ITC turns to food trucks, online platform to deliver essentials

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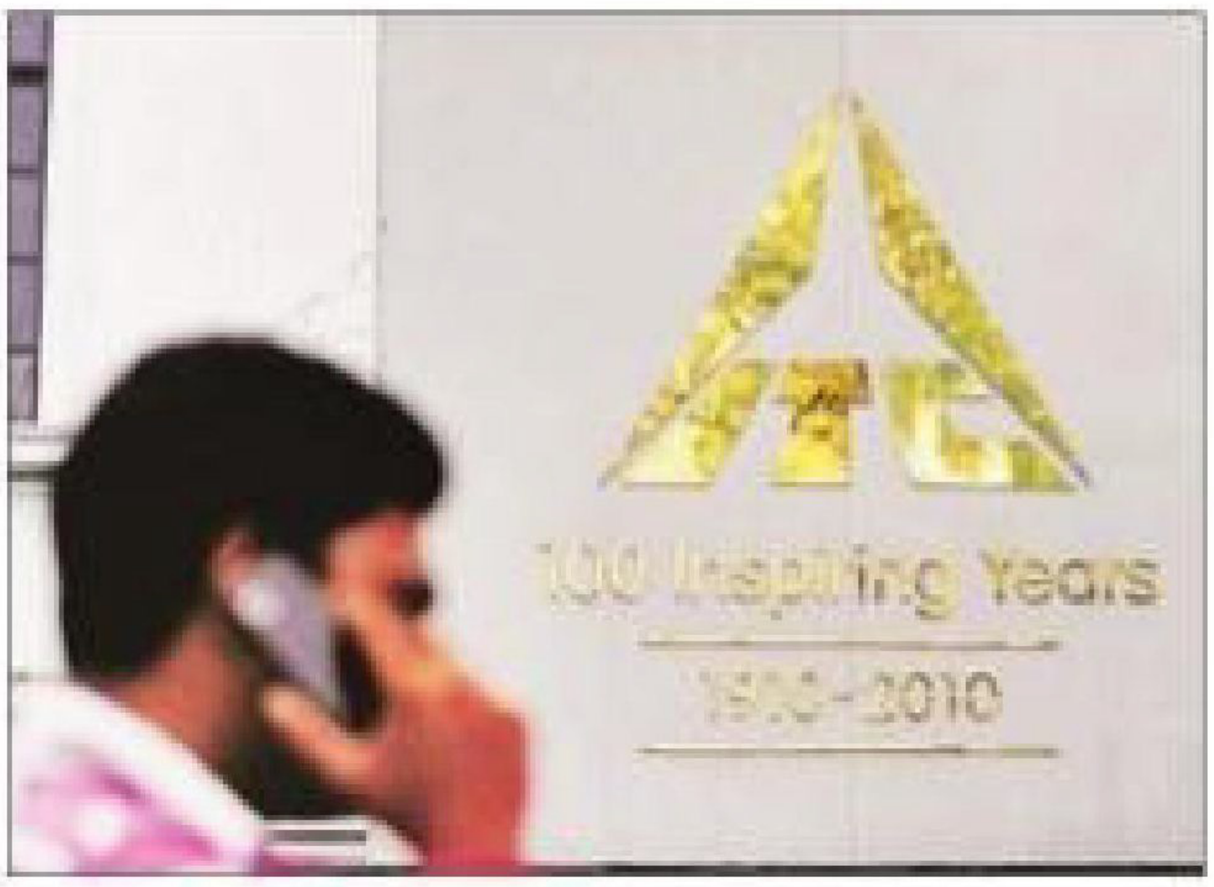

IN A BID to ensure seamless supply of essential items to consumers, ITC has overhauled its distribution network and come up with a number of innovative solutions to reach the consumer's doorstep. The company has adopted a two-pronged strategy to reach its atta, biscuits, spices, juices and hygiene products to retail stores and consumers during the lockdown.

While it is using different channels like social commerce to ensure retail store shelves are stocked, the country's fourth largest company by profits is driving its direct-to-consumer (D2C) strategy, which involves the company catering to the consumer through its online platform itcstore.in and its food trucks. The company has stitched together several partnerships with national and local partners to deliver products to the doorstep of consumers through its 'Store on Wheels' initiative. This initiative is currently available across six cities in the country and could be extended further in times to come.

The company's Store on Wheels has partnered with housing societies in metros like Apna Complex, MyGate, No broker and Azgo to supply essential products to housing societies across key cities. Housing societies can order ITC's Food Truck through these local apps for shopping at their doorstep. "With our huge apartment base across India, we can help ITC to scale up this direct-to-customer model very quickly," said ApnaComplex CEO Raja Sekhar Kommu.

ITC is also leveraging its direct-to-consumer portal itcstore.in, which has availability of more than 400 products that are accessible across the top six cities at present. For last-mile delivery, it has tied up with e-commerce players like Zomato, Dunzo, Swiggy and even Domino's. Dunzo is an on-demand platform that allows consumers to order or get anything delivered — from food, groceries, medicines and others — through a delivery partner within an hour.

These emerging channels are likely to become mainstream in the new normal even after the pandemic passes. Commenting on the company's new distribution model, ITC executive director B Sumant said, "To provide support to consumers during such trying times, we decided to address the distribution challenge in line with our core principles of innovation, agility and empathy. Our unique partnerships with food delivery chains, consumer food apps, community e-commerce brands, and our own direct to consumer portal have been instrumental in providing timely supply of essentials to consumers during the lockdown and thereby ensuring that people remained confined to their homes".