

## Coronavirus effect: Kirana stores go digital, take online orders

Updated : April 16, 2020 06:33 AM IST

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- > In these times of social distancing, the neighbourhood kirana stores are taking business online, thanks to Chennai-based tech firm, GoFrugal, and its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tools.



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If the coronavirus pandemic has taught us one valuable lesson, it's to never write off traditional businesses. "We thought Amazon was reliable but suddenly realized it wasn't delivering; we discovered that kirana stores were more dependable," said veteran investor, Vinod Sethi in a recent interview with *CNBC-TV18*.

There's no doubt that traditional businesses braced for the worst onslaught of the coronavirus crisis and came out on top. Atop this lot is the humble neighbourhood kirana store, with its healthy stock and near-steady supply. As it turns out, these businesses now want to take customer service a step further.

In these times of social distancing, the neighbourhood kirana stores are taking business online, thanks to Chennai-based tech firm, GoFrugal, and its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) tools. Several stores have adopted the company's newly launched OrderEasy and GoDeliver mobile apps to manage online orders and delivery of supplies efficiently. Further, GoFrugal is letting kirana stores subscribe to these apps free of charge for six months.

"OrderEasy lets retailers quickly set up an Android app for online ordering," said Kumar Vembu, founder and CEO, GoFrugal. "The ordering experience is made similar to favourite apps where the order is punched only when the item is available." While OrderEasy helps kirana stores take online orders, GoDeliver helps these establishments manage deliveries efficiently, including factoring in cancellations and rescheduling.

Vembu says that the kirana stores are turning to the app in large numbers owing to their newfound status as omni-channel outlets. "GoFrugal has over 250 customers using the app, and we are seeing a 30-40 percent increase in the orders every single day," he said. An average of eight orders per day is registered on the app.

Currently, GoFrugal is working with 6,000 kirana stores, and is hoping to maximise the reach of the app. The big challenge, however, would be to acclimatise a user who is not tech-savvy and will need to figure out the nuances of app-based delivery services. But it isn't that tough, Vembu insists. "Store owners tell us they hire school dropouts who may not be in a position to use software solutions," he says, "We have listened and have ensured that our solutions are built for them."

One of the ways in which OrderEasy and GoDeliver are tailor-made for kirana usage is their minimal implementation timeline — four to nine hours depending on the size of the business. Another innovation is the ability of the store owner to update inventory one product at a time, without having to shut shop to take stock.

With kirana stores now an app-click away, GoFrugal has begun what could well be termed the Swiggification of traditional retail — provided these stores keep subscribing to the tech long after COVID-19 is history.

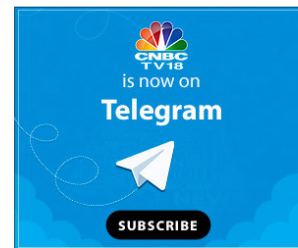
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