

Green retailer Performance for small Green Food Retailers in the Tricity Region in India

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Abstract

“Sustainability” and “Green” have been the biggest buzz words for the past two decades, owing to the environmental and health benefits that these initiatives extend. These have been a topic of research for more than five decades now. With various big organization’s conscious efforts to reduce their carbon foot print many others are following pursuit. Customers are now demanding cleaner products more than ever before and are much more aware of the damages that their habits in past have caused to the environment and indirectly themselves. With the change being reflected in various techniques, practices and methods of production, many organizations are claiming to be sustainable or green worldwide. While the concept has been embraced by various organizations, many retailers around the world are also actively aligning themselves to it. The change is rather slow in India and not much knowledge is there in relation to green retailing amongst the retailers and customers. The Green aspect seems to be restricted to either the product or the method of production. In our research we aim to interact and understand the retailers’ point of view about green retailing, products offered, steps that they take to communicate their efforts to their customers, their efforts towards adopting sustainable ways of production and the impact of all these over retailer preferences compared to their non green competitors amongst the small green food retailers in tri-city region in India. We used a 50-item structured questionnaire and contacted 100 such retailers telephonically using convenient sampling method. 67 retailers qualified the green retailing criteria, and we received 51 responses. Out of these two responses were not found suitable for analysis and hence kept aside. According to our study the understanding about green retailing in local Indian food industry is ambiguous. Many retailers are trying to use the “green” tag by adapting one of the many ways but not really imbibing the spirit of going green in totality. Sustainability has the strongest correlation with the green retailer performance followed by product attributes.

Key Words: Green Retailing, Sustainability, Food Retailing, Green Product, Green Retailer Performance.

Introduction

Green marketing has been a topic of research for about last five decades (Kassarjian, 1971; Kinner *et al.*, 1974; Coddington, 1993; Meffert and Kirchgeorg, 1993; Hopfenbeck, 1993; Ottman, 1994; Peattie, 1995; Polonsky and Mintu-Wimsatt, 1995; Schlegelmilch *et al.*, 1996; Bigne, 1997; Fuller, 1999; Kalafatis *et al.*, 1999; Calomarde, 2000; Fraj and Martínez, 2002; Hartmann, *P. et al.*, 2005; Kaman Lee, 2008; Ghodeswar and Kumar, 2014; Kristina Petljaket *et al.*, 2018)

With a lot of buzz around the carbon foot print of producers, many major organisations have started adapting sustainable ways to give its customers products that are innovative and environment friendly. Some come with higher price tag to either accommodate the cost of going green or to differentiate against the non green options available in the market while others try to fight the battle at the same price as the competitors. Many big global brands across industries have registered themselves in this category by adopting a green supply chain but in

India the concept is still fairly new. Green Retailing seems to be a new and attractive concept for retailers to gain customer attention but very vague in terms of understanding. We could owe the popularity of green retailing to an informed environmentally conscious customer, environmental responsibility onus amongst producers and governmental policies and regulations. The concept has really picked up pace in the developed countries like US or UK but are fairly new in the developing countries and still require a lot of work to be done in the domain.

The millennial population around the world is much more aware about the health and environmental benefits of using green products and are willing to pay more to support the cause (Yadav and Pathak, 2017; Prakash and Pathak, 2017). This puts more pressure on even the retailers to now go green, let alone the manufacturers. Many studies have focused to understand the factors that impact the purchase decision from the customer point of view. Our study aims to interact and understand the retailers point of view about green retailing, product offered, steps that they take to communicate their efforts to their customer, their efforts towards adopting sustainable ways of production and the impact of all these over retailer preference compared to their non green competitors and it retailers overall performance.

When we do a little analysis of the Indian food retail industry we see that with retail contributing 70 per cent of the sales, India's food and grocery market is the world's sixth largest. According to India Brand Equity foundation, "the Indian gourmet food market is currently valued at US\$ 1.3 billion and is growing at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 20 per cent. India's organic food market is expected to increase by three times by 2020". (<https://www.ibef.org/industry/indian-food-industry.aspx>)

The growth of organic food retailing can be attributed to the growing popularity of organic food products (Kapoor and Garyali, 2012). Retail stores like Organic Heritage, Reliance Fresh, Easy Day, Organic Bazaar, Food Bazaar, Navdanya, Naturally Yours, Namdhari's, Spencer's, Sahakari Bhandar, Prakriti Aarogya Kendra, and Godrej Nature's Basket have launched own organic food brands (Kapoor and Garyali, 2012; Pandey and Singh, 2012; The Economic Times, 2012). Online retailers like Organic India, Sresta Naturals, Pristine Organics, Live Organic and Monarka Organic sell organic food products (Kapoor and Garyali, 2012; The Economic Times, 2012). Even after the hype about all the organic food products, organic food brands still contribute only a small part in overall retail sales (Pandey, 2012). Organised retailers in India are reported to stock about 100-200 SKUs of organic food brands (Khare and Pandey, 2017).

Review of literature

What are Green Products?

Rising awareness about the environment and the destruction that human beings are causing to the natural resources due to human activities is leading to a paradigm shift. People have started realising that by using and supporting certain kinds of products they can do their bit to reduce the negative impact on environment. This category of products are called the green products. A green product can be defined as "a product that was manufactured using toxic-free ingredients and environmentally- friendly procedures, and which is certified as such by a recognised organisation" (Gurau and Ranchhod, 2005). According to Diglel and Yazdanifard (2014) a green product is produced in an environmentally conscious manner inflicting lowest possible negative effects on the surroundings, product and packaging made from recycled materials, ensuring preservation of natural resources and locally manufactured. Campher (2013) has observed that market research shows that consumers want greener products. Ottoman & Mallen (2014) believe that customers are seeking out green products, because green product is perceived to be better quality, organic and healthy and also helps to maintain the environment. Manget, Roche and Münnich (2009), also found that many benefits of green products are valued greatly by consumers.

Owing to the ever increasing demand for green products and more and more environmentally conscious customers, many organisations have now started taking conscious steps to reduce their carbon foot print. Many well-known organisations that already are in the process to minimise their carbon foot print are world lead retailers such as Tesco, Patagonia, Carrefour, BestBuy, Wal-Mart and Zara (Saha *et al.*, 2017) to talk about a few.

What is Green Management?

Green management has been defined by various researchers from many perspectives and the definition has really evolved with time (Gladwin et al., 1995; Hart, 1995; Judge and Douglas, 1998; Florida and Davison, 2001; Banerjee, 2002; Anderson, 2004; Darnall et al., 2008 ; Peng and Lin, 2008). “Green management is the organization-wide process of applying innovation to achieve sustainability, waste reduction, social responsibility, and a competitive advantage via continuous learning and development and by embracing environmental goals and strategies that are fully integrated with the goals and strategies of the organization.” (Pane *et al.*, 2007). Green management means to manage the complete process of production, since pollution doesn't know distinction between different processes and activities of product development (Taylor, 1992)

What is Green Marketing?

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA) (AMA,2013) Green marketing can be considered from three varied perspectives. First is marketing of products that are environmentally safe from the retailers point of view. Second is the social marketing perspective where its defined as development and marketing of products that have reduce the negative effect on the environment. Polonsky (1994) and Peattie (2001) also defines green marketing from the environmental perspective. Third is the environmental perspective, where green marketing can be defined as an “ organisations efforts to produce, promote, package and reclaim products in a manner that is sensitive or responsive to ecological concerns” (Rosenbaum and Wong, 2015). In short, today green marketing basically means integrating concern for the environment in all the business domains like sourcing, product designing, supply chain, manufacturing, delivery, reverse logistic and final disposal (Zhu *et al.*, 2010; Pujari *et al.*, 2003; Pujari & Wright, 1996; Ghodeswar and Kumar, 2014)

What is Green retailing?

Retail store is the place that facilitates consumers' interaction with products. The product responses are then used by the companies to understand the customer needs, requirements and their buying behaviour (Kumar, 2014). Hence, retailing has emerged as an important building block of green marketing program and has raised significance of retail- focused sustainability research (Wiese et al., 2012). “Green retailing incorporates availability, display and promotion of green products, sustainability practices in the retail stores, and ethical business practices.”(Kumar, 2014) But, not many studies can be found that illustrates the efforts on the retailer front to achieve environmental promises.

Any retailer or business would always like to maximise his profit, market share, customer base and good will amongst its customers. In short the performance of a retailer compared to its competitors decides if he sustains in the market or exits. In case of green retailers its even more critical to be able to sustain and perform better than not only the direct competitors but also compared to the non greencounterparts. There are very many factors that effect a retailers decision to go green in its operation or offer products that are pro environment apart from the sheer motivation to reduce its environmental footprint. The most important factor would be the performance of the Green retailer compared to its competitors. The study of literature reveals a few factors that impact the performance of a green retailer and we wish to propose a model using three such independent variables that we see are absolutely critical for the same. These variables have been identified by various studies in global context which we would like to study in the Indian context.

The first factor which is also our first independent variable is the Product Attributes. Many studies have proved the relation of various attributes of the products to have a direct impact on the sales and profitability of the green retailer and hence effect its performance. S.Mahapatra (2013) talks about product category having a direct basis for a customer's willingness to pay which directly converts into sales and hence improves a retailers performance. Ghodeswar and Kumar (2014) have spoken of product design innovation to be one of the core marketing practises the determine green marketing orientation. The newness in terms of product design and smart innovative product solutions attracts customers. Companies who are environmentally conscious tend to optimise the use of resources, reduce the wastage and improve resource productivity (Polonsky *et al.*, 1998). New design innovations help to reduce the negative impact on the environment (Eltayebet *et al.*, 2011; Polonsky & Rosenberger III, 2001). These innovations can help in using renewable sources of energy or using recyclable

packaging material or environmentally friendly components, sustainable raw material etc to produce products that have lower negative impact on the environment. (Pujari & Wright, 1996 ; Huang and Wu, 2010; Zhu & Liu, 2010; Gonzalez *et al.*, 2008; Pun, 2006; Rao, 2004; Sakao, 2009). Apart from the quality and design innovations, the price and the price setting behaviour of the management also impacts the overall performance of the green retailer. The managements attitude towards environmental activities, its dedication to the cause and the strategy used for fixing the price of the products goes a long way in determining the response that the retailer receives from its customers which in turn converts to sales. Managerial activities for determining pricing decisions can be defined as the price setting behavior. Different types of pricing strategies like price skimming, penetration pricing and experience curve pricing can be used in case of new products (Ingenbleek&Lans, 2013). Green products can be priced to match the competition or traditional products in case of high competition, could be priced aggressively to to gain a market share or could be priced a little higher than its completion owing to the higher cost of production and nature of green products(Wong *et al.*, 1996; Lampe &Gazda, 1995). Hence our first hypothesis proposed is:

H1: Product attributes for green products offered by the green retailer significantly affect the green retailer's performance.

The second variable identified by us that would potentially affects the green retailer's performance is consumer engagement with the green retailer. "The act of managing relationship between the company and different stakeholders in order to enhance the effectiveness of company's decisions and strategies is called engagement" Amaeshi and Crane (2006). Engagement of consumers with the product increases the effectiveness of the retailer (Laczniak *et al.*, 1989; Petty *et al.*, 1983). This addresses customers experimental quest and offers them experience which helps them realise their desire for the product. It engages a customer in more ways than one and indirectly subjects the customer to stimuli which could eventually convert into sales. It acts as a motivation for the marketers to device green product campaigns in more innovative manner so as to educate the customer about the product. But what needs to be paid attention is that generally green retailers don't just roll out their promotion programs. They make sure that they involve in responsible advertising and green communication practices to be able to consistently communicate the retailers concern for the environment through all its efforts. It involves communicating a retailers commitment towards the green way of doing things (D'Souza, 2004) . This environmental commitment enables them to compete at the market place (Rolland &Bazzoni, 2009; D'Souza, 2005). Also, organization's continuously try to educate its customers about the advantage and disadvantages of giving preference to green products through their green communication programs. They educate the customers by spreading awareness about sustainability and conserving the environment. Strategically in doing so they educate, remind and persuade consumer about their own green products(Kotler and Keller, 2006). Our second hypothesis talks about the effect of all these consumer engagement practices to the green retailer's performance.

H2: Consumer engagement practices employed by green retailer significantly effects the green retailer performance.

The third variable that has appeared in the literature very many times is sustainability. In case of green retailing, sustainability has been observed to have a strong effect on the retailer's performance. Many Green retailers tend to start at the very basics like sourcing responsibly for their product to start with. Green standards and guideline are set as to which suppliers qualify the criteria to be able to source for the products. (Hu & Hsu, 2010; Darnal *et al.*, 2008). Also, many green retailers even insist for their suppliers to be ISO 14001 certified as well. Audit is another method used to ensure quality standards be met. These could either be retailer audits or third-party audits. Also many green retailers go one step further to educate, train and hand hold their suppliers about environmental activities that they could conduct to reduce their negative impact on the environment(Hu & Hsu, 2010). This encourages innovation on the supplier front to reduce the cost and increase the efficiency of resources used (Eltayebet *et al.*, 2011). All environmentally conscious organization's minimize wastage and maximize resource utilization (Kapetanopoulou&Tagaras, 2011). They try to use and reuse waste produced from self's manufacturing process and make many efficient tie-ups in the related industry to be able to recycle every possible thing to reduce their carbon foot print. Local recycling organization collaborations or similar sector

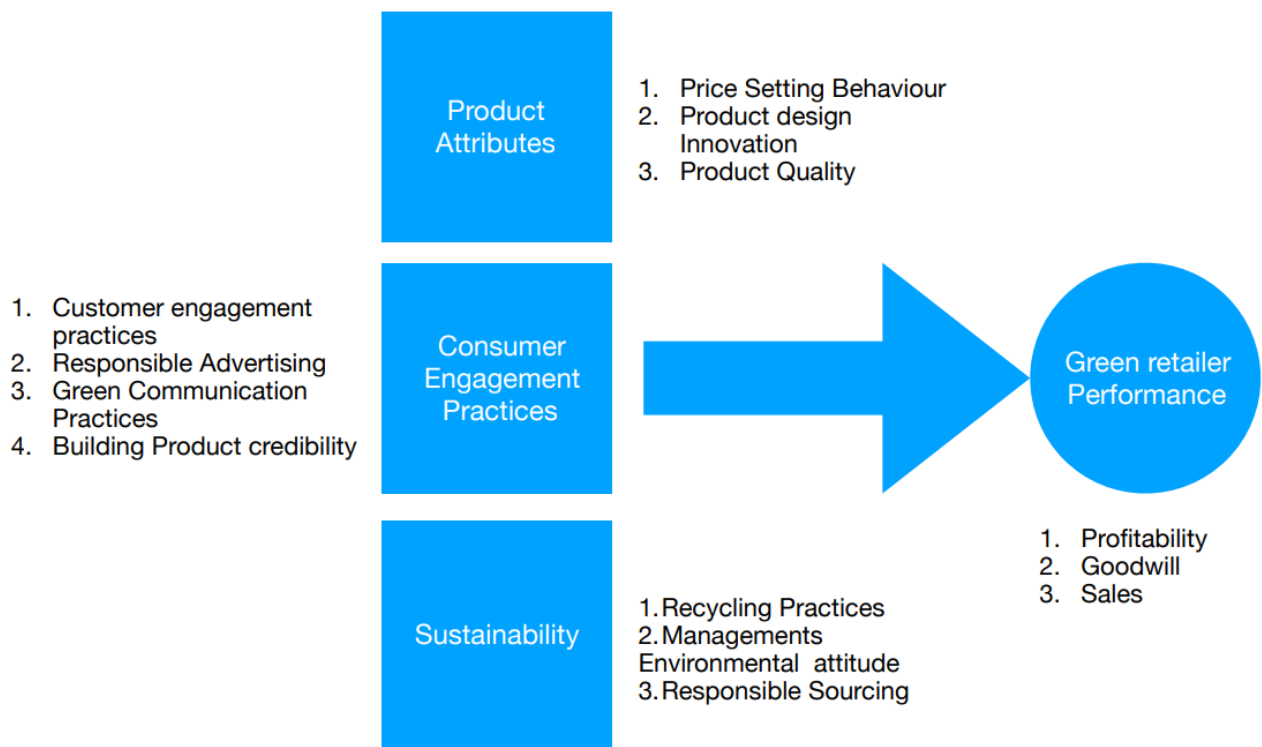
industry networks are a way and tool that they use to recycle as much and as efficiently as possible (Hu & Hsu, 2010) . These green retailers generally ensure reverse logistics if feasible depending on the type of the product. They also try and educate the customer about proper disposal at their end (Ghodeswar and Kumar, 2014). Therefor our third Hypothesis is:

H3: Sustainability has a significant effect on Green Retailer Performance.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. Accessing the level of understanding about green retailing amongst food retailers.
2. Proposing a model to check the effect of Product Attributes, Consumer Engagement Practices and Sustainability on Green Retailer Performance
3. Validation of the proposed model based on the data collected and proposing a model fit aggression equation.



Methodology

A 50-items questionnaire was prepared to collect data for the study. Items were adopted from the literature for each variable (Hu & Hsu, 2010; Darnal *et al.*, 2008; D'Souza *et al.*, 2006; Rao, 2004; Pujari *et al.*, 2003; Mandaraka&Kormentza, 2000; Beamon, 1999; Avlonitis&Gounaris, 1997; Wong *et al.*, 1996 ;Leonidou *et al.*, 2013). The scale was adopted form the scale developed by Ghodeswar and Kumar (2014). All measurements in the study were subjective assessments by the respondents using a five-point Likert scale (end-points being 1-strongly disagree and 5-strongly agree). Basic information about the respondent was also collected like name and designation of the respondent, name of the retail firm, address etc for the record.

The sampling frame consisted of green food retailers in the Try-City region of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. The data regarding the green retailers was collected from the websites about green retailers in each region. Convenience sampling was used as the sampling method for selecting green retail store for participating in the survey. Middle level marketing professionals working for these green retailers were selected to responded

for the survey. To collect the data, respondents were contacted personally to assess their meaning about green retailing and knowing about the green practices followed. Once found suitable, the questionnaire was dropped off with them and collected later, allowing time to the respondents to fill appropriate responses in consultation with all the concerned people (Han- sen, 1980).

Analysis

About 100 retailers were contacted telephonically who were suspected to be green retailers in the tri-city region. 67 retailers qualified the criteria of being green retailers and were then contacted personally out of which we received responses from 51 green retailers giving us a response rate of approximately 75%. Two responses were not found suitable due to incomplete information and inconsistent responses, hence were not included in the analysis.

Table. No 1.1

Variable	Construct	Cronbach's Alpha
A: Product Attributes		0.824
	Product design innovations	0.682
	Price Setting Behaviour	0.739
	Product Quality	0.744
C. Green Marketing Practices		0.878
	Responsible Advertising	0.841
	Green communication practices	0.736
	Building green product credibility	0.613
	Customer engagement practices	0.572
D. Sustainability		0.876
	Recycling Practices	0.644
	Responsible Sourcing	0.780
	Managements Environmental Attitude	0.757
E. Green Retailer Performance		0.884
	Profitability	0.620
	Goodwill	0.850
	Sales	0.758

Reliability test was run on the scale using IBM SPSS 25.0 and the Cronbach's alpha recorded was 0.951. The Cronbach's Alpha for each individual variables and the respective sub constructs under each are given in the table 1.1. P_attribute, M_engagement, S_sust and R_perfm refers to Product attributes, Consumer engagement practices, sustainability and green retailer performance respectively.

Statistics								
N	P_Attribute		M_engagement		S_Sust		R_perfm	
	Valid	Missing	Valid	Missing	Valid	Missing	Valid	Missing
	49	0	49	0	49	0	49	0
Mean	39.3878		53.5510		53.0408		32.7959	
Std. Error of Mean	.74904		.83302		1.17005		.78082	
Median	39.0000		54.0000		54.0000		32.0000	
Mode	36.00		54.00		55.00		30.00	
Std. Deviation	5.24331		5.83117		8.19034		5.46572	
Variance	27.492		34.003		67.082		29.874	
Skewness	.022		.137		.285		.175	
Std. Error of Skewness	.340		.340		.340		.340	
Kurtosis	-.618		-.493		.363		-.594	
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.668		.668		.668		.668	
Percentiles	25	36.0000	49.0000	48.0000	29.0000			
	50	39.0000	54.0000	54.0000	32.0000			
	75	43.5000	57.0000	59.0000	38.0000			

Table 1.2

Looking at table 1.2 we can see all the regular statistics for the four variables. What needs to be noted here are the skewness values for each variable which are between -1 to 1 depicting non skewed data. Similarly, the kurtosis values of all the four variables also depict that our curve is neither too peaked nor too flat. This depicts by and large normal curve.

Looking at the result we can see that the adjusted R_Square for the model is 0.558 which lies between 0 and 1 and hence shows that variation in the dependent variable is explained well by the independent variables under study. Also, the Durbin-Watson value is 1.984 which is well between 1.5-2.5 and very close to 2. So, it can be interpreted that there is almost no auto correlation between the variables. (Table 1.3)

Table 1.3

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics			Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
						F Change	df1	df2		
1	.765 ^a	.586	.558	3.63256	.586	21.223	3	45	.000	1.984

a. Predictors: (Constant), S_Sust, P_Attribute, M_engagement

b. Dependent Variable: R_perfm

If we see the summary table 1.4, we can see that Significance value of P_Attribute is 0.025 which accepts our first hypothesis i.e.**H1**: Product attributes for green products offered by the green retailer significantly affect the green retailers performance. This mean that various attributes like price setting behaviour, product quality and product design innovation effect the green retailers performance. The significance value of variable M_engagement is 0.094 which shows that our second hypotheses i.e.**H2**: Consumer engagement practises employed by green retailer significantly effects the green retailer performance is rejected in the sample chosen. This means that the consumer engagement practices do not have considerable effect on the green retailer performance. The significance value of the variable S_Sust is less than 0.001 which means the the third hypothesis i.e.**H3**: Sustainability has a significant effect on Green retailer performance is accepted. This shows that sustainability practices like responsible sourcing, recycling practices and managements environmental attitude have a positive effect on the green retailer performance.

Table 1.4

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	7.235	4.879		1.483	.145
	P_Attribute	.395	.170	.379	2.322	.025
	M_engagement	-.271	.159	-.289	-1.710	.094
	S_Sust	.462	.082	.693	5.655	.000

a. Dependent Variable: R_perfm

Table 1.5 explains degree of correlations amongst various in dependent variables and the dependent variable i.e. green retailer performance. Out of the three proposed independent variables Sustainability has the highest degree of correlation (0.732) with green retailer performance followed by product attributes (0.568) and customer engagement practices (0.436).

Table 1.5

Correlations

		R_perf	P_Attribute	M_engagement	S_Sust
Pearson Correlation	R_perf	1.000	.540	.436	.732
	P_Attribute	.540	1.000	.803	.568
	M_engagement	.436	.803	1.000	.607
	S_Sust	.732	.568	.607	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	R_perf	.	.000	.001	.000
	P_Attribute	.000	.	.000	.000
	M_engagement	.001	.000	.	.000
	S_Sust	.000	.000	.000	.
N	R_perf	49	49	49	49
	P_Attribute	49	49	49	49
	M_engagement	49	49	49	49
	S_Sust	49	49	49	49

Conclusion

During our interaction with the green retailers in the course of the study we realized that the understanding about green retailing in local Indian food retail industry is fairly ambiguous. Some retailers consider organic food equivalent to green food where as many others are clueless about what exactly constitute green practices. Only on explaining about the concept did some retailers realize that they actually fall under the category of green retailing. Many retailers come under the purview of green retailer but carry out very few green practices in the store and beyond. Not all employees of the retail firms are even aware about the various practices that are carried out to reduce the environmental impact. We also observed that though these green retailers take many steps to inform and educate the customers about environmental impact but fail to imbibe them in their own organizations DNA. Not many local green retailers maintain green supply chains but instead try to offer green products to satisfy the customers environmental concerns. The most important observation was that small eat out places face many bottlenecks when trying to compete in the green product market like price of the product offered, tying up with certifies suppliers, maintaining quality and the most difficult is reverse logistic. Many green retailers have successfully connected themselves with the potential customer either through social media or word of mouth which are environment friendly and have featured in many studies as a very strong marketing strategies for green products. This has helped them in avoiding mediums like banners, leaflet etc which would have a negative environmental impact. The reason why customer engagement practices have no significant effect on green retailer performance could be the fact that the scale used to capture responses did not include marketing and advertising mediums like word of mouth and social/ digital media. The advertisement practices captured in the scale were the once that are generally not used by environmentally aware businesses any more.

Sustainability certainly had the strongest correlation with the green retailer performance which is in line with the research by Ghodeswar and Kumar (2014), Tang *et al* (2016), Kotzabet *al*(2011), Petljaket *at*(2018), Chkanikova and Lehner (2015); Kumar *et al* (2012). Sustainability not only has direct impact on the trailer performance but also helps the retailer to survive, compete and excel in the long run. This finding is particularly important in Indian scenario where we found that many green retailers are still trying to build a green supply chain and decide the extent to which they should imbibe green in their culture. This would encourage green retailers to implement sustainable practices in the business to improve their overall performance.

Product attributes also positively impact the green retailer profit according to the results which is in line with the studies like Smith and Brown (2012). It not only depicts the quality of product but also the organization's over all pricing decisions and outlook towards the cause. Product design innovations is the area that now green retailers are focusing on to build a USP by providing something absolutely unique which customers can resonate with. The idea is to get closer to the environment by either reducing the negative impact or giving back to the environment.

Hence the regression equation identified for the model fit, looking at the results is :

$$R_perfm = 7.23 + 0.395 (P_Attribute) + 0.462 (S_Sust)$$

where,

P_attribute refers to Product attributes

S_sust refers to sustainability

R_perfm refers to green retailer performance

Future Research

The study carried out was done by the objective of understanding the factors that impact the performance of green food retailers in India from their point of view which we felt was missing in the literature. During the course of the study and upon our interaction with the retailer we realized that a detailed qualitative study could really help us correctly access the understanding of green retailing in India. Also study could be carried out to access the effectiveness of governmental programs being run to motivate and support green retailing. Our study took into account a few factors that could potentially effect the green retailer performance but there are many others which could be studies in detailed. Also the study was conducted in the try-city region of Chandigarh, Mohali and Panchkula. But it would be interesting to see the results in metro cities or even smaller towns.

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