

Impact of GST on Business Operations for Small-Scale Retailers in India: A Cross-Sectional Analysis

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of Goods and Services Tax (GST) on business operations for small-scale retailers in India and give recommendations, suggestions to improve the compliance of sustainable growth of GST in India. A survey was conducted small-scale retailers in the Prayagraj district, India, focusing on their perspectives regarding GST and ease of doing business (EODB). Secondary data was sourced from research periodicals, internet site, and reports from entities such as the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the District Industries Centre (DIC), government periodicals, and online resources. The findings of the study reveal significant variations in retailers' opinions concerning GST, while the GST structure affect retailers' ease of doing business. Small-scale retailers encounter challenges related to compliance costs, GSTN issues, time-consuming tax return filing processes, and the necessity for well-trained personnel to ensure compliance.

Keywords: Goods and Services Tax (GST), Sustainable Growth, Retail Operations, GST council, Indian economy

JEL codes: G18, H20, L81, O24, M21

1.0 Introduction

“The King (i.e., the State) shall promote trade and commerce by setting up trade routes by land and by water and establishing market towns and ports”

**Kautilya's Arthashastra, 4th century
¹B.C**

The Small-scale retailers play a crucial role in the Indian economy, contributing to industrial development, technological advancements, and regional growth. These retailers are generally classified as micro, small, and medium enterprises based on their investment in equipment and number

of employees. With the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax in India, small-scale retailers are also impacted by this tax reform. This transformative tax reform aims to streamline the complex tax structure by amalgamating numerous indirect taxes into a unified system. By doing so, GST is poised to diminish documentation expenses and enhance transparency within the tax regime (Kashif and Garima, 2017). It will also create a common market by eliminating hindrances in the present indirect taxation system, providing respite to businesses from multiple compliances under various state statutes (Venkat, 2016). However, there may be challenges for certain sectors, such as service providers, who may experience an increase in the effective tax rate and short-term inflation (Lynley, 2015). Additionally, compliance with GST, particularly for small businesses, may be influenced by factors such as perceptions of deterrence, tax morale, social norms, and the burden of compliance costs (Kotishwar, 2020). Overall, GST is considered a business-friendly reform that is likely to have long-term benefits for the Indian economy (Natarajan, 2017).

The implementation of GST has directly impacted the ease of doing business in many countries. With the implementation of GST in India, there has been a notable improvement in the ease of doing business. Ten parameters constitute the basis of the Ease of Doing Business (EODB) ranking. 'Starting a Business', 'Construction Permits', 'Getting

Electricity', 'Getting Credit', 'Paying Taxes', 'Trade Across Borders', 'Resolving Insolvency' and 'Enforcing Contracts', in providing a sustainable business environment in Taxation law and Tax administration. Additionally, implementing GST has streamlined the taxation process for small-scale retailers. Previously, with multiple taxes and levies, the taxation process for GST compliance was cumbersome and time-consuming. The introduction of GST has simplified and harmonized the tax structure, eliminating the cascading effect of multiple taxes and reducing transaction costs. As a result, businesses involved in e-commerce can now focus more on their core operations and expansion rather than getting entangled in tax-related complexities. Furthermore, the implementation of GST has also led to an increase in implementing GST has also led to increased transparency and accountability in the business environment. Businesses are now required to maintain proper records and file regular GST returns, which has improved overall compliance and governance standards.

Three years post-implementation, GST compliance remains a significant challenge for exporters, job workers, and MSMEs (Lokeshwarri, 2020). Despite this, the concept of "One Nation, One Tax" under GST has facilitated the launch of businesses, startups, and various ventures. GST consolidates thirty-seven different types of indirect taxes of union and state government, streamlining the tax system. Moreover, it simplifies return processes,

particularly benefiting MSMEs, SMEs, retailers, startups, entrepreneurs, and other stakeholders. These efforts are crucial steps toward realizing the envisioned benefits of GST implementation.

The sustainability of Goods and Services Tax is a crucial aspect that needs to be addressed in order to ensure its long-term effectiveness and impact (Chen et al., 2020). GST Stakeholders should consider several aspects of tax to help their organizations accelerate towards a more sustainable future. This includes understanding the tax consequences of sustainability-related business changes and ensuring transparent compliance and reporting, which helps communicate the company's sustainability story to markets and stakeholders (Vadicherla & Saravanan, 2014). Furthermore, considering the convergence of sustainability, the input tax credit (ITC) chain must be considered at every stage of the product's life, including manufacturing, wholesaler, retailers and consumption, customer support, and disposal after the product (Dey et al., 2011). By doing so, the focus on the holistic approach is critical for addressing concerns over sustainability, whether driven by legislation, public interest, or competitive opportunities. Overall, the sustainability of Goods and Services Tax depends on its alignment with the principles of environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Additionally, organizations must prioritize sustainable practices in their GST compliance, including using sustainable policies and best practices,

among other things. The enactment of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India aims to establish a unified marketplace for small- and medium-sized businesses. This will facilitate the participants in the GST to grasp the philosophy of "One Nation, One Tax, One Market." Foreign investment and "Make in India" campaigns will be stimulated by it. A system known as "Streamline Taxation" enables the Union and State governments to harmonize their tax laws, regulations, and practices.

GST plays a crucial role in addressing the negative impacts of cascading or double taxation. Additionally, it introduces uniformity in procedures for taxpayer registration, Input Tax Credit (ITC) refunds, tax return filing and classification of goods and services. As a destination-based consumption tax, GST is advantageous for consuming states, thereby enhancing the investment climate nationwide. This, in turn, contributes to the overall progress of the Indian economy

To address this issue, the study encourages an in-depth examination of how the Goods and Services Tax (GST) affects small-scale retailers' operations in India and offers advice concerning how GST is growing sustainably.

2.0 Literature Review

As far as the researcher explores the review of literature on indirect tax reforms, the relationship between GST and Small-Scale Retailers, and related literature that have been determined and presented.

Dikshit and Singh (2022) discuss the awareness and sustainability of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) among traders and shopkeepers in Prayagraj District, India. A survey was conducted of 80 traders and shopkeepers to understand their level of knowledge about GST. The consequences showed the most respondents were aware of mechanism of GST. However, more than half of the traders did not fully understand the legislation. The study concludes that GST can boost India's economy if the system is made simpler for small businesses through training and clarification of processes. *Murak and Suresh (2021)* outlined in his study GST has replaced multiple indirect taxes in India since July 2017, aiming to simplify the tax structure and reduce the tax burden. Small Scale Industries (SSIs) are vital to the Indian economy, contributing significantly to production, exports, and employment. The impact of GST on SSIs includes both benefits and challenges. Positive impacts include simplified taxation for businesses dealing with sales and services, while challenges involve adapting to the new tax regime and compliance requirements. The study focuses on analyzing the role of SSIs, positive impacts of GST, challenges faced, and providing suitable suggestions for SSIs to navigate the changes effectively. *Geeta et al., (2019)* Advocated that the lack of preparedness on the part of MSME business owners for the GST, the necessity to adapt the GST network, and other similar tendencies are proving to be the barriers preventing the actual benefits of the GST from being realised. According

to the survey the impact that was carried out with small scale retailers' firms, it's evident that individuals believe the effects of GST are balanced and that there is room for development. *Gera and Purankar (2019)* According to the study, Russia has the easiest business climate among the BRICS countries to start a firm in and ease of doing business, while South Africa and Brazil fall behind. According to rankings for ease of doing business, China and India come in second and third, respectively. The MNCs will use this data to help them select markets based on how business-friendly they are. India, Brazil, and South Africa must reduce the number of procedures and establishment timeframes in order to be considered as business destinations. *Kamble and Bhoir (2019)* emphasize India's tax landscape and applaud the GST as a monumental improvement. GST aims to streamline the complex tax structure by consolidating multiple taxes into a single, comprehensive tax. This indirect tax system, spanning production to consumption, transforms India into a seamless trading nation. The study emphasizes GST's advantageous influence on simplifying the transportation of products, reducing various taxes, and promoting economic efficiency. The authors express optimism that the "One nation, one tax" approach will be a game-changer, benefiting both the common man and the overall economic growth of the country. *Tiwari and Singh (2018)* underscore the significant indirect tax reform undertaken by the Indian government through the implementation

of the GST since July 1, 2017. GST aims to establish price uniformity for goods and services nationwide, enhancing transparency and curbing tax evasion. The authors highlight its potential to attract domestic and foreign investors, stimulate business development, alleviate unemployment, and bolster India's foreign exchange reserves. GST aligns with government initiatives like Make in India and Digital India, fostering economic growth, infrastructure development, and making the Indian equity market appealing to both domestic and foreign investors. *Verma et al. (2018)* examined how GST impacts micro, small, and medium-sized businesses (MSMEs). Positive and negative repercussions have been recognized and recorded. The report attempted to examine the problem at the time as well as how businesses were managing in the aftermath of the GST implementation. *Mishra (2018)* emphasises the significance of GST's impact on the Indian Economy by examining its effects across various sectors. The study adopts an exploratory approach, relying on secondary data for analysis. GST's nationwide implementation simultaneously across all states is seen as eliminating policy barriers. This implementation is expected to boost FDI investments, consequently bolstering the country's foreign reserves and potentially enhancing employment opportunities. Moreover, the business-friendly tax structure of GST is anticipated to foster the emergence of new start-ups in India. *Dani (2016)* highlights that the Goods and Services Tax (GST) is a transformative

initiative in India, simplifying the intricate tax structure and promoting economic growth. The GST Bill, also known as The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Second Amendment) Bill, 2014, has introduced a national-level value-added tax. By amalgamating Central and State taxes into a single payment, GST ensures uniformity throughout the country, enhancing India's domestic and international market position. Notably, GST reduces the overall tax burden for consumers, eliminates tax cascading, and fosters a business-friendly environment.

Figure 1: A diagrammatic representation review of literature between GST and Business Operation



Source: Compiled by the author

2.1 Literature GAP

The execution of GST impacted numerous sectors and stakeholder in India. This study aims to shed light on the GST's impact on the business operation in the retail sector, addressing a notable research gap. The study endeavours to understand stakeholders' perspectives in the retail sector regarding the sustainability of GST.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

1. To study how GST impacts small-scale retailers' business operations.
2. To investigate the small-scale retailer viewpoint regarding impact of GST on business operation.
3. To determine issues and challenges of small-scale retailers concerning the ease of doing business.

4.0 Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** The study conducted a thorough review of existing literature to establish the research framework. Primary data was gathered via structured questionnaires distributed among both small-scale and large-scale retailers in the Prayagraj district, focusing on their perspectives regarding GST and ease of doing business. Secondary data was also gathered from research periodicals, internet site, and intelligences from organizations such as the District Industries Centre (DIC) and Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Prayagraj, government periodicals, also online resources. The information gathered was analysed for additional insights.
- **Population, Sample and Data Collection Methods.:** A sample of 120 respondents from Prayagraj District, Uttar Pradesh, were selected to represent the small-scale store sector. The participants were selected

using the "Cluster Random Sampling technique".

- **Survey:** This paper is based on primary survey done by the researcher. The area of the study is selected on the basis of legislative assembly of Prayagraj District (Allahabad North, Allahabad South, Allahabad West, Phaphamau). The survey comprises queries related to the issues and challenges of small-scale retailers' perspectives of GST and its impact on business operation of small-scale retailers. It is designed to understand the Goods and Services Tax from the viewpoint of small-scale retailers.
- **Statistical Approach:** The researcher employed Univariate and Multivariate Analysis to analyse the data. Univariate analysis used to analyze the variable searching Average (Mean), Standard Deviation, Variance, Reliability Test, Chi-Square Test, and Analysis of Variance ANOVA (F-test) are descriptive statistics used to analyse data frequency distribution. Multivariate analysis is used to analyse the hypothesis testing of the variables.

4.2 Need of the Study

The effective execution of GST on retail sector is essential to the country's economic growth and a key source of government revenue. The retail sector fosters healthy growth and provides employment opportunities. Simplification

of business processes from an indirect tax perspective is likely to attract more large-scale retailers, leading to increased employment opportunities and greater revenue generation for the government. Improving the ease of doing business in terms of indirect taxes, particularly through GST, can address issues such as make simpler tax compliance, tumbling restrictions on inter-state supply movement of goods and services, alleviating tax burdens, and facilitating timely tax refunds. The Report of World Bank’s Doing Business has stated the factors significantly impact on India’s ranking in ease of doing business and can enhance its global standing in the “Paying Taxes”.

For study determinations, the Prayagraj district was chosen to analyze the challenges and issues encountered by the small-scale retail sector regarding the business operation. This approach enables researchers to investigate and recognize the role of GST and its implications for business activities.

4.4 Background of the Study

Prayagraj district encompasses eight Tehsils: Bara, Handia, Karchhana, Karaon, Meja, Soraon Phulpur and Prayagraj. With its strategic location, Prayagraj district enjoys connectivity to other industrial towns. It serves as a hub for marketing centres for northern Madhya Pradesh and catering to neighboring districts in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Table 1: Details of retail clusters in Prayagraj district

Small-Scale Retailer	Large-Scale Retailer
Street shops	Departmental provisions
General provisions	Multiple garages
Specialty provisions	Mail-order house
Seconds-hand goods shops	Consumer co-operative stores
Peddlers and Hawkers	Supermarket

Source: Author Finding

5.0 Data Analysis

The purpose of the present investigation, the survey aimed to assess retailers’ understanding of GST. The question was designed to elicit respondents’ perspectives, and a five-point Rensis Likert Scale instrument was employed, which ranged from “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree”.

Table 2: Scale Reliability Test on Small-Scale Retailers

Tau-equivalent reliability (α)	Internal Consistent (γ)	No of Items
0.821	Excellent	15

Source: Data collected by the researcher

The tau equivalent reliability Cronbach’s Alpha ($\hat{\alpha}$) values of 0.821 show strong reliability among the fifteen scale items. With this satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha value, the data underwent analysis for the study. It is evident that respondents comprehended questions related to GST and answered accurately. However, in certain cases, respondents struggled to understand the underlying structure and operation of the GST.

5.1 Hypothesis Testing Results

H₀₁: There is no significant association between GST awareness and business operations among small-scale retailers.

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Table 3: Awareness of GST of business operation on small-scale retailers

	PARAMETERS	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
1	GST hampered the business operations.	120	3.38	1.099	1.208
2	Sales performance	120	3.06	1.086	1.174
3	Filing taxes through GSTIN	120	3.22	.997	.995
4	GSTIN compliance procedures.	120	3.31	.995	.986
5	GST has simplified paperwork for compliance.	120	3.25	1.081	1.169
6	Adequate information and support for the smooth functioning of GST.	120	3.22	1.067	1.139
	Mean of Mean (MoM)		3.24		
				F-Value	P-Value (Significant)
	Analysis of Variances			4.983	.00
				χ ²	P-Value (Significant)
				48.984	.00

Source: - Data collected by the researcher

Interpretation: - As seen from the table 3, the mean measures, ranging from a highest mean of 3.38 to a lowest of 3.07. Retailers highlight that GST applicability has a more pronounced effect on a greater number of retailers. ANOVA analysis reveals a significant disparity in retailer opinions, with an F-ratio of 4.983 surpassing the critical value of 3.34 at a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$, leading to rejection of the Null Hypothesis (H₀). A chi-square test showed the association between the variables. The substantial chi-

square ($\div 2$) value of 48.984 and a p-value much lower than $\alpha=0.05$ indicate a significant relationship between the variables, suggesting differing retailer opinions regarding GST and ease of doing business.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis

Parameter	GST Awareness	Business Operation
Pearson Correlation	1	.046
Sig. (2-tailed)		.00
N	100	100
Pearson Correlation	.046	1
Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
N	100	100

Source: Data collected by the researcher

Interpretation: As seen from the table 4, illustrates the relationship between small-scale retailers’ business operation and their knowledge of the GST. The Pearson correlation coefficient’s value of 0.046 which indicates a moderate relationship between the small-scale retailer and awareness of the GST related to business operation.

H₀₂: There is no significant association between GST and simplifying the business ecosystem for the small-scale retail industry.

H₂: There is a significant association between GST and simplifying the business ecosystem for the small-scale retail industry.

Table 5: Association between GST and business ecosystem of small-scale retailers

	Parameters	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
1	GST is simplified, transparent, and easy tax structure	120	3.41	1.092	1.212
2	GST facilitated ease of doing business in the market.	120	3.11	1.087	1.175
3	Does GST help in easier inter-state movement of goods in the market?	120	3.18	.997	.995
4	GSTN Portal helpline/helpdesk is useful.	120	3.29	.989	.979
5	Does GST facilitate a reduction in the cascade effect?	120	3.32	1.079	1.181
6	Does GST provide easier compliance in Input Tax Credit	120	3.19	1.065	1.138
7	Does GST Enhance the export of goods and services has become easier	120	3.28	1.015	1.030
8	Issues related Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN)	120	3.14	.994	.988
9	Lack of IT infrastructure	120	3.19	1.152	1.327
	Mean of Mean (MoM)		3.23		
				F Value	P-Value (Significant)
	Analysis of Variances			6.350	.00
				χ^2	P-Value (Significant)
	Chi-Square (χ^2)			32.761	.00

Source: - Data collected by the researcher

Interpretation: As seen from the table 5, the range of means reported by small-scale retailers, from a highest of 3.41 to a lowest of 3.11. Retailers note that GST significantly impacts the time-consuming process of filing returns and underscores the necessity for trained personnel in GST procedures. The ANOVA analysis reveals a significant difference in opinions among retailers, with an F-value is 6.350 exceeding the critical value of 3.34 at a significance level of $\alpha=0.05$, leading to rejection of the

Null Hypothesis (H0). A chi-square test ($\div 2$) was showed the association between the variables. The large chi-square test ($\div 2$) value of 32.761 and the p-value is significant, which is much lower than the significance level $\alpha=0.05$, indicate a significant association between the variables

Hypothesis Testing. As seen from the table 4 and 5, summarises the outcomes of the suggested research hypothesis testing, which range from H_{01} to H_{02} . Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results of the Research Proposed.

Table 6: Result of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Research Hypothesis	F-value	Hypothesis Testing Result
H ₁	There is a significant association between GST awareness and business operations among small-scale retailers.	4.983	H ₁ Accepted
H ₂	There is a significant association between GST and simplifying the business ecosystem for the small-scale retail industry.	6.350	H ₂ Accepted

Source: Data Processing by the researcher

6.1 Findings of the study

- Small-scale retailers find the Goods and Services Tax (GST) mechanism burdensome due to the need to file multiple returns, which consumes a lot of time. Additionally, they face high expenses in appointing employee such as (Chartered accountants and tax experts) to ensure GST flawless compliance filing.
- Retailer's expressed concerns about the GST Network (GSTN) and IT infrastructure, which affects their ability to file returns smoothly.
- Compliance issues arise from the requirement to file three returns monthly, along with complex registration and refund rules, causing distress among retailers and stakeholders.
- The lack of an Input Tax Credit (ITC) on the civil costs of construction results in higher prices for retailers when they create new outlets or renovate old ones.
- For compliance with GST, small-scale retailers with an annual turnover of ¹ 10 lakh should register and receive a 12-digit identification number. It is advised that the first 10 places represent the PAN and the last two represent the state code, making GSTR reporting easier.
- The Central Board of Indirect and Customs (CBIC) would set up helpline services on social media platforms to solve GST concerns and queries raised by small-scale traders.

7.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

The introduction of GST partakes significantly impacted the Indian economy, marking a substantial shift. Monthly revenue collection averaging around ¹ 1.5 lakh crores has become the new norm. GST has emerged as a catalyst for driving domestic consumption and has contributed to savings on monthly bills for households. The number of registered taxpayers surged to 1.36 crores by 2023, reflecting its widespread adoption. Notably, monthly GST collections peaked at a record ¹ 1.87 lakh crores in April 2023, a significant increase from pre-GST levels, which typically ranged between ¹ 85,000 to ¹ 95,000 crores. The GST council has spearheaded various reform measures, focusing on simplifying procedures and rationalizing rates to enhance efficiency

The study was to investigate the link between GST structure, and impact of

6.2 Suggestions of the study

- Providing a straightforward, user-friendly GST return filing approach using GST software and apps, which do not incur high time and financial costs for business registration, would ensure compliance.
- Measures should be taken to streamline the GST filing compliance procedure and improve the Information Technology (IT) interface to facilitate the small-scale

GST on the business operations of small-scale retailers. Firstly, the GST stakeholders and retailers are aware of the GST system and its mechanism in Prayagraj District but are yet to be aware of the different aspects. India has implemented a federal GST system, which has encountered numerous challenges and issues affecting its stakeholders, including manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, and small business owners. These challenges primarily relate to the functionality and operation of the system, including the complexities surrounding Input Tax Credit (ITC). Despite these challenges, respondents demonstrate awareness of the GST structure. This study uncovered an interesting finding: there appears to be no evident link between the business operation and the level of awareness about GST between retailers and their participants. Additionally, the structure of GST doesn't seem to have a notable impact on the ease of doing business for retailers. Notably, small business owners often view the GST system as intricate and challenging to grasp. Small business owners have concerns about compliance costs and issues related to internet transactions and GST on imports. Additionally, to enhance tax collection efficiency, the government had better establish a sustainable and adaptable GST mechanism. By implementing GST, the administrative burden associated with managing multiple taxes would be significantly reduced, resulting in streamlined paperwork. This streamlined process would foster an environment conducive to business

operations, thereby bolstering the "Ease of Doing Business" index and potentially elevating India's ranking in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Report. Such improvements would not only attract foreign investment but also stimulate economic growth, ultimately contributing to an expansion of the GDP and diversification of the country's revenue sources.

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