

EVALUATION OF SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES IN ORGANIZED RETAIL AND THEIR IMPACT ON CONSUMER IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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ABSTRACT

Purpose

The purpose of this research is to examine the factors influencing sustainability practices in the retail sector. By conducting a comprehensive content analysis of existing literature, this study aims to identify the key determinants that drive retailers to adopt eco-friendly practices. The research will also explore the broader implications of sustainability on retail operations and industry trends, providing insights for consumers, regulators, and retailers alike.

Design/Methodology/Approach

This study employs a content analysis approach to examine existing literature on sustainability in the retail sector. By analyzing the content of various research papers, articles, and reports, the study identifies the key themes, concepts, and variables related to sustainability practices. The content analysis results are then used to inform the selection of variables for further research analysis.

Findings

The content analysis revealed that several factors influence sustainability practices in the retail sector, including: Increasing consumer awareness and demand for eco-friendly products and practices drive retailers to adopt sustainable initiatives. Government regulations and policies related to environmental protection play a significant role in shaping retail sustainability practices. Consumer demand, regulatory pressures, supply chain considerations, economic factors, and technological advancements are key determinants driving sustainability practices in the retail sector. Retailers must balance these factors to develop effective strategies that meet consumer expectations, comply with regulations, and remain economically viable. By understanding these key determinants, retailers can develop effective sustainability strategies and contribute to a more environmentally responsible retail sector.

Key words: Content Analysis, CSR, Consumer Behaviour, Retailing, Sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

The growing environmental consciousness among consumers has prompted organized retail to adopt sustainability practices across various operational areas. With the retail sector's

extensive reach and influence, its environmental impact is substantial, leading many retailers to prioritize sustainable practices. This shift towards eco-friendly initiatives is not only driven by corporate responsibility but also by the need to align with consumer values. However, the influence of these sustainability practices on consumer behavior, particularly impulse buying, remains an area of significant interest.

One of the primary sustainability efforts in organized retail is waste reduction. Retailers are increasingly focusing on minimizing packaging waste, promoting reusable shopping bags, and optimizing inventory management to prevent overstocking and waste. These initiatives resonate with environmentally conscious consumers, and when effectively communicated, they can influence unplanned purchases. The perception that a retailer is actively reducing its environmental footprint can trigger a positive emotional response in consumers, leading to impulse buying as a way to support the retailer's green initiatives.

Energy efficiency is another critical area where organized retailers are making significant investments. The implementation of energy-saving technologies such as LED lighting, energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, and even the use of renewable energy sources like solar power is becoming more common. For consumers, these visible sustainability efforts can enhance the shopping environment, making them feel good about their purchases. This positive association between energy-efficient practices and the shopping experience can spur impulse buying, as consumers may be more likely to make spontaneous purchases in a store that reflects their values.

Sustainable sourcing is also a key focus in organized retail. Retailers are increasingly offering products made from sustainable materials, such as organic, recycled, or ethically sourced goods. Highlighting these products in-store can appeal to consumers' desire to make responsible choices, potentially leading to impulse purchases. When consumers encounter eco-friendly products that align with their values, they may be more inclined to buy on impulse, driven by the desire to support sustainable practices. Moreover, the design of retail spaces is evolving to incorporate sustainability principles. Many retailers are using eco-friendly materials in their store designs, creating green spaces that not only reduce their environmental impact but also enhance the shopping experience. The ambiance of a sustainable store can have a direct impact on consumer behavior, making them more likely to make unplanned purchases. The positive emotions associated with shopping in an environmentally friendly environment can increase the likelihood of impulse buying.

In this context, evaluating the impact of sustainability practices on consumer impulse buying behavior becomes crucial. This research aims to explore how various sustainable initiatives in organized retail influence spontaneous purchasing decisions. By examining the intersection of sustainability and consumer behavior, this study seeks to provide insights into how retailers can leverage eco-friendly practices to not only reduce their environmental impact but also enhance consumer engagement and drive sales. In (Jones & Wickas, 2018) highlight that the significant environmental footprint of organized retail has driven a shift toward these sustainable practices. Retailers are now employing strategies such as efficient inventory management and recycling programs to address waste issues. In addition, the adoption of energy-saving technologies and a focus on sustainable sourcing practices are critical in minimizing environmental impacts.

Beyond environmental concerns, social responsibility has become a central aspect of sustainable retail. Fair labor practices, community engagement, and diversity initiatives are integral components of this approach. Economic sustainability is further supported through strong supplier relationships, balanced financial performance, and ethical marketing practices, as emphasized by (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABILITY IN RETAILING

Organized retail's extensive operations contribute significantly to environmental impact, prompting many retailers to adopt sustainable practices. Key focuses include waste reduction through efficient inventory management and recycling, energy efficiency via energy-saving technologies, and sustainable sourcing of materials. (Jones & Wickas, 2018) note that this environmental impact has led to the adoption of these practices to mitigate waste and energy consumption. Retailers are increasingly implementing recycling programs and prioritizing sustainable sourcing. In addition to environmental measures, social responsibility is a crucial aspect of sustainable retail. This includes fair labor practices, community engagement, and diversity initiatives. Economic sustainability is supported by strong supplier relationships, balanced financial performance, and ethical marketing, as highlighted by (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

SIX BROAD AREAS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN RETAILING

The first area focuses on reducing paper consumption. This involves transitioning to digital alternatives such as e-receipts and online documentation. Additionally, minimizing printed materials whenever possible is crucial. The second area emphasizes the importance of reusable bags over single-use plastic bags. This helps to reduce plastic waste and its harmful impact on the environment.

Sustainable packaging is the third focus area. This entails using packaging materials derived from sustainable or recycled sources. By minimizing the use of non-biodegradable materials, retailers can contribute to waste reduction.

The fourth area promotes recycling or upcycling old goods. This extends the lifespan of products and decreases the demand for new resources. Sourcing products from suppliers committed to sustainable practices is the fifth area. This involves minimizing environmental impact throughout the supply chain. Lastly, reducing energy consumption within stores and operations is essential. By adopting energy-efficient practices, retailers can lower their carbon footprint. These six areas collectively outline key sustainability initiatives that retailers can implement to operate more environmentally friendly Figure 1.



Source: Pigeon Blog report on "The Rise of Sustainable Retail: How Brands can embrace Eco-friendly practices", cited from <https://blog.contactpigeon.com/sustainable-retail/>

FIGURE 1
SIX BROAD AREAS OF SUSTAINABILITY IN RETAILING

CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW OF CONSUMER IMPULSE BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Impulse buying behavior refers to the spontaneous and unplanned purchase of products, often triggered by emotional states and environmental stimuli. This behavior accounts for a significant portion of consumer purchases, estimated to be between 40% and

80% of all transactions. Impulse buying is characterized by a sudden urge to purchase something without prior intention. It typically arises in response to positive emotional states, such as excitement or happiness, and is often influenced by various internal and external factors. Internal factors include personality traits and emotional states, while external factors encompass the shopping environment, promotional activities, and sensory stimuli.

Sustainability practices in organized retail, such as eco-friendly packaging, energy efficiency, waste reduction, and ethical sourcing, have become increasingly important in influencing consumer behavior. These practices not only align with growing consumer awareness of environmental issues but also impact impulse buying behavior. When retailers incorporate sustainability into their operations, they often create a positive shopping environment that enhances brand trust and loyalty. Consumers are more likely to make impulse purchases in stores that reflect their values, especially if the products are marketed as eco-friendly or sustainable. However, sustainability initiatives can also have a tempering effect on impulse buying if they encourage more thoughtful and responsible consumption. Thus, the relationship between sustainability and impulse buying is complex, with the potential to both stimulate and moderate spontaneous purchasing decisions, depending on how these practices are perceived and implemented.

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES OF INDIAN RETAIL COMPANIES

An endeavour is made to understand the sustainable practices adopted by the Indian retail companies to serve the consumers in a better way. A total of nineteen major retailers' initiatives on sustainability is presented here Table 1.

Sl.No.	Retail Company	Sustainability Initiatives	Examples
1.	Tata Group (Tata Trent Ltd.)	Energy-efficient stores, waste management, responsible sourcing, sustainable fashion	"Recycle Fashion" initiative for recycling old clothes
2.	Future Group	Eco-friendly packaging, waste reduction, energy-efficient practices	Reusable bags, reduced plastic use, sourcing local and sustainable products
3.	Reliance Retail	Energy-efficient lighting, rainwater harvesting, promoting sustainable products	Reliance Fresh stores use LED lighting, efficient refrigeration, and promote sustainability
4.	Aditya Birla Retail (More)	Reducing plastic usage, promoting organic products, energy-efficient technologies	Promotes organic food, supports local farmers, reduces environmental impact
5.	Shoppers Stop	Energy efficiency, waste management, sustainable sourcing	Eco-friendly store interiors, promotion of cloth bags, and sustainable brands
6.	D-Mart	Waste management, energy-efficient operations	Minimizing waste in packaging, using solar power, energy-efficient appliances
7.	Spencer's Retail	Reducing plastic use, promoting eco-friendly products, energy-saving measures	Promoting reusable bags, reducing single-use plastic, offering organic and eco-friendly products
8.	Fabindia	Sustainable and ethical sourcing, promoting handcrafted products, recycling, and upcycling	Organic materials, natural dyes, recycling, and upcycling of materials
9.	ITC Limited	Zero-waste approach, sustainable packaging, carbon footprint	Environment-friendly packaging solutions with recyclable and

		reduction	biodegradable materials
10.	Godrej Nature's Basket	Promoting organic products, eco-friendly packaging, energy-efficient operations	Biodegradable and reusable packaging, focus on reducing plastic and food waste
11.	Patanjali Ayurved	Natural and organic products, eco-friendly packaging, waste reduction	Biodegradable packaging, promotion of natural ingredients to minimize environmental impact
12.	Aditya Birla Fashion and Retail (Pantaloons)	Sustainable fashion, waste reduction, energy-efficient stores	Eco-friendly clothing lines, use of recycled materials for packaging
13.	Spencer's Retail (RPG Group)	Waste management, eco-friendly products, energy-saving operations	Biodegradable bags, reducing plastic waste, and energy-saving initiatives
14.	Landmark Group (Lifestyle, Max Fashion)	Sustainable sourcing, energy conservation, waste management	Energy-efficient stores, eco-friendly materials in products
15.	Decathlon India	Sustainable product design, packaging, energy-efficient operations	Products made from recycled materials, encouraging recycling of used sports equipment
16.	Metro Cash & Carry India	Reducing energy consumption, waste management, sustainable sourcing	Energy-efficient lighting, refrigeration systems, and sustainable product lines
17.	Amazon India	Reducing packaging waste, promoting eco-friendly products, renewable energy investments	"Frustration-Free Packaging" initiative, commitment to 100% renewable energy by 2025
18.	Flipkart	Sustainable packaging, recycling initiatives, promoting eco-friendly products	Green packaging initiative, reducing single-use plastic, using recycled materials
19.	Titan Company (Tanishq)	Ethical sourcing, energy efficiency, eco-friendly packaging	Responsible sourcing of gold and diamonds, energy-efficient practices in stores

Source: Profiles of select Retail companies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An endeavour is made to present a comprehensive review of literature to identify and analyze key factors such as SEF, SP, and Environmental Impact in existing studies. This review provided a foundation for applying content analysis to understand trends and relationships across the research landscape.

In (Mohan et al., 2013) explored how store environment factors and individual traits influence impulse buying through emotions, finding that positive emotions and urges significantly drive this behavior, while negative emotions do not. In (Ramanan & Ramanakumar, 2014) focused on sustainability practices in Indian retail, emphasizing eco-friendly approaches in supply chains and store management. In (Wilson, 2015) analyzed M&S's sustainability strategy, highlighting its success in environmental, economic, and social areas. In (Vinish & Ram, 2015) discussed the rapid growth of Indian retail and its shift towards green practices despite challenges.

In (Gowri et al., 2016) addressed the need for better sustainability measurement systems in fragmented industries, proposing the Three Tiers Sustainability Ranking System. In (Bellini et al., 2017) examined how pre-shopping preparation reduces impulse buying, while (Bottani et al., 2017) evaluated sustainability in retail processes, identifying sales area management as having the highest environmental impact. In (Sivagnanasundaram, 2018) compared Indian and global retailers' sustainability efforts, finding that Indian retailers are still in early stages. In (Jones, 2019) reviewed storytelling in US retail sustainability reports. Investigated sustainable practices in organized retail, identifying challenges and benefits. In (Borusiak & Paluchova, 2018) explored motivations for engagement in charity shops, highlighting various practical and emotional factors.

Examined the retail industry's economic and environmental impact, finding that Indian retailers are in the early stages of adopting sustainable practices compared to global counterparts. Sustainability reporting in India needs improvement, especially as a marketing tool. In (Saber & Weber, 2019a) emphasized the importance of sustainability reports in communicating corporate performance, but also highlighted the risks of greenwashing. Their analysis of German grocery retailers found varying reporting quality and a tendency to underreport negative information.

In (Dabija & Babut, 2019) studied the influence of sustainability on store patronage, revealing generational differences, with Millennials prioritizing sustainability more than Generation X. Another study by (Saber & Weber, 2019b) found that while supermarkets implement sustainability practices better than discount stores, both struggle with report readability and data transparency. The World Wide Federation Report in 2020 noted India's growing retail market and the increasing demand for sustainability, driven by policy changes and global investment. In (Agarwal et al., 2020) highlighted the need for greater awareness and adoption of green practices among Indian retailers, recommending government initiatives and advocacy to promote sustainable business development.

In (Pallikkara et al., 2021) explored impulse buying at grocery checkouts in Karnataka, India, identifying influences such as store environment, credit card availability, and in-store promotions, with Indian shoppers being cautious and health-conscious. Discussed sustainable development (SD) and corporate social responsibility (CSR), highlighting theoretical foundations and practical applications in Central and Eastern Europe. (Zafar et al., 2021) found that personalized social media ads enhance impulsive buying, positively impacting sustainable purchasing decisions. In (Wang & Zhong, 2022) demonstrated that retailers' sustainable development (RSD) boosts consumer advocacy through trust and legitimacy, moderated by consumer eco-literacy.

In (Bain & Company, 2022) reported sustainability as a growing priority for retailers, driven by consumer, investor, and regulatory demands, though many fall short of their goals. In (Khalil & Khalil, 2022) showed that sustainability awareness in Oman enhances green trust and altruism, positively affecting impulse buying, with gender playing a moderating role. Studied fruit and vegetable retail preferences in Navsari, India, finding income, gender, and education significantly influence choices.

In (Cheng et al., 2023) linked event sustainability to enhanced brand equity, with environmental factors having the strongest impact. Tall highlighted the benefits and challenges of green marketing, including the risk of green washing. In (Lyu et al., 2023) found that sustainable CSR practices in China increase impulse buying, amplified by social media advertising. In (Salkova et al., 2023) reported a pandemic-driven shift toward sustainable and deliberate consumer behavior.

Connected sustainability practices with brand equity in the airline industry. Viswanathan found organized retailers in India adopting sustainable practices, despite challenges like high costs and low consumer demand. Turkes showed that economic

sustainability practices significantly improve business performance in Romanian SMEs. In (Lumivalo et al., 2024) highlighted the potential of digital solutions to align retailer sustainability propositions with consumer values, cautioning against overconsumption. Much of the existing research relies on cross-sectional studies, which limit the ability to capture long-term trends and impacts. There is also a heavy reliance on quantitative methods, whereas qualitative approaches like ethnography and longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights. Despite the importance of sustainability reporting, there is a lack of standardized frameworks and metrics across different retail sectors, which hinders effective communication and comparison of sustainability performance.

Furthermore, existing research often lacks geographical and demographic diversity, limiting the generalizability of findings. Addressing these research gaps will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of sustainable retailing and help develop effective strategies that balance environmental, social, and economic considerations.

OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The study primarily aims to evaluate the significance of the evaluation of sustainability practices in organized retail and their impact on consumer impulse buying behaviour. The study will aim to study the sustainability practices adopted by Indian retail companies. Further, the study focuses on analysis of the literature through Content Analysis to obtain what are the key determinants in the existing studies.

The study is based on secondary sources of data obtained from various journals, articles and research papers obtained from offline and online sources. The study will aim to analyze the literature with the use of Content analysis to obtain key determinants focused in the literature.

CONTENT ANALYSIS

Content analysis aims to systematically categorize and quantify key themes across the reviewed literature, such as Store Environment factors, Sustainable factors and Environmental Impact. This method is applied in the present study to identify the most frequently addressed issues in literature, analyze trends over time, and compare different studies. By converting qualitative data into quantitative insights, an attempt is made to statistically evaluate the relationships between various factors. Content analysis also facilitated the synthesis of findings, providing a comprehensive understanding of how these factors are interconnected, thereby supporting our research objectives effectively.

Key Variables

Based on the extensive analysis of the field study results pertaining to the existing literature, the following key variables are determined as key variables analyzed in the studies.

- a. Store Environment Factors (SEF): areas focused in the study include aspects like music, lighting, employee behavior, layout.
- b. Impulse Buying Behavior (IBB): areas focused in the study include factors that influence impulsive purchasing decisions.
- c. Sustainability Practices (SP): areas focused in the study include eco-friendly practices, sustainable supply chains, green marketing.
- d. Sustainability Reporting (SR): areas focused in the study include storytelling in reports, transparency in sustainability practices.
- e. Consumer Behavior (CB): areas focused in the study include shopping habits, preferences, and motivations.
- f. Green Business Practices (GBP): areas focused in the study include methods adopted by businesses to reduce environmental impact.

- g. Retail Management (RM): areas focused in the study include supply chain management, store management.
- h. CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) (CSR): areas focused in the study include social, environmental, and economic sustainability practices.
- i. Economic Impact (EI): areas focused in the study include how retail practices affect economic growth and performance.
- j. Technological Advancements (TA): areas focused in the study include digital solutions, technology in retailing.
- k. Environmental Impact (EI): areas focused in the study include the environmental footprint of retail activities.

Based on the extraction of key variables, the existing studies are codified in order to summarize the frequency of the key variables evaluated in the existing studies. The results are shown here Table 2 & Figure 2.

No.	Authors	SEF	IBB	SP	SR	CB	GBP	RM	CSR	EI	TA	EIM
1	Mohan G et al. (2013)	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	Ramanan C and Ramanakumar K (2014)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
3	Wilson (2015)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
4	Vinish P., Ram M.R. (2015)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
5	Gowri V et al. (2016)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
6	Bellini et al. (2017)	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	Bottani et al. (2017)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
8	Sivagnanasundaram (2018)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
9	Jones P and Comfort D (2018)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	Kannimozhil and Varun (2018)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
11	Borusiak and Paluchova (2018)	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
12	Manickavasagam (2018)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
13	Saber M and Weber A (2019a)	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
14	Dabija and Babut (2019)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
15	Saber and Weber (2019b)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
16	World Wide Federation Report (2020)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
17	Agarwal K et al. (2020)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
18	Pallikkara et al. (2021)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
19	Borusiak (2021)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
20	Zafar et al. (2021)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
21	Wang and Zhong He (2022)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
22	Bain & Company (2022)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
23	Khalil and Khalil (2022)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24	Sharma S et al. (2023)	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
25	Pigeon Blog (2023)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
26	Cheng et al. (2023)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27	Tall T et al. (2023)	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
28	Lyu et al. (2023)	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
29	Salkova et al. (2023)	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Total	1	7	17	3	3	5	2	3	2	1	8

Source: Compiled from Literature reviews.

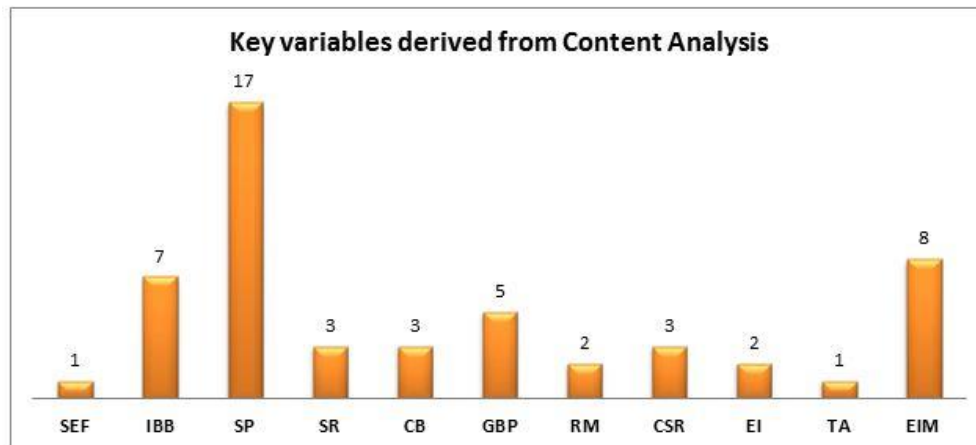


FIGURE 2
KEY VARIABLES DERIVED FROM CONTENT ANALYSIS

The table presents a review of 29 studies, focusing on various factors like SEF, IBB, SP, SR, CB, GBP, RM, CSR, EI, TA, and Environmental Impact. Each column represents a different factor, while rows correspond to individual studies. A value of '1' indicates that the factor was considered in that study, while '0' indicates it was not. Key observations from Content analysis:

1. The most frequently addressed factor is Sustainability practices (17 studies), followed by Environmental Impact (8 studies).
2. Impulse Buying Behaviour (7 studies), Green Business Practices (5 studies), and Consumer Behaviour, Corporate Social Responsibility, Economic impact (each 3 studies) are also focused in the literature.
3. Store Environment factors and Technological advancement are the least addressed factors, with only 1 study each focusing on them.
4. The distribution suggests that sustainability practices (SP) and environmental impact are key areas of interest in these studies.

CONCLUSION

The adoption of sustainability practices by leading Indian retail companies demonstrates a growing commitment to environmental responsibility and ethical operations in the organized retail sector. From energy-efficient stores and waste management initiatives to promoting eco-friendly products and sustainable sourcing, these companies are not only reducing their environmental impact but also responding to consumer demands for greener practices. These initiatives have a dual effect: they enhance brand loyalty and trust by aligning with consumer values, and they can influence purchasing behavior, including impulse buying. By integrating sustainability into their core business strategies, these retailers are positioning themselves as leaders in the movement toward more sustainable consumption, which is increasingly important in a market where consumers are more environmentally conscious and expect businesses to do their part in addressing global sustainability challenges. This alignment of retail operations with sustainability principles is likely to drive long-term benefits both for the environment and the businesses themselves.

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