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HUL App is Now Sourcing Point for 300,000 Kiranas



Hindustan Unilever's use of technology to drive sales accelerated since the Covid-19 lockdown as about 300,000 kirana stores are now buying from its internal ordering app Shikhar, three times more than a year ago.

The FMCG major is also mapping its sales initiatives to MGNREGA and PMKISAN as well as Google Mobility.

Sagar Malviya reports. ▶▶ 5

HUL's App is Sourcing Point for Kiranas Now

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Mumbai: Hindustan Unilever's use of technology to drive sales accelerated since the Covid-19 lockdown as about 3 lakh kirana stores are now buying from its internal ordering app Shikhar, three times more than a year ago.

The country's biggest consumer goods firm is also mapping its sales initiatives to Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and PM Kisan Yojana to understand where farmers have benefited as well as Google Mobility to understand how consumers travel for discretionary purchase.

"Whether the money is increased, which states are getting the benefit now and the fact that migrant populations move, all these together can be very potent. There are some villages and some districts that are not seeing so many instances of Covid and are actually pretty normal. Therefore, to ensure that our execution over there was at the highest and servicing to stores was absolutely normal, technology was needed," said Srinandan Sundaram, executive director, sales & customer development at HUL.



Use of tech has resulted in 3 lakh stores buying from its internal ordering app, Shikhar

HUL's manufacturing and sales operations came to a standstill when the lockdown was clamped nine months ago. Before the pandemic, HUL's app covered nearly 25% of all towns with population of five lakh and above. This, too, has trebled with nearly 60% of its orders from these markets done on Shikhar.

The maker of Rin detergent and Dove shampoo has now ensured Shikhar isn't restricted to just an order taking app. For instance, it added features such as letting kirana store owners see nearby outlets, history of purchases and even product recommendations suited for their vicinity. Also, it recently partnered with the State Bank of India to give kirana owners credit facility.

"The most critical bit on our app is it can communicate back to fulfilment. We are really trying to learn from Apple and as a design philosophy, make sure that what you want to sell is seamlessly integrated with the back end," added Sundaram. "We have partnered with Google to move our distributors to cloud. So there are tech companies that are helping our backend a lot more streamlined."

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