INTERVIEWS | INTERVIEW

Redefining Cold Display Infrastructure

-Gaurav Mittal, CEO & Director, Antarctica Equipment Private Limited

By **Mansi Jamsudkar** | September 4, 2025



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For the ninth feature in NUFFOODS Spectrum's 12th Anniversary Special interview series, *Redefining Cold Display Infrastructure*, we turn to Gaurav Mittal, CEO & Director of Antarctica Equipment. Mittal outlines how refrigerated display cabinets are evolving from basic utilities to strategic retail assets that influence consumer behaviour and sales velocity. With India's food retail shifting towards grab-and-go formats, QSR growth, and premium fresh offerings, Antarctica Equipment is reimagining design, technology, and sustainability to meet the unique climate, operational, and branding needs of the next decade. Edited excerpts;

How do you foresee the role of refrigerated display cabinets evolving in India's food retail landscape by 2030?

By 2030, refrigerated display cabinets will no longer be perceived as peripheral utilities; they will function as strategic retail assets. With the acceleration of grab-and-go formats, cloud kitchens, and QSR penetration across high streets, malls, airports, and transit hubs, the display unit will act as both a freshness guarantee and an impulse sales driver. NielsenIQ data already indicates that Indian consumers spend just 8 seconds scanning refrigerated shelves before making purchase decisions—this window will become even more critical in the years ahead, making design, accessibility, and visual merchandising central to sales strategy.

What global and domestic market trends are influencing investment decisions in display equipment?

The global refrigerated display market is projected to grow from $42.5 billion in 2023 to $91.5 billion by 2030, driven by rising demand for energy efficiency, format adaptability, and durable, high-footfall-ready equipment. In India, purchase decisions are increasingly influenced by factors such as operating cost optimisation, space efficiency, and after-sales reliability. Retailers are seeking equipment that balances global-grade performance with local adaptability, recognising that refrigeration is now a brand-facing asset rather than a back-end requirement.

In the F&B industry, growth in fresh, ready-to-eat, and premium product segments is pushing demand for displays that ensure consistent temperature control, prevent cross-contamination, and enhance product visibility to drive impulse purchases. Additionally, sustainability goals are prompting adoption of natural refrigerants and energy-efficient compressors, aligning with both operational and environmental priorities.

How can display design directly influence sales and consumer behaviour?

Strategic display placement and design can significantly impact sales velocity. For example, open-front chillers have been shown to increase impulse purchases by up to 22 per cent over closed units, while positioning chilled beverage shelves near checkouts can drive substantial cross-selling. Café and bakery chains have reported sales uplifts exceeding 30 per cent simply by repositioning units to intercept consumer flow or adding compact dessert-focused modules. These results underline the importance of integrating merchandising intelligence into equipment design.

What specific challenges does the Indian market pose for refrigerated display units, and how should manufacturers address them by 2030?

India presents unique operational challenges, including extreme summer temperatures reaching 45°C, high dust exposure, inconsistent power supply, and constrained retail spaces. By 2030, manufacturers will need to design solutions that address these realities—ranging from L-shaped units for space-limited bakeries, to energy-saving night curtains, to modular shelving that accommodates varied SKUs. The focus must remain on “fit-for-climate” engineering that ensures product integrity and ease of maintenance in high-stress environments.

What technology-driven innovations will shape the future of food display by 2030?

The next decade will see the integration of intelligent, connected systems into display units. Future-ready equipment will feature automated lighting adjustments, IoT-enabled temperature monitoring with real-time alerts, quick-swap washable filters to minimise downtime, and adaptable door configurations to optimise customer flow.

Emerging possibilities include AR-enabled storytelling, where customers can scan products to access origin, sourcing, and freshness data—aligning with transparency and traceability

demands in food retail. In the F&B industry, AI-driven planogramme optimisation, energy recovery systems to reduce carbon footprint, and antimicrobial surface coatings will gain prominence. Displays will also integrate with inventory management systems to trigger restocking alerts, enabling fresher, safer, and more sustainable food experiences.

From a strategic perspective, how should retailers evaluate display cabinet investments for the coming decade?

Retailers should transition from viewing display units as cost centres to recognising them as ROI-generating assets. By 2030, competitive differentiation will be driven by displays that not only maintain temperature but also enhance consumer engagement, reinforce brand positioning, and maximise cross-merchandising opportunities. The equipment must align with sustainability goals, operational efficiency, and brand storytelling to remain relevant in a high-choice, low-attention-span market.

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