

BOOK REVIEW: Arun Mahapatra, art of retailing. New Delhi: Lotus press publishers & distributors, 2015, 156 pp. ISBN: 978-81-8382-208-4

Isaac Kazungu^{1*} and Emmanuel Chao²

¹Department of Marketing and Enterprise Management, Moshi Co-operative University, Moshi, Tanzania

²Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, Mzumbe University, Morogoro, Tanzania

*Correspondence: isaackazungu@gmail.com

Abstract

With a rising scholarly and practical interest in retailing, the global retail industry is experiencing significant growth. This trend is anticipated to persist, capturing widespread attention from various economic sectors, consumers, entrepreneurs, and investors in the coming decades. The industry is poised for expansive global magnification, fostering job creation and socio-economic development. This review aims to elucidate the integration of the retailing industry within the logistics of business growth. "Art of retailing" emerges as a valuable resource for retail industry professionals, lecturers, professors, and university students engaged in business studies, marketing, procurement, and entrepreneurship programs. Despite its merits, the text's principal drawback lies in its failure to present world-class illustrations, case studies, exhibits, checkpoint questions, and summaries, which are pivotal for reinforcing concepts in each chapter. Nevertheless, researchers in the retail sector can benefit from the contextual insights and identified gaps, paving the way for further studies. The untapped areas highlighted in the text are recommended to enhance the book's significance in the context of the pivotal subject of e-retailing in the contemporary era.

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1. Synopsis of the Book and Reflections

Born in Ahmedabad, India, in 1962, Arun Mahapatra (Ph.D), is a management consultant specialised in marketing and organisational management. Dr. Mahapatra is a well-known management scholar with over twenty years of experience in management practices. Mahapatra's book aims at guiding readers through the art and science of retailing in an intensely competitive environment and thereby enhance their understanding of the various processes which go into the enterprise of retailing. This book incorporates a preface, ten chapters, and a biography. Essentially, the text has been designed to serve as a reference book that seeks to inform readers, students in higher learning institutions, operators in the retail industry, and business communities at large on aspects which comprise the art of retailing. It also orients the readers to an extensive analysis of the various challenges and rules underpinning the field of retailing.

Chapter one gives a general introduction to retailing. It defines retailing as a sale of goods or merchandise from a fixed location such as a departmental store, or kiosk, or by post, in a small or individual lot for direct consumption by the purchaser. Mahapatra describes the nature of retailing by classifying end-consumers as small, immobile, and uninformed. In recognition of the relevance of competition in the retail industry, the author details the dimensions of horizontal competition between retailers: retail pricing, geographical location, product selection, and retailer services. The fact that marketers have shifted from tradition to modern marketing where customers are at the heart of all marketing activities, this book addressed the mechanisms of transfer by showing ways in which consumers can receive goods from the retailers. Apart from traditional counter service, the author describes contemporary methods such as delivery, door-to-door, and self-service. The chapter also covers ways which are used to categorize retailers where the target market served, product offerings, pricing structure, promotional emphasis, distribution method, and service level were discussed. The general formats and models that best describe a retail operation are described in the form of mom-and-pop (family-run businesses), mass discounters, warehouse stores, category killers, departmental stores, boutique, catalogue retailers, e-retailers, franchise, convenience store, and vending (pp.15-18).

After putting clear concepts and an introduction to the retail industry, the author in chapter two explained the dynamic nature of retailing. Mahapatra herein presents the six steps in creating a successful retail business. These steps are business planning, validation of business ideas, execution of the plan,

orchestration of the grand opening, routine creation, and business growth. Consideration and reasons for opening a retail store were also part of the vital deliverables of chapter two. In the third chapter, the author focuses on the types of retail outlets, their structure, and the advantages and disadvantages of each type. In chapter four, the steps in starting a retail business are explained. The main arguments in this chapter focus on choosing a business name, legal structure, choice of products to sell, and how to write a business plan for a retail store. Chapter Five is about the organisational structure of a retail store where the types and planning of the structure, types of store layouts, and staffing of a retail business are detailed in the chapter.

Marketing management practices in the retailing industry are discussed in chapters six to eight. Chapter Six gives the discussion of 4P's of marketing in terms of product, price, promotion, and place. Mahapatra called them the "retail marketing mix", defining them as variables that a retailer combines in alternative ways to arrive at a marketing strategy as a means to attract customers. As an extension to the preceding chapter, retail pricing strategies are herein discussed in chapter eight. The author proves the relevance of setting the right price as a crucial step in realising a retail profit. Popular retail pricing strategies are deliberated regarding mark-up pricing, vendor pricing, competitive pricing, keynote pricing, discount, and psychological pricing. Chapter eight presents supply chain aspects in the retail industry. It details the various forces in the extended global supply chain and their influence on retail procurement. The coordination and effect of location, timing, strategic position, tactical postponement, and mode on energising the retail supply chains also form a significant part of this chapter.

Chapter nine presents the history, perspectives, importance, and application of franchising in the retail industry. Retail franchise modalities, agreements, cancellations, terminations, rights and obligations, profits realisations, and losses are also detailed in this chapter (p.119-122). Two methods of retail franchising, i.e. business format franchising and product & trade name franchising, are also described herein. The chapter winds up with details of techniques for determining good franchises, benefits, advantages, and disadvantages of franchising. The final chapter of the book revisits retail merchandising, which the author termed as methods, practices, and operations conducted to promote and sustain commercial activities. Mahapatra, in this closing chapter, offers a comprehensive explanation of licensing, promotional merchandising, the trading industry, auctions in a retail store, the creation of attractive displays, digital signage in retail, and trade show exhibitions.

2. Critical Evaluation and Discussions of the Book

This book contributes to the thriving of the retail industry as one of the largest industries in a globally competitive and dynamic business environment. It is an incisive referral book that looks at numerous processes that go into the enterprise of retailing and guides readers through the art and science of retailing. Despite the fact that the majority of its examples focus on the context of India, the United Kingdom (UK), the United States, Hong Kong, and China, the book is of instantaneous importance to Tanzanian students, lecturers, and operators in the retail industry.

As it is documented in the literature (i.e. [Kochhar & Madhulika, 2018](#); [Shikha & Raj, 2016](#)), the modern retail industry has played a remarkable role in the development of economies across the world thereby increasing productivity and supply of consumer goods and services. This, therefore, makes the retail industry one of the largest industries in modern societies. While acknowledging the importance and the pace at which the industry is growing, there is a need to have a clear understanding of its historical development. Despite its well-designed contextual arrangement, the book did not show the originality and historical development of the concept of the retailing sector. Readers need to understand the stages that the retail industry passed to reach the current developments, which include innovative retailing, modern techniques, exclusive retail outlets, and retail chains. In this case, Mahapatra would have discussed the pre and post-1990s revolutions in the retail industry. For instance, the retail industry in India, up to the early 1990s, was dominated by the unorganised sector. The retail market grew to witness the introduction of corporate groups like Bennett Coleman & Company, Imperial Tobacco Company of India Limited (ITC), Rama Prasad Goenka Group (RPG), and Tata Group ([Shikha & Raj, 2016](#)). The post-1991 has witnessed the major initiatives to attract Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the retail industry, through liberalisation of the global FDI policies ([Kochhar & Madhulika, 2018](#)). It is very important to have a clear understanding of how the imposed FDI policies affected the development of the retail sector. The story should capture the 2000s developments which include introducing chain stores, mini-markets, supermarkets, multi-storied malls, hypermarkets, huge complexes, and e-retailing.

Mahapatra discussed the types of retail pricing strategies as part of the marketing plan. He considers them as the crucial vehicles in determining how to price products or services. The author detailed the common pricing strategies in the retail industry, such as mark-up pricing, vendor pricing, competitive

pricing, psychological pricing, keystone pricing, and discount pricing. This review believes that the author would have to support the discussion on the pricing strategies with computations, real-life, and pictorial examples from the retail industry. Further, for easier understanding, the discussion would also be enriched with the advantages and disadvantages of each of the retail pricing strategies.

Likewise, the author ought to have a chapter on retail entrepreneurship in the context of both developed and developing countries. The discussion, among other things, should show the drivers for global retail industry development. Herein factors such as liberalisation of the economy, the upward mobility of the middle class, the paradigm shift of consumer demands, and the recent expansion and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) would form the basis of the discussion. The relevance of retail entrepreneurship comes from the sectorial contribution in terms of employment creation, where retail Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) occupy 60 to 70% of jobs globally, and their proportion of new jobs is very high. The author would have shown context-specific contributions of retail entrepreneurial undertakings to support this. For instance, in India retail industry accounts for 10% of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs between 6 and 7% of the workforce. It also contributes 12.5% of GDP and employs 21% of the total work in South Africa (Malgas et al., 2017).

Mahapatra would also have a chapter on conventional e-retailing, which has emerged as a significant player in the retail industry across the globe. The author needs to give details of the perspectives and development of e-retailing. The chapter would have included the factors behind the growth of e-retailing, such as the growth of mobile commerce, localisation of internet content, increased use of debit cards for cashless transactions, rising of disposable income among consumers, urbanisation, growth, and transformation of cities to metros, growing investment in logistics and warehouse. The challenges and proposed solutions associated with the development of e-retailing are also a very significant component of this chapter. Such challenges include logistic and language problems, high customer acquisition costs, low internet penetration in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), offline presence, knowledge of customer lifetime value, and risks related to customer data handling. To make an easy understanding by the readers, the author would also cite the major global cutthroat competition materialises between Alibaba, eBay, Flipkart, Snap deal, Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., Tesco PLC, Amazon.com, Inc., Metro Group AG., Costco Wholesale Corporation, Kroger Company, Aditya Birla Retail, Walgreens Boots Alliance, Inc., and Avenue Supermarts Ltd.

In chapter eight, the author talks about the retail supply chain. The chapter would sound better if the author would also discuss green retailing and how it is connected to green supply chain management (GSCM). This is of vital importance to remove the imbalance between the use of the supply chain in the manufacturing industry and the retail industry (Petljak et al., 2018). This influences retailers' competitive advantage (i.e. price, quality services, and store location), which impacts retail activities on the environment, society, and consumer purchase behaviour (Kolk et al., 2010). This, therefore, calls for retailers to identify the environmental impact of their processes along the supply chains (Kirchoff et al., 2016; Chkanikova & Mont, 2015). It should be noted that despite retailers' prominence in the global supply chains, research on green as a component of sustainability in the retail industry remains an emerging domain. The author, therefore may enrich this chapter by giving details of the interaction between green in-store processes (utility management [water and energy], waste management); green supply chain management (i.e. green logistics, green purchasing, and cooperation with suppliers); and green retailing performance outcomes (i.e. economic performance and environmental performance).

3. Endorsements, Weaknesses, and Strength of the Book

The central weakness of this text is its failure to present world-class illustrations, case studies, exhibits, checkpoint questions, and summaries, which guarantee continuity and strengthen the concepts discussed in each chapter. Nevertheless, the book remains a usable, practical, and good resource for university lecturers and students particularly those pursuing undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in enterprise management, marketing, and entrepreneurship courses. It is also an important resource book for owners of businesses, from multinational companies to small-scale operators. The text will also be used as a guide and reference by operators in the retail industry in developing countries like Tanzania. The insights provided in this text extend beyond the immediate realm of retail management, reaching into various specialized fields such as entrepreneurship, marketing, and business management. Therefore, researchers in these fields might also benefit from concepts, examples, and gaps identified in this text as they may open up new ideas and areas for further research in retail management.

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