Greentailing Along the Retailer Spectrum: A Case Study in Portland, Oregon

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Abstract

Grocery retailers act as gatekeepers between shoppers and manufacturers or producers, maintaining a strategic position within the consumption industry. Retailers are poised to filter industry perceptions and realities to consumers, in this way presenting perspectives of industry that are integral to consumption. One new perspective retailers present, greentailing, promotes environmental consciousness through TASC: thinking green, acting green, selling green and conveying green. Environmental appeals, however, can often result in greenwashing, the act of presenting falsified environmental claims, which can harm the businesses, consumers and the environment. This study examines the current retail industry and analyzes the presence of greentailing among different types of grocery retailers along a spectrum of traditional to alternative. By conducting a case study of two Portland, Oregon neighborhood grocery retailers, Safeway and New Seasons Market, this thesis examines how retailers think and act green as well as sell and convey green, or greentail, based on rhetorical analysis of each company's public reporting and semiotic analysis of breakfast cereal ecolabels within each store. Results demonstrated that retailers are limited based on mission and size. While the New Seasons' produced a greater percent and variety of ecolabels than Safeway, New Seasons' mission prevented significant expansion of the retailer beyond the Portland area. In this way, based on the nationwide scope and larger scale of Safeway's influence, the retailer's positive impact through greentailing is far greater than New Seasons. Therefore, while alternative retailers may appear to present a stronger environmental appeal through thinking and selling green, larger traditional retailers are better poised to act green based on scale and scope of the company.

Cerberus, in Greek and Roman mythology, governed the river Styx at the passageway into the underworld. Often in mythology, gatekeepers like Cerberus guard passageways, the mystery of which hides powerful truths capable of altering perceptions. In mainstream society, it is customary to take for granted certain realities without questioning the truth behind them. One's role as consumer is to make judgements of products based on these realities. The truth *behind* the reality of products, though, is often masked by familiar gatekeepers: retailers.

Within the food industry, especially, the reality behind each product is largely unknown. For the most part, we enlist the judgment of grocery retailers to distinguish between products and the companies we provide with our business, often with little dispute over the retailer's choices. By determining the products that are displayed on shelves, retailers filter consumer perceptions about the food industry.

Ecolabels are pervasive throughout society, especially within grocery stores. Whether or not one notices them, ecolabels are everywhere. Often ecolabels, declarations of the environmental virtues of businesses or products, affect consumer decisions; but these labels may not, in fact, tell the whole story, for grocery retailers as the gatekeepers control the degree to which the the food industry's messages reach shoppers. In addition to moderating consumer perceptions through product selection, retailers also use their position to represent "green" aspects of the retail experience. In this way, retailers wield great power over the consumer ethos through their ability to manipulate or alter the shopping selection and experience. These methods are referred to as "greentailing". Whether or not this influences consumption or environmental views, this study is interested in how different grocers along the retailer spectrum of traditional to alternative attempt to alter the shopping experiences through greentailing and the presentation of ecolabeled products.

This study reflects present conditions of the consumer retail experience as defined by ecolabeling and perceived retailer environmental consciousness. It will discuss ecolabeling and the relationship ecolabels play within the realm of retail, as well as consider the grocery retailing industry and important changes along the spectrum of retailers within the particular industry. This study will then compare two grocery retailers along the retailer spectrum, as per their greentailing attributes and presence of ecolabeling within their aisles. The hope for this study is to differentiate between traditional and alternative retailer methods of greentailing and those attempts to provide an environmentally conscious perspective for consumers.

Part One: Background

Ecolabeling

The *2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor*, a study assembled by The World Resource Institute, in conjunction with Big Room, Inc., depicts the current landscape of ecolabeling around the world and provides an updated survey database through ecolabelindex.com. The goal of the project and their online database is to illuminate for consumers the issues and trends of ecolabeling and eco-certification by attempting to provide increased transparency of such practices.[1]

Ideally, ecolabeling serves as a business tool and consumer guide to legitimate environmental practices. By acting as a measure of authentic environmental claims, ecolabeling can motivate environmental excellence in business and environmental consciousness in consumption. Common forms of ecolabeling employ terms like “green” or “eco-friendly” to brandish a wide range of commodities from household cleaners to banking services to food items (as is the focus of this study). Confusion arises, however, as desire to promote businesses or products in a “green” light escalates, resulting in an accumulation of environmental claims and ecolabels. Ecolabels that are confusing or misleading are referred to as “greenwashing” and has a range of negative effects. As Daniel Goleman states

> Greenwashing pollutes the data available to consumers, gumming up marketplace efficiency by pawning off misleading information to get us to buy things that do not deliver on their promise. This squanders the benefits of our purchases. Because greenwashing undermines consumer trust, it devalues sound data, instilling doubts and cynicism in customers who might want to put their dollars to good use by supporting true green innovations.[2]

Varying degrees of greenwashing by ecolabels results in a “third rail effect,” or uneasy feelings over the validity of an ecolabel that can dissuade consumers from purchasing environmentally labeled products, regardless of their credibility. This not only affects consumers and businesses, but may impact and threaten the environment. Though this study will not speak to the extent of environmental degradation caused by the food industry, it is important to note that ecolabels that

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[1] Anon. 2010. “2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute.” *Http://www.wri.org/publication/global-ecolabel-monitor* (July). http://www.wri.org/publication/global-ecolabel-monitor

[2] Goleman, Daniel. 2009. *Ecological intelligence: how knowing the hidden impacts of what we buy can change everything*. New York: Broadway Books. (p. 74)

address such issues have an opportunity to educate consumers and influence their actions to the benefit of the environment. These subversion of these benefits by the third rail effect, however, is why it is important to avoid greenwashing.[3]

The issues arising from ecolabeling confusion are not new in the United States. In 1992 the Federal Trade Commission's efforts to set restrictions for environmental labeling prompted the creation of *The Guides for the Use of Environmental Marketing Claims*, or the Green Guides.[4] The FTC's main role is to prevent “unfair and deceptive practices” in the marketplace.[5] Therefore, the Green Guides set forth that environmental claims require substantiation, qualification and disclosure, clarity, as well as avoidance of overstatement.[6] The Green Guides also specify appropriate uses of common claims such as “biodegradable,” “recyclable” and “ozone friendly.”[7] Yet, the FTC does not ordinarily take authoritative action on offending labels. Rather, self-policing within the advertising industry and dedicated watchdog organizations, like The World Resource Institute and Big Room, Inc., bare the burden of relieving the public greenwashing.

However, ecolabeling policing appears limited. As is evident through the failure or ecolabeling organizations to participate in the *2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor*’s survey, evaluative assessment~~s~~ appears to not be a primary interest of label producing agencies. The *2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor* contacted 340 ecolabels in 42 countries throughout Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America. Only 33% of those invited to participate completed the survey. While 14% started but did not finish the survey, 10% declined to take part and 42% simple did not respond or could not be reached.[8] This lack of participation serves as a commentary of the reality behind this industry’s practice, the superficial goal of which is to

[3] Bergeson, Lynn L. 2008. “The Explosion of Green Marketing Claims: FTC Jumps into the Fray.” *Environmental Quality Management* 18 (2) (December 1): 71–78. doi:10.1002/tqem.20207. (71)

[4] Bergeson, Lynn L. (71)

[5] Anon. “Enforcement Policy Statement on Food Advertising.” http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/policystmt/ad-food.shtm.

[6] Bergeson, Lynn L. (73)

[7] Bergeson, Lynn L. (73)

[8] Anon. 2010. “2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute.” *Http://www.wri.org/publication/global-ecolabel-monitor* (July). http://www.wri.org/publication/global-ecolabel-monitor. (p. 7)

facilitate transparency through labeling.

As the survey results reflect, a majority of the organizations in charge of ecolabels in the U.S. and worldwide that participated are non-profits.[9] Through the survey non-profits were revealed to more routinely utilize conformity assessments, such as site visits or audits, that measure the compliance to the label's standards of production for the ecolabeled item.[10] The high cost of improving, managing, and mandating labels proves to be an obstacle in these organizations' successful implementation of standards, especially for non-profits whose primary source of funding is application and licensing fees, or government grants.[11] Although 47% of organizations claimed to be currently enhancing their label by developing new standards, the study also found that a majority of ecolabeling organizations were unaware of basic market statistics of products, services or organization awarded their label further emphasizing the lack of concern for labeling by the organizations.[12] As well, only 31% of ecolabels regularly study the impacts of their labels though there is mounting interest from stakeholders to further understand and measure the environmental and social impact of these programs.[13]

Governmental Ecolabels

While the FTC may not act authoritatively on issues of ecolabeling, the Food and Drug Administration and United States Department of Agriculture in conjunction with the FTC regulate labeling of food products through the Nutritional Labeling and Education Act 1990. This would not be possible without implicating retailers in the regulation process.[14] The NLEA forms the basis of our current governmental ecolabeling scheme for food that today consists of USDA Organic certification and Country of Origin labeling.[15]

[9] "2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute." (11)

[10] "2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute." (11)

[11] "2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute." (12)

[12] "2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute." (12)

[13] "2010 Global Ecolabel Monitor | World Resources Institute." (12)

[14] "Enforcement Policy Statement on Food Advertising."

[15] Czarnezki, Jason J. 2011. "The Future of Food Eco-Labeling: Organic, Carbon Footprint, and Environmental Life-Cyscle Analysis." *Stanford Environmental Law Journal* 30 (1) (February): 3–49. (p. 13)

Through the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 and the National Organic program, the USDA maintains a four-tiered labeling program for organic products, defined as those "produced and handled without the use of synthetic substances."[16] Products may carry the USDA label as 100% organic, 95% organic, or if 70% organic (in which case the product may state "made with organic ingredients").[17] Products made of less than 70% organic materials may list the organic ingredients separately but may be awarded no label. Similarly, products may seek accreditation from other organizations up to the point that their product is at least 70% organic. As well, farmers whose annual income is $5000 or less may receive a declaration of compliance when selling organic agricultural products on farm stands or in farmers markets, circumventing certification fees.[18]

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 and Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 now makes it possible for consumers to learn the source of many food products. Grocery retailers, including club warehouse stores, are mandated to provide labeling for ground meats, wild and farm-raised fish and shellfish, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables, certain nuts, and ginseng.[19] While current laws may apply mostly to agricultural or unprocessed foods, Czarnezki posits that future legislation may be expanded to include the country of final processing or require the origin of a product's separate ingredients to be listed on a manufacturer webpage. Such labeling formulated on the basis of food safety and domestic economic protectionism poses an important role in the movement to inform and educate consumers on ecological issues. Knowledge of a product's origin allows consumers to buy based on seasonality, local markets, and that country's cultivation practices and thus to select food with minimal food miles and the most sustainable practices.[20] Currently, this information is not explicitly stated on mandated labels and so requires more effort by consumers, which reveals an information deficit and an area where labeling can be improved.

Grocery Retailers

[16] Czarnezki, Jason J. (15)

[17] Czarnezki, Jason J. 16)

[18] Czarnezki, Jason J. (16)

[19] Czarnezki, Jason J. (22)

[20] Czarnezki, Jason J. (21)

The grocery retail market "over the past decade has become one of the most brutally contested economic battlegrounds in global history."[21] The grocery industry generated $562.7 billion in 2010 and affects 3.4 million employees.[22] This segment of the retail industry occupies, now more than ever, a strategic position within the economy, giving retailers a unique role in mediating and conveying knowledge about food products, creating an enormous power shift from manufacturers to retailers that began around the time of Wal-Mart's rise to power.

Wal-Mart's strategy of grocery retail consists of providing sale prices of the entire inventory by eliminating on-site storage, lowering labor costs, doubling store size, accommodating more consumers, providing broader inventory, and pioneering technology such as data scanning. In this way, Wal-Mart is able to exploit economies of scale and drive competition between manufacturers. Such a powerful retail force has escalated competition, spurring a series of mergers that has created a retail grocery market in the U.S. now controlled by six major retailer chains (compared to 62 retailers 20 years prior).[23] Wal-Mart emerged as a leading grocery retailer through expanding into diverse geographic markets, streamlining technology, cross-docking, and tailoring to communities, as well as hard negotiation with enormous manufacturers like Kellogs.[24] As of 2005, Wal-Mart maintained 2,349 U.S. stores and 2.43 percent U.S. GDP.[25]

Supercenters and mass retailers like Wal-Mart represent the driving force of the nontraditional grocery retailers that also include drug stores, dollar stores and wholesale clubs.[26] Though this format of retailing encompasses only 37.8% of the market share compared to 46.8% of traditional grocers, nontraditional retailers pose a great threat to traditional grocers. In 2010, nontraditional retail sales increased by 6.4% to $387.5 billion, raising market share by .7 points,

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[21] Roberts, Paul. 2008. *The End of Food*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. (61)

[22] Anon. "FMI | Food Marketing Institute | Food Marketing Institute - Facts & Figures." http://www.fmi.org/facts_figs/?fuseaction=superfact.

[23] Roberts, Paul. (61)

[24] Martinez, Steve W. 2007. "The U.S. Food Marketing System: Recent Developments, 1997-2006, ERR-42." *U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Econ. Res. Serv.* (May). http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR42/. (p. 6, table 4)

[25] Martinez, Steve W. (Table 3)

[26] Fry, Chad. 2011. The Future of Food Retailing. Willard Bishop. http://www.willardbishop.com/comp_edge.php?id=58&m=&y=&p=1.

whereas market share of traditional retailers' fell by .8 points.[27]

Among the most common traditional retailers are supermarkets, defined as grocers that carry 15,000 to 60,000 Shelf Keeping Units of a wide range of groceries, meats and produce. In 2010, traditional grocery retail sales reached $412.2 billion; however, market share decreased 1.1 points to 40.2%.[28] While retailers learned to capitalize on their strategic advantage, traditional grocery retailers are currently facing growing competition from nontraditional retailers. Between 1994 and 2005, nontraditional retailers increased their share of the food-at-home market from 17.1% to 31,6%. Martinez predicts a steady decline in market share of retailers continuing a "stuck in the middle" strategy.[29] He offers two options: differentiation vs consolidation.

Greentailing

A popular strategy in the Wal-Mart dominated industry, consolidation through mergers and acquisitions is a common way to cut costs and achieve economies of scale, yet has led to a decline in small retailers from 1992 through 2002.[30] In 1999, $12.75 billion became the price of the largest merger in Kroger's history as the company acquired Pacific Northwest local retailer Fred Meyer as well as QFC and Smiths Food & Drug Centers, further narrowing the Pacific NW regional market.[31]

Differentiation, on the other hand, seeks to "provide consumers with unique and superior products and service at a premium price."[32] There is an array of strategies to implement this in the grocery retail market including altering store layouts, offering fuel stations, and providing pre-cooked food services. However, a popular new trend among retailers is greentailing. Greentailing is how retailers appeal to consumers' environmental concerns and ethos by marketing themselves as an environmentally conscientious provider of consumer products.

[27] Fry, Chad.

[28] Fry, Chad

[29] Martinez, Steve W. (5)

[30] Martinez, Steve W. (19)

[31] Martinez, Steve W. (18)

[32] Martinez, Steve W. (3)

Whole Foods, a “Fresh Format” national grocery retailer and greentailing poster child, grew by 158% between 1994-2005 whereas the entire US grocery industry grew by 13% in the same period of time.[33] A variation of the traditional supermarkets, Fresh Format retailers sell a range of items that “emphasize perishables and offer center-store assortments” like natural and organic foods. These grocers showed 10.8% increase in sales, earning $9.0 billion in 2010 proving that such formats are viable retail models with a strong forecasted growth rate of 9.4% annually.[34] It is no wonder greentailing has become the new pinnacle of the grocery retailing industry.

Stern and Ander coined greentailing the “case du jour” in 2008. At this point, it was uncertain whether or not greentailing could succeed as a legitimate business model of grocery retail~~ers~~ as growth for these stores depended on ideas of consumption, which greatly contradicted with ideas of environmentalism.[35] Today, however, greentailing has evolved from early premises of a simply earth-friendly promotional technique to a mainstream retailing phenomenon. Stern and Ander describe greentailing as:

> conscientious retailing built on environmentally sustainable, socially responsible, and economically profitable business practices which explicitly consider the impact of a retailer's actions on the environment and community, customer perception and behavior, employees, suppliers, and ultimately shareholder returns.[36]

The authors also suggest four key components to greentailing while avoiding greenwashing: Think green, Act green, Sell green and Convey green. The resulting acronym, TASC, works to help retailers succeed in cultivating and following through with greentailing efforts. The first component, *think green*, requires retailers to internally define their values and interests in environmental retailing. By setting goals concerning their mission, ranging from waste management or energy efficiency, retailers can clearly demonstrate their commitments and

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[33] Martinez, Steve W. (10)

[34] Fry, Chad.

[35] Stern, Neil Z., and Willard N. Ander. 2008. *Greentailing and other revolutions in retail: hot ideas that are grabbing customer's attention and raising profits*. Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley. (29)

[36] Stern, Neil Z., and Willard N. Ander. (31)

progress.[37] *Acting green* requires following through on those goals. This is accomplished through addressing a myriad of environmental issues. For example, in 2006, the energy expended in all Whole Foods Market facilities- including stores, distribution centers and offices- was offset by the purchase of renewable wind power.[38] The next component of greentailing, *Sell green*, entails retailer commitment to its environmental principles in a manner that will translate directly to consumers through product selection. This is where ecolabeling becomes important and proves that retailers must truly understand the products and producers with which they do business, as it is vital to greentailing to avoid greenwashing.[39] Lastly, Stern and Ander encourage retailers to *Convey green* by making public their positions through public reporting like corporate social responsibility or sustainability reports.[40] In many ways, greentailing is already integrated into ideas of public reporting. Both are concerned with transparency and a company's interests within their situated communities and express the principles, values, goals, and accomplishments of a company and therefore often extend~~s~~ into environmental realms.[41] Only recently has such reporting become a dominant practice among companies large and small, as such reporting devices provide an opportunity for differentiation.[42]

Part Two: Methodology

Continuing the exploring of greentailing, this methodology focuses on the concept of TASC by identifying of how thinking and acting green, influence selling and conveying green through rhetorical and semiotic analysis of local grocers. Portland, Oregon has long been recognized as mecca for foodies and farm fresh fiends. Yet this destination city for cuisine suffers from insufficient access to food in many Portland neighborhoods and communities. The USDA uses the term “food desert” to measure limited access to healthy and affordable food

[37] Stern, Neil Z., and Willard N. Ander. (115)
[38] Stern, Neil Z., and Willard N. Ander. (119)
[39] Stern, Neil Z., and Willard N. Ander. (119)
[40] Stern, Neil Z., and Willard N. Ander. (120)
[41] Martinez, Steve W. (30)
[42] Martinez, Steve W. (30)

across the United States.[43] As defined by the Healthy Food Financing Initiative, a food desert is a low-income community in which 500 people, or 33% of residents, in an urban area live one mile from a food retailer. Portland, Oregon contains six food deserts according to the USDA Food Desert Locator.[44]

The Coalition for a Livable Future, a Portland based community and environmental advocacy organization, has found through studying the regional foodshed that although important food items can be accessed through farmers markets or convenience stores, traditional grocery retailers are an important component of community health. “One of the most convenient places to buy a balanced 'basket' of food at an affordable price is a full-service grocery store, where most Americans shop.”[45] Within southeast Portland, limited access to grocery retailers is not an issue. Within a one mile radius, one has access to People's Coop, Trader Joe's, Walgreen's, numerous gas stations, Penny Saver Market, Shanghai Co. Asian grocery, as well as the two neighborhood stores I examine in my study: Safeway and New Seasons Market. In today's competitive retail industry, especially in a neighborhood in southeast Portland where grocery stores abound, it becomes necessary to conceive of a method of differentiation.

While it may be simple to differentiate between traditional and nontraditional retailers in terms of product selection, the process becomes more complex when differentiating between environmental ethic along the traditional retailer spectrum. Along the greentailing spectrum, retailers are arranged on a sliding scale, positioned according to the degree of environmental thinking, acting, selling, and conveying (i.e., TASC). Theoretically, traditional retailers like Safeway occur at the opposite ends of the spectrum from Fresh Format stores like New Seasons. This this methodology, though, this study intends to tease out the the actual distinction between traditional grocery retailers along this spectrum of environmental consciousness.

In analyzing Safeway and New Seasons Market, the study compares each retailer's environmental consciousness based on Stern and Ander 's concept of greentailing. Through researching the retailers, conducting interviews with representatives, and analyzing each

[43] Anon. “Food Desert Locator.” http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert/index.htm.

[44] Anon. “Food Desert Locator.” http://www.ers.usda.gov/data/fooddesert/index.htm. (About the Locator)

[45] Anon. “Coalition for a Livable Future’s Regional Equity Atlas.” http://www.equityatlas.org/chapters.html. (Chapter 6. p. 72)

company's annual social responsibility report, the methodology develops a better understanding of the Safeway and New Seasons mission and values, or how each store thinks and acts green by means of conveying and selling green.

Utilizing each retailer's most recent public report, New Seasons Market's *2011 Sustainability Report* and Safeway's *2010 Corporate Social Responsibility Report*, as well as informational interviews with retailer representatives, the environmental ethic of each grocer and ability to convey such ethic is achieved. Additionally, to assess how both retailers act as gatekeepers to the consumer and food industry, this study conducts semiotic analysis of ecolabeling in each store, using breakfast cereal as a proxy for general consumer food products. The methodology examines breakfast cereal as a surrogate for general consumer food goods as not only does cereal packaging allow for a clear promotional display panel, breakfast cereal also represents a standard grocery item found in nearly every food retailer. Breakfast cereal is also a generally heavily processed, agriculturally based product that undergoes a variety of production, packaging, and transportation handling before arriving on grocery store shelves, common among many food items. Alternatives to typical breakfast cereals offer a new perspective on the entire food-industrial complex.

In the Pacific Northwest, the Portland-Vancouver area ranked 20th nationally among U.S. grocery markets.[46] The Pacific Northwest also boasts 25% of the nation's natural food stores (like New Seasons) suggesting that "consumers are more conscious of health and social issues than most and educated about the food they eat."[47] However, as of 2003, Safeway, Inc. was the largest grocery retailer in Portland, Oregon with the greatest number of store locations, 86, and the largest market share of 30.5%.[48] The second and third largest retailers in Portland were Fred Meyer and Quality Food Centers (QFC), both of which are owned by Kroger, Inc.[49] Seeing as Portland is an intersection of a social and environmental consciousness and business, this study presents an important opportunity to examine the influence both have on the retail industry.

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[46] Beaman, Jill A., and Aaron J. Johnson. 2006. *Grocery retailers in the Northwest: a guide for new manufacturers*. [Corvallis, Or.]: Oregon State University, Extension Service, Food Innovation Center. (1)

[47] Beaman, Jill A., and Aaron J. Johnson. (2)

[48] Beaman, Jill A., and Aaron J. Johnson. (1)

[49] Beaman, Jill A., and Aaron J. Johnson. (1)

Company Profiles

In 1999, the three founding members of New Seasons Market, with the help of friends and family, set about to establish a grocery store with the mission to promote sustainable, local agriculture within a progressive, friendly and interactive environment. The first store was opened in Raleigh Hills in 2000 and today the company operates 11 stores in the Portland area and one store in Vancouver, WA.[50]

The successful growth of New Seasons attests to the acceptance of the retailer's business strategy and values of communities throughout the Portland area. Initially concern was voiced over the ability of the store to assimilate within Portland neighborhoods. While the company supports natural and "slow food" trends embraced by retailers like Whole Foods,[51] community members raised concerns over whether the store would fit with the working class neighborhoods.[52] According to Dan Menasche from New Season, the retailer hopes to serve and accommodate a wide range of customers. "We'd like to think we appeal to all customers. Since we carry a broad array of products—organic, natural, conventional, and even generic—we think that we're in a unique position to cater to just about everyone."[53]

Founded by M.B. Skaggs in America Falls, Idaho in 1915, Safeway, Inc. has grown into the third largest grocery retailer in America with 4% value share in 2011 (behind Wal-Mart 24% and Kroger 7%). The company operates 1,738 stores across North America, including Safeway, Vons, Randalls, Tom Thumbs, Genuardi's and Carrs in the U.S. and Canada,[54] and partial ownership of Casa Ley retailers in Mexico.[55]

However, the retailing giant's growth was deterred in part by the recent economic atmosphere

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[50] Anon. "New Seasons Market - Our Story." http://www.newseasonsmarket.com/talk-with-us/our-story

[51] Burros, Marian. 2006. "In Oregon, Thinking Local." *The New York Times*, January 4, sec. Dining & Wine. http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/04/dining/04well.html.

[52] Anon. "New Seasons Market." Answers.com. http://www.answers.com/topic/new-seasons-market.

[53] Menasche, Daniel. (March 2012) Email Interview

[54] Anon. "Our Story". Safeway. http://www.safeway.com/ShopStores/Our-Story.page.

[55] Turcsik, Richard. 2003. "Safeway: Back to Basics. (Cover Story: PG Profile)." *Progressive Grocer* 82 (9): 11.

as well as by the rising competitive challenges of the grocery retail industry.[56] In order to stay abreast of rising challenges such as maintaining customer loyalty and differentiation in the midst of a saturated market and stiff competition, many Safeway stores offer gas stations, in-store banking, pre-prepared meals, photo labs, loyalty cards, and internet retailing.[57] Of the many amenities offered, most notable among them is the numerous private label product lines.

“[...] [A]rguably the best private label program of any retailer in the U.S., including Target, Wal-Mart, Costco, Walgreens, Wegmans, and Ahold," according to Burt P. Flickinger III, managing director at Strategic Resource Group, Safeway amasses 27% of its profits from its private labels, more than most retailers. Safeway successfully markets its private label lines in other retailers' stores, a notable accomplishment in the competitive retail industry.[58]

Rhetorical Analysis

Prior to conducting this methodology, it was hypothesized that shifts in the retail industry spurred by increased industry competition as well as recent consumer trends have resulted in a profusion of greentailing and ecolabeling in grocery stores. However, it was also hypothesized that along the supermarket spectrum, a greater concentration of greentailing and ecolabeling is more present in nontraditional, alternative, fresh format grocery retailers like New Seasons than in traditional, national retailers like Safeway. This study posits that the emphasis on environmental values is greater among nontraditional retailers than traditional, as detailed through informational interviews and through Safeway's *2010 Corporate Social Responsibility Report* and New Seasons' *2011 Sustainability Report*.

New Seasons Market

New Seasons' *2011 Sustainability Report* details the value oriented goals and operating practices of the company. These include both community and environmentally minded commitments. As a locally owned retailer, New Seasons maintains partnerships and support through events and service within Portland and the Pacific Northwest and exhibits such loyalty through their report.

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[56] Martinez, Steve W (5)

[57] Turcsik, Richard.

[58] Turcsik, Richard.

Like Safeway, New Seasons provides a private label brand of food products such as milk and eggs. As part of New Season's goals and values, a portion of proceeds from their private brand benefits local family farmers. Additionally, in-store labeling is an important component of the New Seasons shopping experience. The retailer's "Home Grown" label signifies items produced within the regional foodshed of Oregon, Washington, and Northern California, in line with New Seasons commitment to supporting sustainability especially within the local economy. As Lisa Sedlar, President of New Seasons, described in an interview, "The joy for us is having relationships with 125 farmers who we pay fair prices. If it doesn't work for them, it doesn't work for us."[59]

Much of this community commitment is tied into the company's environmental concern. For instance, since 1997 each New Seasons store maintains a "Green Team" whose members focus on waste reduction and diversion programs and supporting the staff and the community through community service and short-term service projects.[60] In 2011 the Raleigh Hills store's Green Team designed and conducted a restoration project in Jackson Bottom Wetlands Preserve in Hillsboro, a local nature preserve and educational community center.[61]

In addition to operating with 25% less energy than that required by Oregon's energy code, 15% percent of New Seasons' power is wind power which in 2011 prevented the release of 2,837,468 pounds of CO2 into the atmosphere, "the equivalent of 3,124,996 miles not driven, through our purchase of clean wind power."[62]

New Seasons takes part in a reusable plastic carton (RPC) program which allows the retailer to request the use of special produce containers which can be saved and reused after sanitization. On average such programs, compared to the traditional corrugated boxes, produce 95% less solid waste and 29% less greenhouse gas emissions with 39% less energy according to lifecycle analysis. In 2010 New Seasons diverted 4,692,000 pounds of food waste from landfills, removed 2,346 tons of CO2 from atmosphere through composting efforts, recycled 794,145 pounds

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[59] Johnson, Jean. 2006. "Belly and Soul." *E: The Environmental Magazine* 17 (3) (June): 42–43.

[60] Menasche, Daniel.

[61] New Seasons. "2011 Sustainability Report"

[62] Menasche, Daniel.

of plastic film and bags and repurposed 3656 gallons of used cooking oil for biodiesel. New Seasons recycles “All possible store-generated waste. Additionally, we offer recycling collection of plastic film/bags and lids/clamshells for our customers.” Food waste prevention and reduction program entails careful dating in the delis, careful rotation of perishable goods, free unsellable goods for the staff, and allowing “compost as a last resort.”[63]

The most recent New Seasons’ store on Hawthorne, built in 2010, was constructed with the environment in mind. About 95% of builder materials from the project were recycled, repurposed, or reused. Glycol refrigerant rather than CFC/HCFC was used in cooling cases to lower carbon footprint. Landscaped bioswales were designed around the store perimeter to collect stormwater and reduce noise pollution. As well, 50 customer bike staples were installed in order to encourage bike transportation and reduce CO2 emissions from automobile commuting.

Safeway

The four main tenets of the company's operating procedures, according to Safeway's *2010 Corporate Social Responsibility Report*, are concern for people, products, community, and planet. Of those four tenants, greentailing is evident in Safeway’s concern for “earth-friendlier products,” pledging sustainability through modified resource and energy consumption as well as through sustainable development.

As noted above, Safeway boasts an abundance of private labels. Many of Safeway's private brands embody environmental ideals held by the company. For instance, Safeway's line of personal care products, *In-Kind*, is made with 90% natural ingredients and without parabens, sulfates or synthetic colors. As well, Scientific Certification Systems is employed to assess the environmental credibility of the Safeway's *Bright Green* line of products like household cleaners and light bulbs, by evaluating each product's life-cycle impact.[64]

Safeway also offers original brands of food items. Since 2005, *O Organics* brand has offered USDA organic certified food and beverage products and is now one of the largest U.S. organic

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[63] Menasche, Daniel.

[64] Safeway. “Corporate Sustainability Report.” (16)

brands. The Open Nature labels products, from poultry to cereal, made with 100% natural, minimally processed ingredients without the use of antibiotics, added hormones, artificial ingredients, preservatives, nitrates, nitrites or MSG.[65]

Safeway participates in many programs across the country which emphasize a commitment to sustainable values ranging from energy efficiency to animal welfare. The company employs an Animal Welfare Council of experts to ensure the best practices to raising methods, transportation, and processing of animals.[66] While Safeway is committed to animal welfare, the retailer a leader in protection and conservation of marine species. Last year, Safeway ranked number one in Greenpeace's Supermarket Seafood Sustainability list.[67] In partnership with FishWise and Food Marketing Institute, Safeway supports the sustainable seafood industry by assessing seafood suppliers as well as banning sale of Blue Fin tuna and shark in 2010. In 2011, Safeway established a seafood sustainability project which creates an in-store information display system and seafood clerk education. Safeway also support the California Marine Protection Act Initiative which promotes conservation through Marine Protected Areas which also prohibits the sale of Chilean Sea Bass from Ross Sea in Antarctica.[68]

A "longtime practice of giving buying preference to our local vendor partners," Safeway's locally grown program ensures freshness for consumers, support local economies as well as reduces greenhouse gas emissions.[69] However, Safeway's role in reducing carbon dioxide extend beyond reducing food miles. Safeway also runs an award winning transportation fleet which reduced CO_2 emissions by 9,667 metric tons by modifying loading practices and improving fleet efficiency by 2.8% ton miles per gallon. In 2010 the company purchased 93 million kilowatt hours of wind energy and was ranked 10th on the EPA's Green Power Partnership for alternative energy.[70]

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[65] Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (15)

[66] Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (18)

[67] Anon. 2011. "Safeway Leads Greenpeace Seafood Rankings." Environmental Leader: Environmental & Energy Management News. http://www.environmentalleader.com/2011/04/12/safeway-leads-greenpeace-seafood-rankings/.

[68] Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (18)

[69] Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (17)

[70] Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (33)

In order to mitigate the environmental costs of Safeway's 1738 U.S. and Canadian stores, as well as their offices, distribution centers and manufacturing facilities, the retailer has embarked on a series of waste diversion, energy efficiency and facility design and construction efforts.[71] Also, Safeway sees responsible packaging as a means to reduce carbon footprints and support recycling industries. Due to the large size of the company, the retailer was able to conserve 18,500 pounds of plastic by altering the packaging of a veggie tray product. As well, through replacing polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic with a recyclable polyethylene terephthalate (PET) to eliminate 272,000 pounds of PVC material. 2010 By reducing the weight of 500 ml water bottles, the company saves 1.2 million pounds of material annually.[72]

In addition to rethinking packaging, Safeway is challenging itself to a goal of zero waste through recycling programs which in 2010 diverted 490,000 tons of materials ranging from cardboard and plastics to food items and construction materials. Such programs won the company its twelfth consecutive Waste Reduction Award Program from the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery.[73]

Through retrofitting frozen food cases, purchasing wind energy, converting 19 stores to solar power, constructing two of their own wind turbines and constructing LEED certified facilities which including parks, roof terraces, "living" walls, Safeway appears to be actualizing their *acting green* goals.[74]

Semiotic Analysis

The goal this portion of the study was to survey all breakfast cereal items within each of the New Seasons and Safeway stores in order to answer basic questions about the presence of ecolabels within different traditional and alternative retail environments. The study initially hoped to answer the following questions: which breakfast cereals utilize ecolabels; what ecolabels are displayed; how many ecolabels are accounted for and how frequently do different ecolabels

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71 Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (32)

72 Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (19)

73 Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (31)

74 Safeway. "Corporate Sustainability Report." (33)

appear?

Using each stores' cereal aisle as my sample population, the semiotic analysis coded the front display panel of cereal boxes as well as cereal bags; this also included granola boxes and bags. Only the first or most forward bag of box within a given shelf space was included. For instance, if several boxes of the same cereal were lined up behind one another on the shelf, only the first box in the series was coded. Also, the same kind of cereal was often coded multiple times depending on how many times it occupied a shelf space. Therefore, if two cereal boxes of the same kind were displayed side by side, both boxes were coded. After preliminary observations of the two retailers' cereal aisles, each aisle was coded specifically for organic and natural labeling, as well as producer environmental practices promoted on the front panel of the packaging.

Coding for "Natural" ecolabels presented a challenge as various permutations of the label appear throughout the aisle of breakfast cereals. Though the FDA does not define the meaning of the term natural, the FDA "does not object to the use of the term if the food does not contain added color, artificial flavors, or synthetic substances."[75] This analysis found that "natural" labels may refer to a single ingredient or the entire product with very little differentiation or additional information. In order to distinguish between uses of the term natural, a dual system of coding was employed using Type 1 and Type 2 natural label differentiation. Type 1 was used in reference of flavors or singular ingredients, such as "Naturally Sweetened" or "Natural Nutritious Raisins." Type 2 of natural labeling used only the claim "100% Natural" or "All Natural." Neglected from both labeling were those cereals which incorporated *Natural* into their brand name or cereal name.

Safeway

Within Safeway, the breakfast cereal aisle displayed 413 boxes and bags of cereal and granola. The cereal products appeared to be arranged in order of most nutritious value by proximity to the register. Subsequently most ecolabeled items were situated in the same vicinity as the health conscious brands. Therefore many of the cereals labeled "A Good Source of Fiber" or "Made with Whole Grains" per the Safeway's on *Simple Nutrition* in-store labels, were displayed

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[75] Nutrition, Center for Food Safety and Applied. "FDA Basics - What Is the Meaning of 'Natural' on the Label of Food?" WebContent. http://www.fda.gov/AboutFDA/Transparency/Basics/ucm214868.htm.

alongside *Simple Nutrition* “Organic” labels. Although the *Simple Nutrition* labels spanned the length of the aisle, most of the natural labels and all of the organic labels were clustered in the section nearest the register. Within this section, consisting of 134 breakfast cereals, 17 cereals were labeled organic, all displaying a USDA organic certification. The companies which produced these cereals were *Cascadian Farms*, *Nature's Path* and *Arrowhead Mills*.

The store's *Simple Nutrition* signage also included its own label “Natural” which was found in this section closest to the register as well. As previously mentioned natural labeling is complicated. Though instances of natural labels appeared throughout the breakfast cereal selection, the Safeway in-store *Simple Nutrition* “Natural” labels were clustered in the same section as the organic labeled cereals. In this way coding separately for Type 1 and Type 2 natural labeling was helpful. A total of 62 cereals in Safeway exclusively used Type 1 labeling. Thirty-two cereals displayed Type 2 labeling, though many of these also used Type 1.

Safeway's private labels, *Kitchen Essentials*, *Safeway Brand*, *Safeway Select*, *Eating Right* and *Open Nature*, comprised approximately 24%, 99 boxes of the breakfast cereals displayed. Of all the Safeway brands, 14 cereals used Type 1 and 9 cereals used Type 2 natural labeling. No Safeway brands were labeled organic, however, Safeway's *O Organics* line of organic products was not represented in the sample.

New Seasons

As hypothesized, New Seasons' cereal aisle displayed, 357 products, less than that of Safeway (approximately 14% less). The products were arranged in a similar fashion as the Safeway aisle: the most conventional breakfast brands arranged furthest from the register while the ecolabeled products were arranged nearer to the register. Also as hypothesized, New Seasons offered a greater total selection of ecolabeled cereal items, 256 total. The results show that the New Seasons’ sample yielded 31 Type 1 and 80 Type 2 natural labeling. Additionally, 145 organic labels were displayed among the sample, however, this does not include items which claimed to be “Made With Organic Ingredients” or those which identified as organic yet provided no USDA certification.

Among the coded ecolabels, many unique environmental claims and declarations appeared on the New Seasons' shelves. Theses claims ranged from addressing packaging waste to touting alternative energy sources of manufacturing. One cereal box announced "Same Amount of Granola, Less Box." Another simply read "Eco Pac." Both cereals were products of the same company. One of New Seasons' top selling breakfast cereals, *Mom's Best Naturals*, directly expresses its use of alternative wind energy in manufacturing.

While Safeway displayed four brands of breakfast cereals, excluding *O Organics*, significantly less of the store's cereal stock displayed ecolabels compared to the stock of New Seasons. A 72% majority of the New Seasons sample exhibited at least one of the ecolabels coded for in this study. However, this excludes many unique ecolabels that appealed to aspects of the product beyond characteristics of the cereal. Many products, through highlighting packaging features, addressed issues of excess packaging waste or discussed use of alternative energy in manufacturing. Sentiments such as these were expressed in both Safeway and New Seasons' public reports, however, only New Seasons demonstrated a parallel between their mission and their products.

Among the abundance of ecolabels in New Seasons, however, a few products raised questions. One product in particular posited its organic virtue while no certification was found on the front panel packaging. Under further inspection, no USDA label was found on the box at all. Though the product may have undergone certification either through the USDA or through a more stringent certifier, knowledge of this authorization was inevident. While this is only one product, uncertainty of a products labeling may lead to concerns of greenwashing within the store and result in the third rail effect among consumers.

For this reason, retailers need to be cautious and vigilant of their products as methods and practices of producers and manufacturers are not always transparent. As well, it is not only the responsibility of retailers as gatekeepers to represent the realities of products for consumers, it is also a retailer's responsibility to protect consumers from faulty or questionable products such as greenwashed products.

Table 1

Ecolabels		

	New Seasons	Safeway
Total Breakfast Cereal Products	375	413
Total Ecolabeled Products	256	111
Percent of Ecolabeled products	72%	27%

Table 1 shows the extent of ecolabeling within each store's sample.

Table 2

Organic		
	New Seasons	Safeway
Total Organic Ecolabeled Products	145	17
Percent of Organic Labeled Products of Total	41%	4%
Percent of Organic Labeled Products oF Total Ecolabeled Products	57%	15%

Table 2 displays the amount of organic labeling in each store.

Table 3

Natural Type 1		
	New Seasons	Safeway
Type 1 Total	31	62
Type 1 Percent of Total	9%	15%
Type 1 Percent of Total Ecolabeled	12%	56%

Type 1 Percent of Natural Labels	28%	66%

Table 3 shows the amount of natural labeling Type 1 in each store.

Table 4

	Natural Type 2	
	New Seasons	Safeway
Type 2	80	32
Type 2 Percent of Total	22%	8%
Type 2 Percent of Total Ecolabeled	31%	28%
Type 2 Percent of Natural Labels	72%	34%

Table 4 shows the amount of natural labeling Type 2 in each store.

Part Three: Conclusion and Implications

Comparative Results

This study showed significant differences between the degree of greentailing represented through product selection, or selling green. Safeway, which offers a wider range of products, displayed very few ecolabeled products. In total Safeway maintained ecolabeling among 27% of all cereal products compared to 72% of that of New Seasons. This suggests that New Seasons offers greater green alternative to Safeway's traditional retail selection. This data also indicates that New Seasons' commitment to providing customers with goods from producers which are promote environmental consciousness is stronger than that of Safeway.

The two stores also differed in the types of ecolabels most frequently exhibited. Of the ecolabels distributed within Safeway, the study found a greater display of natural labels. Specifically, Safeway's use of natural Type 1 labeling outweighed that of natural Type 2 or organic ecolabeling, while the frequency of natural Type 2 exceeded organic labels. In contrast, in New

Seasons, organic labels appeared more often than both natural labeling, however the prevalence of natural Type 2 labeling was greater natural Type 1 labeling.

This indicates that the majority of Safeway's products display natural Type 1 labels which account for a less significant portion the product, such as a single ingredient, than natural Type 2 labels which designates the entire product as natural. The reverse is true of New Seasons that, in the case of natural labeling, presented a greater amount of natural Type 2 than natural Type 1, suggesting that a majority of natural labeling of cereal within the store classified the entire product as natural.

Typically "natural" is defined by and absence of synthetic or artificial substances or ingredients. As natural claims however are undefined or regulated by a government agency, the characteristics of products labeled in such a way is both unsubstantiated. In other words, though products may brandish natural labeling, no legislative rule gives meaning to this label, and so no product is restricted from using this such a claim. In contrast, organic labels coded for in this study certified by the USDA according to aforementioned guidelines and standards. These government approved ecolabels comprised the majority, 57%, of New Seasons' cereal retail array whereas on 15% of Safeway's products presented organic labels.

The greater display of ecolabels especially government authorized ecolabels in this study conveys a dedication by New Seasons to legitimate products and greentailing practices. As well, New Seasons product labeling provides diverse views of consumer and environmental consciousness through product claims regarding alternative energy and waste reduction, which were absent in Safeway.

The study however, analyzed more than just representations of ecolabeling, or selling green, within Safeway and New Seasons. To gain a broad understanding of both retailers' greentailing ethic, this study also analyzed the rhetoric of each company's environmental public reporting.

Both retailers showed a great deal of commitment to reducing their environmental impact through incorporating alternative packaging programs, leading recycling efforts, offering local product selections, or substituting energy sources with alternatives. New Seasons primary focus was the local environment and community and aiding the cohesion of the two through Green Team initiatives or partnerships with Portland environmental organizations. Safeway on the other hand provided no instances of Portland based environmental services despite maintaining 10 locations in the area. However, the national extent of the Safeway company ensures that the scale of impact for environmental initiatives far exceeds that of New Seasons. For instance, New Seasons' waste reduction program diverted 794,145 lb. plastic bags and film as well as 4,692,000 lb. of food waste from landfills, 2,743 tons total. Safeway diverted 490,000 tons. As well, the scale of Safeway's operations allows the company to influence a significantly greater number of individuals than New Seasons whose founders are committed to remaining local.

Applicability

New Seasons' intentions to remain local mirrors the desire of many small, independent grocers to maintain community involvement and commitment to values, such as environmentally conscious retailing. This aspect allows small retailers to conduct business with small or new manufacturers that operate under similar values reflected in their produced and are more likely to generate ecolabeled goods. As well, these manufactures are less likely to secure a position within the aisles of traditional format, chain retailers (like Safeway) due to their inexperience or production limitations. Though larger supermarket chains present greater opportunity for manufacturers to benefit from larger sales and promotion due to the large scope and scale of the retailer, small or new manufacturers face challenges from traditional supermarket retailers in the form of slotting fees and promotional fees, packaging restrictions, labeling regulation, technology integration, and licensing.[76]

For example, fitting with their mission of supporting the regional foodshed, New Seasons awards preference to local and "super-local products." "We generally don't purchase direct from manufacturers unless it's a local, self-distributed product."[77] And when asked if ecolabels influence buying decisions, Menasche answered "Of course. Sustainability and even positive environmental impact are a central tenet of our company." Compared to large format supermarkets like Safeway, smaller, local, independent retailers like New Seasons are better poised to incorporate new products and ecolabeled products which reflect values like

[76] Beaman, Jill A., and Aaron J. Johnson.

[77] Menasche, Daniel.

environmental consciousness.

While Safeway and New Seasons provide representations of both traditional and alternative retailer niches, each also demonstrates atypical characteristics. Safeway demonstrates characteristics of a traditional supermarket retailer by providing a pharmacy, deli and offering a large variety of traditional foods as well as household goods. As well New Seasons demonstrates values representative of a typical fresh format retailer by focusing on natural and organic products. However New Seasons, for instance, in addition to offering an array of natural and organic products also sells traditional product varieties as well. As well Safeway offers private lines dedicated to reducing environmental impact and award winning programs focused on waste and emissions reduction. In this way, Safeway and New Seasons may not accurately represent traditional and alternative retailers, respectively.

Further, since the Safeway products are purchased through centralized buying and distribution, a majority of the products present in this study are available in any Safeway store across the country. The study of New Seasons, however, is only applicable to the individual stores in Portland as New Seasons is confined to the Portland area and therefore may not be representative of Fresh Format stores in other regions. In this way, New Seasons can only act as a model for other Fresh Format stores as expansion of the company beyond the Portland area is contradictory to the company's local mission and "would fundamentally change the way we do business," according to Brian Roehter, CEO and cofounder of New Seasons."[78]

While Safeway's stores are distributed across the country, New Seasons adamantly remains local and therefore the study of New Seasons can only be applicable to the Portland area. The present success and predicted future market value of fresh format retailers, however, suggests that stores like New Seasons can and will succeed in other locations and cities beyond Portland. The key to modeling the success of New Seasons though is to tailor the business strategy to the community.Therefore, while New Seasons aims to serve a wide consumer base, the community in which a store like New Seasons is situated must share the values of the store. Neighborhoods in metropolitan areas of the country may be better suited for such a store while more rural areas where residents are dispersed throughout larger areas may prove more difficult locations to

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[78] Johnson, Jean.

establish such a value oriented store.

Future Studies

This study presents a unique comparison between the two retailers, however, there are certain strengths and weakness on which future research can build. While this study is able to provide perspective on differentiation of ecolabeling practices and environmental values between the two different retailers along the traditional to alternative retailer spectrum of greentailing, this analysis was not exhaustive. Future studies on this topic should extend analysis to a greater number of retailers in order to exploration greentailing among a variety of retailers. For example, the scale and scope of New Seasons and Safeway are very dissimilar, posing difficulty in drawing comparisons. Incorporating a fresh format retailer of equal scale and scope as Safeway, such as Whole Foods, would provide an opportunity to more closely compare the presence and practices of greentailing on a national level. Similarly, extending this study to include nontraditional retailers, such as drug stores like Walgreens, may provide an intriguing view of the evolving retail industry as nontraditional retailers are gaining greater hold within the retail market. Further, by incorporating a greater span of products, perhaps beyond processed or packaged foods, into the semiotic analysis might allow for a more thorough understanding of greentailing through a broader examination of product ecolabeling.

In addition to expanding the scope of this study to include greater variation, additional research to complement this study might build on, in particular, natural labeling. Natural labeling is a topic which is in need of greater illumination. In the process of this study many questions were raised as to the working definition of natural, as well as explanation for a lack of regulation despite frequency in which natural labeling appears. In this study, a distinction was drawn between natural labeling using the Type 1 and Type 2 dichotomy. Such a dichotomy incites the questions as to the actual difference in merit between these two categories. Natural labeling is currently a grey area in ecolabeling but research of the topic can bring to light the some of these issues.

While there are diverse practices of greentailing apparent in the simple comparison of New Seasons and Safeway, labeling plays an important part in conveying values to consumers beyond “organic” and “natural”. However, labeling, especially in conjunction with conscientious retailing, can illuminate a variety of important issues, from social, to health to ecological. For instance retailers can provide greater transparency through in-store labeling. Hannaford's in Maine, with the help of a third-party panel of nutritionists, assessed the nutritional benefits all store products and provided a tiered labeling system making a difference in shoppers' consumption patterns as well as in producers' methods.[79] As well, the European retailer, Tesco, partnered with the Carbon Institute to incorporate carbon labeling on every product sold in the retailers' stores. Although the labeling system was recently recalled due to a lack of cooperation by other retailers, Tesco's effort shows that success of such greentailing is pivotally based on the commitment of multiple retailers and consumers.[80]

In this way, it is important for consumers and retailers to actively work together to seek transparency and reform. The reality of societies consumption is often hidden from us, though transparency can be achieved through practices such as greentailing. And while retailers may act as gatekeepers to a wide range of industries, greentailing helps ensure goods and services are based on values similar to consumers' own values and that products are less harmful for the environment. Daniel Goleman argues that society has evolved at a rate in which our ecological intelligence has not caught up, leaving a vast information gap. He posits that we can no longer sustain ourselves or our consumption because we have lost the ability to sustain the environment as well.[81] Perhaps by supporting positive change of our retailers through greentailing, we can support positive change of our society and environment as well.

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79 Goleman, Daniel. (123)

80 Anon. 2012. "Tesco Drops Carbon-label Pledge." The Guardian, January 30, sec. Environment. http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2012/jan/30/tesco-drops-carbon-labelling.

81 Goleman, Daniel.

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