

Factors Affecting the Implementation of Sustainable Practices in the Sri Lankan Food Retail Sector

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Sustainability is becoming a buzzword for today's whole world. To ensure the well-being of the environment, there is the need for immediate as well as strategic action plans regarding sustainability. Companies are looking into ways to lessen their contribution towards environmental issues, as well as to reduce the associated high operating costs, using sustainable practices. Their ability to be cost-effective, bring reputation, etc. have been encouraging companies to focus on sustainability implementation. However, a comprehensive study regarding sustainability implementation in the Sri Lankan food retail industry is still missing. This study aims to explore the factors affecting the implementation of sustainable practices in the Sri Lankan food retail sector, by identifying the practices that can be implemented, and the factors influencing the implementation of sustainability practices. A literature review identified such practices and the factors in the global context, which were then confirmed for the Sri Lankan context by the industry experts' opinions. Next, a questionnaire survey was carried out to collect empirical data from the food retailers, which were then analyzed using PLS-SEM (Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling). Sustainable practices were identified under three categories: Facilities and Utilities, Internal Operations, and Market Activities, and the influencing factors were identified under five categories: Organization and Management, Economy, Regulatory, Society, and Industry and Market. Through the findings, the study emphasizes the need to increase the top management awareness of the various sustainable solutions available, their benefits, and available financing schemes, staff training programs to enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding sustainability, having a good functional integration in the firm, and introducing financing schemes to help companies in funding sustainable practices.

Keywords: *sustainability practices, sustainability factors, food retail sector, PLS-SEM*