitatively rather than as measured outcomes. Taken together, the study offers a bounded, field-grounded account of General Trade retail execution that complements — without superseding — the broader trade-marketing and distribution literature, and provides a practical basis for outlet prioritisation, cooler deployment, and retailer engagement in the Ujjain territory going forward.

9.2 Future Research

Future research could usefully extend this study through a matched comparison of cooler and non-cooler outlets with similar baseline characteristics, to better isolate the contribution of cooler placement to sales performance; a structured, questionnaire-based retailer survey to complement the field-observation approach used here; longer-period tracking of the same outlets to assess whether execution improvements persist across seasons; a documented, verifiable methodology for outlet categorisation so that future analysis of that indicator is not limited by the ambiguity noted in Section 5.5; broader territorial coverage to test whether the pitch-to-execution patterns reported here generalise beyond Ujjain; and a formal pilot evaluation of the proposed AI-based RED Score Calculation and Compliance Monitoring concept, with defined performance metrics, before any wider rollout is considered. These are proposed as directions for subsequent research and are not findings of the present study.

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