

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE & MANAGEMENT

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INCREASING INFLUENCE OF PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS IN ORGANIZED RETAIL

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ABSTRACT

The business world has been experiencing a major economic change, consumer demand has shifted, and retailer's operating systems today are instilled with far more advanced technology than was the case ten years ago. While the world's largest developing markets still tempt the largest global retailers, and show no signs of slowing down, many smaller, untapped markets are providing new growth opportunities. Highly potential and dynamic business environment of India has influenced the Global Retail Giants and Industry Experts to rate Indian markets as the 'destination next' for retail sector only next to China. The organized Indian retail has responded positively to this rating, showing a phenomenal growth, despite the slump in the markets. 'Private Label Brands' refers to the brands that are owned by the retailers, and sold through a specific chain of stores. In the developed international retail markets private label brands are considered to be the key to success. The concept of PLBs in India is in its embryonic stage, it still promises a humongous potential to vitalize the Indian retail sector. This paper is an attempt to study the increasing influence of private label brands in the organized retailing. It is interesting to know how these newly born brands are competing with the giant standard brands – Not only competing but providing to be a better option to the retailers and to the consumers as well. The study will include only the private label brands offered by organized retailers.

KEYWORDS

consumer, organized retail, private label brands, unorganized retail, standard brands.

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1.1 PRIVATE LABEL BRAND (PLB)

The presence of the retailers own brand often sharing shelf space with major standard bands is nowadays a common sight in many retail stores in India and abroad. When the retailers decide to sell products of a line or merchandise which is owned, controlled, merchandised and sold by the retailer in his own store/chain of stores, he is said to be selling own label/brand or a private label brand.

Private label brands are available in a multitude of formats. There are, essentially, three varieties of private label brands. The first being a representative brand, which is a private label brand that through its name and packaging announces that it is produced and solely owned by the retailer. The second being an exclusive private label brand, which is owned and produced by the retailer, yet this fact is not explicitly conveyed to the consumer through brand name and packaging. The last type is confined labels. In terms of branding, the general consensus appears to be that private label brands are considered "every bit as much a brand as national brand". There can be at least four tiers of private label brands. These include low quality generics; medium quality private labels; somewhat less expensive but comparable quality products; and premium quality private labels that are priced in excess of competitor manufacturer brands. Whilst the nature of a store's private label brand(s) should be guided, first and foremost, by its target market, the authors suggest that successful retailers will adopt more than one tier of private label brand if they are to achieve wide scale market coverage. (Pradhan, 2009)

It is said that most of the private label brands are copycat brands. These brands essentially attempt to imitate the packaging and content of first tier manufacturer brands. Retailers analyze the contents of leading brands, and then re-create the product, through a process known as reverse engineering (ibid). Thus, since there are minimal research and development costs, and the retailers have already recognized that there is a potentially lucrative market available, these products are more often than not successful. The retailers use in-store promotions to aggressively promote the brands, using a "me-too at a cheaper price" strategy. This type of strategy involves producing an almost identical product and offering it at a reduced price relative to competitors. Packaging of private label brands is nearly indistinguishable from competitor brands. The copycat strategy is not without complications – pursuing this approach may well result in legal tussles. Actions of trademark infringement and "passing off" because of consumer confusion, unfair misappropriation of brand owners' intellectual property can have legal implications. (Justin Beneke, 2010).

1.2. DEFINITIONS

1.2.1 NATIONAL BRAND: National Brands are also called as standard brands.

"Brand marketed throughout a national market. National brands are owned and promoted usually by large manufacturers."

www.businessdictionary.com accessed on 20 April 2016

"National brands are those product/service names that are promoted nationally, or even globally. Because national brands are generally owned by companies with significant resources, marketing of national brands typically focuses on brand differentiation rather than feature or price positioning."

<http://www.brandeo.drupalgardens.com/> accessed on 20 April 2016

1.2.2 THE PRIVATE LABEL BRAND

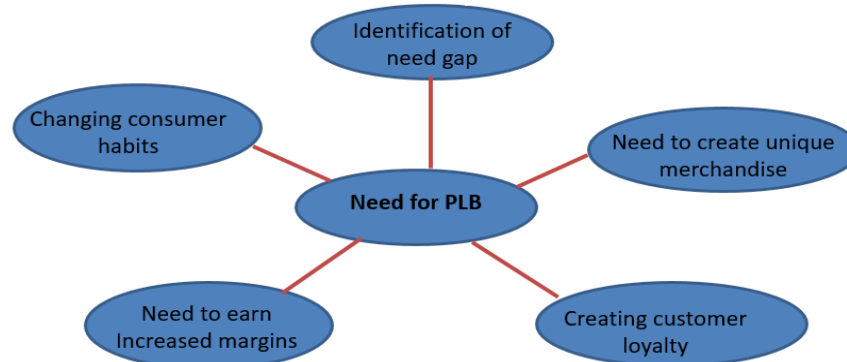
- i) According to Private Label Marketing Association, "all merchandise sold under a retail store's private label. That label can be the store's own name or a name created exclusively by that store. In some cases, a store may belong to a wholesale buying group that own labels, which are available to the members of the group. These wholesaler-owned labels are referred to as a controlled label". (www.plma.com accessed on 20 April 2016)
- ii) A private label brand (also called a reseller, store, house or distributor brand) is a brand that retailers and wholesalers develop. – Kotler, Keller, Koshy, Jha (Kotler, Keller, Koshy & Jha, 2009)
- iii) Private label brands, also referred to as in-store brands, are products that are produced and marketed by retailers. – ICFAI, 2003
- iv) "The concept of private label brands was popularized by large corporate supermarket chains which expanded their private label business at the expense of some heavily advertised national brands and items". – Louis W. Stern, (Ramkrishnan & Ravindran, 2012).

1.3. SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIVATE LABEL BRAND

Across the globe retailers become more sophisticated and competitive, the role of private labels in their stores, changes from that of a price – fighter to being a value – added marketing differentiator. This is indicated by the fact that the volume of private-label brands is starting to diversify their offering beyond the expected, enabling them to compete more effectively in existing product categories and foray into new and different product categories that have traditionally been dominated by national brand players (Pradhan, 2009).

Very often, there is a need to develop a private label brand by a retailer due to the reasons illustrated in the below figure:

FIG. 1: SIGNIFICANCE OF PRIVATE LABEL BRAND (PLB)



The changing consumer tastes and the need to fill a gap in the product offering is the key reasons for retailers to opt for offering a private label. This gap may be due to the non-availability of particular product / category. The most significant advantage that a private label allows a retailer is that of earning a level of margin which may be higher than what is offered on other brands that he chooses to retail. A private label basically involves the retailer doing the *designing, merchandising, sourcing and distribution*. Thus, his cost is under his control and spread across a limited range of activities. Promotions are mainly done in store and thus, his cost of goods sold is much lower compared to that of national brand. Finally, the retailer may also vary the offerings of the private label across geographical boundaries on the basis of the variation in consumer references or to seed a competitive advantage in a new geographical region.

1.4. EVOLUTION OF PRIVATE LABELS

Private labels were defined as generic product offerings that competed with their national brand counterparts by means of a price – value proposition. Often, the lower priced alternative to the real thing, private label or store brands carried the stigma of inferior quality and therefore, inspired less trust and confidence. In the developed markets, private labels started out of economic necessity – for providing a cheap alternative for low – emotion involvement goods such as butter, eggs, flour and sugar. Generics, which were products distinguishable by their plain and basic packaging, where the first type of private labels to appear on the horizon, largely associated with low price and low quality.

Following table shows the Evolution of Own Brands:

TABLE 1- THE EVOLUTION OF PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS

	1 st Generation	2 nd Generation	3 rd Generation	4 th Generation
Types of Brand	Generic	Quasi Brand	Own Brand	Own Brand Extended own brand, i.e. segmented own brand
	No Name	Own Label		
	Brand free			
	Unbranded			
Strategy	Generics	Cheapest price	Me-too	Value added
Objective	Increase margins	Increase margins	Enhance category margins	Increase and retain the client base
	Provide choice in pricing	Reduce manufacturer's power by setting entry price	Expand product assortment	Enhance category margins
		Provide better value product	Build retailer's image among customers	Improve image further
				Differentiation
Product	Basic and functional products	One-off staple lines with a large volume	Big category products	Image forming product groups
				Large number of products with small volume (niches)
Technology	Simple production process and basic technology lagging behind market leader	Technology still lagging behind market leaders	Close to the brand leader	Innovative technology
Quality / Image	Lower image and inferior image compared to the manufacturer's brands	Medium quality but still perceived as lower than leading manufacturer's brands.	Comparable to market leaders	Same of better than brand leader
		Secondary brand, alongside the leading manufacturer's brand		Innovative and different products from brand leaders
Approximate Pricing	20% or more below the brand leader	10 – 20 % below	5 – 10 % below	Equal or higher than known brand
Consumer's Motivation to buy	Price	Price is still important	Both quality and price, i.e. value for money	Better and unique products
Supplier	National, not specialized	National, partly specializing for own label manufacturing	National, mostly specializing for own label manufacturing	International, manufacturing mostly own brands

(Source: H. Laaksonen and J. Reynolds, 1994, Own brands in food retailing across Europe, The Journal of Brand Management)

1.5. PRIVATE LABEL: INTERNATIONAL SCENARIO

PLBs have experienced enormous growth in recent years in many countries. Europe has been home of the most mature private label markets in the world and experience fast growth popularity (*Tha Ha Nguyen & Aida Gizaw, 2014*). Globally, private labels are winning acceptability and the loyalty of customers. Private labels posted market share gains in 15 countries tracked by Nielsen for PLMA's 2007 International Private Label Yearbook. It further states that in Central and Eastern Europe, where modern retailing is rapidly taking root, retailer brands are making their biggest market share increases.

Private labels contribute 17% of retail sales with a growth of 5% per annum, globally. International retailers like Wal-Mart of USA and Tesco of UK have 40% and 55% private label brands representation in their stores respectively. Private label penetration in the United Kingdom is close to 37% currently, and is forecasted to exceed 40 per cent by 2011. (*Satish Chandra, 2014*)

Today, perceptions about private label are overwhelmingly favorable— almost three-quarters of global consumers (71%) say private-label quality has improved over time. A door once opened by economic necessity has widened to include a variety of private-label products that remain viable and trusted for many consumers worldwide.

To understand current consumer perceptions about private-label quality, value, assortment and packaging, Nielsen polled more than 30,000 online consumers in 60 countries. A few shared sentiments emerged around the world:

- Price is important to most consumers and is the primary driver of consumers' purchase intent for private label. Sixty-nine percent of respondents globally feel it's important to get the best price on a product. Moreover, 70% say they purchase private label to save money.
- Private label's appeal goes beyond price. Consumers are seeking quality and value, and private label delivers on both of these attributes. Two-thirds (67%) believe private label offers extremely good value for money, and 62% say buying private label makes them feel like a smart shopper.

- In terms of private-label development, the world can be divided into two distinct spheres: the developed world (Europe, North America and the Pacific) and the developing world (Latin America, Asia and Africa/Middle East). While value share is at or above 25% in developed, it is below 20% in most developing countries in the study. In fact, it is 5% in key markets, such as China and India. While learnings about private-label success in one market can help in another, there is no cookie-cutter approach for all. Private-label growth requires approaches that are tailored to each market. In this report, we highlight the current state of private-label development around the world, the drivers and obstacles to success and the impact these brands have on name-brand performance. (*Neilson Report, 2014*).

- The data shows substantial growth for retailer brands in Western Europe. The share increase in the United Kingdom, up by more than a point to 41%. In France, the A-brand competition has not been able to stop the powerful trend towards private label in recent years. Market share in the country has now climbed to 28%, and would surely be higher if sales data from discounters were included. Even so, the private label's high market share contrasts sharply with the situation in 1997, when it stood at only 21%.

- Spain continues to be one of the biggest success stories for retailer brands. Market share there has surpassed the 40% mark for the first time ever and seems destined to reach 50% in the next few years. Private label maintains its significant position in Germany and Belgium. Market share in Germany approaches the 40% level, while it is over 42% in Belgium. In Austria, retail brands climbed more than one point and now account for one of every five products sold. Switzerland again had the highest volume share of any of the countries surveyed by Nielsen. Retailer brands now account for 53% of all products sold in the country and their market share is still climbing.

- In Scandinavia private label's share is at least 20% in each of countries – Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The biggest increase was posted in Denmark, where the share for retailer brands climbed more than two points to 27%. Market share has been climbing steadily in Sweden, up from 22% in 2003, to more than 28% in 2006. In the Netherlands, the share for retailer brands has now climbed to 22%. Private label continued its growth in Italy, marking substantial gains over the past eight years Market share for private label in Portugal climbed more than two points reaching 33%. (*Monarch Joshi, 2014*).

FIG. 2: MARKET SHARE OF PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS WORLDWIDE



(Source: <http://www.statista.com>)

1.6. PRIVATE LABEL BRAND INDIAN SCENARIO

Although India may represent one of the least developed modern retail markets globally, the story of private label retail has been secular, and holds much significant promise for the future. Moreover, this segment is now at a tipping point. Lessons from European countries indicate that private label growth in a country is likely to accelerate when market share enters a 5%-8% range. Indian private label penetration is nicely placed in this range.

The traditional definition of private label – a product sold by retailers exclusively in own stores – is no longer valid. Retailers are increasingly looking to omni-channel for brand play E.g. Future-Amazon tie-up. Innovative distribution channels are also being tapped E.g. Future group's partnership with Rajasthan government to sell consumer goods to lower income groups through public distribution systems. Retailers have historically preferred private label as a 'mandatory' product category as it gives an additional 15-25% boost to gross margins. It is no surprise, therefore, that many M&A deals have been driven by investors towards this objective. E.g. Flipkart-Myntra, Zovi-Inkfruit and recently concluded Snapdeal-Exclusively.in (*Vivek Gupta, 2015*).

Consequently, it can be seen that with the increasing growth of the organised retail sector, private labels brands are also increasingly. The recession has significantly given a thrust to private labels, thus favourably affecting the private label sales of almost all major retailers like Reliance Retail, Future group, Aditya Birla Retail, Bharti Walmart Retail, Hyper City, Infiniti Retail, Trent, Shoppers Stop etc., offering private label in their merchandise mix.

The growth of private labels was seen across categories, growth in grocery was prominently seen in supermarkets at 15% and hypermarkets accounting for 30% of total value sales. Introduction of private labels in categories such as apparels and footwear, toys, electronics and appliances enable retailers to expand their offerings. Even Apollo Pharmacy and Guardian Pharmacy entered into their private labels in 2010 in health, beauty and personal care products. (MICA, 2014).

1.7. SHARE OF PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS IN INDIA

In India there is an increasing trend towards acceptance of private label brands and thus their penetration is on the rise in various segments. The growth of private labels is likely to continue in the current financial environment as 'cash-strapped' consumer's perception of the products as a 'cheaper option' changes. Part of private label growth in a recession is permanently sustainable. (MICA).

The private label market in India is currently estimated at Rs. 13 billion, which accounts for 10-12% of organised retail in India. Among the major Indian players, the degree of private label penetration was the highest in Trent with 90 per cent, followed by Reliance Retail (80 per cent), Pantaloon (75 per cent), Nilgiri's (38 per cent), Indiabulls/ Piramyd (30 per cent) and Food world (22 per cent). Aditya Birla Retail plans to increase the share of own brands in sales from the present 5% to 10% in the next 2-3 years.

TABLE 2: PRIVATE LABEL PENETRATION

Sr. No.	Company	Degree of Private Label Penetration
1	Trent	90%
2	Reliance Retail	80%
3	Pantaloon	75%
4	Nilgiris	38%
5	India Bulls/Piramyd	30%
6	Food World	22%
7	Aditya Birla	5%

(Source: www.indiareetailing.com)

In comparison, international retailers like the US-based Wal-Mart and Tesco of the UK have 40 per cent and 55 per cent own label brands representation in their stores, respectively. Among the reasons for the likely growth of private labels, most prominent are the higher margins, cheaper price and better bargaining power for the retailers.

According to industry estimates, private label margins for electronics goods are up to 20% higher compared with average national brands. This rises to 30-50% when it comes to clothing. Department stores tend to price their products at par with standard-priced products of some leading brands in India, while electronics and appliance specialist retailers, as well as health and beauty specialist retailers, generally price their products lower than the respective leading brands in order to generate volume sales. (MICA, 2014).

Citing the example of Future Group Retail Stores, we can categorically discuss the private label brands as follows;

- In Lifestyle and garment segment, private labels form 80% of apparel sales in Pantaloon as well Big Bazaar (Fashion@Big Bazaar). Some of the Private Label Brands are - John Miller, Lombard, BARE, Knight-Hood, DJ&G, RIG, Chalk, Honey, Scullers etc.
- In the Value format, Future Group has private label brands comprising of 30% of sales across Food, FMCG and Personal care categories. Some of the key private label brands in this space include Tasty Treat, Fresh & Pure, Clean Mate, Care Mate etc.
- Future Group's major initiative in enhancing the private brands portfolio was the launch of the Ektaa brand, offering community specific food products across the country. In the Electronics space, FG has Koryo Private Label (Value for Money) and Sensei (as the Premium Offering). FG is facing tremendous competition from LG, Samsung, and Sony.
- In case of Food Bazaar, in many categories, private labels are better than branded products. For instance, Food Bazaar's Care Mate hand wash has been a fast moving product. While as a category, hand wash hadn't grown much in the last few years, the company introduced Care Mate by offering a unique price proposition. Food Bazaar's hand wash, detergents and oral care products are priced 20% to 25% lower than market prices.
- The company also believes that when it comes to local tastes and preferences, private labels hold an edge over national brands. And this is extremely pronounced in food categories, as a national brand can only offer limited varieties. But a private label can be localized to a greater extent, for example Food Bazaar's Tasty Treat pickles not only use local ingredients but also the oil is suited for the local palate.
- In western India, pickles are prepared in groundnut oil, while it is cooked in sesame and mustard oil in south and east. The company introduced Tasty Treat Kasundi (mustard sauce) only for the eastern market as kasundi is a regional favorite; the product is now being rolled out nationally. It has also introduced 'Thankyou Auntie', an umbrella brand provided to self-help groups that make locally favorite snacks like murukku, chakli, thepla and chowda. Food Bazaar has also adopted labels like the insecticide spray Quite, manufactured by Asian ITG, a manufacturer for brands like Mortein, and Maniar's Khakra, for a year. All these adopted brands are now sold exclusively in Food Bazaar outlets.

One can assume that players are looking only at generic private label brands, given the nascence of retailing in India. Segmentation is already taking place even within own labels – from generic brands to the premium brands being retailed on the shelves. For instance, Big Bazaar has four different private label strategies – opening price point labels, promotional labels, trade – up labels and even deep – discount labels. This segmentation is created according to customers' preferences. Similarly, Spinach has tied up with small brands in jam and sauces, and retails these products after rebranding them. Aditya Birla Retail (ABRL) is aggressively pursuing the strategy of promoting Sales of private labels. Currently, the segment accounts for around 3 percent of its total sales. ABRL operating supermarket and hypermarket formats, under 'More for You' food and grocery chain, is targeting to increase private label sales to 10-15 percent in the next 2-3 years.

Bharti Retail, Walmart's joint venture partner in India, have bought eight private label in total including Great Value line of food (flour, dry fruits, spices, cereal, and tea), George Apparel. The Private Label lines are going into the Cash & Carry format (BestPrice Modern Wholesale) and discount convenience (Easyday). Equate, a brand for pharmacy and health and beauty items, has been introduced only in the handwash category as of now in Easyday stores. Other Wal-Mart private labels introduced in India include Home Trends (home furnishing), Mainstays (plastic containers, kitchen accessories), Kid Connection (toys, clothing), Faded Glory (footwear) and Athletic Works (athletic shoes, equipment). Astitva, is a line for Indian ethnic wear.

Overall, in India, private labels constitute 10-12 percent of the organized retail product mix. 23 Players like Shoppers Stop, Tata Trent, Pantaloon, Reliance, Spencer's, moved towards adopting private labels to address consumer needs and to increase profitability of their retail businesses. In India, very few players are into own manufacturing of private labels and are dependent on third parties, for example, Vishal Retail is increasingly shifting from manufacturing to third party sourcing primarily because of increase in categories for private labeling and volumes. Vishal Mega Mart offers salt and toothbrush under its 'V-needed' brand.

For promotional activities, retailers, mostly rely on shelf space and signage's, and techniques like sampling and active merchandising at the prominent spots. We hardly see any special advertising created for own labels, except for the odd leaflet or two. The real challenge, however, will be for retailers to take own labels outside their stores and make them national brands. Following table lists few private labels of Indian retailers:

TABLE 3: LIST OF PRIVATE LABEL BRANDS AND THEIR INDIAN RETAILERS

Sr. No.	Company/Store Name	Brands	Category
1	Future Group	John Miller, Bare, DJ&C, Buffalo, Knighthood, RIG, Indigo Nation, Scullers, Urbana	Fashion & Lifestyle
		Tasty Treat, Care Mate, Clean Mate, Fresh n Pure	FMCG
		Dreamline	General Merchandise
		Koryo, Sensei, IQIP	Electronics & Consumer Durables
2	Reliance Retail	Reliance Select, Reliance Value	Staple & Food
		Dairy Pure	Dairy Products
3	Aditya Birla Retail	Maha Saver, Freya	Grocery
		Essential, Pebble Rock	Home Décor
		Big Feet	Foot ware
		Feasters, Kitchen Promise, Best of India	Food Brands
		Enrich, Pestex, Paradise, Germex	Home & Personal Care
4	Spencer's	Smart Choice	Daily Grocery, Processed Foods, Beverages, Home & Multipurpose Needs
		Iland Monks, Mark Nicholas, Scorez, Detailz, Asankhya, Puddles, Little Devils,	Fashion
		Maroon	Non Stick Cookware
		Live Smart	Modular Furniture
		College Studio	Stationary
		360 Degree	Luggage
		Great	Electronics & Electricals
5	Shoppers Stop	Kashish	Men's Ethnic Wear
		Life, Mario	Western Wear Men Women
		Zegnoti	Men's Casual Wear
		Acropolis	Men's Formal Wear
		Push & Shove	Eye Wear
		Vettorio Fratini	Premium Men's Wear

1.8. LONG-TERM GROWTH DRIVERS OF PRIVATE LABEL

The underlying drivers for private label growth are scattered over a number of trends/strategies. To complicate matters, there is a strong interdependency between the growth factors. The arguments for private label growth are summarized below:

1. Consumer acceptance levels for private label are rising, due to price sensitivity (economic recession or hard discount competition).
2. Continued industry consolidation in developed food retail markets (Western Europe, the US and Australia). Economies of scale in logistics, procurement, marketing, store opening strategies and private label will continue to fuel sector consolidation. Larger operating scale provides more opportunities to launch private label.
3. Adoptions of modern retail i.e. more professional and larger scaled procurement organizations in developing markets (Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Turkey).
4. Growing share of hard discount due to increase price awareness, a consumer trend toward demand polarization (indulgence versus value for money) and ongoing expansion in developing countries.
5. Hard discount competition is driving value private-label growth. Service oriented supermarkets are expanding their value private-label offering, aiming to retain traffic and prevent customers defecting to hard discounters.
6. Need for diversification among service oriented supermarkets. The ongoing convergence of service and price-oriented business models is driving the need for service-oriented supermarkets to differentiate through premium private label.
7. More comprehensive private-label strategies of larger retailers. Many top three retailers in developed countries are still in the early stages of private label adoption and have only recently started to look at private label as one of the pillars for growth.
8. Increased professionalism of private-label suppliers. The emergence of specialist private-label suppliers is increasing professionalism and quality levels, thus improving the image of private label among retailers and consumers.
9. Consolidation among A-brands undermines retailers' negotiation positions. Larger A-brand suppliers drive the need for food retailers to reinforce their position at the negotiation table by expanding their private-label offering (Sebastiaan Schreijen, 2011).

1.9 CONCLUSION

The emergence of private label brands is one of the silver lining that has appeared in the retailing business. This study has attempted to gain more insight into the private label brands and its significance in the business of organised retailing. The planning and execution of PLB is crucial. Retailers need to understand that brands attract consumers to the retail store through advertising and promotion, thereby creating demand for the category. Private labels also benefit in the process as it gives them an opportunity to be picked up by consumers. If private labels are the only available products in the store and national brands are phased out, then it could alienate consumers from that store. The developed international organised retailers have recognized the potential of PLBs. They have a well-developed and sophisticated internal system to monitor the PLB business.

With the proliferation of Private Label Brands and its influence into the retailing business in context to Indian retailing sector, there is need for an intensive research into various aspects of Private Label Brands. This opens the door for further comprehensive research in fields of consumer behaviour, customer satisfaction, potential determination, labelling and packaging, procurement and distribution, etc.

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