DOI: 10.38027/N5ICCAUA2025EN0272

Chapter 5

Smart Energy Retrofits in Retail: Driving SDG 7 for Sustainable Cities

* Tanem Sürmeli, İrem Arslan, Suzan Girginkaya Akdağ

Introduction

The United Nations promotes accessible and clean energy through Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7), titled "Affordable and Clean Energy," which seeks to provide reliable, sustainable, modern, and affordable energy for all (United Nations, 2015). Energy drives improvements in quality of life and mitigates environmental impacts. SDG 7 strives to reduce global energy access inequalities and promote widespread adoption of clean energy through solutions based on renewable energy sources (United Nations, 2015). Increasing environmental challenges and growing sustainability awareness compel all countries to adopt greener practices (IPCC, 2018).

Turkey aligns with the European Union Green Deal of 2019 and implements various regulations and directives to advance its energy transition process (European Commission, 2019). Public and private sectors actively pursue energy efficiency projects and renewable energy investments. These initiatives span multiple areas, including border carbon regulations, green and circular economy practices, clean and secure energy supply, sustainable agriculture, smart transportation solutions, and efforts to combat climate change (Özbuğday and Erkut, 2020). Companies support these projects through green financing models, strengthen international collaborations through diplomatic initiatives, and raise public awareness through educational activities (Yılmaz and Arı, 2021). These efforts demand technological transformation and robust financial infrastructure to help companies achieve their sustainability goals.

The retail sector, known for its high energy consumption, prioritizes energy efficiency and renewable energy integration to achieve environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Retail businesses, with their large-scale operations and extensive supply chains, consume significant energy, which increases operational costs and carbon emissions (Akyüz and Üstün, 2019). Store lighting, heating-cooling systems, refrigerators, and electronic devices generate a substantial carbon footprint in retail operations. Transitioning to sustainable energy not only addresses environmental needs but also delivers economic benefits in the retail sector. Improving energy efficiency lowers operating costs, while adopting renewable energy sources reduces long-term energy dependency and shields against energy price volatility (Demir and Çankaya, 2022). Furthermore, sustainable energy practices enhance social sustainability by building community trust and strengthening brand reputation as environmentally responsible entities (KPMG, 2023).

This study examines the role of smart energy retrofitting solutions in the energy-intensive retail sector. It aims to emphasize how such upgrades help preserve the ecological, social, and economic value of existing buildings—ultimately extending their lifespan and reducing the need for demolition. Rooted in principles of flexibility, resilience, and phased implementation, Adaptive Urbanism empowers cities to effectively respond to evolving environmental, economic, and social challenges (Meerow et al., 2016). Within this paradigm, retrofitting retail spaces with renewable energy systems—such as solar power—not only bolsters urban resilience but also advances social sustainability by cultivating public engagement with low-carbon transitions (Kaya & Özkan, 2023).

In periods of limited energy resources and challenging economic conditions, retrofit projects emerge as strategic solutions by improving existing systems. These projects, which offer cost-effective alternatives to new facility investments, significantly advance energy efficiency goals by enhancing the performance of existing buildings and energy infrastructure (Tosun and Yılmaz, 2019). Retrofit applications modernize lighting systems, replace heating, cooling, and ventilation systems with high-efficiency devices, and integrate building automation

Corresponding Author: * Tanem Sürmeli
Master's in Architecture Program, Graduate School, Bahçeşehir University, İstanbul, Türkiye
Corresponding Author's * e-mail: tanem.surmeli@bahcesehir.edu.tr

How to Cite This Chapter:
Sürmeli, T., Arslan, İ., & Girginkaya Akdağ, S. (2025). Smart energy retrofits in retail: Driving SDG 7 for sustainable cities. In Nikoofam, M., & Mobaraki, A. (Eds.), *Resilient Urbanism: Architecture, Equity & Innovation* (pp. 64–72). Cinius Yayınları.
https://doi.org/10.38027/N5ICCAUA2025EN0272

systems. These measures reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions, contributing to environmental sustainability. Moreover, retrofit projects deliver long-term economic benefits by lowering operating costs and align institutions with climate policies (Gökçe and Kaya, 2023). In countries like Turkey, with substantial existing building stock, retrofit applications serve as indispensable tools for the feasibility and scalability of energy transformation.

In Turkey's retail sector, companies increasingly prioritize energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in their corporate strategies. Retailers transition to LED lighting systems in stores and shopping malls and employ building energy management systems to control heating, cooling, ventilation, and lighting processes intelligently, achieving significant energy savings (Kara and Şahin, 2020). Retailers also modernize cooling systems, implement heat recovery systems, and undertake building insulation projects to reduce energy consumption substantially. In the renewable energy domain, many retail companies install rooftop solar energy systems to meet their electricity needs. They also invest in large-scale solar power plants (SPPs) and secure long-term energy purchase agreements with wind power plants (Erden and Akın, 2021). Retailers document these efforts with green energy certificates like I-REC (International Renewable Energy Certificate) and YEK-G (Turkish Renewable Energy Resource Guarantee System), reinforcing their environmental commitments, while initiatives like establishing electric vehicle charging infrastructure advance sustainability in transportation. These initiatives are strategically significant in mitigating environmental effects while ensuring the industry's enduring competitiveness.

Problem Statement, Hypotheses, and Structure

The retail sector, particularly hypermarkets and shopping malls, consumes high amounts of energy due to systems like lighting, cooling, heating, and ventilation. Reliance on fossil fuels increases operational costs and exacerbates environmental issues, such as global warming and resource depletion. Global retail leaders invest in solar and wind energy to achieve carbon neutrality, yet Turkey's implementations remain limited in scope. Consequently, comprehensive research on the sectoral impacts, scalability, and long-term outcomes of such initiatives remains scarce.

This study highlights CarrefourSA's İstinye Solar Power Plant (SPP) project as a flagship energy retrofit initiative in Turkey's organized food retail sector, evaluating its effectiveness through comparison with global counterparts IKEA and Walmart. Grounded in Sustainable Development Goal 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy), the research investigates how renewable energy retrofits contribute to environmental sustainability (H1: reduced energy consumption/carbon emissions), economic benefits (H2: lower operational costs/long-term savings), and social value (H3: enhanced brand perception). By employing a methodology that combines comparative analysis, in-depth case study examination, and SWOT analysis, the study not only assesses Turkey's retail sector sustainability efforts but also positions them within the global sustainability landscape. The findings synthesize the triple-bottom-line impacts of such initiatives, addressing critical literature gaps while providing insights into Turkey's potential for scaling sustainable retail practices and its contribution to international sustainability objectives.

Materials and Methods

This study examines renewable energy adoption strategies in global retail by analyzing three distinct case studies: IKEA and Walmart as international sustainability leaders and CarrefourSA as Turkey's domestic benchmark (Figure 1). To ensure robust cross-company comparisons, the research employs a tiered data collection approach. For IKEA and Walmart, quantitative metrics have been systematically extracted from their official 2023 sustainability reports, providing standardized global benchmarks. Meanwhile CarrefourSA's data, have been sourced from multiple channels: internal company reports, collaboration documents with İklimSA (a sustainability-focused Turkish organization within the same investor group that specializes in climate change mitigation, energy efficiency, and sustainable projects), and the Solar Energy Atlas published by Turkey's Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources (2023). This multi-source methodology has enabled a balanced comparison while accounting for regional variations in data availability and reporting frameworks.

These cases represent varying market contexts, allowing for a comparative assessment of photovoltaic (PV) system implementations and their operational impacts in retail environments. By investigating these examples, the research aims to identify key patterns, innovations, and challenges in sustainable energy adoption, with a particular focus on how solar energy integration aligns with broader corporate sustainability goals across different economic and regulatory landscapes.

Figure 1. Solar Energy System Projects by Global Retail Companies:
IKEA Memphis, Walmart California and CarrefourSA İstinye SPP Projects
(Ikea SPP: http://www.seattleglobalist.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Ikea-Solar-1-of-1.jpg
Walmart SPP: https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Walmart-featured-image.png
CarrefourSA SPP: https://kurumsal.carrefoursa.com/tr/hakkimizda/bizden-haberler/carrefoursa-magazalari-kendi-enerjisini-uretiyor)

IKEA Memphis Project (2016): As part of its global sustainability strategy, IKEA deployed a 1.2 MW rooftop solar plant at its Memphis store in 2016, covering 37,000 m^2 with 3,800 high-efficiency panels. The system generates 1.5 million kWh annually, fulfilling 90% of the store's energy needs while reducing CO_2 emissions by 1,500 tons (equivalent to 300 cars' annual emissions) and cutting energy costs by 20%. Integrated battery storage and smart grid technologies ensure nighttime operations and real-time efficiency.

By 2023, this project contributed to IKEA's 1.7 GW global renewable capacity, which includes 920,000 solar panels and 534 wind turbines producing 4.5 million MWh yearly — surpassing the company's total energy consumption. The Memphis initiative exemplifies IKEA's leadership in scalable PV solutions, aligning with its 2030 carbon-neutrality goal through energy independence, cost savings, and advanced grid management (IKEA, 2023).

Walmart California Portfolio (2019): In 2019, Walmart implemented a groundbreaking 10 MW distributed solar portfolio across 50 California stores, utilizing 185,000 m^2 of rooftop space with 28,000 polycrystalline panels. This ambitious system generates 14 million kWh annually, fulfilling 30% of the energy needs for 364 Walmart facilities statewide while reducing annual CO_2 emissions by 650,000 tons—equivalent to the carbon footprint of 90,000 U.S. households (Walmart, 2023). Beyond environmental benefits, the project delivers 15% energy cost savings through optimized power generation and consumption. The installation incorporates microgrid technology and battery storage, ensuring uninterrupted operations during grid outages and allowing excess energy to be stored for peak demand periods.

As a cornerstone of Walmart's 100% renewable energy by 2035 strategy, this scalable model demonstrates how large retail chains can effectively transition to sustainable energy. The initiative's impact extends beyond infrastructure through community partnerships and environmental awareness campaigns, reinforcing Walmart's commitment to both ecological and social responsibility while setting a replicable standard for renewable energy adoption in the retail sector.

CarrefourSA İstinye SPP Project (2024): In 2024, CarrefourSA achieved a significant milestone in Turkey's retail sector **with** the inauguration of a 620 kWp solar power plant atop its İstinye Hypermarket in Istanbul. Covering 10,000 m^2 of rooftop space with 1,113 high-efficiency monocrystalline panels, the system generates 1 million kWh annually—meeting 45% of the store's electricity demand while reducing 374.8 tons of CO_2 emissions, equivalent to the annual energy consumption of 187 Turkish households (CarrefourSA, 2024).

The solar power project was systematically executed using a proven five-phase methodology (Sev, 2009). The process commenced with a comprehensive Current Situation Assessment, involving structural integrity evaluations and detailed energy audits to establish baseline conditions. This informed the Goal Setting & Strategy Development phase, where measurable objectives and actionable roadmaps were formulated. During the Design & Planning stage, engineers leveraged solar irradiation data to optimize panel configuration for maximum energy yield. The Implementation phase then transformed these plans into reality through precision installation of all system components. Finally, the Review & Performance Evaluation phase ensured ongoing optimization through real-time performance monitoring and thermal validation protocols, creating a closed-loop system for continuous improvement. This methodical approach guaranteed both technical excellence and operational efficiency throughout the project lifecycle (Figure 2).

This systematic approach ensured maximum efficiency in Istanbul's favorable climate (2,741 annual sunlight hours declared at the Solar Energy Atlas (Turkey's Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, 2023). Though currently lacking battery storage—creating seasonal limitations—the project delivers 25% energy cost savings and establishes an important precedent for renewable energy adoption in Turkish retail. The installation features optimized panel layouts, advanced inverters, and real-time monitoring through İklimSA (a sustainability-focused Turkish organization within the same investor group that specializes in climate change mitigation, energy efficiency, and sustainable projects), demonstrating how urban retail spaces can effectively integrate renewable solutions despite space constraints. As Turkey's first major retail solar initiative, it represents both an operational achievement and a powerful symbol of sustainable commerce.

Figure 2. CarrefourSA İstinye SPP Project Execution Stages (From the Authors' Archive)

Focusing on these commercial solar energy initiatives. this study utilizes a two-phase analytical approach. The first phase involves a systematic comparison of three major solar projects (IKEA, Walmart, and CarrefourSA), assessing both quantitative factors—such as installation specifications (area coverage, panel quantity) and operational metrics (energy capacity, output, emission reductions, cost efficiency)—and qualitative aspects, including sustainability benefits, technological implementations, and project timelines (Figure 1).

The second phase focuses on a dedicated SWOT analysis of CarrefourSA's solar installation, examining its internal operational strengths and weaknesses as well as external market opportunities and threats. By combining measurable performance data with strategic assessments, this dual-method framework offers comprehensive insights, facilitating cross-project benchmarking while also enabling a detailed evaluation of CarrefourSA's competitive positioning and market potential within the solar energy sector.

Comparative Analysis of Retail Solar Energy Projects: Case Studies and Key Findings

Table 1 presents a detailed comparison of solar energy initiatives implemented by three major retailers - IKEA, Walmart, and CarrefourSA - across different global markets. The analysis examines their physical infrastructure, energy production capabilities, environmental benefits, and strategic approaches to renewable energy adoption.

Table 1. Comparative Analysis of Retail Solar Power Plant Projects (by the authors)

Parameter	IKEA (Memphis, 2016)	Walmart (California, 2019)	CarrefourSA (İstinye, 2024)
Physical Characteristics			
Installation Area	37,000 m^2 (6 acres)	185,000 m^2 (50 stores)	10,000 m^2 (1 store)
Panel Count	3,800	28,000	1,113
Performance Metrics			
Installed Capacity	1.2 MW	10 MW	620 kWp
Annual Energy Production	1.5 million kWh	14 million kWh	1 million kWh
CO_2 Reduction	1,500 tons/year	650,000 tons/year	374.8 tons/year
Energy Cost Savings	20%	15%	25% (estimated)
Strategic Value			
Sustainability Impacts	Renewable Energy, Energy Independence	Scalability	Local Leadership, Environmental Awareness
Technological Features	Smart Energy Management, Battery Systems	Microgrid, Energy Optimization	High-Efficiency Panels, Internal Monitoring
Implementation Timeline	8 months	12 months	6 months

The analysis reveals three distinct models of solar adoption in retail: IKEA's technology-intensive, energy independent approach, Walmart's large-scale, multi-location deployment and CarrefourSA's localized, policy-optimized solution.

IKEA's Memphis project (2016) demonstrates a comprehensive approach to sustainable energy with its 1.2 MW solar installation. The system spans 37,000 m^2 with 3,800 panels, generating 1.5 million kWh annually - sufficient to meet 90% of the store's electricity needs. The project's most innovative feature is its integrated battery storage system, which enables energy independence by storing excess production for nighttime use. This technological advantage comes with a significant $1.5 million investment, reflecting IKEA's commitment to being a sustainability leader in the retail sector. The installation reduces carbon emissions by 1,500 tons each year while incorporating smart energy management for optimal performance.

Walmart's California initiative (2019) represents one of the largest retail solar deployments, with a massive 10 MW capacity spread across 185,000 m^2 at 50 store locations. This expansive system produces 14 million kWh annually, covering 30% of the energy needs for 364 facilities. The project's microgrid technology ensures reliable power supply while maintaining connection to the main grid. Although using slightly less efficient polycrystalline panels, the scale of implementation results in extraordinary environmental benefits - reducing CO_2 emissions by 650,000 tons annually, equivalent to removing about 140,000 cars from the road each year.

CarrefourSA's İstinye project (2024) illustrates how regional retailers can effectively implement solar solutions. Despite its smaller 620 kWp capacity (1,113 panels across 10,000 m^2), the system meets 45% of the store's energy demand through 1 million kWh of annual production. The project capitalizes on Turkey's abundant sunshine (2,741 hours/year) and national renewable energy incentives to achieve 25% cost savings. While lacking battery storage, its advanced monitoring system and rapid 6-month implementation demonstrate how retailers can achieve meaningful sustainability results even with limited resources.

These cases demonstrate that successful solar implementation requires alignment between corporate sustainability goals, local conditions, and available technologies. While global chains can invest in cutting-edge systems and wide-scale deployments, regional players like CarrefourSA show that significant progress can be made through well-designed, context-specific solutions. The projects collectively highlight the growing importance of solar energy in retail operations worldwide, with each model offering valuable lessons for businesses pursuing renewable energy strategies.

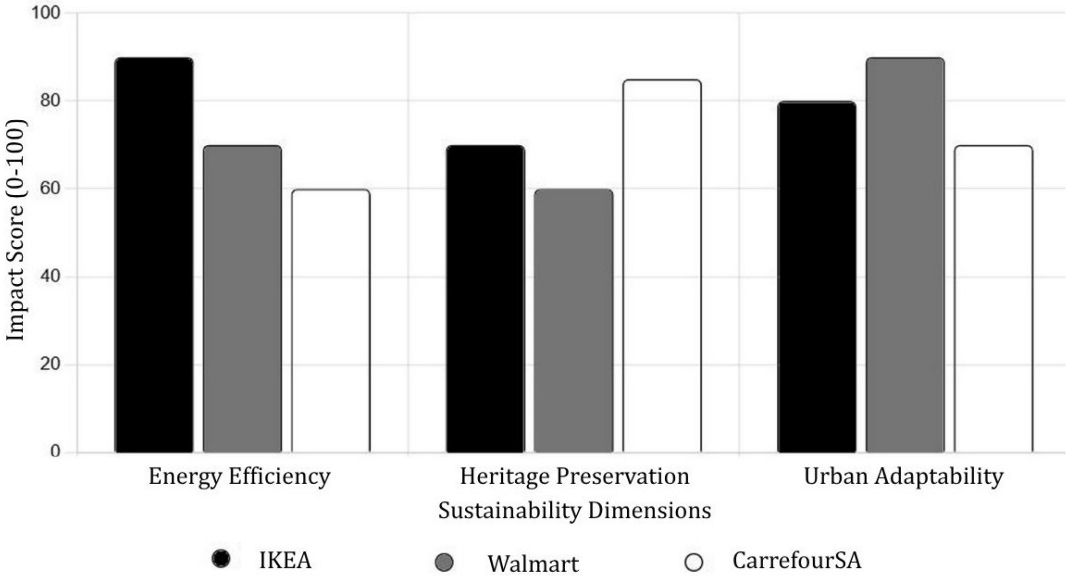

Figure 3. Comparative Impact of Adaptive Retrofitting on Sustainability (Developed by Author)

SWOT Analysis of CarrefourSA's İstinye SPP project and Key Findings

CarrefourSA's İstinye Solar Power Plant (SPP) represents a significant step toward Sabancı Holding's commitment to reduce carbon emissions by 41% by 2030. This initiative showcases the potential for renewable energy adoption in Turkey's retail sector while highlighting both its strengths and areas for improvement.

Strengths: The İstinye SPP demonstrates strong environmental and economic benefits. With a 620 kWp capacity, the system generates 1 million kWh annually, covering 45% of the store's energy needs and reducing CO_2 emissions by 374.8 tons per year—equivalent to the annual consumption of 187 households. Despite rising energy costs in Turkey, the project delivers 25% savings, enhancing operational efficiency. Its strategic location in Istanbul boosts brand visibility, aligning with growing consumer demand for sustainable businesses. Additionally, the use of high-efficiency monocrystalline panels and real-time monitoring ensures reliable performance, while the rapid six-month implementation sets a benchmark for future projects.

Weaknesses: However, the project faces limitations in scalability and technological advancement. Compared to global competitors like IKEA and Walmart, which operate solar capacities of 1.7 GW and 500 MW respectively, CarrefourSA's initiative remains modest in scale. The lack of battery storage leads to a 30-40% drop in energy production during winter months, reducing efficiency. Furthermore, the $500,000 initial investment may deter smaller retailers from adopting similar solutions, and the absence of a clear expansion plan across CarrefourSA's 1,000+ stores limits broader impact.

Opportunities: Turkey's abundant sunlight (2,741 hours annually) provides an excellent foundation for scaling solar energy projects. Government incentives, including the EU Green Deal and YEKDEM (National Renewable Energy Support Mechanism)- incentives subsidies, offer financial support for further renewable energy investments. The growing consumer preference for eco-friendly brands (65% by 2025) presents an opportunity to strengthen customer loyalty. Future enhancements, such as AI-driven energy management and electric vehicle charging stations, could further elevate CarrefourSA's sustainability leadership.

Threats: The project must navigate several challenges, including competition from global retailers with advanced technologies like IKEA's battery storage and Walmart's microgrid systems. Seasonal energy fluctuations and regulatory changes, such as potential reductions in government incentives, pose additional risks. Economic instability and rising material costs may also hinder future investments in renewable energy.

The SWOT analysis underscores that the İstinye Solar Power Plant (SPP) represents a groundbreaking initiative in Turkey's retail sector, proving the feasibility of solar energy integration while highlighting opportunities for further innovation. To fully capitalize on this potential, CarrefourSA should focus on scaling the project across its store network, investing in advanced energy storage systems, and pursuing continuous technological advancements. By proactively addressing these strategic priorities, the company can not only enhance its operational sustainability but also reinforce its leadership in the transition toward eco-conscious retail practices.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study demonstrates that retrofitting plays a pivotal role in advancing environmental sustainability within the retail sector, as exemplified by the CarrefourSA İstinye SPP Project's substantial reductions in carbon emissions and energy costs. A comparative analysis with industry leaders such as IKEA and Walmart further reveals that retrofitting not only decreases operational expenditures but also enhances brand reputation, contributing to broader economic and social sustainability objectives.

Beyond its immediate benefits, retrofitting supports urban resilience—a key principle of adaptive urbanism (Meerow et al., 2016). By integrating renewable energy solutions into retail spaces, cities can better adapt to climate change challenges. The CarrefourSA case illustrates this through improved community awareness and sustainable transportation initiatives, including electric vehicle charging stations. However, the economic impact of retrofitting varies across contexts: CarrefourSA achieved a 25% reduction in costs, outperforming IKEA and Walmart (both at 15%). This disparity underscores the influence of local factors on retrofitting outcomes, suggesting that tailored strategies are essential for maximizing sustainability gains.

These findings illuminate promising directions for future investigation into adaptive retrofitting solutions. The study underscores the critical need to develop tailored approaches that translate sustainability theory into practical applications, particularly in urban contexts grappling with dual energy and economic challenges. The demonstrated success of case-specific interventions suggests that hybrid methodologies combining technological innovation with localized adaptation strategies may offer the most viable path forward. Researchers should particularly focus on developing decision-support frameworks that help stakeholders navigate the complex trade-offs between environmental benefits, implementation costs, and operational feasibility in crisis-affected urban markets.

Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that influence the interpretation and applicability of its findings. First, its reliance on the CarrefourSA İstinye SPP Project as a primary case study restricts the generalizability of results to other retail environments, particularly smaller-scale operations or regions with differing regulatory and climatic conditions. While the qualitative comparative analysis with IKEA and Walmart provides valuable insights, the dependence on secondary data—without complementary primary data from stakeholder interviews or consumer surveys—may obscure nuanced social perceptions and behavioral impacts. Second, the economic analysis does not fully account for the upfront capital expenditures required for retrofitting, a critical factor for smaller retailers with limited liquidity. This omission may overstate the short-term feasibility of such projects despite their demonstrated long-term benefits.

Third, the study's cross-sectional design (with data current to June 2025) lacks longitudinal assessment, preventing analysis of how sustainability outcomes evolve over time, such as fluctuations in energy savings or maintenance costs. Additionally, the exclusion of energy storage systems (e.g., battery technology like IKEA's) limits understanding of how retrofitting can mitigate renewable energy intermittency—a key challenge for scalability.

Future Research Directions for Sustainable Retrofitting in Retail

The current research identifies several crucial gaps that require further investigation. Future studies must expand their focus to include small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the retail sector, as these businesses face unique implementation challenges despite representing a substantial market segment. Examining SMEs will yield valuable insights about scaling retrofitting solutions across different business models and operational scales.

Methodological improvements should become a key focus for upcoming research. Scholars need to combine quantitative energy data with qualitative social impact measurements through mixed-methods approaches. Implementing longitudinal study designs would be particularly beneficial for tracking both short-term results and long-term sustainability outcomes of retrofitting projects.

Energy storage integration presents another vital research opportunity. Following successful examples like IKEA's Memphis project, researchers should investigate how emerging battery technologies and smart grid solutions can solve renewable energy intermittency issues in retail environments. These studies should evaluate technical requirements, cost efficiency, and geographic-specific implementation barriers across various climate zones.

Several specific research areas demand focused attention: developing customized energy storage systems for different retail formats, analyzing financing options for smaller retailers, and examining retrofitting's long-term urban effects. Implementing rigorous methodologies will be essential, including comparative case studies, stakeholder analysis frameworks, economic modeling, and policy evaluations. Future research could cover context-specific retrofitting models that account for local infrastructure constraints and resource availability, cost-optimized implementation strategies for financially constrained environments, and scalable solutions that maintain efficacy across varying urban densities and building typologies.

These research initiatives will establish the necessary evidence base for creating adaptable implementation strategies. By filling these knowledge gaps, researchers can provide practical guidance to both business leaders and government officials, promoting wider adoption of sustainable retrofitting practices worldwide. The findings will help achieve balanced solutions that address environmental sustainability while maintaining economic feasibility and social responsibility in the retail industry.

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