

# MEASURING - EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT – CASE STUDY OF A SPORTS RETAILER

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## ABSTRACT

*The Indian Sports retailing industry is growing very rapidly, however, one of the biggest challenges the sports retail sector is facing is too many people leaving the job too fast. With disposable incomes rising of Indians and retail sector opening shops and malls everywhere to cater to the growing needs, the retail staff have multiple opportunities within a city and outside it causing huge turnover among the retail staff from entry level to seniors posts. For organization to be successful at competing for new talent and retaining employees, they have to know what workers want, what keeps them happy, and what makes them stay. The present paper is based on empirical work. An experimental survey on employees of a sports retailer were carried out and were evaluated on seven sub scales viz: measuring hygiene factors, policy factors, motivational factors, people factors, self related factors, manager related factors, organization related factors. Data analysis was done on various independent parameters such as gender, age, marital status, work experience with the above mentioned - engagement factors. The objective of the study is to measure engagement level, investigate the factors which contribute to the retention of staff and to understand the major challenges in retaining the staff in retail workplaces. The results showed positive connection between conducive work environment and engaged workforce.*

**Keyword :** -Employee Engagement, Monotony, Motivation, Sports retailing, Productivity.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Employee Engagement refers to the deep involvement physically, mentally in the work roles by the employees of an organization so that they feel deeply satisfied with their jobs.

In a country like USA also around half of the workforce are either not fully engaged or disengaged (Johnson 2004) which means that a lot of loss in productivity and lost profits. With more and more computerization at the work place and standardizations of processes in organizations, companies are increasingly searching for ways to increase the engagement of employees in different sectors to maintain their bottom line. Today if employees are unhappy with their work they will move to a different companies due to lots of alternatives. Hence retaining them with different engagement initiatives is the need of the hour.

When the term engagement was used first in relation to work is not clear but Gallup organization is given the credit for coining the term. In their book *First, break all the rules* by Buckingham and Coffman (1999), Gallup's "survey done for a long time from 1988 on over 100000 employee was summarized under the theme strong workplaces. The employees idea of workplaces was measured with 12 questions called Q12.

Lots of changes was happening in the workplaces which needed the adaptation of the employee both physically and mentally to perform their work. With workplaces becoming more complex huge demands were placed on the employees. So instead of their bodies employees bring their whole self to the workplaces and employees contribution became more important as business started to get more output with less employees so

engaging not only the physical self but also the mental self became the norm .This resulted in lots of practioner articles on how to keep the employee engaged in a fast changing workplace.

The main scholar article on the term employee engagement was published in the Academy of management titled “ Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work”(Kahn,1990) His article was primarily based on the sociological text ,”The presentation of self in everyday life “ by (Goffman 1961) .Kahn had hinted that “people act out momentary attachments and detachments in role performances”

### **1.1 WHY IS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT NEEDED FOR ORGANISATION**

Employee Engagement is needed to develop and continue the interest in a job profile. Once an employee joins work , he learns all the activities comprising his job . Due to the new experiences he shall gain, the employee is motivated to learn new things, tackle different issues in the work place. The difficulties in work and workplace make him strive to work hard and overcome the hardships and emerge successful. Once he becomes proficient in his work , doing the same job everyday,he is struck by the monotony of the jobs. After some time they lose interest and motivation as there is no new learning. Finally the approach towards work becomes mechanical as they become more detached to work leading to disengagement. As this continues, he looks for better job opportunities where his knowledge ,skills will be utilized in a better way. If he lands a better job he leaves and goes off taking with him lots of valuable work experience. If he does not he continues getting more and more dissatisfied impacting work quality adversely.

### **1.2 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

With more and more standardization of jobs and subdivision of work into small parts being distributed among all the employees, one employee has to do one or few activities under his work role for a fairly long period of time causing boredom and he may not get adequate scope to demonstrate or apply his skill and knowledge as much as he wants to. In such a scenario, developing and maintaining the interest in job on a daily basis is needed which can be done with Employee Engagement.

With more jobs becoming routine and mechanical, the importance of Employee Engagement has been rising and companies have been spending lots of time devising ways to keep the employee engaged in his work. Hence, this study will study the factors which are responsible for high employee engagement in retail sector taking a sports retailer in India as case study.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

- 1.To measure the level of employee engagement in the company.
2. To identify the factors which contribute to engagement.
3. To understand the major challenges in engaging the employee.

### **2.1 REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

In the academic literature, a number of definitions have been provided for the term employee engagement. In his qualitative paper paper “Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work ”Kahn (1990, p. 694) defines personal engagement as “the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles, in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances.” Personal disengagement refers to “the uncoupling of selves from work roles, in disengagement, people withdraw and defend themselves physically, cognitively, or emotionally during role performances” (p. 694). Thus, according to Kahn (1990, 1992), engagement means to be psychologically present when occupying and performing an organizational role.

Rothbard (2001, p. 656) also defines engagement as psychological presence but goes further to state that it involves two critical components: attention and absorption. Attention refers to “cognitive availability and the amount of time

one spends thinking about a role” while absorption “means being engrossed in a role and refers to the intensity of one’s focus on a role.

In the paper “the psychological conditions of meaningfulness, safety, availability and engagement of human spirit at work” by May et. al.(2004). Douglas May tested Kahn’s theory of the effects of the three psychological conditions psychological meaningfulness, physiological safety and psychological availability on employee engagement. His research proved that these three conditions impacted on employee engagement in varying ways. In the results meaningfulness displayed the strongest relation. The work role fit and job enrichment positively linked to psychological meaningfulness. The reward and supportive supervisor relations were positively linked to psychological safety. Self consciousness and adherence to co-worker norms negatively affected psychological safety while resources availability were positively related to psychological availability. Participation in outside activities negatively related to psychological availability.

Burnout researchers define engagement as the opposite or positive antithesis of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001). According to Maslach et al. (2001), engagement is characterized by energy, involvement, and efficacy, the direct opposite of the three burnout dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and inefficacy. Research on burnout and engagement has found that the core dimensions of burnout (exhaustion and cynicism) and engagement (vigor and dedication) are opposites of each other (Gonzalez-Roma et al., 2006).

Schaufeli et al. (2002, p. 74) define engagement “as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption.” They further state that engagement is not a momentary and specific state, but rather, it is “a more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state that is not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior” (p. 74).

Alan M. Saks in 2006 in the paper titled “Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement ”

perceived organizational support, perceived supervisor support predicts both job and organization engagement, job characteristics predicts job engagement and procedural justice, distributive justice predicts organization engagement. Higher job and organization engagement led to job satisfaction, organizational commitment, reduced intentions to quit and organizational citizenship behavior.

In the article “The Meaning of Employee Engagement” in 2008 William Macey, Benjamin Schneider have proposed the term is used at different times to refer to psychological states, traits, and behaviors as well as their antecedents and outcomes.

## 2.2 METHODOLOGY

**2.2.1 Data Collection:** The present research is a cross sectional descriptive study and is based on primary data. The Primary data has been collected from a sports retailing company having branches in Bangalore. A structured questionnaire was adopted for collecting primary data as also the literature and interview has been conducted with executives from the head-office and stores of the said sports retailing company. Secondary sources include information from the journals, periodicals, magazines and practitioners articles.

**The Tool:** A detailed questionnaire is designed keeping in view the objectives of the study and administered among sample respondents. The questionnaire has two sections, with five point Likert rating scale, ranging, 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=can’t say, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree.

The questionnaire consisting of 16 questions was made after referring to Gull Q12 questions and UWES questions on employee engagement.

**Section A:** Personal information of respondents was sought. It constitutes age group, experience, gender, marital status of the respondents.

**Section B:** This section is regarding factors of nurses retention, questions were designed on seven sub scales viz: measuring hygiene factors, policy factors, motivational factors, people factors, self related factors, manager related factors, organization related factors.

**2.2.2 Sample Size:** Samples of 116 responses was included for this study although questions were sent to 337 respondents. Hence response rate was 34%. All the employees of the company was sent an online questionnaire through googledocs.

**2.2.3 Sampling Method:** Simple random sampling method was adopted. It is a probability sampling technique. Respondents considered for data collection were at various positions at senior, middle and at entry level at the sports retailing company.

A personal visit to all the stores located in different parts of the city was made by the researcher meeting the Store managers explaining the idea behind the survey. Afterwards interviews with select department heads and operational heads were also done and hardcopy of the questionnaire was distributed for filling on the spot. Repeated follow-up through mail and telephone was done through store managers and operational heads to ensure maximum participation.

### 3. DATA ANALYSIS

**3.1 Gender:** Table 1.1: showing the frequency of gender

Gender of respondents	Numbers	(%)
Male	89	77%
Female	27	23%
Total	116	100%

**3.2 Experience :** Table 1.2: showing the frequency of experience in current organization

Experience in current organization	0-2 year	2-4 yrs	4-6 years	Above 6 yrs	Total
Number	68	38	38	4	116
(%)	58%	32.70%	5.10%	3.40%	100%

**3.3 Designation:** Table 1.3: showing the designation

Designation	Numbers	(%)
Store Manager	6	5.17%
Operations manager	2	1.72%
Department manager	36	31.03%
Sales executives	62	53%
CRM executives	10	8.60%
	116	100

**3.4 Marital Status:** Table 1.4: showing marital status

Marital Status	Numbers	(%)
Married	26	22%
Unmarried	90	78%
	116	100%

**Table 1.5 showing Descriptive statistics for Hygiene factors, Policy, Motivational, People, Self, Managerial, Organizational factors.**

Items	Total(116)		Male(89)		Female(27)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Descriptive statistics for Hygiene factors</b>						
1. My dept provide a safe & clean working environment	4.6	1.07	4.57	1.1	4.7	0.94
<b>Descriptive statistics for Policy factors</b>						
2.This company cares about its employee	4.3	1.41	4.47	1.47	4.18	1.51
<b>Descriptive statistics for Motivational factors</b>						
3. Time flies when I'm working	4.49	1.54	4.41	1.28	4.74	1.166
4. At my job, I feel strong and vigorous	4.55	1.148	4.52	1.23	4.62	1.01
5. My job inspires me	4.56	1.19	4.55	1.14	4.59	1.21
<b>Descriptive statistics for People factors</b>						
6. My team talk about openly what needed to be done	4.37	1.32	4.39	1.28	5.22	4.1
7. The people I work with treat me with respect	4.44	1.26	4.39	1.28	4.62	1.01
8. People at this company are honest	3.81	1.714	3.78	1.92	3.92	1.88

<b>Descriptive statistics for Self</b>						
9. My manager treats me with respect	4.59	1.077	4.6	1.025	4.55	1.23
10. I feel important to the success of my department	4.74	0.95	4.71	0.992	4.81	0.79
11. I am proud to say that I work at this company	4.73	0.918	4.75	0.824	4.66	1.16
12. It is difficult to detach myself from my job	4.32	1.422	4.32	1.366	4.33	2.51
13. When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work	4.35	1.297	4.31	1.33	4.48	1.16
<b>Descriptive statistics for Managerial factors</b>						
14. My manager communicates well with all team members	4.44	1.33	4.48	1.294	4.33	1.316
15. My manager recognizes me when I do a good job.	4.41	1.295	4.39	1.332	4.48	1.163
<b>Descriptive statistics for Organization</b>						
16. This company treats all employees fairly	4.14	1.523	4.07	1.54	4.44	1.635

\*number in brackets denotes the number of respondents

**Interpretation:** The first question in the table shows the responses of respondents on factors related to hygiene. Most of the respondents feel that their department provide safe and clean working environment (mean=4.6).

The second question in the table show the responses of respondents on factors related to Policy matters. Respondents are happy that the company care about its employees with (mean=4.3).

The third question in the table indicates the responses for motivational factors .The respondents strongly agree that time flies when they are working (mean = 4.49). Many respondents feel strong and vigorous at the job with (mean =4.55) .Majority of the respondents feel that their jobs inspire them having a (mean =4.56) as shown by the fifth question.

The sixth question in the table indicates response for people factors. The respondents do agree that their team talk about openly what needed to be done with (mean= 4.37). Respondents also agree that the people I work with treat me with respect having scored (mean= 4.44). Respondents agree that the people in the company are honest having scored (mean=3.81).

The table shows the responses of respondents on factors related to Self from question 9 to 13. Most of the respondents feel that their manager treats them with respect with (mean=4.59). A very high percentage of respondents (mean=4.74) feel that they are important to the success of their department. Many agree that they are proud to proclaim that they work at this company (mean= 4.73). Many agreed that its difficult for them to detach

themselves from work(mean=4.32). Respondents agree that when they get up in the morning,they feel like going to work (mean= 4.35).

The table show the responses of respondents on managerial factors in question 14 and 15 . Respondents strongly agree that their manager communicates well with all team members.(mean=4.44). Respondents do agree that their manager recognizes them for a good job (mean=4.41) .

The result of the question 16 indicates the responses of all the respondents on organizational factors. Respondents strongly agree that they are treated fairly with (mean= 4.14).

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

As per the literature, conducive work environment, fair treatment by supervisor, friendly colleagues with proper required infrastructure goes a long way in enhancing engagement to the workplace. Our empirical study taking a sport retailer as an example has affirmed it. Many of the employees were happy to work in the organization. When they get up in the morning they feel like going to work since it's a great place to work. Due to fair treatment by the management the staff were proud to work in the company which stipulates that they should continue with their worker friendly policies. Incase of any problem, the supervisors and colleagues would discuss and solve the issues which help in promoting a congenial work environment.

Most of the employees are so engrossed in their work that they forget how time flies. That much of motivation and commitment employee show towards their work as their work place is safe and clean and they are provided with all the required tools and equipments to do a good job.

#### **5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

Respondents are limited only to Bangalore city, Karnataka. This study is confined only to staff of only one company. It is assumed that the respondents have provided genuine inputs and reflect true experience. Responses were taken only from those who agreed to give their valuable inputs.

#### **6. SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

1. The study can also be done geographically across different Indian cities.
2. The study was conducted in 5 branches of one sports retailing company but can be extended to other players in sports goods retailing industry.
3. The study was conducted can be extended to different age groups to see the level of engagement.
4. The study was conducted only in one sector but other sectors can also be studied and comparative studies can also be done across different verticals like pharmaceuticals, IT etc. for better representativeness .

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