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# **Essmart:**

# Distributing Life Changing Technologies to Rural Villagers

**Essmart's Mission**: To bring essential, life-improving products to all people, no matter who they are or where they are from.

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This case was written by Aqeela Nanji, under the supervision of Andre Calmon, Assistant Professor of Technology and Operations Management at INSEAD, and Gonzalo Romero, Assistant Professor of Operations Management at the Rotman School of Management. It is intended to be used as a basis for class discussion rather than to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of an administrative situation.

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# Introduction

Essmart works with small, independent retail shops in India to distribute life-improving technologies, such as solar lighting and clean cooking products, to consumers in small towns and villages. The social enterprise began operations in 2012 and was founded by Jackie Stenson and Diana Jue-Rajasingh. They both had a strong interest in international development during their undergraduate degrees and, upon graduation, they pursued research and work opportunities in Asia and Africa for multiple years. In these contexts, they learned that new technologies designed for consumers in developing countries were either not being adopted by end users or not in use due to the lack of efficient, appropriate, and scalable distribution systems and consumer awareness.

The vast majority of people whom Jackie and Diana met had never heard of the innovative technologies they had worked with during their academic studies and post-graduate work pursuits, such as off-grid solar lighting solutions, nonelectric water purifiers, and smoke-reducing cookstoves, and the few people who had received those technologies were not using them. Many products had not been thoroughly tested with end users in a way that reduced interviewer bias, and were therefore not properly designed to meet the users' needs. Moreover, inadequate education on how to use the products and product malfunctions without appropriate servicing provisions rendered them useless or dangerous. Jackie and Diana learned that the hype around new inventions was not enough. Life-improving technologies have the potential to change lives, but their potential cannot be realized without robust last-mile dissemination systems for both information and physical solutions.

Essmart was created to bridge the dissemination gap and ensure that life-changing technologies are known and accessible to those who can benefit from them. Essmart utilizes existing retail networks to reach consumers, creating awareness about products and providing consumers with the opportunity to purchase those products from trusted and reliable sources. The business model is built on three core elements: (1) demonstrate, (2) distribute, and (3) guarantee.

In the 5 years since Essmart was founded, the company has grown to operate 6 distribution centres in Southern India. In addition to plans to continue expanding operations and serving new regions within India, the management team wants to further develop the business model to increase sales in existing locations. The team is contemplating whether to increase marketing and consumer education efforts to build more brand awareness and expand the breadth of the product catalogue or to expand after-sales services, which would reduce the financial risk that consumers bear when purchasing products.

# **Great Ideas that Lose Their Way**

## Access to Resources

In India, 97M people lack clean drinking water<sup>1</sup>, 700M have unreliable electricity<sup>2</sup>, and 400M suffer indoor air pollution from inefficient biomass cookstoves<sup>3</sup>. 70% of India's population live in rural areas, and almost 80% of those in rural areas are hard to access due to poor road quality<sup>4</sup>.

Access to resources varies greatly between the different towns and villages where Essmart operates, which have populations ranging from 10K to 100K. Generally, those who are within or close to town have better access to running water and electricity, but electricity is often unreliable since there are frequent power cuts that can last for up to 10 hours a day. Those who live in more remote villages or in mountainous areas may share a communal water tap or have a well at their homes, which can fill with dirty water during monsoon season.



Among other things, this shop sells cookies, shampoos, and toys.

# Life Changing Innovations at the Base of the Pyramid

For over 60 years, there has been increasing interest in developing innovative technologies for low-income users who experience challenges similar to those described above. Hundreds of life-improving technologies that meet the needs of clean water, electricity, and other challenges already exist. Examples include affordable off-grid solar lanterns, nonelectric water purifiers, smoke-reducing cookstoves, and bicycle-powered mobile phone chargers. Strong interest in these technologies is exemplified by the growth of initiatives like the Global Alliance for Clean

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. (2012). *WHO Fast Facts: WHO/UNICEF joint monitoring report 2012*. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/water sanitation health/monitoring/jmp2012/fast facts/en/

<sup>2</sup> The Economist. (2013). Lighting rural India: Out of the gloom. *The Economist*. Retrieved from <u>http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21582043---villagers---enjoy---sunlight---after---dark---out---gloom</u>

<sup>3</sup> Dalberg Global Development Advisors. (2013). *India Cookstoves and Fuels Market Assessment*. Retrieved from http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/india-cookstove-and-fuels-market-assessment.pdf

<sup>4</sup> Chandramouli, C. (2011). *Census of India 2011: Rural Urban Distribution of Population*. Retrieved from http://censusindia.gov.in/2011-prov-results/paper2/data\_files/india/Rural\_Urban\_2011.pdf

Cookstoves, which plans to distribute 100M stoves by 2020, and academic programs in which students design products for international development. Despite strong interest and good intentions, there are two major challenges with these types of products.

First, although inventions are designed specifically for users at the base of the pyramid, designers can be too focused on the technical aspects of the problem without understanding the end user's values. To make products affordable, inventors tend to remove extra features and can make products very 'bare bones'. However, these excluded product features may provide the aspirational branding or the 'value-for-money' needed for users to willingly adopt these products, and thus users will not buy the more minimal products at all. Compounding this is that sometimes inventors assume that the problem they are trying to solve is of upmost importance to the consumer, when in reality it is not. For example, one cookstove manufacturer designed their stoves at the optimal height to reduce fumes from combustion, which required users to stand while using the stoves. Since users would traditionally kneel while cooking on the stove, users did not like the product because it forced them to change their habits and behaviours. Products must be designed with customer wants, desires, and values in mind, not just the designers' perception of the problem that the customer faces.

Second, no matter how well-designed life-changing products may be, there is no guarantee they will reach the people for whom they are made. Individuals in small towns and villages do not know about many of these products or how to access them. Paul Polak, founder of International Development Enterprises and author of Out of Poverty, a book about development initiatives, captures these challenges:

"If you succeed, against all odds, in designing a transformative radically affordable technology, you still have addressed only 25% of the problem. The other 75% is marketing it effectively, which requires designing and implementing an effective branding, mass marketing and last mile distribution strategy."<sup>5</sup>

# Distribution Methods for Durable, Socially Impactful Goods

Lack of effective and appropriate dissemination channels occur because of low consumer awareness, lack of consistent product availability, risk aversion, affordability, lack of confidence in the performance of products and the warranty, and negative branding or stereotypes carried by some products that have resulted from years of failed dissemination efforts. Although non-profit organizations, government programs, large multinational companies, and small social enterprises continuously try to distribute innovative technologies, no strategy has been completely successful.

Historically, life-improving products have been distributed on a project-by-project basis by non-profit organizations or government campaigns. These projects have encountered several barriers that have prevented them from scaling or reaching widespread adoption. First, they often face limited funding and time periods, and are not designed for widespread scale. Second, they often focus on marketing and branding these efforts as a way for a user to lift themselves out of poverty. However, as Jackie witnessed in her work as an engineer designing lifeimproving products, low-income end users do not want to adopt products that cement their

<sup>5</sup> Polak, P. (2010). *Death of Appropriate Technology II: How To Design For The Market*. Retrieved from <u>http://www.paulpolak.com/design-for-the-market/</u>

status as being poor, but rather they are looking for aspirational solutions. And finally, without appropriate servicing channels, technologies often become trash in communities. Jackie found water pumps in various states of disrepair in Ethiopia, no longer functioning after project funding and know-how dried up, and broken bicycle ambulances in Zambia since clinics could not budget for maintenance costs.

A popular dissemination strategy that attempts to increase consumer awareness are massive door-to-door campaigns that combine education and subsidized direct sales; however, these types of initiatives are expensive and labour-intensive. Diana witnessed the failure of these types of campaigns first-hand in Southern India when she was researching distribution channels. A company that was attempting to sell cookstoves door-to-door had trouble maintaining employees. Salespeople did not enjoy knocking on doors nor collecting money, resulting in low sales and high turnover.

Another company Diana encountered made the mistake of focusing too much on mass marketing, at the expense of not having a local presence. Their strategy utilized television commercials to create wide-spread consumer awareness of their product. They urged consumers to go to stores to buy the product, but ultimately their strategy failed because there were no salespeople providing in-person demonstrations for the product on the ground in the towns and villages where consumers lived.

In India, buying relationships are integral. Consumers buy from retailers they trust and rely on those retailer's endorsements for new products. Consumers want to make informed decisions when spending their disposable income, so it is important that they are provided with education on the products and available options. Additionally, purchasing a life-changing technology is an investment, and consumers want to ensure that their investments are protected through after-sales service. Not only are warranties important, but consumers also need assurance that those warranties will be upheld when products break or malfunction. Thus, it is important for retailers to have confidence in the products as well as the manufacturers and distributors supplying them.

Effective distribution systems need to handle not just the distribution of products, but also marketing, consumer awareness, and after-sales service. These three elements are essential to ensuring that life-improving technologies end up reaching and being adopted by their intended end users.

Manufacturers are aware of the complexity of and need for effective distribution channels, yet their options are limited. It is often too expensive for manufacturers to design and implement their own distribution systems and finding an external distributor that specializes in life-changing technologies is challenging since there are so few.

# **Developing Essmart's Business Model**

# Launching the Social Enterprise

Essmart's business model grew out of the years of research that Jackie and Diana completed prior to developing the idea to launch a social enterprise. Although they did not know each other while completing their undergraduate degrees, Jackie and Diana shared a strong interest in international development and were both involved with MIT's D-Lab, an academic program

that focuses on the co-creation of life-improving technologies with communities. After working abroad after graduation and learning about the challenges of distributing life-improving technologies, Jackie and Diana continued their research by each focusing their Master's degrees on the issue.

Despite their similar journeys, the two did not meet until Fall of 2011 when a lecturer at MIT introduced them. The idea to launch a new social enterprise, and the respective business model, developed from discussions about their research and the lessons they had learned. Although they would have preferred to join existing efforts, they could not find any organizations that were adequately solving the last-mile distribution problem in a way they believed was scalable and sustainable. They realized that their only option to continue their work on distribution challenges was to start their own initiative and fill a gap that no other organization was addressing.

Essmart's founding mission was to create a marketplace for life-improving technologies, providing consumers with product choices and education so that they could make informed decisions as to which products would give them the greatest benefits. Rather than re-inventing the wheel, Essmart's marketplace would leverage existing retail networks and the trusted buying relationships those retailers have with their customers. After thinking through various aspects of the business model, Jackie and Diana utilized the university ecosystem to solicit feedback on their ideas. They spoke with professors during office hours, developed a business plan as part of an entrepreneurship course, participated in business plan competitions, and successfully obtained funding to conduct a pilot.

## Strategy

Essmart sources already existing life-improving products from manufacturers. Essmart's operations then focus on the demonstrations, distribution, and guarantees needed for these products to reach end users.

## Demonstrate

Since Essmart's portfolio of life-improving products are new to end customers, Essmart must first create awareness about the products in a manner that both highlights the value that the technology creates and builds trust with end users to de-risk their investment into an otherwise new and unfamiliar product.

To do this, Essmart has full-time sales employees, called Sales Executives, whose primary role is to build relationships with retail shops and help them market and sell life-improving products to end customers. Sales Executives work with retail shops to demonstrate products both nearby retail shops and at weekly town markets. Up to 10 products are presented at each demonstration to educate both retailers and consumers on product features and the user needs they address. Essmart Sales Executives coordinate the demonstrations and refer end consumers to local retailers if they are interested in purchasing a product. Although the demonstrations have more limited reach than door-to-door campaigns, they are significantly less labour intensive while still ensuring Essmart Sales Executives have a local presence. The demonstrations not only create awareness of Essmart's products and allow retailers to become more familiar with marketing techniques, but they also build trust between Essmart and consumers.



An Essmart sales executive shows a consumer various products at a market.

## Distribute

Villages usually have a general store, where people purchase fast-moving consumer goods such as groceries and household products, as well as an agricultural supplies or hardware store. There are over 15M of these small, local retail shops in India, on which over 192M households solely rely for their everyday needs<sup>6,7</sup>. Despite this extensive retail coverage, life-improving technologies are rarely available outside of major cities. While some retail shops receive inventory at their shops from existing distributors, many others need to close their shop for an afternoon and travel to a nearby town to purchase inventory.

To address the physical distribution gap, Essmart partners with small retail shops in towns and villages and provides them with marketing materials and product samples. Retailers are given a catalogue with product pictures and descriptions, as well as a few samples to introduce Essmart's product selection to consumers. Retailers can choose to invest in larger quantities of inventory or have smaller quantities "delivered-to-order" at a higher cost. In the latter strategy, when retailers make a sale, they contact an Essmart Sales Executive, who will deliver the product to the shop within 1-2 days from a nearby Essmart Distribution Center. This delivery option effectively removes associated inventory risk from retailers and can lower the barrier to adoption if retailers are not ready to invest in larger quantities of Essmart inventory.

## Guarantee

To guarantee the quality of the products offered and de-risk the adoption of new products for end users, Essmart ensures that manufacturers' warranties are upheld. While most products come with a warranty and the manufacturers' number printed on the box or instructions manual, these servicing lines rarely work and / or servicing times can take weeks.

Essmart provides a reliable channel through which manufacturers' warranties can be facilitated. If a product malfunctions, consumers bring it to the retail shop where they made the purchase. Retailers contact Essmart, and a Sales Executive retrieves the faulty product on his next scheduled visit to the shop. Depending on the warranty, the product is either replaced or sent to

<sup>6</sup> McKinsey & Company. (2008). *The Great Indian Bazaar: Organised Retail Comes of Age in India.* 

<sup>7</sup> Paneerselvam, S. (2012). Management of Supply Chain Drivers in Kirana Stores (A Case Study of Bangalore City). *Asian Journal of Research in Business Economics and Management*, 2(6).

a repair facility. After servicing, the product is then delivered back to the retail shop for the consumer to pick up.

When Essmart was founded, no other distributor of life-improving technologies facilitated warranties – the retail-focused non-profits that Jackie and Diana encountered in their research rarely emphasized after-sales service, or simply gave it lip service and did not integrate it as an essential part of their operations from the start. Providing such after-sales service addresses consumers' risk aversion and provides them with protection against losing their money when a product malfunctions.

## **Pilot**s

In January of 2012, Diana and Prashanth Venkataramana, an Essmart co-founder and Director of India Operations, conducted a pilot in India. They visited 200 retail shops in Southern India and surveyed retailers about the products Essmart was considering for distribution. Retailers were asked if they knew what the products were, if consumers would be interested in those products, and at what price point consumers would pay. After analysing collected data, Diana and Prashanth began a trial run with two shops to test pricing strategies and their associated sales. They retained the help of retailers to sell a selected sample of products. The shops sold out of their first run of 17 items within a week.

During an extension of this pilot starting in August 2012, the founding Essmart team talked to additional consumers and visited their homes. A lot of people had purchased batteries to power LED lights and mobile phones, but those batteries would break within three months due to low quality. One consumer they spoke with was on the fence about buying one of Essmart's products, a solar lantern, because of the high-cost and his experience purchasing low quality technologies that would quickly break. The impact of low-quality technologies also extends to retailers. Retailers are hesitant to offer products they are unfamiliar with since their reputation is impacted when those products stop working.

The pilots confirmed many of the findings Jackie and Diana had developed through their years of research, which was the backbone of Essmart's business model. The successful test run of selling products through the retail network proved that it was an effective strategy to distribute life-improving technologies. Additionally, conversations with retailers and consumers affirmed the importance of after-sales service. As a social enterprise, Essmart's mission is not to just sell products, but also to improve the lives of people through distributing new technologies. Guaranteeing that these technologies are reliable, by offering after-sales service, serves that mission.

# Scaling Operations

Essmart's first distribution centre was established in Pollachi (population of 100K), which is a town outside the city of Coimbatore (population of 1.6M) in the state of Tamil Nadu. It was an ideal first location as there was a need for life-improving technologies, consumers were aspirational and were willing to save up to purchase Essmart's products, and the town was large enough to receive deliveries from suppliers but also had easy access to rural areas for deliveries. Essmart would not have been able to sustain its business model if it had first established operations far from the cities into extremely rural areas.

Over the next two years, Jackie, Diana, Prashanth, and Poonacha Kalengada, an Essmart cofounder and Director of Field operations, led Essmart's expansion into new areas and established five more distribution centres. During this time, the Essmart team developed criteria for new locations. Potential locations must have a bank branch and could receive deliveries coming from other states in India; however, they were often the last stop for traditional courier companies and thus there was need in the peri-urban and rural areas surrounding the location. Additionally, initial locations were chosen because of the expanding field team's connections to individuals in those areas - utilizing personal networks to grow the team was a very effective hiring method. As Essmart continues to expand and move into new states, the criteria for selecting potential locations will continue to evolve. Moreover, Essmart's expansion exposed the management team to opportunities to further develop aspects of the business model.

#### Retailer Relationships

Developing relationships and building trust with retailers is the central focus of Essmart's operations, as opposed to other initiatives that focus on using the retail shops as a pass-through entity to sell to end customers. Essmart learned that they needed to take the time to turn shop owners into active sellers, and that the buy-in of shop owners was key to scaling their reach efficiently and effectively. Before retailers agreed to sell Essmart's products, they had to believe that the social enterprise would offer quality products, follow through on delivery and after-sales service, and be a long-term partner. Sales Executives spent significant amounts of time at each retail shop in the early days of a relationship, visiting on a near daily basis to build trust. To strengthen those relationships, the Essmart co-founders would also visit shops to reassure retailers of Essmart's commitment to serving them and their customers. Building that trust was important and resulted in retailers gaining the confidence necessary to market Essmart's products to their customers, who rely on their opinions when making purchasing decisions, with minimal ongoing support from Essmart.

## Brand Awareness

An early challenge faced by the Essmart team was to determine how to make the Essmart brand visible to consumers, as retail shops are packed with products from different brands and there is little room to consistently display marketing material from distributors. In addition to the product demonstrations, Essmart has experimented with providing a variety of marketing materials to retailers to create brand awareness. Catalogues and signs have been changed multiple times as Essmart learns more about the effectiveness of different formats. For instance, the catalogue most recently changed from a book into a standing calendar. Additionally, different formats have both positive and negative attributes. For example, light boards are expensive yet durable, while the less expensive banners often rip in the wind.

Another challenge was the diversity of retail shops with which Essmart works. There is no single marketing formula that can be applied to all shops. The type of marketing materials offered must be based on the characteristics of individual shops and their customers. Some retailers want the catalogue and signs, whereas other retailers have little need as they rely on personal recommendations to sell products. Essmart is building a marketing solution that can scale, yet stay flexible enough to cater to the needs of a diverse set of retailers.



An Essmart sales executive with a retailer, who is displaying Essmart's brand and product samples.

# Professional Development Workshops

In early 2016, Essmart received a grant from the Women's Empowerment Fund at the Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves to facilitate workshops for retailers, with the goal of improving the active selling techniques of retailers, and especially women retailers who typically take a more passive selling role. The workshops lasted five days and focused on developing business skills. There were approximately 25 to 30 men and 10 women who attended different parts of the workshops. This first attempt at more formalized training workshops has some positive outcomes but several logistical challenges. It was difficult for attendees to stay the entire five days as they were coming from different villages and would have to travel by bus. After the workshops, the Essmart team decided to reproduce some of the content but in a different format – short videos, which are shared with retailers through WhatsApp and by Sales Executives during shop visits. Essmart hopes to incorporate some of the content of the workshops into more formalized trainings with shop owners to make it more operationally realistic and impactful for both Essmart and shop owners alike.

# **Essmart Today and Short-Term Goals**

To date, Essmart has impacted over 111K people, sold 28K products, and partnered with 1,300 retail shops. Currently at six distribution centres, Essmart is planning to expand into the state of Karnataka, northwest of Tamil Nadu. Since language and culture changes across states, Essmart will be investing in the development of new marketing materials and hiring additional staff. Its long-term goal is to continue expanding operations to serve new regions throughout all of India, and then to expand into other countries.

Additionally, the Essmart management team wants to further develop the business model to increase sales in existing locations. Some of these sales increases will come with the economies of scale associated with geographic expansion. However, the Essmart team has been and would like to continue to experiment with the most effective marketing techniques for both shop owners and end consumers, as well as the trade-offs of focusing these interventions on

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educational marketing versus the assurance of after-sales service. They have experimented with six different interventions to date through the support of a USAID Development Innovations Ventures grant. The next step will be to further develop new ideas with both Essmart Sales Executives and Retailers and test these ideas so they can be implemented across the company.

## Exhibit 1

#### Profiles Essmart's Management Team

Essmart's management team functions with a fairly flat structure rather than a traditional hierarchy. Major decisions are made through consultations with the entire team, with the team member with the most relevant expertise taking the lead on facilitating both the decision making process as well as any operational execution.



#### Jackie Stenson, CEO

*Education:* MPhil in Engineering for Sustainable Development from the University of Cambridge; BS in mechanical engineering from Harvard

*Prior Work Experience:* Jackie designed and implemented a range of lifeimproving technologies in 11 sub-Saharan African countries, and researched technology dissemination strategies in Africa and India.

*Functional Responsibilities:* Project management, fundraising and investor relations, logistics software development, legal and accounting tasks associated with our US entity, market testing contracts, and forming partnerships

*Awards*: Forbes 30 Under 30 List, MIT D-Lab Scale-Ups Fellowship, Echoing Green Fellowship, Cartier Women's Initiate Awards Laureate, Grinnell College Innovator for Social Justice Prize, University of Cambridge Jesus College Foundation Scholarship for Academic Excellence, Harvard George Peobody Gardner Traveling Fellowship, Harvard Thomas T. Hoopes Prize Awardee



#### Diana Jue-Rajasingh, COO

*Education:* PhD Candidate at University of Michigan Ross School of Business focusing; Master in City Planning, International Development Group, from MIT; BS in Urban Studies and Planning and BS in Economics from MIT

*Prior Work Experience:* Diana studied community development and social impact technology dissemination in India and western China. She has been a visiting scholar at IIT Madras and a Fulbright researcher in Bangalore.

*Functional Responsibilities:* Strategy, sector-wide partnerships, logistics software development, data and reporting

*Awards:* Forbes 30 Under 30 List, Echoing Green Fellowship, Cartier Women's Initiate Awards Laureate, Grinnell College Innovator for Social Justice Prize, Fulbright-Nehru Research Fellowship, American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) Outstanding Student Award, MIT Department of Urban Studies and Planning Best Thesis Honourable Mention, MIT International Development Initiative Technology Dissemination Fellowship



#### Prashanth Venkataramana, Director of India Operations

*Education*: MPhil in Engineering for Sustainable Development from the University of Cambridge; Bachelor of Engineering from Anna University

*Prior Work Experience:* Prashanth previously managed the Africa and Middle East regional sales and distribution for a multinational corporation, including setting up the company's distribution network in Sri Lanka. He speaks Tamil, Telegu, and Hindi, and is from Pollachi, where Essmart's first Distribution Center is located.

*Functional Responsibilities:* Sales targets and strategies, marketing strategies including development and execution of experiments and schemes, partnerships, supplier relationships, fundraising, legal, and HR

*Awards:* Action for India Social Innovator, Villgro Foundation Sankalp Entrepreneur Scholar, University of Santa Clara Global Social Benefit Incubator (GSBI) Fellow

#### Poonacha Kalengada, Director of Field Operations

*Education:* MBA in Agri Business Management from University of Agriculture Science, Bangalore; BSc in Agriculture from University of Agriculture Science, Bangalore

*Prior Work Experience:* Hailing from a farming community, Poonacha previously worked in managing sales employees for an agricultural inputs company that distributed fertilizers and seeds. Poonacha is from Karnataka and speaks Tamil, Kannada, Hindi, and Malayalam.

*Functional Responsibilities:* Establishing new Distribution Centers, hiring and training Essmart's Sales Executives and Office Administrators, programmatic developments (such as incentive programs) for both internal employees and shops, logistics software development (from user perspective)



#### **Taylor Matthews, CFO**

*Education:* MBA from MIT Sloan School of Management; BA in Philosophy and Political Science from Yale

*Prior Work Experience:* Taylor has worked in investment banking and management consulting, in addition to holding financial and business operation leadership roles at growing Silicon Valley start-ups.

Functional Responsibilities: Finance, accounting, fundraising, and reporting

# Exhibit 2

Awards



MIT D-Lab Scale-Ups Fellowship, 2016



Forbes 30 Under 30 List, Social Entrepreneurship category, 2015



Grinnell College Innovator for Social Justice Prize, 2016



UN Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves Women's Empowerment Fund Award Winner, 2015



USAID Development Innovation Ventures Award Winner, 2015



Cartier Women's Initiative Awards, Laureate for the Asia-Pacific region, 2014

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D-Prize Inaugural Winner, 2013



Echoing Green Fellowship, 2013



Dell Social Innovation Challenge Grand Prize, 2012



MIT IDEAS Global Challenge Prize, 2012



Essmart Distribution Centres and Expansion Areas



#### **Exhibit 4**

#### Customer Testimonials



Sundar, one of our earliest customers in the village of Negamam, is a fan of one of our water filters. In fact, he used to sell a brand that Essmart doesn't carry, but he switched to selling Essmart's water filter because he appreciates Essmart's after-sales service. If he has any problems with a water filter or needs a replacement filter, he can call his Essmart sales executive to remedy the problem as soon as physically possible. Sundar uses the water filter in his home, where his family can enjoy clean, healthy water for years on end. Here, Mrs. Sundar poses with her family's filter.



Subramanian, one of our shop owners in the village of Pusaripatti, took us to meet one of his first customers. This customer owns a small barber shop in Pusaripatti, and he bought an Essmart-distributed solar lantern for his shop. He turned on the lantern, excited to show us how it illuminates his shop at night. Shortly after he did so, a man walking by noticed the lit shop and stopped to get his hair cut. The barber shop owner demonstrates how Essmart-distributed essential technologies can immediately improve small businesses by enabling commerce at night.

## Exhibit 5

#### Marketing Materials Offered to Retailers

Pictures and descriptions of all the marketing materials offered to retailers: banners, posters, signs and the catalogue.

#### **Exhibit 6**

#### Store Visits and Demonstrations by Region

Region	# of Sales Executives	Market Size	Sales / Week (Average)	# of Store Visits / Week (Average)	# of Demonstrations / Week (Average)
Total					

# **Exhibit 7** Training Videos



Solar Lanterns 1

**Agricultural Sprayer 2** 

Essmart produced 12 marketing videos and these were shared with the Sales Executives every Monday morning during the experiment period of 12 weeks. The content in the videos was in two categories: Product Information and Sales Strategy with one sales strategy video after every two product information videos totalling 4 of the former and 8 of the latter. In addition to the videos, separate discussion prompts (or points of information) were also given to the Sales Executives to help discuss with the shopkeepers about the content in the videos in greater detail. Before heading out to the shopkeepers, the Sales Executives watched the videos with the team in their Distribution Centre and the Facility Managers reinforced the aim of the exercise, explained the technical data in the videos and clarified any questions.

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