

CHAPTER- I
INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

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1.1 INTRODUCTION

Supply Chain Management (SCM) is an important process within the network of sports retail industry. Although many organizations have embraced a process approach to managing their businesses, most remain uncertain about the supply chain processes that should be considered, the associated practices, and the interrelationships between them. SCM in sports retail industry is a versatile process that encompasses various functions such as operation planning, transportation, distribution, and sourcing, and involves procuring, maintaining, and delivering the products to meet customer demands. Sports retail SCM involves coordinating with multiple departments and companies to regulate scheduling, order processing, service and support, forecasting, and production planning.

The concept of the sports retail SC refers to array of companies and operational activities that are necessary to conceive, produce, transport, and utilize a product or service. To survive and flourish, sports goods retailers rely on their supply chains. Depending on their business model, every sports good's retailer operates within at least one supply chain. As the market becomes more competitive and their growth increases, sports retailers much understand the Supply Chain (SC) processes in which they are involved and comprehend their responsibilities.

By developing and overseeing effective sports retail SC methods, sports retailers can gain a substantial competitive advantage in their respective markets.

To ensure that sports retail products reach consumers efficiently, it is essential to establish a strong and reliable sports retailers SC. Advances in information technology have greatly improved the efficiency in sports retail SCM, thereby enhancing the effectiveness and profitability to sports retailers. Today's sports retail SC process is an integrated one in which every activity is interconnected with the information system throughout the cycle. This integration makes timely action at every stage of sports retail SC process.

Before the 1950s, “the SCM concept was unrecognized beyond the military base” (Ballou, R. 1978). The term “logistics management was initially used before the SCM concept, and it originated from the military base to supplies goods during battles” (Stroh, 2002). Today, logistics management is considered as an integral part of modern business practices (Chen and Notteboom, 2014; Aggarwal and Srivastava, 2016). The concept of SCM was first introduced by Oliver and Webber in the 1980s due to the globalization of trade and business. The SCM continued to grow in the 1990s with the rise of information technology, individual competency, business competitiveness, and the emergence of new players (Chen and Paulraj, 2004). There is no consistent definition of SCM, and it is challenging for many sports goods retailers to adopt and manage the complexities of their supply chain (Croxtton et al., 2001).

The literature presents various definitions to express the SCM concept. However, (Stock & Boyer 2009), which analyzed 173 definitions from several journals and articles, found no universally acknowledged definition of SCM. This inconsistency often confuses scholars and practitioners. Managing uncertainties

across multiple market sectors is a key challenge for SCM, that negatively impact both the company's and its partners' results (Croxtton et al., 2001). So, identifying, compiling, and reducing the ambiguity of the supply chain should be of utmost concern. A number of studies have looked at how supply chain management affects company profitability and concluded that SCM plays a key role in business success (Srivastava, 2008; Aggarwal and Srivastava, 2016; Gawankar et al., 2016).

Nowadays, supply chain has the extensive scope of business operations that covers everything from purchasing to post-sale services (Ascencio et al., 2014). To enhance performance and productivity in any organization, it is vital key to adopt supply chain principles and practices (Giunipero et al., 2008). Several models have been developed to emphasize implementing the SCM as a crucial element in business operations (Sandberg, 2007). The important of SCM and its practices has been recognized by retail companies, who have established notable principles (Sandberg & Abrahamsson, 2010; Smaros, 2007). However, intriguingly, the study in this area suggested that the same principles may not be applicable in the context of small retailers (Hamister, 2012). As per multiple studies, establishing a robust organizational infrastructure is crucial to achieving effective supply chain management practices (Marien, 2000). However, many of India's retail sectors lack the necessary infrastructure to establish suitable SCM practices.

To achieve specific goals, sports goods retailers must prioritize proper supply chain management to generate maximum customer value. This

necessitates a continuous commitment from sports goods retailers to develop and implement appropriate supply chain networks for efficient business operations. Such networks should encompass product development, sourcing, production, distribution, and the necessary information systems to coordinate supply chain operations (Handfield, 2011). To further assist in understanding the concepts of sports goods retail SCM, some important definitions are studied.

1.1.1 Supply Chain Management

The SC is referred to a system of facilities and distribution channels that procure the raw materials, convert them into intermediate and final goods, and then distribute them to consumers. The SC includes all the activities from procuring the raw materials to the end-user. Sport retailers must adopt innovative approaches to fulfill the customer demand effectively. Organizational SCM involves various functions and activities such as incoming and outgoing logistics, managing inventory, procurement, production, and operational planning. The aim of SCM is to control and monitor these functions efficiently.

Definitions:

- Cooper & Ellram (1993) define it “as an integrating approach to manage the total flow of a distribution channel from supplier to the ultimate customer”.
- In 1996, Sengupta and Turnbull defined SCM “as a method of manage the movement of resources and finished products from manufacturers to consumers”.

- Lambert et al. (1998) describe SCM “as the integration processes among different firms to provide information, products, and services to customers and partners”.
- Narasimhan and Das (2001) define it “as the practice of procurement, production, and delivery management”.
- “A supply chain is the set of entities that collectively manufactures a product and sells it to an endpoint” (Stern et al, 2001).
- Ashish Bhatnagar, (2012) define that SCM is referred to as end-to-end operation management.

SCM aims to ensure the right product reach consumers without delay to the right place, with a right price to maximize profit for retailer. It enables a seamless flow of goods from raw materials to finished products, all the way to the end consumer. It has replaced fragmented approaches to buying, storing, and moving goods. Service and manufacturing organizations can both benefit from SCM, although each firm and industry may have a different level of supply chain complexity. The goal is to integrate activities across the entire merchandise flow to achieve quick response through product delivery and services to customer demand, allowing for more accurate production time predictions.

1.1.2. Retail Supply Chain Management

Retail SCM is the process of overseeing and optimizing the products flow, information, and resources from suppliers to end consumers within the retail industry. Over time, SCM has not only become a critical operational function also

into a distinct profession within the retail industry. Its growing significantly led to an increase the number of people pursuing careers in retail SCM, recognizing its substantial impact on the success and growth of local businesses.

The retail supply chain is the key component of the retail industry, orchestrating the flow of goods from producers to consumers. In today's globalized economy, effective retail SCM is important for the success and sustainability of retail businesses. The dynamic nature of the retail sector, driven by technological advancements, evolving consumer preferences, and increasing competition, has transformed SCM from a mere operational function into a strategic tool that can provide a competitive edge (Christopher, M. 2016). Retail SCM involves a complex network of processes, including product manufacturing, distribution, inventory management, and retail customer service. These processes must be carefully coordinated, ensuring that the right quantity of the products demanded is delivered to consumers at the right point in time and at the right cost. The integration of these processes not only enhances operational efficiency but also improves customer satisfaction, which has become crucial in the hectic retail industry of today (Chopra & Meindl, 2016).

The retail landscape has experienced significant changes in the past several decades. The advent of e-commerce and omnichannel retailing has introduced new challenges and opportunities for supply chain management. Retailers are now required to manage both online and offline channels, ensuring seamless coordination between them to meet consumer expectations. This has led to the use of the latest technologies developed, including analytics based on

big data, AI, and automation in SCM to optimize operations and enhance decision-making (*Fernie, J., & Sparks, L. (2019)*). In the Indian context, the retail sector has seen rapid growth, contributing substantially to the nation's GDP. The sector's expansion has all been contributed by factors such as increases in disposable incomes, growing urbanization, and increased consumer purchases. However, this growth has also brought about challenges, particularly in managing the supply chain efficiently. The diversity of the Indian market, characterized by varying consumer demands, infrastructure challenges, and regulatory complexities, makes effective supply chain management even more critical (*Deloitte, 2023*).

The Retailers Association of India (RAI) has played a key role in advancing the retail sector, particularly in promoting best practices in SCM. RAI's initiatives, such as organizing annual conferences and forming dedicated Supply Chain groups, have provided a platform for industry professionals to share knowledge, discuss challenges, and explore innovative solutions. These efforts have contributed to the professionalization of SCM roles within the retail industry, highlighting the importance of this field in driving business success (*Retailers Association of India, 2024*). SC is a strategically important parameter for the growth of supplier relationships and customers, as well as for the efficient and proper working of suppliers in the value chain. To succeed in business, retailers must understand their duties and the functions of supply chains. Retail SC are extremely vulnerable by nature. One must adapt to any kind of conditions to increase efficiency, effectiveness, performance, and convenience (*Vizinger, T., and erovnik, J. 2018*).

1.1.3. Sports Retail Supply Chain Management

SCM is a key process in the sports retail industry, especially in ensuring the delivery of sports products to customers timely and driving productivity, competitiveness, and economic growth by preventing sales bottlenecks. Sports retailing encompasses various processes and practices such as selling of products and services, whether for personal or non-commercial use. Sports retail is an expansive sector broadly over the globe, although it is still in a transitional phase in northeast India. Previously, urban sports consumers primarily relied on local, independent sports stores. However, the internationally recognized sports retail model is now gaining traction in India, prompting the transformation of the sports retail industry to effectively compete in the global market through the adoption of new operational methods and processes. The sports retail industry strives to adapt its approaches and practices to thrive in the competitive marketplace. Consequently, India's sports retail landscape has undergone significant changes, with organized retailers, convenience stores, replacing traditional retailers. As a result, sports retailing is increasingly gaining popularity and importance within the Indian economic landscape.

The rapid growth of technology advancement has brought significant changes and developments in various operational procedures within the sports retail industry, particularly in SC practices. SCM emerged as a direct response to the specific challenges encountered by sports retailers in their daily operations, notably in optimizing the transportation of sports goods from the moment of purchase to the end customer. Within the broader value chain, SC plays a key role

in sports retail by facilitating strong relationships with the suppliers also with the customers ensuring the efficient provision of products supply to meet customer demand. To effectively run a successful business, sports retailers must clearly understand SC practices and their corresponding responsibilities, thereby gaining insights into the intricacies of the SC model.

To navigate the uncertainties and the challenges within the sports retail industry, and the intense competition across the entire value chain, it becomes imperative for businesses to adopt an appropriate SCM model for sports goods retail. The effective implementation of SCM plays a pivotal role in sports goods retailers ensuring customer satisfaction and meeting their evolving expectations. As the implementation of retail SCM undergoes a transformation within the sports retail industry, it is important for sports retailers to enhance their roles and functions both before and after the implementation, enabling them to compete effectively in a competitive market and enhance the profitability to retail business. Within the current business landscape, managing the retail SC poses certain challenges specific to the sports retail sector.

1.1.4 Overview of Retail Industry

The term "retail was derived from the French word retailer". which means to sell goods in small quantities. In India, the retail industry is largely comprised of small, independent retailers. With its significant contribution to employment in India, the retail sector offers promising opportunities for tens of millions of people. Retailing refers to the act of selling products or providing services to individual

customers for personal or household use in exchange for monetary transactions, as defined by Shenoy et al. (2013) and Kamal and Kumar (2014).

Retailing “refers to selling goods and services to ultimate consumers for their personal and non-business usage” (Kotler et al. 2013). R. Bhattacharyya (2012) classified the Indian retail business into two main segments: organized retailing and unorganized retailing. Organized retailing encompasses licensed retailers like marketplaces and retail chains, as well as independently owned large retail firms. whereas unorganized retailing comprises traditional retail models such as local stores, sidewalk vendors, owner-operated retail shops, and convenience retailers. Organized retail concepts are typically major chain retailers that are corporately controlled, utilize modern management practices, and are mostly self-service driven.

The unorganized retail accounted for 93 percent of the market share and is expected to decrease to around 80 percent by 2021 (Technopak analysis, 2012). Meanwhile, organized retail in India is predicted to increase from 7% in 2012 to 15 percent by 2021, and from 12 percent in 2019 to 25 percent by 2024, based on nominal growth rates. The “Indian retail industry is expanding at a rapid pace due to the entry of new companies, making it a highly competitive sector. It contributes over 10% to the country's GDP and employs 8% of the population”.

India is the fifth world largest retail destination, and the buying power of urban consumers is increasing, with branded items in various categories, such as sports products, clothing, cosmetics, footwear, watches, food, beverages, and jewellery, becoming preferred products for individuals as well as businesses. In

recent study by the “Boston Consulting Group (BCG)” predicts that retail industry in India will be worth \$2 trillion by 2032. The transformation from traditional to organized retailing from the early 1990s led to modernization and market liberalization of the Indian economy, population growth, changes in consumer behavior, increased household income among the middle class, and significant changes in logistics (Anbanandam et al., 2009; Singh et al., 2013).

The rise of the retail industry has brought about various changes and allowed firms to expand their businesses globally (KPMG, 2014). Major international retail firms entered the Indian market during this phase. The trend of organized retailing was first launched in the 1980s by Mother's Dairy in New Delhi. An annual assessment referred to as the Global Retail Development Index (GRDI) rates the top 30 emerging nations in terms of retail development. India was placed 20th in 2014, down from 14th in the previous ranking.

According to AT. Kearney (2013) “India's retail industry is currently estimated to be \$500 billion and is believe to reach \$1.3 trillion by 2020. Kearney predicts that the industry will expand at a rate of 9% annually from US\$779 billion in 2019 to US\$1,407 billion by 2026 and more than US\$1.8 trillion by 2030” driven by factors such as rising incomes, increased spending on essential items, easier in access credit, the expansion of online shopping, and modifications to consumption habits. With the entry of more Indian and international retailers, the market is becoming more competitive, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has enabled retailers to introduce new technologies to increase their response time

and effectiveness. This section examines the significance of the supply chain in sports retail industry, as well as the challenges they face.

1.1.5 Sports Retail Industry in India

The sports retail sector in India is experiencing significant growth, since there is rapid increase in population, urban expansion, and a wider range of revenue sources. Thus, there has been a notable rise in the availability of new sporting products, leading to a transformation in consumer purchasing behavior. The primary goal of sports goods retail is to cater to the diverse preferences of consumers, whether the consumers are in search for personal, family, or team-oriented sports products. Since the 1980s, the sports goods industry in India has experienced remarkable expansion. This growth could be connected with the extensive broadcasting of various sports competitions and the media's increased coverage of global sporting events. These factors have played a vital role in fostering widespread participation and exposure to sports, subsequently fueling the demand for sports goods. Looking ahead, the sports retail sector in India is intends for further development. It has been expected to exhibit a remarkable growth rate of over 16.2% between 2022 and 2029. This trajectory underscores the growing of sports and the continued investment in sports-related products and services within the country.

To achieve success in the sports goods business, sports retailers can benefit from effective sales planning and coordination with their customers. Developing a strong relationship with sports retail customers is essential, as it fosters trust and loyalty. Additionally, selecting knowledgeable employees with

marketing abilities is crucial in establishing a solid market position. To meet the demands of consumers, sports goods retailers should consider engaging energetic young professionals with backgrounds in sports management and physical education. These individuals can provide the necessary expertise and ensure that customers receive the services they require. The sports retail industry offers various job prospects, including marketing and sales roles for sports products, retail shop operations, administrative and managerial positions, and field labor. There is also a growing focus on enhancing the design of traditional sports products.

In India, the sports industry is experiencing robust growth, leading to an increased allocation of space for sports retailers in department stores and shopping malls. This expansion creates ample opportunities for retailers to thrive and cater to the rising demand for sports-related products. The India sports retail industry has a notable history and reputation for producing high-quality sporting products. Foreign investments in multi-brand sports goods have had a significant impact on the retail sector. Indian sports products are rapidly gaining recognition in the global market, playing a vital role in the industry. To keep pace with ever-changing global trends, the sector continuously adopts the latest technologies for sports product manufacturing.

The increasing media engagement in sports has significant growth the sports retail market in the past few decades. Various large retail establishments, such as department stores, malls, toy stores, and outlets, now offer a wide range of sports goods, including premium brands, catering to customer demands and

market requirements in specific locations. This trend has influenced overall sales at traditional sports goods retailers. Additionally, the expansion of existing stores and the introduction of exclusive franchises for the latest sports products have had a substantial impact on sales for these retailers. Online bookings and the internet explore the purchase of latest sports goods are increasingly popular in the market.

Success in sports goods sales in India relies on factors such as the ability to provide after-sales support, the expertise of staff in attracting customers, employee behavior, prompt delivery, product reliability, and more. Indian sports goods manufacturers are actively seeking strategic partnerships and technological collaborations, with a focus on sports goods that have not yet been available in India but have significant export potential. However, industry growth has been somewhat hindered by demographic differences, the high pricing of newly developed sports products, and the constantly evolving preferences of customers.

The major sporting events continue to be the primary drivers of the market, with media coverage is now more important than ever. The availability of Indian-branded sports goods in the domestic retail market is subject to the rules of manufacturing groups and government regulations. Successful foreign-branded sports products strategically position their brand identity, sponsor various sports activities and athletes, price their products appropriately, and carefully select Indian distributors to ensure success in the Indian market. Sports retail business is also focusing on appealing to female customers with their branded sports items. Planograms, visual representations that optimize product placement on different types of retail displays, are employed to enhance sales in retail outlets. Indian

consumers tend to purchase sports goods when they can benefit from significant discounts or special schemes offered by manufacturers, providing with few options but to take advantage of these opportunities.

The Indian sports industry is a vibrant and evolving sector with significant economic and social impact. As the country continues to embrace sports and invest in its development, the industry is poised for further growth. Addressing current challenges and capitalizing on emerging opportunities will be key to enhancing the sector's contribution to the economy, fostering national talent, and promoting a culture of sports excellence.

1.1.6 Sports Retail Industry in Northeast India

The sports goods retail industry in Northeast India is witnessing continuous expansion and adapting to cater to the growing demand for sporting products in the region. Several factors contribute to this growth, including a youthful population, affluent sports enthusiasts, urbanization, increased fitness awareness, access to international sports products, improved athletic performance, and heightened media coverage. Northeast India, consisting of eight states with a vibrant sporting culture, has witnessed a surge in sports participation and the popularity of various sports. The market has been growing at an annual rate of over 12% every year.

The retailing models for sports products have evolved over time, with the presence of international brands and a wider range of sports goods, including health and fitness equipment. However, the limited sports infrastructure and accessibility pose challenges for branded sports products to enter the region. The

sports goods retail industry in Northeast India is experiencing steady growth and evolving to meet the increase of sports products demand in the region. With the rise in disposable income and changing lifestyles, there has been a growing interest in sports and fitness activities among the population of Northeast India. This has led to an increased demand for sports goods, including sports equipment, apparel, footwear, and accessories. The retail sector in Northeast India has responded to this demand by expanding its offerings and improving access to sports goods.

The major cities in the northeast region, such as Guwahati, Imphal, and Shillong, have seen the emergence of dedicated sports goods stores, both local and national brands. These retailers provide various sports goods, including traditional indigenous sports, basketball, badminton, cricket, and football. Government initiatives and support for sports development in northeast have played a crucial role in promoting the sports retail industry. Infrastructure development, including the construction of sports complexes, stadiums, and training centers, has created opportunities for retailers to establish their presence and cater to the needs of athletes and sports enthusiasts. Nonetheless, there are challenges in northeast India sports retail industry. Limited distribution networks, logistical constraints, and the availability of authentic branded products are the hurdles for sports retailers. The industry can benefit from increased marketing and promotion to create awareness and stimulate demand.

The region's passion for sports, coupled with the increasing focus on sports development and rising consumer interest, creates opportunities for retailers to

thrive. Overall, the Northeast India sports retail industry shows the confidence and potential by addressing challenges and adopting strategies to meet customer needs, continue to grow and contribute to the sporting ecosystem in northeast India.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The retailers SC play a vital role in sports goods industry ensuring industrial growth by being adaptable and responsive to customer demands. Vizinger and Zerovnik (2018) emphasize “the importance of adaptability in SCM to meet customer needs effectively”. Adivar et al. (2019) provide a performance assessment process and growth strategy for retailers to enhance their effectiveness. Establishing strong relationships with suppliers is vital for retailers to improve SCP, as noted by Ellram et al. (1999). The affordability of product prices for customers depends on maintaining the best possible overall performance of the retail SC. S. Rana et al. (2016) “evaluated the significant factors affecting the retail SCP, highlighting the need of knowledge for performance improvement”.

Despite the importance of the retail SC in the sports retail industry, the comprehensive literature that thoroughly study or examines the SC challenges in sports retail sector is still lacking. Therefore, the researcher found a gap in this area hence identified this research gap. The influence of globalization on sports retailing, both domestically and internationally, has significantly influenced customer expectations and requirements from sports goods suppliers, manufacturers, and retailers.

To maintain a competitive edge, sports retailers are focusing on key success factors such as leveraging modern technology, ensuring product quality, managing product costs, and capitalizing on market opportunities. In the present business environment, modern sports retail SC processes are not confined to rigid rules and procedures but are adaptable to changing situations and customer needs. Retailers need to shift their focus from solely manufacturing to encompassing global supply chain operations. Prominent sports retailers serve as indicators of both the demand for sports and the availability of effective products, reflecting the interplay between supply and demand.

Having accurate information and data is essential for effective product stocking in the sports retail SC. Without it, the entire SC process would come to a halt. Sports retail SC executives can expedite operations by closely monitoring and making necessary modifications based on the information or data available. When customers receive their desired goods within the expected timeframe and without any issues, they experience value and satisfaction. Therefore, Sports retailers must focus on improving the integration of key elements for the efficiency of SC systems. Implementing a straightforward and practical sports retail SC network is important to ensure a positive outcome. The key components established through the review for the sports retail SC include information management, demand forecasting, distribution, managing environmental uncertainties, and sourcing.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The role of SC has become increasingly a vital for the sports retailers. However, in northeast India, the sports retailers face numerous challenges that disturb the smooth and effective operation of its SC. These challenges significantly impact the overall performance and success of sports retailers who operate in a highly competitive market. These are due to lack of a clear understanding and identification of the major challenges within the sports retail SC. To thrive, sports retailers need to adopt effective SC model in order to meet their business objectives and ensure their business growth in the marketplace.

This study examines the retail SCM in both organized and unorganized northeast India sports retailers. However, there is limited information available on the management practices and model suitable for both organized and unorganized sports retailers. This study aims to understand the specific SC challenges of sports retailers and the impact on their firm's performance. Through comprehensive research, it identifies the challenges factors and determines the impact on the overall performance of northeast sports retailers.

1.4 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

These research focusses on creating opportunities by understanding and addressing the specific challenges in SC of northeast sports retailers. By gathering information from sports retailers and conducting in-depth analysis, the study aims to identify both the potential opportunities and challenges present in the northeast sports retail market. This study stimulates the growth of the Northeast India sports

retail industry, resulting in numerous job opportunities, improved services, higher incomes, increased economic productivity, enhanced social activities, and more productive retail business operations. Additionally, the study provides effective suggestions for executing retail supply chain strategies for both organized and unorganized sports retailers.

It examines various crucial aspects of the retail SC, including sourcing, inventory management, distribution management, demand management, environmental uncertainties, and information management. This study also investigates the current execution of supply chain processes, highlights the challenges and factors that influence sports retail firm performance, and proposes improvements. The firm's performance of sports retailers was analyzed using the indicators such as delivery performance, financial performance, inventory management, and customer service and satisfaction. The study explores methodologies and practices employed by sports goods retailers to accurately manage their SC. Moreover, the research explores the use of technology and innovative solutions which can improved the SCM operations effectively for the sports goods retail industry. The research also addresses the sustainability supply chain practices' incorporation into the sports retail SC.

1.5 RESEARCH GAP

The SCM in the retail industry is widely recognized. However, there is no literature that comprehensively addresses the SC challenges of sports retail. This study aims to fill the research gap by exploring how SCM can improve the

performance of organized and unorganized sports retailers and give them a competitive advantage in addressing the challenges of northeast Indian sports market. Although SCM has a well-established management theory, there is still a lack of understanding of the SC theories that explain the relationship between the SCM challenges, SCP, and the firms' performance in the sports industry.

Despite the important and fast growing of SCM in sports retail industry, further research is needed to better understand and address the specific SCM challenges encountered by sports retailers in their SC practices. Addressing these research gaps, it will contribute in developing the practical frameworks, guidelines, and best practices that sports retailers can employ to overcome these SC challenges and ensure their SCP and their firms' performance.

1.6 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions have been developed based on the review of literature study in Chapter 2:

1. What are the SC challenges face by sports retailers in managing their supply chains effectively?
2. Does the study challenges are contributing factors to sports retail SC challenges?
3. Do the retail SC challenges have impact on their firms' performance?
4. What is the role of retail SCP as mediator in the relationships between retail SC challenges and the firm performance?

5. What does retail SCM need to develop and leverage in order to achieve excellence in the sports industries?

The literature reviewed provided a comprehensive analysis and discussion, serving as the foundation for these research questions.

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research objectives were developed based on the research questions identified. The primary objective is to identify the contributing factors that lead to retail SC challenges and examine their impacts on the performance. This will assist sports retailers in developing and implementing an appropriate framework to achieve optimal performance in the northeast sports industry.

1. To explore the demographic profile of the northeast sports retailer's
2. To identify the contributing factors to retail SC challenges
3. To investigate the impact of retail SC challenges on performance.
4. To examine the mediation role of SCP between retail SC challenges, and firm performance.
5. To establish a theoretical structural model incorporating the retail SC challenges, SCP, and firm performance.

1.8 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The northeast sports industry is experiencing an expansion in their sports business, including the major sports business organizations and foreign participants. This study focusses on adopting effective SC process of sports

retailers to enhance customer service by identifying the SC challenges that affect their firm's performance. The researcher conducted a formal study to ensure better understanding of SCM practices in northeast sports retailers and to recognize the importance they play in the success of retail businesses.

For this study, an existing sports retailer from northeast India was selected to investigate its continuous efforts and aim to develop an effective retail SC model that supports both organized and unorganized sports retail, enhancing business expansion. The study aims to identify the challenges and explore opportunities for improvement.

This study projected the significant future market improvements of the sports retail industry. It analyzes the impact of retail SC challenges on various performance indicators to understand more concerning the overall retail operations and the scope of the retail SC in the sports industry. The study explores the business and employment potential for graduates with sports disciplines, thereby generating more job opportunities in the sports industry. It identifies untapped market opportunities within the retail segment, enabling businesses to fill market gaps, target new customer segments, and develop innovative sports products and services tailored to specific customer needs. Moreover, the study contributes to the expansion and advancement of the sports industry as a whole. It identifies areas for improvement, highlights challenges, and offers solutions to enhance overall performance and profitability.

The research holds significant economic importance as it generates employment opportunities and contributes to local and national economic growth.

It helps retailers improve their offerings, enhance customer experiences, and cultivate long-term relationships with the audience they are targeting, ultimately leading to enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty. Furthermore, with the understanding consumer needs and preferences, enabling retailers to effectively promote sports products and encourage individuals to engage in sports and adopt healthier lifestyles.

This study provides valuable insights to sports businesses, fosters industry growth, and drives economic development within the sports retailers. It plays a key role in helping sports goods retailers meet customer demands, identify market opportunities, and contribute to the overall advancement of the retail industry. The study's methodology includes an exploration and analysis of relevant literature to establish a conceptual framework, followed by the implementation of research methodology.

1.9 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study first analyzed sports retail SC challenges, and established the conceptualizing framework. Subsequently, the study identified several factors that contribute to challenges within the sports retail SC, such as Demand Management Challenges (DeMC), Distribution Management Challenges (DiMC), Environmental Uncertainty Challenges (EUC), Information Management Challenges (IMC), and Sourcing Challenges (SC). Furthermore, the study investigated how these challenges affect the sports goods retail performance. The research explored the connections of each retail challenge within the supply chain and evaluate the impact on their SCP and firms' performance indicator such as, Delivery

Performance (DP), Financial Performance (FP), Inventory Performance (IP), and Customers service and Satisfaction (CSS). Finally, the study examined how SCP mediated the relationship between retail SC challenges and the firm performance indicators.

1.10 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The result suggested that implementing effective retail SC strategies will improve the performance of northeast sports retail industry. Through a comprehensive analysis, the study focuses on five key challenge such as, DeMC, DiMC, EUC, IMC, and SC. The research indicates that these factors directly impact both retail SCP and firm performance indicators. To overcome these challenges, sports retailers can foster partnerships with manufacturers, suppliers, logistics operators, distribution partners, and supplier operations.

Developing an efficient information and communication system is necessary to enhance the sports retail SC businesses. By doing so, sports retail businesses can better manage demand management challenges and ensure the availability of distribution channels throughout the region. This will enable exchange of information across the sports retail SC network, ultimately enhancing SCP and firm performance.

By effectively addressing sourcing challenges, retail firms can enhance their ability to manage unpredictability or enhance resilience. This, in turn, helps prevent negative impacts on delivery performance, customer satisfaction, disruptions in demand managing, and SC stability. Even in the face of significant retail SC challenges caused by environmental uncertainties in the region, the management

of sourcing challenges proves beneficial for sports retail firms. It enables them to navigate market variations, and fluctuations in product supply, maintain consistency in product supply, address technological challenges, and mitigate other external issues specific to the northeast region.

The study's findings provide valuable insights for executives in making informed decisions, such as designing, implementing, and executing sports retail SC practice frameworks. These practices help tackle sports retailers SC challenges while adapting to changes and unpredictability, all while ensuring minimal impact on the desired level of consumer satisfaction.

1.11 CHAPTERIZATION OF THE DISSERTATION

The dissertation is organized into five chapters:

The first chapter includes the overview of the study, SCM, RSCM, an overview of retail industry, sports retail industry in India, the sports retail industry in Northeast India, research background, statement of the problem, scope of the study, research questions, objective of the study, the significance of the study, outline of the study and the contributions of the study are all presented.

The second chapter explores existing research on SCM, RSCM, sports goods retailing, retail SC challenges, SCP and firms' performance measure. This section summarizes existing research on the retail supply chain, its challenges, relationship to the performance, and how the retail firm performance are measured in their business operation and also presents a conceptual framework for the study.

The third chapter presented the research method and the analytical process adopted. The method consists of the study population, sampling, questionnaire design, pre-tests, pilot study, data collection, measurement scale, research hypotheses, data analysis method, and all part of the analytical process.

The fourth chapter presents the data analysis, findings and interpretation.

The fifth chapter describe the finding of the study, research implications, theoretical contribution, methodological implications, and managerial implications, limitations, future research.

Furthermore, the references and appendices used in this study are presented in the final section of the dissertation.