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- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

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SUSTAINABILITY IN GREEN RETAILING: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES, AND A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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ABSTRACT

In the global front, retailers started giving importance to sustainability long back, but in Indian context, the sustainability measures were practiced since time in history but began to be realized recently. Regardless of its origin, sustainability has become an important consideration for the retail industry, affecting strategy, operations, workforce engagement, and connection to consumers and communities. This is more due to the emergence of organised retail sector in India. Retailers are evaluating their direct store, distribution center, and supply chain operations to uncover cost saving and workforce enhancing opportunities. While sustainability measures are reducing energy, greenhouse gases, waste, and chemicals, the organizations are trying innovative methods to improve their business the Green retail way. Further, the retail industry is evolving to meet the changing needs of consumers in specific and society at large. As one of the most notable evolutions of the past decade, consumers have become progressively more concerned about their environmental and social impact. This concern has manifested in an increased demand for Corporate Social Responsible activities, environmentally friendly products, a rise in the availability of organic foods, and more. The researcher seeks to highlight sustainability trends in the retail industry i.e. various sustainability measures followed by retailers, the benefits of adopting sustainability practices to retailers, shedding light on retail's evolving business practices and the challenges the industry still faces. The broader objective is to provide the retail industry and those it serves with a way to act on and engage in sustainability, through framing the critical issues, anticipating future trends, recognizing challenges, and sharing examples of how retailers are responding.

JEL CODE

M14

KEYWORDS

Sustainability, Green Retailing, Sustainability Tools, Corporate Social Responsibility.

INTRODUCTION

The retail industry plays a unique role in connecting product manufacturers, consumers, employees, and communities. From this point, the retail companies have insight into evolving manufacturing practices, consumer preferences, and community demands. Recently the retailers have started feeling that the traditional measures of competition—namely price, quality, service, and convenience—are now being supplemented by environmental and social considerations. Global warming and other environmental concerns are changing the way people live and do business. Consumers worldwide are increasingly showing their preference for companies who practice social and environmental responsibility. Seeing opportunities to differentiate themselves and build customer loyalty, retailers are implementing 'green' initiatives that improve brand image and involves lower spending (Green Retail Report 2010). These changing marketplace dynamics reinforce retailers' efforts to identify and act on environmental and social concerns in their direct operations and product supply chains. For the purposes of this research, "sustainability" is defined as operations that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Saroj Datar, Kavita Laghate (2011):** in their paper titled 'Green Business: A View of Retail Sector in India' opined that sustainable business practices is important not only for today but also for securing business tomorrow. Hence this issue is going to be the top concern for the corporate houses in any format. Media creating awareness, consumers are becoming aware of eco friendly sustainable business practices, government control, rules laws, regulations, environment protection groups etc are having a synchronized impact on this movement. The scarcity of natural resources, limited availability of non renewable energy sources, and the time required to create these sources in natural way, energy prices make sure that the issues related to the environmental can not now be neglected. And the overall business strategy need to be in tune with the environmental friendly, sustainable manner that will drive the business decision making and enhance the commercial viability of the business venture.
- **Prof. Ritu (2011)** in her titled "Green Retailing: An Exploratory Study Examining the Effects of Sustainability on Global Retail Landscape" found that majority of global retail players have developed an approach to monitor individual retailer's activities and progress made in the different areas of action over time towards achieving sustainability. These approaches were widely used by global retailers rather than the Indian counterparts. These players have created a buzz for their actions related to green products, greening supply chain, retailer's own environmental performance and raising consumer awareness relating to the green movement.
- **Smitu Malhotra (2012)** in her research paper "Green Retailing" stated that Building environmental sustainability in the vision mission statement of the organization is the starting point. Developing processes and culture in the organization that accepts sustainability, developing transparent standards and

measuring their impact, setting concrete sustainability targets to be achieved, will send a message in the organization about the seriousness of the commitment of the top management. Unless sustainability is ingrained in the culture of the organization, it has little chance of success.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The Government of India has given green signal to global retailers to start their ventures in India. Even though their entry into Indian market is expected to take time it is worth taking note of their business practices. One of the important business ideologies that they follow is sustainability practices. They are moving towards the concept of green retailing and self sustainability. In India the growth of organised retailers and malls are in their nascent stage hence the concept of sustainability is new to them. If the Indian retailers are to compete with their global counterparts they must be aware of the sustainability measures taken by them. This paper throws light into the need and benefits of following sustainability measures, the challenges in the road towards green retailing, some of the measures taken by major global retailers and Indian retailers.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study are:

- To understand the concept of retail sustainability.
- To study the benefits enjoyed and challenges involved while adopting sustainability practices.
- To identify the sustainability initiatives taken by both global and Indian retailers.
- To understand tools used by global retailers to reach sustainability

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is purely descriptive in nature and the data used for conducting research were taken from primary and secondary sources. Primary information comes from the interview with the administrative of selected retailers and secondary information from various journals, magazines, newspapers and websites.

NEED FOR ADOPTING SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES BY RETAILERS

- **Minimizing Energy consumption:** Retailers are accountable for the largest energy bills. Further the energy use is growing faster. There is always a need to conserve energy as most of the nations across the globe are facing acute energy crisis. Use of renewable sources of energy like wind and solar need to be encouraged.
- **Waste Management:** A large volume of waste materials are generated during the process of sale and distribution of physical goods. One of the major headache faced by developing nations are the process of managing waste disposal. Still most of the countries have not developed professional methods for proper waste disposal. Hence it is for the retailers to minimize the waste generated during trade activities and to develop their own indigenous waste management system.
- **Minimizing the use of non renewable natural resources:** The retailer especially those in the shopping malls consume huge amount of water everyday. To prevent the acute shortage of fresh water, the retailers need to manage its use.
- **Preventing Green house gas emissions:** Most of the retail malls use heavy refrigeration system which emits green house gases. Proper service and management of the refrigeration and cooling system will reduce the emission. The Government can enforce strict rules on the manufacturing of the refrigerators and levy penalties on the use of harmful chemicals that leads to greenhouse gas emissions.

BENEFITS OF SUSTAINABILITY

Adopting sustainability practices can bring a host of opportunities and benefits to the retailers. Some of the advantages are:

- **Develop a professional business:** Looking at business operations through the lens of sustainability brings environmental and financial advantages through the reduction of energy, fuel, materials, waste, packaging, and other resources.
- **Dynamically lowers risks:** Decreasing dependence on natural resources like fuel and materials, both internally and in the product supply chain, reduces exposure to price fluctuations and market volatility. Ensuring proper labor standards, managing at-risk suppliers, and ensuring the safe manufacture and use of products alleviate brand risk.
- **Bring in new innovations:** Sustainability is increasingly seen as a platform for identifying and driving innovative business practices. An eye toward reducing energy, water, waste, and toxic chemical use, as well as other environmental impacts leads to the development of new technologies and processes to save money, reduce risks, and identify revenue opportunities.
- **Favourable attitude and support from employees:** Employees, now more than ever, enjoy working for a company they can be proud of. They appreciate employers that value their opinions, ideas, and skills. Strong sustainability programs attract and retain top employees by providing them with opportunities to positively influence society.
- **Enter new market locations:** Retailers who constantly strengthen the value they bring to communities, beyond that of simply economic value or job creation, are more likely to be welcomed in new locations.
- **Enter new product markets:** As the green, natural, conscious, and healthy consumer segments grow, retailers will benefit from developing products and services that cater to these markets. This can be done by proper waste management process.
- **Acceptability among industry's stakeholders:** When sustainability efforts address the concerns of NGOs, suppliers, vendors, consumers, and other stakeholders, those stakeholders provide support rather than resistance to all dimensions of company growth—financial, social, and environmental.

IMPACTS OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) IN RETAIL

Social responsibility is the responsibility of an organization for the impacts of its decisions and activities on society and the environment, through transparent and ethical behavior that is consistent with sustainable development and the welfare of the society; takes into account the expectations of stake holders; is in compliance with applicable law and consistent with international norms of behavior and is integrated throughout the organization.

BASIC DIMENSIONS OF CSR ACTIVITIES

Since CSR encompasses a broad range of activities, it seems likely that the CSR activities will not all be the same. Underlying dimensions may exist by which different types of CSR activities can be distinguished. A consumer may not perceive the same level of CSR or may not be affected in the same way by, e.g., donations to charity as by attention to product safety. This research encourages the evaluations of CSR which are dependent on the type of CSR activity that the retailer performs. CSR activities differ on two main dimensions: (1) the beneficiary of the activity and (2) the intrinsic contribution of the retailer. Consumers are interested in who reaps the benefits of the activity and how much the retailer invests in the activity.

RETAIL SUSTAINABILITY MEASURES ADOPTED BY FIVE MAJOR GLOBAL PLAYERS

NIKE

Nike has set a goal to be "carbon neutral" by 2013 and currently purchases 79,820,000 kWh of green power for its World Headquarters, representing 72% of annual consumption. The company is also designing its footwear to meet targets for waste reduction, elimination of volatile organic compounds and increased use of environmentally preferred materials by 2013. Nike Environmental Action Team (N.E.A.T.) was established in the year 1993 with the objective of directing

and coordinating Nike's global environmental programs. They promoted the initiatives like "Reuse-A-Shoe" that made use of worn and defective footwear and grinds them into granulated rubber used for sports surfaces and carpet padding, thus eliminating 7.5 million shoes entering into the landfills. On this the company saved around \$4.5 million dollars and 1.3 million gallons of solvent by shifting to water based adhesives in nine out of ten of its shoe designs. Nike saves a half a million trees a year by switching to environmentally responsible packaging by making use of corrugated cardboard.

WAL-MART

Wal-Mart has made a commitment to reduce overall Green House Gas emissions by 20% over the next 8 years and set a long-term corporate goal to purchase 100% of their energy from renewable sources. Wal-Mart has also set a goal to increase fuel efficiency of its fleet by 25% over the next 3 years and is currently the largest single purchaser of 100% organic cotton products. According to Wal-Mart CEO, Lee Scott, the company has invested \$500 million in sustainability projects and working on the three ambitious goals for the company: usage of entirely renewable energy, create zero waste; and sell products that sustain resources and the environment. It is working closely with suppliers and other stakeholders to lower their carbon footprints, packaging wastage and to be more energy efficient in transporting products to Wal-Mart outlets. It has invested heavily in the development of a hybrid truck fleet, establishing energy efficient pilot stores, switching to more efficient LED lighting in store, renovating outlets to lower electricity usage, opening new outlets with advanced green building features and deploying energy saving technologies in its warehousing.

TARGET

The discount retailer, Target, became a certified organic produce retailer late last year and now offers more than 500 choices of organic certified food. Target also reduces waste through food-donation programs, giving away nearly 7 million pounds of food last year. They also have four buildings in California using on-site solar electricity, with systems under development at 14 additional stores. Target is one of Australia's leading department store retailers who show its commitment to inculcate an environmentally sustainable culture within their business and the community. They successfully carried a campaign of removing plastic shopping bags from their stores in 2009, which is followed by a program called Buddy Bag where they are selling Target red reusable bags. This is followed up by educating the customers about the Buddy bag through in store signage, print advertisements, our internet site and internal bulletins. Customers can bring their own bag or purchase from the range of reusable or compostable bags. They have launched a "Think Climate label" to their customers where they are encouraging them to opt for less energy usage by cold washing and line drying the Target products. They are drafting and implementing environmental packaging guidelines with that aim to further reduce packaging waste. They have introduced carton reduction program by consolidating orders across departments, increasing promotional pack sizes, introducing multiple pack sizes to accommodate smaller and larger stores, reviewing and reducing the frequency of replenishment orders. This program aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions from reduced volumes in the supply chain, less waste to landfill, considerable savings in processing costs, reduction in supplier and store costs, and improved productivity in buying teams, distribution centers and stores

CARREFOUR GROUP

Carrefour Group is accelerating its efforts to decrease emissions, combat waste and promote recycling. This has led to the opening of stores which are more economical and less on energy, plastic bags and make use of paper for catalogues and consumer magazines that is made from recycled wood fibers. Also, it is focusing on to improve its stores' energy efficiency and has launched an investment plan of some €30 million per year. It is working to have optimized refrigeration systems, energy-saving lighting and the use of natural light and closed freezers. It is also working hard to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions linked to refrigerant leaks and finding out the ways to avoid them at all. At the same time Carrefour works upstream with its suppliers to reduce water consumption in the supply chain and stores' water use. It is making efforts to reduce the volume of store waste by replacing merchandise shipping boxes and crates with reusable plastic bins. It is also encouraging customers to sort and opened waste recycling centers for glass, plastic, metal, paper, small household appliances, telephones and batteries. They are also involving staff to raise awareness of environmentally-friendly practices and conducts sustainability training in its various business Units. Its stores also promote sustainable-development awareness campaigns by organizing numerous initiatives to coincide with national, European and international events.

TESCO

The supermarket giant has identified "green consumerism" as a key to success in competitive retailing by focusing on concepts like recycling, labeling, store design, energy management and promotion and reward for employees and consumers as well. They have commissioned Environmental Resources Management (ERM) to map the total direct carbon footprint of the Tesco business across all the countries. This will enable them to baseline from which they have to start and prioritize in reducing emissions. It has plans to build environmentally-friendly shops and install wind turbines on its stores.

TOOLS USED BY GLOBAL RETAILERS TO ACCESS SUSTAINABILITY

WAL-MART'S "LIVE BETTER SCORECARD"

The tool has been in development since 2009, in collaboration with a number of other companies, as well as The Sustainability Consortium (TSC). Keeping in line with Walmart's broad goal of establishing a global retail standard for the 21st century, the Live Better Scorecard seeks to help:

- Improve the sustainability of products
- Integrate sustainability into the core business
- Reduce cost, improve product quality, and create a more efficient supply chain

The Live Better Scorecard has already been rolled out to buyers in over 100 categories—such as cereal, coffee, apparel, hardware, and electronics—with another 100 categories to be added by the end of the year. Walmart's original goal was to have the scorecard in 100 categories by the end of 2012.

Wal-Mart has said that the long-term goal is to evolve the scorecard as a product label for sustainability, similar to a nutrition label; however, the short-term focus is on providing the buyers in the merchandising team a tool to assess the sustainability of the products placed in shelves.

P&G SCORE CARD

The Scorecard Analysis Tool is the latest publicly available component of P&G's Supply Chain Environmental Sustainability Scorecard, which was designed to improve the environmental footprint of P&G's supply chain, fuel innovation, and encourage suppliers to make environmental improvements in their own supply chains.

The scorecard measures absolute or intensity improvements in nine key metrics including energy use, water use, waste disposal and greenhouse gas emissions on a year-to-year basis. It also assesses P&G's external business partners' sustainability innovation ideas and promotes collaboration. Indeed, its results affect a supplier's rating, which can impact future business with P&G.

ESTY ENVIRONMENTAL SCORECARD

A tool designed to help companies assess the company's sustainability strategies and performance, benchmark their results against industry peers and build brand value through sustainability. Esty Environmental Partners developed the scorecard using the research in Dan Esty's book, Green to Gold, an insight gathered from extensive work with clients, including global sustainability leaders. The Scorecard is customized by size and type of product or services and organizes company performance in 3 key areas: Organizational Commitment and Alignment, Core Environmental Performance and Stakeholder Communications and Engagement.

RETAIL SUSTAINABILITY CONCEPT: A CASE OF INDIAN RETAIL SECTOR

Retail sustainability concept is new to Indian retail sector. As far as Indian retail sector is concerned a vast majority belongs to the unorganised sector and organised retail sector is in its nascent stage. The unorganized retail stores popularly called the 'Kirana' stores are run by small businessman with less working capital. Most of them have only primary education, follow primitive business practices and are in perpetual cash crunch. Majority of them will not be in a position to understand and carryout the concept of 'retail sustainability'. However, it is worth noticing that paper bags were quite a popular practice used by these retailers in ancient times. With growing industry revolution people became more used to convenience and got indulged in the use of plastic bags. Indian Government has put forward a step in minimizing the use non bio-degradable bags by forcing the retailers to put a complete stop on the use of plastic bags

while issuing purchased items to the consumers. On the contrary, the consumers are asked to pay a price for these bags thus discouraging them for further use of it.

On the other hand the organised sector in India is in its nascent stage. This has both advantage and disadvantage. Disadvantage being the limited knowledge, experience and expertise in this field and advantage being the sustainability practices can be absorbed and implemented at early stages of business so that sustainable practices become a way of life.

RETAIL SUSTAINABILITY FOLLOWED BY INDIAN RETAILERS

On the Indian front, most of the players don't speak much of their green initiatives. Future group takes the lead where it is making obvious display of its green initiatives through Pantaloon Retail India Limited. Tata International, part of the Tata Group, has plans to launch Green Retailing stores across India. The stores will consume 40 per cent less energy and designed on LEED certification of USGBC. Mahindra Retail has launched its "Green" Mom & Me store in Bangalore. This store makes use of eco-friendly, recycled and reused construction material. It has made use of natural elements in the store such as low energy consumption lighting, lead free paints & tiles, doors reconditioned from the existing buildings etc. IBM Retail Store Solutions has received Green Excellence of the Year award for its outstanding efforts in energy conservation and its commitment to safeguarding natural resources. The other key retail players follow as Shopper's Stop, Trent (Westside), Reliance, Aditya Birla Group, Central and others are not working so seriously in this direction. In India green retailing may not be that obvious but there are many companies that are contributing towards the green movement. The key players are Suzlon, Wipro Technologies, and HCL technologies, ONGC, IndusInd Bank, Idea Cellular and Hero Honda Motors.

CHALLENGES FACED BY RETAILERS WHILE ADOPTING SUSTAINABILITY IN INDIA

- **Lack of expertise for implementing the sustainability program:** Because expertise is not yet available within their respective organizations, retailers are reaching out to nonprofits, academics, and governments, as well as suppliers, consumers and investors to accelerate sustainable innovation.
- **Turning away from sustainability as a cost-incurring concept:** Most of the retailers view the initial investments into the waste management and energy reduction program as a burden, even though the retailers will have long term benefits from sustainability practices. Many of them are reluctant to adopt the concept into business as the initial investment is high. Other than this the end consumer is also apprehensive in consuming sustainable product as they are normally an expensive affair.
- **Developing systems for continuous improvement:** As retailers build sustainability programs, they have developed management, measurement and IT systems for continuous improvement. Such mechanisms include environmental management systems, supplier "score carding" and management training, employee training and engagement, energy and waste reduction goals and sustainability reporting. All these are challenges as Indian organised retail sector is still in its nascent stage.
- **Educating customers and suppliers on the importance of sustainability:** To make sustainable practices a success the retailers require the tough task of customer attitude about consumption, usage and disposal of products in their daily life.
- **Low political priority for sustainability:** as far as India is concerned there are no strict rules regarding sustainability measures. Even though the Government makes it a point to acknowledge the efforts taken by retailers towards sustainability by way of issuing awards, there is no real pressure on the retailers to practice sustainability measures.

CONCLUSION

Retail industry serves as a vital connecting link with the end customers and can play an important role in pushing green products. If the consumers are properly educated and motivated for the green products, then policy of three R's i.e. Reduce, Reuse and Recycle can help make the industry more environment friendly. When there is demand for the green products, retailers are bound to stock green and organic products for their customers. One of the major apprehensions with the green products is its cost factor. But with the growing interest in the environment over the past few years; most of the customers are opting for the "green" options and ready to pay the premium for these products. Many studies have confirmed the fact food, beverage and personal care are the two most commonly used categories that accounts for the majority of green products in the marketplace. The researchers and the government in conjunction with the retailers should look into innovations and ideas to make these environment friendly products much affordable to be able to promote sustainability practices among general public much easily. Corporate Social Responsibility activities can be encouraged to be practiced by the retailers in India. This social commitment will not only help overall sustainable development of the society but in addition can lead customer trust in the company. CSR activities can increase overall retail store evaluation.

Thus green retailing is an approach that reflects the concern of big corporations towards the environment. Also, it should be the onus of governments and consumers to press the retailers to adopt green practices. Retailers are observing that environmentally-responsible retailing serves as a strong, powerful marketing tool and also a way to reduce operating costs and improve business efficiency. But at the same time, it should also keep a check whether these big stores are actually living up to their "greenness" they are merely using it as a sales technique. Thus it becomes very important to quantify the activities relating to materials consumption, carbon emissions, waste, pollution and transport infrastructure, the environment and the consumer and then strategies to minimize the detrimental impact of their activities in a positive and proactive way. This requires investment in environmental audits, reviewing store design and operation, assessing logistics and transportation effectiveness, reviewing energy usage and energy sourcing, partnering with suppliers and stakeholders, and educating both employees and consumers in key areas. At the least the extensive usage of plastic bags can be avoided by using bags made of natural fabrics and recycled paper.

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