



Greening retail: an Indian experience

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to determine the extent of greening retail taking place in Indian context and identifies its core groups of green retail practices.

Design/methodology/approach – A questionnaire was developed and used to collect data from retailers of green products, and caselets were developed.

Findings – Nine core groups of green retail practices are identified – distinctness of green products, promoting sustainable business practices, use of environmental keywords, promotion for awareness, promotional offers for sale, ensuring availability and visibility of green products, approval for environmental claims, environmentally friendly appeal of store and consumer involvement approaches.

Research limitations/implications – Findings of the study should be generalised with its limitations; though are useful in understanding greening retail concept.

Originality/value – This paper is original in terms of its value addition to the green marketing literature and extends the concept of sustainability to retailing.

Keywords India, Sustainability, Green marketing, Green retailing

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Consumers, at present, look for and pay logical attention to environmental actions and practices of companies. This has increased the demand of environmentally friendly business activities and green products in the market (Gam, 2011; Phau and Ong, 2007). So, companies intend to develop their responsible social personalities in the society by communicating their core corporate environmental values and sustainability-related business operations (Peters *et al.*, 2007; Silva and Alwi, 2006). Also, they launch their products redesigned to have least environmental impact (Jones *et al.*, 2007; Bergström *et al.*, 2005) which are intended to develop their positive image in the minds of environmentally conscious consumers. In this attempt, innovative role of retailers has increased in showcasing their green products and in communicating their environmental practices. In this direction, this paper determines the extent of greening retail taking place in Indian context, investigates various initiatives taken by the retailers and therefore, identifies the core groups of green retail practices that could be relevant in the process of greening retail.

Review of literature

Retail store is a platform where consumers' interaction with products is facilitated and their responses towards the products are used by the companies to learn about their needs, demands and intended behaviour. 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. But, illustration upon the efforts made by retailers in retailing of green products and in enhancing consumers' shopping experience in green marketing literature is largely unexplored. Hence, this study



attempts to conceptualise two aspects of greening retail: promoting green products and retail design and environment.

Promoting green products

A set of retailers specifically choose to source and retail products from manufacturers who design and produce environmentally friendly products (such as, products with natural ingredients, minimum resource consumption and emissions, and environmentally friendly packaging, etc.) and adopt environmentally friendly business practices (minimum emissions and waste recycling, etc.). These manufacturers explicitly integrate environmental issues in products to reduce their environmental impact in terms of materials, manufacturing, use and disposal (Pujari *et al.*, 2003). So, the retailers promote these products based on their reduced impact on the environment, design and functional features (environmental safety, recyclability/reusability and biodegradable ingredients, etc.), and their relevance to environmentally friendly lifestyle (D'Souza *et al.*, 2006). They also choose to source products those are awarded eco-labels, emphasise on their recycling credentials and ensure credibility of their environmental claims (Nimon and Beghin, 1999; Davis, 1994). They also promote green products based on social value associated with them such as waste recovery and recycling, fair trade, health and fitness, sustainability-related benefits and initiatives supporting local communities (Perry, 2012; Jones *et al.*, 2007).

Such retailers also ensure that packaging of these products is made with a sense of responsibility towards the environment and in compliance with social regulations. Retailers promote them for their environmental-friendly packaging such as safety in use, saving in amount and variety of packaging materials, made of sustainable raw materials (bio-degradable, reusable and recyclable, etc.), high level of user-friendliness, economic benefits and ease of use (Kotzab *et al.*, 2011; Vernuccio *et al.*, 2010).

Further, retailers ensure availability of green products in stores, their exposure to the consumers and their proximity with conventional products. To offer effective access of green products to consumers, personal benefits of convenience, visibility of green products, price and quality of the products are also ensured (Ginsberg and Bloom, 2004; Hartmann *et al.*, 2005). They also ensure that packaging of green products sourced and retail should contain verbal (informational) and visual components (Rettie and Brewer, 2000). As verbal components, packaging provides information related to environmental characteristics of products, its usage and disposal instructions and other environment-related objectives (vande Mortel, 2011; Silayoi and Speece, 2004). Retailers ensure that the information provided is sufficient and specific (D'Souza *et al.*, 2006; Silayoi and Speece, 2004). As visual components, packaging expresses emotions related to eco-friendliness of products by using combinations of symbolic colours of nature (e.g. light yellow, green and white, etc.), nature-related photographs, hand-drawn-like illustrations and calligraphy with natural and friendly feeling (vande Mortel, 2011; Bone and France, 2001; Baik and Suk, 2010; Belizzi *et al.*, 1983). Retailers also display sustainability-related promotional messages, in a structured format, on boards and banners at operational levels such as shelf-edge labelling, window display and leaflets etc. (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Nancarrow *et al.*, 1998).

Retail store and store atmospherics design

It consists of symbolic and functional aspects of retail stores (Hyllegard *et al.*, 2006). It offers pleasance, visual appeal, convenience, range of products and competitive prices, and thus, portrays a distinct identity of retailers that develops their positive

perceptions in the minds of consumers (Doyle and Broadbridge, 1999). Green products in retail stores are promoted through television broadcasting located at ceiling level and on the top shelves in a number of aisles, a number of booklets and leaflets put on display close to the checkouts, window advertisements, posters and banners, display-sections, shelf-edge labels and packaging of products (Jones *et al.*, 2007). In developing retail design and environment, retailers use: first, distinct combinations of colour which relates to emotional state of customers, and environmental meaning associated with products; second, images in posters, point of sale materials, displays of products and their packaging, and signage; and third, sensory elements such as environmentally friendly aromas, textures and surfaces and lighting techniques (Kent, 2007). This way, retailers aim at attracting consumers towards the stores, retail interiors and display windows intended to develop their interest in green products, and to influence their psychological and behavioural responses (shopping intentions and product recommendation, etc.) (vande Mortel, 2011; Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Kauppinen, 2004).

Further, retailers execute sustainability-related marketing programs in the stores aimed to engage consumers with its creativeness and value-differentiating elements, and to excite emotions and senses to develop a sense of awesomeness (Kent, 2007). These marketing programs establish a logical connection between green products and consumers' lifestyles, and influence consumers' attitude towards green products and their purchase intentions (Hou *et al.*, 2008). Their effectiveness is enhanced by increasing the level of consumer participation through sales promotion and advertising tactics. For low involvement products, consumer behaviour is influenced by visual elements such as colour, etc. while for high involvement products, the verbal (information) elements are more important (Kuvykaite *et al.*, 2009; Silayoi and Speece, 2007). Thus, involving consumers with green products establishes strong retail brands (Swoboda *et al.*, 2009), enhances consumers' brand loyalty (van den Brink *et al.*, 2006), creates positive attitudes towards retailers' image, and develops feel good factor for retailers, products, the management and the staff (Chattananon *et al.*, 2007).

Research methodology

The objective of identifying core groups of green retail practices makes it exploratory in nature and demands in-depth investigation of related research issues. Guided by key exploratory studies in marketing management and robustness in their results (Hutchinson and Quinn, 2011; Anselmsson and Johansson, 2007), the study adopts an interpretive research paradigm and employs case-based approach.

A purposeful sampling design was used in selection of case retailers and for developing information-rich caselets. An initial investigation was conducted through personal visits to retailers as well as internet search to identify retail outlets engaged in promoting green products. The internet search included keywords such as green retailing, sustainable retailing, green marketing, fair trade products and recycling, etc. Retailers who are engaged in promoting green products and environmentally friendly business practices were selected for the study. A total of seven retail stores of different brands for apparel, food, stationary, healthcare, cosmetic and handicrafts products were chosen for the study.

For data collection, a questionnaire was developed based on the literature consisting of five parts. First part included items related to green product and packaging ingredients, product certifications and packaging text and colour (vande Mortel, 2011; Kotzab *et al.*, 2011; Baik and Suk, 2010; Kuvykaite *et al.*, 2009; D'Souza *et al.*, 2006;

Silayoi and Speece, 2004; Bone and France, 2001). Second part included items related to social and ethical initiatives such as fair trade practices and sharing business profits with social organisations, etc. (Hou *et al.*, 2008; D'Souza *et al.*, 2006). Third part included items related to retail design, display of products, design of shelves and creating shopping experiences, etc. (Barnes and Lea-Greenwood, 2010; Kent, 2007; Belizzi *et al.*, 1983). And, fourth part included items related to green marketing programs such as promotion of sustainability-related activities and recycling activities, etc. (Jones *et al.*, 2007; Silayoi and Speece, 2004; Ginsberg and Bloom, 2004). Fifth part included information related to the retailer such as name of the retail store, name of products being retailed and designation of the respondent. It was reviewed by a panel of academic experts and senior professionals (Churchill, 1979) who had been working in green marketing for minimum two years and their recommendations were incorporated. Some of the items were based on five-point Likert scale while others were open-ended questions for which space was provided to answer.

Store managers, store owners, store designers and sales and promotion officers were selected as respondents for the questionnaire. The respondents were approached through e-mails, telephonic conversation and personal visits to the stores. Those who agreed to participate, a suitable time was decided with an appointment for data collection. Five to eight responses were collected from each store. Apart from questionnaire, the data were also collected from by analysing documents, reports, brochures and booklets, media articles and internet information, personal observations and close reading of relevant texts on the banners, brochures and signage, etc. The case analyses were conducted using within case analysis and cross-case analysis methods (Cruz and Pedrozo, 2009).

The research detailed here was aimed to deliberately investigate a small number of retailers, rather than seeking to create a representative sample. Therefore, the results of this study cannot be taken to represent the current status of greening retail across retailing industry. There are reasons to choose such a method. The initial observation of the researcher in the market shows that greening retail concept is limited to a few retailers only. Further, each of the retailers is unique in its approach and worthy of study in its own right. Hence, it would be misleading to talk of "industry averages", and applying statistics to talk about the status of marketing in a broad and generalised manner. Such broad generalisation would limit the richness of its understanding which could come from caselet analysis.

It is believed that it is important to start from a detailed analysis of individual caselets, moving eventually to a more broadly based, statistical approach when appropriate. Although the work is not statistically reliable, it is believed that research approach gives findings with high content validity.

Caselets

Caselet 1

This caselet describes promotion of reduced plastic bag usage in a multi-brand apparel retail store. The retailer exhibits its commitment to Indian regulation and as per the regulation; consumers need to pay for the plastic carry bags they take away from the store for carrying purchased products. This commitment is communicated using banners put up at the billing counters where customers make payments for the apparels they buy. The carry bag is ensured to have recyclability properties, made of recycled materials and confirming with Indian environmental standards.

Further, eco-friendly image of the store is developed by using a mix of green and white colour in painting of nature (drawing of leafs and flowers) on walls of the store,

signage, banners and boards, gift wrap materials, carry bags, instruction boards, store map, in-store shopping bags and store directory font. The retailer also executes a green marketing program which motivates consumers to carry their own bags for shopping and involves them in its commitment towards saving the environment.

Caselet 2

This caselet is based on a world-class multi-brand food store that promotes a wide range of environmentally friendly food products such as spice and herbs, cereals, biscuits, sweetener, herbal tea, jam and preserves, organic food (spices, sugar, pulses and flour, etc.) and juices. These products are sourced from the manufacturers who are committed to have strong environmental and social sustainability goals such as using green electricity in their business operations (e.g. electricity generated from waste water treatment, etc.) and carbon neutral manufacturing, etc. The retailer ensures that these products are made of environmentally friendly ingredients such as natural ingredients, soya (a good option for protein over animals), very low salt, no colour, no added flavour, no preservatives, no harmful ingredients (monosodium glutamate, caffeine, gluten and lactose, etc.) and herbal infusions etc. and offer health-related benefits such as weight loss and fat loss, etc. It also ensures that the sourced products meet Indian and international environmental standards such as Indian National Programme for Organic Production (Indian-NPOP), EEC 834/2007 and US National Organic Programme (NOP) standards, etc. The credibility of the products is ensured by certifications and eco-labels awarded to them such as carbon neutral company (carbonneutral.com), and EU/non-EU agriculture, etc.

Retailer also ensures environmental friendliness in packaging of the products they source. Products with recyclable/recycled packaging, less packaging, paper packing (for flour), tetra packing (for juices) and card board packing (for other eatables), and use of Soy ink for printing literature on packaging are sourced by the retailer. Retailer ensures that manufacturers of these products mention environmental statements on product packaging such as “Please help the environment by recycling this baggage”, “Please recycle” and “Do not litter”, etc. and have symbol of recycling.

Caselet 3

This caselet is based on a single-brand store that promotes environment-friendly Indian-origin based *Ayurveda* products for human health and religious rituals, and apparel products. The retailer makes sure that health and ritual products are made of natural ingredients (100 per cent pure therapeutic grade essential oils etc.), non-toxic (no paraffin, no petroleum, no alcohol, no synthetic substances, and no artificial fragrance), and are safe (no lead), eco-friendly (no flame and smoke while burning), healthy (able to neutralise smoke, dispel aeroallergen, and bacteria and virus), reusable and durable. The retailer sources apparel products made of sustainable materials (organic cotton, light and natural fibre, chemicals-free, biodegradable and renewable), and those are thermal regulating (one to two degree temperature difference), comfortable, anti-odor, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal, hypo allergic and offer ultraviolet protection (98 per cent protection from sun). It also ensures that packaging for sourced products is made of sustainable raw materials (organic cotton and paper, etc.), and is recyclable. Also, the carry bag is paper-based which are user-friendly and easy to use.

Further, retailer is committed to adopt ethical practices, to pay fair prices to manufacturers and to discourage child labour. These commitments are advertised throughout the year by using boards saying, “100 per cent ethical practices”, “No child

labour” and “Fair prices for farmers and artisans”. The boards and banners also communicate product-related environmental information and sustainability-related messages describing organic, natural, *ayurvedic* properties of the products.

The retailer executes a green marketing program to promote recycling-related activities. It educates consumers on how to reuse and recycle packaging materials. Also, it puts an attractive, wood-made recycle bin in the store and motivates consumers to return bottles of used products bought from the store in exchange of attractive incentives. This way, it involves consumers towards the sustainability-related efforts.

Caselet 4

It describes green retailing initiatives of a single-brand retail outlet for grains, natural spices, stationary, beauty products, idols, bags, home décor and food products. The retailer ensures that the products available in the store are 100 per cent organic (organic honey and organic dry fruits, etc.), non-greasy, silicone-free, alcohol-free, paraben-free, light in weight, and are produced without using chemicals, fertilisers and pesticides (for food products), meet ethical standards (no child labour, not tested on animals, etc.) and are awarded eco-labels (such as ECOCERT, etc.). As well, packaging of the sourced products is ensured to have used sustainable raw materials, and to be environmentally safe, and recyclable. The retailer offers carry bags to consumers made of environmentally friendly materials (paper, etc.).

Together with, the retailer is committed to promote “reduce-reuse-recycle” concept, and to discourage child labour, product testing on animals and using non-toxic substances in products. It also gives a definite percentage of business profit to the non-government organisations (NGOs) who are working for community development for women empowerment and children. These commitments and activities are communicated to consumers using text-based banners displayed in the store throughout the year.

Caselet 5

A single-brand retail outlet is committed to source and retail organic beauty products those are made of 100 per cent vegetable ingredients, contain no harmful substances (i.e. free from sulphate, parabens and colourants), meet eco-conscious and strict bio-degradable standards, and are not tested on animals. The retailer ensures that the products sourced are made available in polyethylene terephthalate bottles with “responsible” packaging (made of 100 per cent bio-degradable materials, recyclable plastic and recycled materials) and have used water-based ink for printing the literature on packaging of these products.

The retailer uses text-based banners to advertise its commitment towards discouraging animal testing, protecting our planet, practicing fair trade, supporting community standards, working with grass-root organisations and supporting initiatives in local communities (sourcing from less-developed countries to uplift their economic conditions). These banners use natural and friendly calligraphy, and different shades of natural colours (a mix of green and white) in their text and background.

Caselet 6

This caselet describes a single-brand retailer for brass work, apparel products, home décor, home linen and accessories, idols and groceries. The retailer sources its products from remotely located Indian manufacturers who are engaged in manufacturing sustainable products using contemporary design, traditional craft, traditional knowledge and skills, sustainable sources (such as wood etc.), as well as produce low carbon

footprints in their production processes and practice effective disposal of waste and used products. Thus, it is committed to revive and maintain traditional knowledge, skills and techniques that preserve Indian culture and wisdom, to offer sustainable livelihoods to the artisans in remote villages of India, to ensure fair prices paid to them, and to promote sustainable lifestyle among consumers. It ensures that sourced apparels are made of vegetable dyes, natural and Azo-free dyes, and claim environmental safety and superior quality. It also ensures that packaging materials of the sourced products are made of environmentally friendly materials such as paper and card board paper, etc. It also sells easy-to-use carry bag made of old newspapers.

Retailer uses banners to display promotional messages such as “Preserve Indian style and nature” and “Nurture traditional artisan communities” etc. across the year. In combinations of symbolic colours of nature (red, brown, green, yellow and white), sustainability-related messages are displayed on shelf-edge labels and on the top shelves in aisles, as well as on packaging and tags of products in the form of stickers.

Caselet 7

This caselet explains green retailing of a single-brand retailer who is committed to make natural, comfortable clothing a fashion statement. It ensures that the sourced apparel products are made of natural, organic cotton and pure linen, and have civic advises printed on them. It also sells paper-based carry bags which are claimed to be safe for children and user-friendly.

The store is uniquely designed by placing vertical tall bamboo pieces at its entrance which projects environmentally friendly appearance from outside. A combination of green and white colours is used to display sustainability-related messages on posters, packaging of products and product tags.

Discussion

Three dimensions of greening retail, i.e. environmental, social and ethical emerge from the analysis. Environmental dimension is related to sourcing and promoting environmentally friendly products and practicing environmentally friendly business operations. Social dimension is concerned with sourcing products from manufacturers who are committed to nurturing communities, preserving traditions (culture, skills and wisdom), developing economic opportunities and generating employment (livelihood). Ethical dimension includes sourcing products from manufacturers who practice fair trade and no child labour, defend human rights, support local communities and NGOs and meet national and international standards.

Further, nine core groups of green retail practices are identified based on the environment- and green product-related practices observed. Distinctness of green products for their benefits and appearance is identified as the first group. Green products are distinct for their functional benefits such as superior quality, performance and health benefits, etc., and environmental value such as favourability towards the environment. Their distinctness in appearance includes their availability in unique shapes and sizes, content on packaging (text, hand-written illustrations and calligraphy with natural and friendly feeling, etc.), shades and pictures of trees and leaves, smiling faces, sustainability-related messages and innovative shades of environmentally friendly colours (red, brown, blue, yellow and white with green as major one). Thus, promoting green products for their durability, ease of use, reduced resource consumption, safety and emotional attractiveness in favourability towards the environment intends to

develop consumers' positive predisposition towards green products and builds brand association.

Promoting sustainable business practices is the second group of green retailing practices. It includes retailers' commitment for ethical practices, fair trade (paying fair prices to manufacturers), supporting communities in less-developed countries (sourcing their products to uplift their economic conditions) and community standards, discouraging child labour and product testing on animals, sharing business profit with NGOs working for community development, offering sustainable livelihoods to the artisans in remote locations, and supporting those engaged in manufacturing sustainable products using contemporary design and traditional craft, and those engaged in preserving traditional culture, traditional knowledge, traditional skills and wisdom. It is intended to result in positioning green products in environmentally conscious consumer segments, developing positive corporate image and influencing consumer loyalty and purchase intentions (Hou *et al.*, 2008; Anselmsson and Johansson, 2007; Chattananon *et al.*, 2007; Peters *et al.*, 2007; van den Brink *et al.*, 2006).

Use of environmental keywords is the third group of green retailing practices. The keywords are used for specific essence, for example, "toxic" for harmfulness, "community" for a group of people and "symbol of recycle" for recyclability properties, etc. Retailers use these keywords to attract green consumers towards green products and to position their products in environmentally friendly consumer segments.

As fourth group of green retailing practices, promotion for awareness includes practicing long lasting sustainability-related campaigns throughout the year and spreading sustainability-related messages to effectively promote green products. It is aimed to influence consumers' purchase behaviour and to promote sustainable lifestyle. Retailers ensure that products sourced are awarded eco-labels, and literature provided on packaging and product tags includes environment-related phrases and information. They also ensure that retail staff members have sufficient green product-related knowledge for explaining product information to the consumers and verifying environmental claims.

"Promotion offers for sale" as the fifth group aims at offering high-priced green products at competitive prices. Since upper threshold for consumers' willing to pay higher for green products varies across green consumer segments, retailers vary prices of green products throughout the year as per the stock availability. For example, a consumer may not afford to pay price A for a green product, but when it is reduced to a price B in a seasonal sale, it becomes affordable. Hence, innovative promotional offers such as annual sale, stock clearance sale, festival sale, seasonal sale and discount coupons for next time purchase, etc. are adopted by the retailers to target various green consumer segments. This intends to increase consumer base and market share of green products.

Ensuring availability and visibility of green products in retail stores throughout the year is the sixth group of green retailing practices. Keeping them in quite proximity to conventional products and in same shelf enable consumers notice their availability, improve their awareness towards green products and develop green brand identification.

Approval for environmental claims, as the seventh group of green retailing practices, verifies the environmental-information related to green products and their packaging. Support groups such as international and national NGOs, certification agencies, grass-root level organisations and communities and regulatory bodies have significant role in approving, displaying, promoting and endorsing green products.

This improves credibility of environmental claims and enables consumers to trust their functional and environmental performance.

Environmentally friendly appeal of the store, as the eighth group of green retailing practices, aims to offer emotional satisfaction to environmentally conscious consumers. Retailers display green products in specially designed and unique structures which use attractive shades of environmentally friendly colours (red, brown, blue, yellow, white and green etc.). Further, pleasant and visual appeal are developed in the store by using CFLs of cool-white and warm-white colour and cove lighting, which illuminate shelves, and offer attractive colourful display on windows. Banners and boards in the store are made pleasant by using innovative shades of environmentally friendly colours (red, brown, blue, yellow and white etc. with green as major one) for text and the background. Pleasant is also developed by unique presentation of products, and interactive and confident staff behaviour. Interior design of outlet, window display and shelves are developed to offer convenience of picking up green products, holding it, reading the literature on the packaging and keeping it back in the shelf or carrying it to the billing counter. Thus, environmentally friendly appeal of the store intends to develop pleasant brand feeling, and unique brand and shopping experience for green products.

As the ninth group of green retailing practices, consumer involvement approaches describes retailers' practices of actively involving consumers with green products and sustainability-related activities. They design and implement innovative consumer involvement approaches for effective product-consumer and retailer-consumer interactions. It is intended to develop consumers' emotional bonding with green products which facilitate retailers to understand market needs, fetch them innovative ideas for effectively positioning green products in the market and to improve market performance of green products.

The main conclusions from this work can be summarised by highlighting the main groups of retailing practices adopted by the retailers rather than making a comparison between them. Based on the caselet-wise comparison listed in Table I, it can be inferred that groups 1, 2 and 6, i.e. distinctness of green products, promoting sustainable business practices and ensuring availability and visibility of green products are the most common green retailing practices. In other words, ensuring green products available in the store, enabling their accessibility to the consumers, highlighting their environmental benefits and adopting ethical and socially beneficial business practices are the popular green retailing practices across different sectors. Further, closer analysis of the comparison of green retailing practices across the caselets shows that retailers develop innovative retailing practices to actively promote green products, to ensure validity of their

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4	Group 5	Group 6	Group 7	Group 8	Group 9
Caselet 1	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Caselet 2	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X
Caselet 3	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓
Caselet 4	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X
Caselet 5	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
Caselet 6	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X
Caselet 7	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓

Table I.
Caselet-wise comparison
of green retailing practices

environmental claims, to increase sale of green products and therefore, supporting sustainable lifestyle in the society.

Thus, the study is believed to make significant contribution to green marketing literature. It provides nine core groups of green retail practices necessary to meet with rising demands of environmentally sensitive consumers and to guide consumer perceptions for green products. Further, retailer-consumer interaction through green marketing programs facilitates exchange of thoughts, ideas and opinions between the two. It enables retailers to understand consumers' needs and expectations and facilitates a learning process for both of them. This also allows consumers to take responsibility for sustainable consumption through their individual purchasing decisions (Jones *et al.*, 2011; Lee-Wingate and Xie, 2010). Thus, the findings might have universal meaning for disseminating green product-related information and offering green product experience aimed to achieve marketing objectives such as conveying intended positioning, establishing product differentiation, creating a distinctive product image and improving retail performance of green products.

Managerial implications

The significant learning for practitioners from the study is the key practices in retailing of green products in India. They need to understand that spotlighting social, functional, emotional, economical and experiential benefits of green products is important to make them distinct in retail stores. It is advised to focus on elaborating how environmental concerns of consumers are addressed by purchasing, using and disposing green products. Promoting green products with approved environmental claims is also important for developing trust and favourability of green products in the minds of consumers. Further, they should so design retail stores that they ensure noticeability of green products, improving product awareness, facilitating convenience of shopping, offering pleasance and visual appeal and promoting environment-friendliness of the store. Findings of the study also motivate them to develop innovative and interactive marketing programs for green products which intend to engage consumers in environmental initiatives and practices. This ensures promoting sustainable lifestyle in the society and long-term demand of green products.

Conclusion, limitations and direction for future research

Outlining the concept of greening retail, the study looks into retailers' commitment towards the environment and in retailing of green products. In this direction, it highlights innovation and new thinking in retailing by developing seven caselets and synthesises them to identify nine core groups of green retail practices. The suggested core groups of greening retail enable researchers in developing a broad understanding of retailing of green products. Though the study does not generalise the findings, it proves to be a milestone in developing further work in the domain of green retailing. It is believed that the results can be considered as a starting point for future investigations in retailing of green products.

Several limitations of the study need to be acknowledged. This study is conducted in business-to-consumer (B2C) setting and is limited to green consumer products. So, findings can be useful to consumer product categories only. This study does not cover consumer aspect of retailing which is an important dimension of marketing planning. Also, the research did not take into consideration the other retailing bases which might have given a broader view of green retailing. But, at the same time, it could probe into greening retail *per se*.

There are possibilities for extending this work. When sustainability-related messages and information are communicated, their credibility is determined by transparency and trust (on store, staff and the brand) (Guenzi *et al.*, 2009). So, future work can look into this phenomenon from greening retail perspective. Since “accurate information” is not covered in this study, the understanding on providing accurate information on green products and sustainability-related activities needs development in the literature of green marketing. This study has witnessed that retailers are not providing “too much information” to the consumers but has overlooked the concrete meaning of this phrase. This should be further studied in terms of word counts, sentence counts and phrases counts etc. and their effectiveness in developing predisposition about green products in the minds of consumers. Similarly, phrases like “long lasting campaign” and “convenience to the consumers at retail store” can be further explored from greening retail perspective. Future research should also examine consumer aspect of green retailing, their perceptions of green retailing activities and long-term consequences in terms of adopting sustainable lifestyle and other retailing objectives.

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