

Information management, attractive packaging and retail logistics as drivers for the retail sector's performance

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Abstract: Globally, the retail industry has experienced extreme marketing competition leading to extraordinary instability, complexity, and upheaval in many firms, which caused performance challenges. The current study examines the effect of information management, attractive packaging, and retail logistics on business performance in the case of beverage products in an emerging market. A cross-sectional survey of 235 randomly selected managerial employees in supermarkets in Harare, Zimbabwe was conducted. The study established that information management, retail logistics and attractive packaging positively affect the performance of retail businesses. Also, information management was found to have a positive effect on both retail logistics and attractive packaging. Attractive packaging and retail logistics were found to partially mediate the information-retail sector performance. A study like this is necessary as it provides deeper understanding and corroborates present literature on business management especially concerning emerging markets like Zimbabwe.

Keywords: attractive packaging, information management, organisational performance, retail logistics, retail sector, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Globally, the retail industry has experienced extreme marketing competition leading to extraordinary instability, complexity, and upheaval in many firms (Jacobson et al., 2023; Kaondera et al., 2023). The path of a product from manufacturer to the customer (retail logistics) has increasingly become important (Shumba et al., 2025). Organisations that do not monitor and improve the retail logistic path are finding it difficult to outwit competitors, hence performing below expectations (Chikazhe et al., 2020). Those that are embracing new strategies to do with retail logistics are enjoying a competitive advantage over their rivals (Sama & Trivedi, 2019). Moreover, retail firms that monitor product packaging by manufacturers are better servicing their customers, which results in improved sales and overall business performance (Sparks, 2023; Röding et al., 2022). Customers pile pressure on retailers concerning product packaging requirements, hence it is the duty of the retailer to ensure that manufacturers improve the packaging of goods. Packaging expectations by customers include those packages that are attractive, informative, protective and those that are environment friendly (Elkhattat & Medhat, 2022). Failure to observe this may result in business performance challenges as customers may be lost.

Retailers act as a bridge between customers and manufacturing firms (Shahrzadi et al., 2024). Thus, retailers provide feedback to manufacturers on issues raised by customers pertaining product performance as regards packaging, labelling and stock movements. If the product fails to meet customer expectations in terms of its right packaging and correct label information (Nyagadza et al., 2023), it is the duty of the retailer to alert the manufacturer. Hence, proper information management between retailers and manufacturers results in improved retail logistics and improved packaging of goods, which causes improved retail business performance (Lukiyanchuk et al., 2020). Retailers that properly manage information to do with logistics (movement of goods) and proper packaging of goods are bound to attract customers and improve business performance. Retail businesses that fail to observe

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information management struggle to satisfy customers, and this may lead to loss of sales; and Zimbabwe is not an exception.

In Zimbabwe, retailers are not performing as expected (Chikazhe et al., 2023). Sales continue to decline as customers switch from one shop to the other in search of well-packaged beverage products (Kaondera et al., 2023). Some beverage products are packed in unattractive packaging material, which forces customers to opt for imported well-packed products. Imported products, as compared to locally produced ones, are well-packaged, well-labelled, and are sold in packaging materials that are easier to open, easy to reseal and easy to store. Such products can also be safely transported, and protected from adverse effects such as heat, cold and moisture (Nyagadza et al., 2023). Customers expect to find beverage products in stock any time they visit retail shops. It is common practice with businesses in Zimbabwe that customers often fail to get the beverage products at the right time, and they are requested to wait for orders in transit, which leaves most customers importing such products from neighbouring countries like South Africa, Botswana and Zambia (Maziriri, 2020). These challenges have left the retail industry in agony as it cannot maintain loyal customers, which negatively affects its performance (Madzimore, 2019). Furthermore, many beverage products sold by Zimbabwean retailers especially those that are packed in plastic containers pose disposal challenges and empty bottles remain scattered all over, after the consumption of their contents. Most streets in Harare have with wind-blown plastic empty packages, which draws attention to environmentally unfriendly packaging by manufacturers. Also, some of the products exhibit labels with incorrect and insufficient information, which can sometimes be in foreign languages making it difficult for local customers to understand the meaning of what is written on the label. Other retailers face difficulties during product shipment as packaging can easily break due to the manufactures' fault (Chikazhe et al., 2020). The packaging may not be strong enough to the extent that the products reach customers in a good state. Considering these challenges among others, one wonders whether manufacturers are really getting feedback from retailers as aired by retail consumers pertaining to the packaging and labelling of beverage products. Retailers are faced with numerous complaints from consumers, and this has affected business performance.

In an effort to address related retail business performance challenges, several studies were conducted to date (Gupta & Ramachandran, 2021; Benjamin et al., 2019; Nawawi & Rahardjo, 2021; Chen et al., 2022; Hansson et al., 2022). These mainly focus on various factors relating to business performance. None of the prior studies focused on the relationship among retail logistics, attractive packaging, information management and retail business performance especially within an emerging market like Zimbabwe. Thus, the current study sought to narrow this gap by examining how proper information management could improve retail logistics, attractive packaging and retail business performance within the retail business to meet customer expectations. The study further examines the effect of information management on retail logistics and attractive packaging.

2. Theoretical framework

This current study was anchored on the theory of Motivated Information Management (Afifi & Weiner, 2004). The theory illustrates that motivation for seeking information from specific people regarding significant topics is one of the driving forces behind the guiding principles of the motivated information management paradigm. According to the theory, when deciding whether to seek out or provide information, both information seekers and providers weigh the advantages and disadvantages of doing so, as well as their own and the recipient's capacity to effectively manage and communicate the sought-after information. Thus, the current study aimed to establish how proper information management could assist retail business performance. Motivated Information Management theory explains how individuals manage information exchange to achieve goals, reduce uncertainty, and maintain relationships. In the retail sector, motivational factors influence information exchange among stakeholders concerning such issues as employees concealing inventory levels, customers withholding purchasing decisions, suppliers sharing product availability, and managers concealing sales performance data. By understanding these motivational factors, retailers can design strategies to promote effective information management, improve communication, and achieve business objectives.

2.1 Retail business performance

Retail business performance encompasses the measurable outcomes of a retail business across financial, operational, and customer-related aspects (Udriyah et al., 2024). Key indicators include financial performance (sales growth, gross margin, Return on Investment), operational performance (inventory turnover, supply chain efficiency, employee productivity), and customer-related performance (customer satisfaction, retention, loyalty program participation). These indicators can be measured using financial statements, operational metrics, customer feedback surveys, and employee performance metrics, and these provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating and improving retail business performance (Gupta & Ramachandran, 2021). Retailing is the sale of goods and certain services to consumers (Deepak & Jeyakumar, 2019). Chikazhe et al. (2021) further define retail business performance as commercial effectiveness, which is determined by a company's ability to implement optimal organisation in order to offer a product or service that meets the expectations of consumers and customers. Additionally, organisations need good performance management, according to Maziriri (2020). This helps them connect their personnel, assets, and systems with their strategic goals through both formal and informal processes. This study examines how retail firm managers evaluate profitability, market response, and market value from their individualised points of view.

The principles of efficiency and effectiveness should also be used to evaluate business performance (Sina & Wu, 2023). These phrases are reciprocal in the sense that when doing something, it is critical to focus on the intended goals (effectiveness) while making good use of available resources (efficiency), and management must exert control in order to achieve efficiency and effectiveness (Bansal et al., 2023). Effective performance management necessitates information on genuine standards in relation to those expected and those attained, as well as steps to address discrepancies that arise from time to time (Latifah et al. 2021). The retail sector faces significant challenges, including economic instability, infrastructure deficiencies, and regulatory complexities (Zhao et al., 2021). Despite these hurdles, retailers can achieve strong performance by adapting to changing consumer behaviour, developing resilient supply chains, investing in technology, and focusing on customer experience (Ganbold et al., 2021). However, businesses must also contend with unique challenges, such as limited access to financing, talent shortages, and infrastructure constraints, which hinder their ability to invest in growth initiatives, innovate, and operate efficiently (Nawawi & Rahardjo, 2021).

2.2 Retail logistics

Retail Logistics involves planning, coordinating, and executing activities to move and store goods from their origin to consumption, this way meeting customer demand and expectations (Bansal et al., 2023). Key components include inventory management, transportation management, warehouse management, supply chain visibility, and order fulfilment (Lukiyanchuk et al., 2020). Performance indicators encompass inventory turnover ratio, order fill rate, shipping accuracy, transportation costs, and warehouse capacity utilization (Sebata, 2024). By operationalising retail logistics, retailers can effectively manage complex processes to deliver products efficiently and meet customer needs (Mishra et al., 2024). This process continues until the goods are sold and delivered to the customer (Sina & Wu, 2023). Decisions such as where to keep stock, how much to keep, and how to distribute it have all been part of the trade-off analysis that is at the heart of logistics management (Liu & Song, 2023). The tremendous rise in store product variety has necessitated improved retail logistics and sophisticated technologies.

Retail logistics in the industrialised world have changed from manufacturers storing products at their factories or field warehouses to various small shops being the major method of distribution to stores (Tarigan et al., 2021). As the retail multichannel grew in popularity, retailers engaged in regional distribution centres to coordinate supplier deliveries for onward delivery to stores (Sparks, 2023). Many merchants think that outsourcing logistics to a partner or third party with no additional management effort spent on its development is sufficient or, even better, and they also believe that it is sufficient to let logistics run with no management oversight (Menon & Pramod, 2018). Such views are incorrect, because retail logistics operations have the potential to improve retail business performance (Sparks, 2023). The

current study understands retail logistics as all incoming and outgoing procedures that lead to the movement of completed items from an enterprise to the customer.

Improved retail logistics increases operational efficiency, reduces costs, and boosts productivity, while also enhancing customer satisfaction and loyalty through reliable delivery, accurate orders, and effective returns management (Deepak & Jeyakumar, 2019). This, in turn, improves inventory turnover, increases sales, and provides a competitive advantage, differentiating retailers from competitors and attracting and retaining customers (Jacobson et al., 2023). The retail sector faces frequent stockouts, high transportation costs, and limited warehousing capacity (Lukiyanchuk et al., 2020). Effective retail logistics can help overcome these challenges by improving supply chain visibility, optimizing transportation operations, and enhancing inventory management. However, retailers face unique challenges, including infrastructure constraints, regulatory compliance issues, and limited technology adoption (Van Ooijen et al., 2020).

2.3 Attractive Packaging

Attractive packaging is a critical factor in influencing consumer purchasing decisions and brand perceptions. Attractive packaging consists of five key components: aesthetics, functionality, innovation, branding, and sustainability (Elkhattat & Medhat, 2022). Effective packaging design can boost competitiveness, facilitate logistics, and support marketing strategies (Shekhar & Raveendran, 2016). Key aspects of packaging attractiveness include material, ease of opening, label information, colour, typography, and brightness/visuals, which evoke emotions, convey brand identity, and enhance user experience (Regattieri et al., 2020).

Information management plays a crucial role in retail performance through retail logistics and attractive packaging, and provides real-time supply chain visibility, thereby enhancing inventory management, and streamlining order fulfilment (Chikazhe et al., 2020). In the competitive retail sector, attractive packaging is essential for driving sales and performance, differentiating products, influencing purchasing decisions, and building brand loyalty (Mukonza & Swarts, 2019). Also, functionality, size, design, and packaging all play a part in a product's success and have an influence on user experience, brand perception, and total product value (Elkhattat & Medhat, 2022).

2.4 Information management

According to Saffady (2021), information management is the systematic and strategic process of managing information assets to support organizational goals and objectives. Information management encompasses five key components: Information Governance (policies and standards); Information Architecture (design and organization of information systems); Content Management (digital content creation and management); Data Management (planning, organization, and control of data assets); and Knowledge Management (identification, acquisition, and utilization of knowledge to support innovation and learning) (Vhatkar et al., 2024).

Information management frequently relies on computer programs that track inventories and determine what is ordered. A computer-based information system that supports all areas of retail logistics management is known as a logistics information system (Santarek et al., 2022). The current study understands information management as the control of systems and procedures used by retail managers make use of customer feedback, provide feedback to manufacturers and timely response to feedback. Retail managers are involved in information management practices with the aim of facilitating efficient and effective information access, processing, and usage both for individuals and for organisations.

The explosion of information, according to Restuputri et al. (2021), has made logistics a crucial weapon in an organisation's armoury for generating value to customers. Elkhattat and Medhat (2022) propound that information flow has become an important aspect that represents not only collaboration within retail logistics management but also organizational success in all organizations. Sharing information on transfer, exchange of inventory levels and positions, sales data and forecasting information, order status, manufacturing plans, and delivery capacity, as well as firm performance measurements has become critical. Orders, inventory, demand, and sales data are examples of information flows. These flows are critical for restocking and (demand) forecasting across the retail logistic chain (Sina & Wu, 2023).

In the modern world, innovation has a significant impact on the retail industry and its transformation in order to address current issues and take advantage of fresh opportunities related to online retail operating models that integrate rapid digitalization with regional geography and consumption patterns (Chege et al., 2020). It is quite expensive for a retail organization to construct and implement retail information management systems, but it has been discovered that the advantages gained this way are significantly larger than the cost and are sustainable over a significant period of time. However, new online services raise substantial last-mile logistics and cost problems, which will require time, effort, and money to address, especially given that grocery margins are already low in comparison to many other items (Opoku & Francis, 2019). Information management was seen as the gathering of data required by retail managers and business decision-makers to properly manage stock and to direct businesses to financial success.

Concerning the context of this study, effective information management is paramount due to Zimbabwe's complex and dynamic economic environment, which is characterized by frequent currency fluctuations, supply chain disruptions, and changing consumer behaviour (Schiffmann et al., 2023). The nation's economic instability, marked by monetary policy changes, currency devaluations, and exchange rate volatility, creates uncertainty and complexity for retailers, while congested borders, inadequate transportation infrastructure, and erratic fuel supplies disrupt the flow of goods, leading to stock outs and lost sales (Maziriri, 2020). Furthermore, consumers are increasingly price-sensitive, seek value for money, and exhibit shifting preferences due to economic pressures, which makes it essential for retailers to manage information effectively to navigate these challenges (Saffady, 2021).

2.5 Development of research hypotheses and research model

Literature confirms that business performance is determined by several factors related to information management (Bahrainizad & Rajabi, 2018; Chege et al., 2020; Ganyam & Ivungu, 2019; Kolding et al., 2019; Madzimure, 2019; Maziriri, 2020; Olah et al., 2018; Prajogo et al., 2018; Rajendran et al., 2018; Spruit & Almenar, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). In their study, Prajogo et al. (2018) investigated the role of information management as a process management driver and its impact on operational performance. The results of the study indicate that operational performance is influenced by information management. Likewise, Chege et al. (2020) examined how information technology innovation influences business performance. The results imply that effective management of information technology has a favourable effect on business performance.

Santarek et al. (2022) looked into how information system management affected a company's financial performance. Excessive information management can have unintended consequences, potentially harming retail business performance. Information overload, costly implementation and maintenance, poor data quality, and overreliance on technology can all undermine the effectiveness of information management systems (Saffady, 2021). These challenges can lead to inaccurate decisions, decreased performance, and increased vulnerability to technological failures, ultimately offsetting the benefits of information management (Shahrzadi et al., 2024; Ngcobo et al., 2024; Klumpp & Loske, 2021). However, none of these studies looked at how retailers can create a bridge between customers and manufacturers in an effort to improve information management pertaining to beverage products. Also, the success of retail firms in Zimbabwe is greatly impacted by information management, especially the use of information and communication technology (ICT). According to studies, greater supply chain management, inventory control, customer involvement, and decision-making may all be the result of the efficient use of ICT (Chikazhe et al., 2023; Nyagadza et al., 2023). Hence it can be hypothesised that:

H1: Information management has a positive influence on retail business performance.

Rajendran et al. (2018) investigated how logistics services affect business performance through online shoppers' satisfaction level. The results of the study confirm a positive relationship between logistics services and customer satisfaction level (business performance). Furthermore, Olah et al. (2018) used a novel approach to investigate the life of logistics service companies and to conduct a comprehensive study of the management success factors of logistics service providers. It was concluded that the sequence and volume

of development in these areas can have a significant impact on the development and financial results of the factors determining the competitiveness of logistics companies. Madzimore (2019) investigated the impact of strategic networks and logistics integration on firm performance in a related study. Strategic networks, according to the findings, have a positive and significant impact on logistics integration and firm performance. Logistics integration also had a significant and positive impact on firm performance.

Investing in retail logistics can have unintended consequences, including outweighed costs, complexity, and disruptions that negatively impact performance (Klump & Loske, 2021; Sebata, 2024; Ugbebor et al., 2024; Chen et al., 2024). Overemphasizing logistics efficiency can also divert focus from customer service and marketing, while yielding diminishing returns that halt performance improvements. Furthermore, effective retail logistics have a major and favourable influence on Zimbabwean retail companies' performance. This is due to the fact that efficient logistics operations increase supply chains' efficiency, boost customer satisfaction, improve inventory control, and cut expenses—all of which boost profitability and competitiveness (Chikazhe et al., 2021; Maziriri, 2020). In this light, it is reasonable to adopt the following hypothesis:

H2: Retail logistics positively influence retail business performance.

Spruit and Almenar (2021) studied how e-commerce food packaging influences business performance in the retail sector. It was found that retail business is influenced by product packaging. Maziriri (2020) also carried out a study to evaluate the effect of green packaging and green advertising on the competitive advantage and business performance of manufacturing enterprises. It has been demonstrated that using green packaging and green advertising increases competitive advantage and business performance. Bahrainzad and Rajabi (2018) looked into how consumer perceptions of the usefulness of product packaging – in terms of label, size, shape, colour, and material – affected consumers' plans to buy. The results show that customers' evaluations of product packaging usability are significantly positively impacted by proper packaging material, shape, and labelling. The results also showed that consumer views of packaging usability have a considerable favourable impact on impulse buying.

The importance of attractive packaging may be diminishing due to shifting consumer priorities. As consumers increasingly focus on sustainability and environmental concerns, visually appealing packaging may take a backseat (Pålsson & Sandberg, 2022). Moreover, excessive emphasis on attractive packaging can divert resources from critical aspects like product quality, customer service, and marketing (Ngcobo et al., 2024). Additionally, packaging attractiveness is subjective, and varies across cultures and individuals due to personal preferences and cultural norms (Schiffman et al., 2023). However, none of the prior studies included packaging characteristics like packaging materials that are lighter in weight, easier for customers to open during consumption, easier to reseal and store and that ensure safe transportation and distribution in their focus. Because attractive product packaging affects consumer perceptions, buying decisions, and brand image, it has a substantial impact on retail company performance in Zimbabwe. Good packaging may draw customers in, set things apart, and eventually increase sales (Chikazhe et al., 2020; Kaondera et al., 2023). Thus, it can be hypothesised that:

H3: Attractive packaging has a positive influence on retail business performance.

Zhang et al. (2020) studied the widespread use of information technology for the modernization of logistics information management. It was concluded that the new generation of information technology encourages the use of modern logistics management, which will aid businesses in their transition to the logistics integration process. Equally, Kolding et al. (2019) investigated how logistics within large organisations is affected by information management. The study results show that information management plays a significant role in the logistics of an organisation. However, excessive information management can have unintended consequences, including information overload, which can lead to decision paralysis, decreased productivity, and increased errors in retail logistics management (Ngcobo et al., 2024). Furthermore, information management systems are only as effective as the people using them, and human errors, lack of training, and resistance to change can all negate their

benefits. Additionally, poor data quality can undermine the effectiveness of information management systems, which leads to inaccurate decisions and decreased retail logistics performance (Klump & Loske, 2021). Previous studies did not focus on how retailers can benefit through proper management of information pertaining retail logistics. Therefore, it can be hypothesised that:

H4: Information management positively influences retail logistics management.

Literature has evidence on the importance of product packaging (Prajogo et al., 2018; Mathias et al., 2011). Kapoor and Kumur (2019) stress that packaging serves considerably more purposes than only safeguarding a product. It is a crucial marketing tool that promotes branding, highlights the greatest qualities of the product, and gives customers an unforgettable experience (Kolding et al., 2019). It is a doorway that can take your company and goods to new heights. On the other hand, attractive packaging is driven by factors beyond information management, including design, creativity, marketing, and branding strategies (Saffady, 2021). Visual appeal is influenced by colour, shape, and graphics, while consumer preferences and trends also play a significant role. Moreover, packaging functionality, such as protection, ease of use, and convenience, is not directly related to information management (Schiffman et al., 2023; Srivastava, 2022; Spruit & Almenar, 2021). Yet, none of the studies looked at the relationship between information management and attractive packaging within the retail sector. Additionally, appealing packaging and educational labelling are essential for product success in Zimbabwe. Labels guarantee customer safety and promote brand awareness by providing crucial product characteristics such as ingredients, nutritional data, and expiration dates (Madzimure, 2019). Businesses may differentiate themselves in the competitive market by using eye-catching, personalised labels that adhere to industry requirements (Kamoyo et al., 2025; Murombo et al., 2025). As a result, it is proposed that:

H5: Information management significantly influences attractive packaging.

Retail logistics plays a mediating role in the relationship between information management and retail performance, thereby enabling firms to optimize logistics and to drive success (Mishra et al., 2024). Also, the seamless and effective flow of goods from production to the final consumer is ensured by retail logistics, which plays a critical mediating role between suppliers and customers. This has an impact on supply chain performance and customer satisfaction (Rashid et al., 2024). This study delves deeper into this mediating role, seeking nuanced insights into the relationships between information management, logistics, and retail performance. Information management aids packaging decisions, facilitates innovation and guides design, material selection, and branding strategies (Chikazhe et al., 2020). While direct relationships among these variables are established in literature, this study uniquely examines their interplay, addresses a knowledge gap and provides novel perspectives on the retail logistics landscape.

H6: Retail logistics play a mediating role on the relationship between information management and retail sector performance.

Research highlights the mediating role of attractive packaging in the relationship between information management and retail performance. Studies show that appealing packaging influences customer opinions and purchase decisions, and that information management directs package innovation (Srivastava et al., 2022; Elkhattat & Medhat, 2022). Despite its growing importance, research on the mediating role of attractive packaging is scarce. This study addresses this knowledge gap, explores how attractive packaging communicates product information, creates emotional connections, and differentiates products, ultimately influencing customer purchasing decisions. Effective information management enables retailers to design packaging that meets customer needs, reduces waste, and minimizes environmental impact, which leads to improved customer satisfaction and increased packaging efficiency (Spruit & Almenar, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Based on the preceding discussions, this study hypothesizes:

H7: Attractive packaging plays a mediating role in the relationship between information management and retail sector performance.

The following conceptual framework (Figure 1) is proposed based on the preceding discussion:

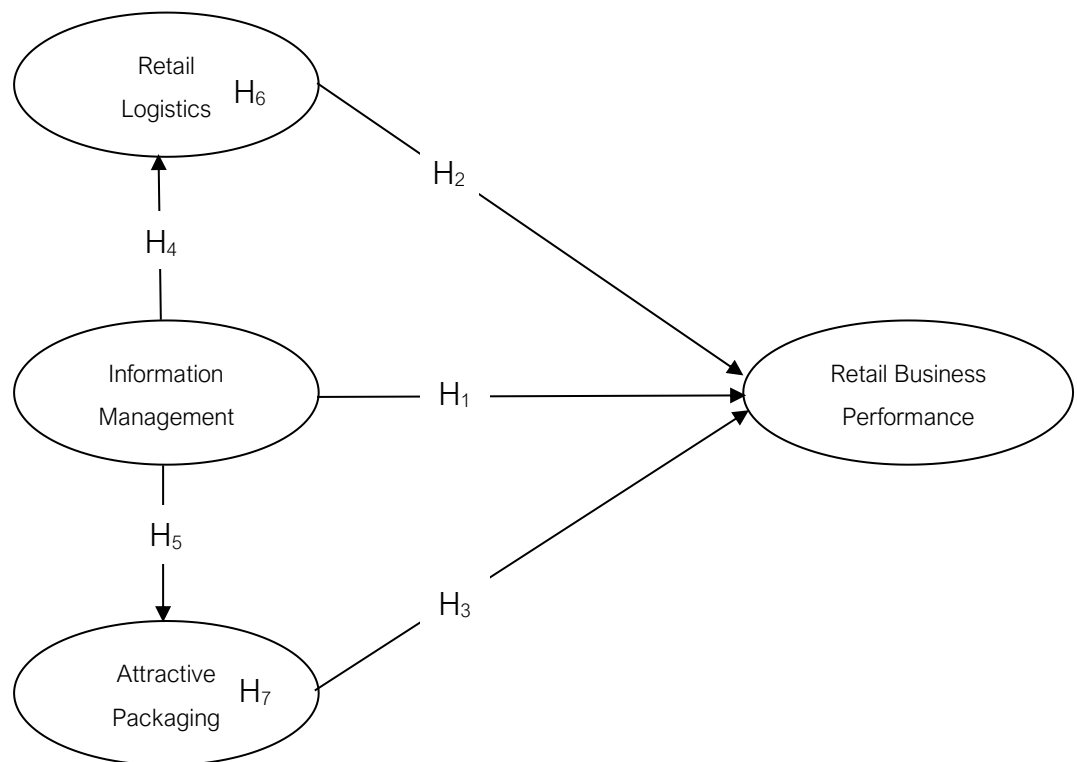


Figure 1: Conceptual framework. Source: Authors' own

3. Methodology

In June 2023, data were collected from 235 managerial employees and their support workers in the retail enterprises (supermarkets) in Harare, Zimbabwe, using a cross-section survey. Respondents were drawn from OK Stores, Spar Pick n Pay, Food Lover's Market and Choppies. Harare was chosen since it is home to the majority of Zimbabwe's retail companies. The majority of retail businesses in Harare have branches around the country, and their business practices are uniform throughout the country. Randomly selected heads of retail managerial employees and their support workers were given questionnaires to complete. In order to eliminate prejudice, respondents were given up to three days to complete the questionnaire at their leisure time. This study employed a robust methodology by targeting managerial employees and support workers in Harare retail sector, with a sufficient sample size of 235 respondents selected randomly to minimize bias. Data were collected using self-administered questionnaires, allowing for thoughtful and accurate responses. By focusing on Harare, the study's findings can be generalized to Zimbabwe's retail sector, and the anonymous and self-administered nature of the questionnaire reduced prejudice and social desirability bias, ensuring reliable and accurate results.

3.1 Questionnaire design and measures

Employees within retail firms in Harare were polled using a structured questionnaire with Likert-type items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The five-point Likert scale was developed based on a thorough literature review to identify all items under each of the four variables (retail business performance, information management, retail

logistics and attractive packaging). Demographic data were included in a separate section. The study borrowed items from prior related studies and customised them to fit the needs of the current investigation. Table 1 shows items and sources of the instrument used to gather data.

Table 1. Questionnaire items and sources. Source: Authors' own

Items	Sources
<i>Retail business performance</i>	
The organisation is making huge profits	Bahrainizad & Rajabi, 2018; Chege et al., 2020
Customer are satisfied and continue to do business with the same firm	
Superior customer service is experienced	
Sales are on the increase	
The market share continues to expand	
<i>Retail logistics</i>	
Retailers' replenish stocks in a timely manner	Sina & Wu, 2023 Tarigan et al., 2021
There is proper movement of stocks between manufacturers and retailers	
Inventory control is properly exercised by retailers	
There is sufficient warehousing space within retail shops	
Supplier response is positive when retailers require stocks	
State of goods is good when delivered to retailers	
Modern warehousing of goods is practised by retailers	
Stocks are transported to retail units in good shape	
<i>Information Management</i>	
Retailers make use of customer feedback to improve communication	Prajogo et al., 2018; Rajendran et al., 2018
Retailers provide feedback to manufacturers about customer complaints	
Retailers use information communication technology to relay messages to manufacturers for quicker deliveries	
Retailers provide timely response to customer complaints	
Retailers gather data for decision making	
Retailers track inventories in a timely manner in order to service customers	
<i>Attractive Packaging</i>	
Easy to ship packages are used	Madzimure, 2019; Maziriri, 2020; Olah et al., 2018; Zhang et al., 2020
Products have an attractive appearance on shelf	
Products are easy to store	
Environmental friendly packages are used	
Easy to dispose packaging is used	
Easy to open packages	
Packaging is informative	

A total of 235 of the 270 distributed questionnaires were returned and usable, which gave an exceptional response rate of 87%. According to Hendra and Hill (2019), an 80% response rate is adequate, while an 87% score is outstanding. Males made up the majority of respondents (72%), with females accounting for only 28% of those who took part in the survey. The study found that 55% of those who responded had at least a bachelor's degree. This meant that the majority of retail management employees in Harare were educated enough to

understand the retail business performance and how it is affected by management of information, retail logistics and attractive packaging. The study also found out that 34% of respondents had worked for their companies for a period between 6 and 10 years, while 33% had worked for more than 10 years. So, data were gathered from experienced employees.

3.2 Scale validation

Before hypotheses testing, scale validation was conducted in SPSS V21 through discriminant validity and convergent validity. The Kaiser–Meyer Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of Sphericity were used in the study to assess sampling adequacy. The sampling adequacy results were satisfactory: Kaiser–Meyer Olkin sampling adequacy, 0.522 Bartlett's test of Sphericity – about chi-square 938.490, df 630, Sig. 0.000). Field (2009) suggested that the KMO statistic be at least 0.5, and that the Bartlett's test of Sphericity be significant at $p < 0.05$. To extract principal components, the Varimax (with Kaiser Normalisation) rotation approach was utilised. The rotation provided a solution with a total variance explained of 67.308% after six rounds. No elements were eliminated due to factor loadings less than 0.4 or double loading.

3.3 Convergent validity

Convergent validity was tested as part of the scale validation process utilising model fit indices, reliability, standardised factor loadings and critical ratios. The minimum conditions for the measurement model fit indices were acceptable. Table 2 shows the results for the measurement model fit indices and table 3 displays the results for standardised factor loadings, individual item reliabilities, critical ratios, Cronbach's alpha reliability and composite reliability.

Table 2. Measurement model fit indices. *Source: Authors' own*

Fit indices	Measurement model	Recommended values	Sources
χ^2/DF	2.02	≤ 3.000	Hair et al. (2010),
GFI	.918	> 0.900	Hooper et al. (2008)
AGFI	.946	> 0.900	
NFI	.921	> 0.900	
TLI	.912	> 0.900	
CFI	.907	> 0.900	
RMSEA	.065	< 0.080	

Table 3. Constructs, standardised factor loadings, individual item reliabilities, critical ratios, Cronbach's alpha reliability and composite reliability. *Source: Authors' own*

Construct	Standardised Factor Loading	Individual Item Reliability	Critical Ratio	Cronbach's alpha	Composite Reliability
<i>Retail business performance</i>					
RBP1	.803	.945	-	.913	.979
RBP2	.891	.876	18.214***		
RBP3	.912	.823	19.678***		
RBP4	.798	.794	20.172***		

RBP5	.903	.854	15.745***		
<i>Information Management</i>					
IM1	.811	.786	-	.908	.952
IM2	.907	.816	14.247***		
IM3	.814	.817	16.324***		
IM4	.902	.902	20.451***		
IM5	.805	.834	11.247***		
IM6	.761	.803	9.789***		
<i>Retail Logistics</i>					
RL1	.835	.789	-	.801	.909
RL2	.786	.805	21.045***		
RL3	.824	.913	22.678***		
RL4	.872	.917	19.475***		
RL5	.785	.887	17.015***		
<i>Attractive Packaging</i>					
AP1	.735	.799	-	.902	.949
AP2	.872	.901	13.247***		
AP3	.784	.876	19.247***		
AP4	.891	.865	22.178***		
AP5	.827	.893	18.017***		
AP6	.829	.904	17.364***		
Notes: – CR is fixed; ***significant at $p < 0.001$					

Results shown in Table 3 indicate that all items' standardised factor loadings exceeded the minimal threshold of 0.6 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Critical ratios had similar significance at $p < 0.001$. Additionally, all composite reliability test outcomes exceeded Cronbach's alpha test outcomes. As a consequence, convergent outcome minimal results were fulfilled.

3.4 Discriminant validity

Average variance extracted (AVEs) were compared with corresponding squared inter-construct correlations (SICCs) to establish discriminant validity (Ronkko & Cho, 2022). The results in Table 4 show that all AVEs were above 0.5 and bigger than SICCs, which indicates that the discriminant validity minimal criteria were met (Henseler et al., 2014).

Table 4. Average variance extracted and squared inter-construct correlations. *Source: Authors' own*

Construct	RBP	IM	RL	AP
Retail business performance (RBP)	.608			
Information Management (IM)	.289	.721		
Retail Logistics (RL)	.374	.418	.653	
Attractive Packaging (AP)	.392	.347	.404	.711
Note: diagonal elements represent average variance extracted				

4. Results

4.1 Structural equation modelling

The study hypotheses were tested in order to ascertain the nature of the correlations between variables once the factors underlying the constructs had been identified. Structural equation modelling (SEM) was used in AMOS 21 to test the following hypotheses:

- H1: Information management has a positive influence on retail business performance
- H2: Retail logistics positively influence retail business performance
- H3: Attractive packaging has a positive influence on retail business performance
- H4: Information management positively influences retail logistics management
- H5: Information management significantly influences attractive packaging
- H6: Retail logistics play a mediation role on the relationship between information management and retail sector performance.
- H7: Attractive packaging plays a mediation role on the relationship between information management and retail sector performance.

As expected, model fit indices ($\chi^2/DF = 2.68$; GFI = 0.917; AGFI = 0.911; NFI = 0.923; TLI = 0.931; CFI = 0.922; RMSEA = 0.45) were also satisfactory. The results in Table 5 shows that all hypothesised relationships H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 were supported. Table 5 presents the results of the hypotheses.

Table 5. Hypotheses test results. Source: Authors' own

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	SRW	CR	Remark
H ₁	Information Management → Retail Business Performance	0.386	4.125***	Supported
H ₂	Retail Logistics → Retail Business Performance	0.297	6.387***	Supported
H ₃	Attractive Packaging → Retail Business Performance	0.501	7.210***	Supported
H ₄	Information Management → Retail Logistics	0.326	4.421***	Supported
H ₅	Information Management → Attractive Packaging	0.329	5.645***	Supported

Notes: SRW standardised regression weight, CR critical ratio, *** significant at $p < 0.001$, ^{ns} not significant

Table 5 shows that H1, H2, H3, H4 and H5 were all supported. This implies the following: retail business performance was determined by information management, retail logistics and attractive packaging. Also, information management influenced retail logistics and information management. Table 6 presents the results for the mediation effects of retail logistics and attractive packaging on the information management-retail business performance relationship (H6 and H7).

Table 6. Hypotheses test results for H6 and H7. Source: Authors' own

Hypothesis	Path	Description	Path Coefficient	Comments
H ₆	IM → RL → RBP	RL mediates the effect of IM on RBP	0.257***	Partial mediation
H ₇	IM → AP → RBP	AP mediates the effect of IM on RBP	0.302***	Partial mediation

Note: IM-Information Management, RL-Retail Logistics, RBP-Retail Business Performance, AP-Attractive Packaging

The results in Table 6 show that the path IM-RL-RBP was significant (path coefficient = 0.257; $p < 0.001$). Route coefficients often lie between -1 and +1: strong negative links are indicated closer to -1, and strong positive relationships appear closer to +1. This implies that supply retail logistics partially mediates the effect of information management and retail business performance. Retail logistics has a partial mediation effect since direct relationship was established between information management and retail business performance. Hence, H₆ was supported. Similarly, the path IM-AP-RBM was significant (path coefficient = 0.302; $p < 0.001$). This suggests that attractive packaging partially mediates the information management-retail business performance relationship. Hence, H₇ was supported.

5. Discussion

While there is a general understanding in the present literature, which indicates various factors that influence general business performance (Bahrainizad & Rajabi, 2018; Chege et al., 2020; Maziriri, 2020; Olah et al., 2018; Prajogo et al., 2018; Rajendran et al., 2018; Spruit & Almenar, 2021; Zhang et al., 2020), previous studies overlooked the effect of information management, retail logistics and attractive packaging especially within the retail sector, notably within emerging markets like Zimbabwe. Thus, the current study sought to narrow this gap by establishing the influence of information management, retail logistics and attractive packaging on retail business performance. The study's findings are in line with the theory of Motivated Information Management, which spells out that information management is one of the driving forces behind decision making. Thus, the current study found that decisions on information management drive retail business performance, attractive packaging and retail logistics. Moreover, the current study addressed another key question on how information management within the retail sector influences retail logistics and attractive packaging. The first question was answered by the quantitative testing of the effect of information management, retail logistics and attractive packaging on retail business performance. Secondly, the effect of information management on retail logistics and attractive packaging was tested quantitatively to yield results. Last, the mediating effect of retail logistics and attractive packaging on information management-retail business performance was tested.

Many studies on business performance conducted to date were mainly concerned with developed markets with very little studies done in emerging markets particularly in the Sub-Saharan region and Zimbabwe to be specific (Ganyam & Ivungu, 2019; Kolding et al., 2019; Madzimore, 2019). Therefore, a study like this was necessary as it provides a deeper understanding and corroborates present literature on retail business management especially in emerging markets like Zimbabwe.

Firstly, the study established a positive relationship on the information management-retail business performance relationship giving support to H₁. This implies that proper management of information between retailers, customers and suppliers enhances the relationship, which can be translated into business growth. Most retail employees who partook in this study agreed that the management of information to do with stock balancing between supplier and retailer is critical for business success. Thus, retail managers ought to ensure that they make use of customer feedback to improve information management. Also, retailers

should provide feedback to manufacturers, thus they have to provide timely response to feedback. Through proper information management, retailers are able to track inventories to determine what is ordered.

The study results also indicate a strong relationship between retail logistics and retail business performance, thus, confirming H2. There was high concurrence among the respondents regarding retail logistics as a factor that strongly impacts retail business. It is clear from the findings that successful retail logistics improves business performance. Moreover, customers are happier when logistics are good. This way, more sales and brand loyalty are generated (Baack et al., 2019) and increased consumer happiness is the result. Hence, retail managers should monitor stock movement and timely replenishment of stocks. Proper movement of stocks from manufacturer to intermediary and the wholesaler has to be monitored as part of inventory control. Retailers ought to ensure sufficient storage space and good state of goods when products are delivered.

Attractive packaging-retail business performance tests results indicate a positive relationship, hence, H3 was supported. The results of the study indicated that the packaging of products is crucial to retailers. This supports that packaging is an important business component (Shekhar & Raveendran, 2016) that can boost competitiveness in the movement of products from the producer to the final point of sale. Therefore, retailers should ensure that products have an attractive appearance on shelf through expected packages. Retailers should also alert manufacturers on the use of environmentally friendly packages which are easy to open during consumption and easy to dispose of. Retailers ought to recommend innovative packaging which makes products easy to ship and store products as this can improve the retail-customer relationship. Retailers must raise the alarm to producers on the need to include informative packaging, which also accommodate specific markets in terms of language.

As for the results of the information management-retail logistics relationship, it was concluded that the variables have a positive relationship, accordingly, H4 is confirmed. Participants highlighted the need to have updated information between retailers and suppliers to enhance business performance. This supports the notion that information management plays a significant role in the logistics of an organisation (Zhang et al., 2020).

Also, the information management-attractive packaging relationship was supported, which confirms H5. Respondents concurred that proper information relaying, especially in the form of feedback, results in suppliers improving their packaging. The finding corroborates with Chikazhe et al. (2020)'s view, who claimed that packaging and packaging design have clearly become an important strategy for distinction in the food and retail industries. Also, the packaging provides simplicity in order to support the handling and storage of products within a logistics system and among end users (Regattieri et al., 2019). The study confirmed that retail logistics and attractive packaging mediate the relationship between information management and retail business performance. In Zimbabwe, robust logistics systems encompassing inventory tracking, demand forecasting, and decentralized warehousing help mitigate infrastructure challenges, ensuring timely deliveries, reducing stockouts, and enhancing operational efficiency. This reliability fosters customer trust, repeat purchases, and improved performance. Similarly, effective information management enhances packaging strategies by providing insights into customer preferences, enabling tailored designs that boost brand differentiation. In a competitive market like Zimbabwe, well-designed packaging strengthens emotional connections, perceived value, and sustainability, which are key drivers of customer satisfaction and loyalty. These findings address a gap in literature, offering new insights into how retail logistics and attractive packaging mediate information management performance in the retail sector.

6. Implications

The Zimbabwean supermarket retail sector operates in a complex environment characterized by macroeconomic instability, infrastructure deficiencies, and supply chain vulnerabilities, including challenges such as exchange rate gaps, electricity shortages, poor roads, limited digital infrastructure, import dependency for packaging materials, profit repatriation barriers, and working capital constraints, necessitating strategic calibration of information management, logistics, and packaging to ensure profitability. Zimbabweans should adopt cost-effective inventory management solutions, such as lightweight software,

hybrid manual-digital systems, and community-based inventory pools to maintain stock visibility without substantial upfront investment.

Retailers can also benefit from logistics adaptations like decentralized warehousing, flexible routing, and collaborative distribution to mitigate transport disruption risks. Furthermore, partnering with local packaging manufacturers can reduce forex exposure, promote sustainable material solutions, and support circular economy models. By leveraging these strategies, retailers can enhance their resilience and competitiveness in Zimbabwe's challenging business environment. Retail organisations' management should establish information systems that manage retail logistics activities effectively and efficiently in order to improve their performance. This suggests that new information technologies should be implemented in order to track stock movement and keep up with the changing needs and desires of customers.

Retailers can optimize inventory management and logistics by implementing tech-driven solutions such as barcode/ Radio-Frequency Identification tracking (RFID) tracking, Global Positioning System (GPS) fleet tracking, and just-in-time deliveries. Warehouse management systems can improve stock organization, while last-mile delivery solutions like motorbike couriers or collaborative distribution can reduce costs. Additionally, digitizing import/export documentation and exploring blockchain technology can enhance cross-border trade efficiency and contribute to chain transparency.

Information management can assist top managers in identifying and resolving problems and weaknesses within the retail sector, as well as can assist in making informed decisions that boost a company's financial performance. Retailers who invest in information management technology on a regular basis stay competitive in a constantly changing market. To enhance data-driven decision-making, retailers can adopt incremental tech solutions like basic inventory tracking software and mobile-based POS systems to monitor stock levels and track sales.

Staff training and data literacy programs can improve record-keeping and reporting, while leveraging customer insights through loyalty programs and simple analytics tools can help gather consumer behaviour data and track trends, ultimately informing business decisions. Retail businesses have a wide range of stock keeping units, making it difficult to manage stocks without the use of advanced information technology solutions. Other company competencies, such as retail logistics performance and performance management, are heavily reliant on information management capabilities. To increase the performance of retail organizations, top management should focus on providing favourable conditions for information technology development.

Packaging is the first move that entices a customer to try a new product. Attractive packaging has the potential to influence a customer's decision to purchase a product even if the customer is unfamiliar with the product. The primary goal of packing is to keep the product safe during transit and until it is delivered to the client. Customers can readily identify the product thanks to its attractive packaging, and the information on the package helps to raise brand awareness.

Top management in the retail businesses are encouraged to think about attractive packaging when making decisions because it has a propensity to boost business performance. Retail firms should make sure the appearance of packaging sends the right message. Feedback must be channelled to manufacturers to design a package which sells and tells with the right wording. Also, the package to the product should also be fitted so that the product can be safely transported. Moreover, retailers ought to advise manufacturers to make the package user-friendly in a way that it is easy to dispose of without causing environmental pollution.

Zimbabwean retailers can boost appeal and sustainability by adopting eco-friendly packaging incentives, such as tax breaks for biodegradable materials and local sourcing of sustainable materials like banana leaves or bamboo. Packaging designs can incorporate traditional patterns, colours, and languages to resonate with consumers, while storytelling packaging can enhance brand loyalty. Cost-effective solutions like refill stations for bulk products and minimalist designs can reduce packaging waste and production costs, striking a balance between cultural relevance, cost-effectiveness, and sustainability.

As regards retail logistics, retail companies must oversee a variety of operational tasks, such as distribution, warehouse staff management, transportation, inventory control, and customer service. When these areas are managed well in the retail industry, products arrive

on schedule, in good shape, and are reasonably priced for customers when they are needed. Retail logistics lowers costs and guarantees an effective supply chain for merchants. The most effective retailers should have a vast network of locations and warehouses, some of which use the cross-docking concept to maintain a steady supply of merchandise within their stores. In addition, to prevent stockouts, merchandise has to be received, unloaded, and put on store shelves in plenty of time.

To improve retail business performance, Zimbabwean retailers should invest in information management systems, integrate information management with retail logistics, and leverage information management to enhance customer experience and supply chain efficiency. This can provide a competitive advantage in the market. Similarly, emerging markets should prioritize on retail logistics and attractive packaging as these were found to be key drivers for retail sector performance. Retail managers should understand the importance of incorporating retail logistics and attractive packaging concepts in their routine operations. Mobile-based inventory tracking systems and community-led packaging waste initiatives should also be implemented to improve retail logistics and packaging sustainability. Public-private partnerships can also be leveraged to upgrade logistics infrastructure and to promote sustainable packaging innovation, such as biodegradable or reusable packaging. Additionally, sector-wide standards for eco-friendly packaging and incentives for businesses adopting sustainable practices can be explored. Comparative studies across urban and rural contexts, as well as different industries can help identify sector-specific mediators and be channelled to contribute to tailored solutions.

7. Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to consider the effects of effective and adaptive information management on retail company performance. It also explored the role of retail information management in influencing attractive packaging and retail logistics information. The findings demonstrate that information management is critical in integrating the functions of attractive packaging and retail logistics in order to improve retail business performance.

The study focused mostly on retail businesses, particularly on food and grocery shops. Other retail industries, such as service retailing, hardware, apparel, and online shopping, may perform comprehensive studies. The study's findings, based on data from Harare, may have limited generalizability to other regions or sectors in Zimbabwe due to differences in infrastructure, consumer behaviour, and market dynamics. Future research should test these relationships in diverse settings, such as rural areas and other sectors, to enhance external validity and ensure broader applicability of the results. A qualitative strategy can be introduced to the study to supplement the shortcomings of the quantitative technique used in this study. Future research should build on this study's findings by expanding geographically to other cities and rural areas, testing the mediation effects of retail logistics and packaging across industries like apparel, electronics, and agriculture, and should incorporate cross-country comparisons with neighbouring Southern African countries to assess regional and contextual differences as well as to strengthen the broader relevance of the results.

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