

“Employee Engagement: Recent Trends” (With Special Reference to Organized Retail Sector)

¹Dr. Priyanka Shrivastava., ²Dr. Dharmendra Mehta

¹Asst.Professor, Prashanti Institute of Management

²Prof. & Director-FMS, Pt. JNIBMV.U

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ABSTRACT

An organized retailer's success in India is greatly reliant on employee involvement within the company, and this makes it imperative for us to understand it. An employee's engagement in the organizational day to day activities improves their productivity, as well as the services provided to the customers. With the help of different kinds of secondary information contained here, we look into engagement practices such as remote work strategies, use of engagement technology solutions, DEI activities, wellbeing programs, and the employee experience strategies. These engagement practices are evidenced among the organized retail leaders in India like Pantaloons Retail, K Raheja Group, Tata Group, Landmark Group, and Bharti-Walmart. More focus needs to be given towards employee engagement when it comes to wanting to have a motivated team as well as committed team members to that are necessary for any company wanting to remain relevant in this ever-changing competitive marketplace. Future research directions would be on impacts of remote work, how effective technology engagement strategies are for employees, the crossover of DEI engagement, and the well-being initiatives provided by the firm. In depth understanding and improvement in employee engagement will enhance the chances of retail businesses succeeding in today's economy.

Keywords: Employee Engagement, Remote Work, Technology, Diversity, Inclusion, Well- being, Organizational Culture.

INTRODUCTION

William Kahn initially coined the phrase ‘Employee Engagement’ in the 1990s, and defined it as the degree to which employees engage to construct themselves in relation to their work roles. Today, the definition has expanded to include job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and employees' participation, all of which make a considerable contribution to the success of an organization. Productivity, creativity, and loyalty fostered by engaged employees have a positive effect on workplace culture, customer satisfaction, and overall business performance. There are several approaches to improve engagement, such as career development, reward systems, work-life balance policies, and supportive, collaborative company cultures. Communication and collaboration through digital tools also enhance engagement. Therefore, engagement of employees is a multidimensional component that is necessary for effective organizational performance and success.

The engagement of employees is highly crucial with respect to the retail industry of India as it is contributing significantly towards the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Considering the diverse nature and the rapid development in the organized retail sector, it has emerged as one of the leading growing sectors of the economy with the highest CAGR. The expansion of the sector between 2013 and 2018 demonstrated a compounded annual growth of 24.26 percent. Despite these changes, the consumer preferences continue to evolve, and therefore, the need for engaged employees cannot be overemphasized. More and more companies have realized that in order to survive in the rapidly changing retail environment, it is necessary to have a strong commitment and high levels of motivation among the employees. Thus, the retail business enterprises must understand and work upon employee engagement to survive in the challenging and vibrant dynamics of the industry, especially if they hope to tap into the remaining industry opportunities for expansion and improvement.

Modern trends for employee engagement in a dynamic retail industry are aimed at nurturing purpose and connection, managing remote staff employees, and diversity and inclusion strategies. The pandemic along with a shift in consumer behavior has forced retailers to adopt employee engagement as a key strategy in keeping them afloat and achieving growth in business. Here, employees play a vital role. Engaged employees are the ones who can sell and satisfy the customers which makes them instrumental for retail business success. As competition increases, employee engagement is also a necessity in order to maintain the quality of customer service, as well as the productivity of the organization in terms of selling and services provided.

The paper primarily aims to gain insight into current trends in employee engagement practices within the organized retail sector. Additionally, it seeks to identify the factors influencing employee engagement in this industry, as well as the strategies implemented to enhance it. The paper explores effective practices for improving employee engagement and highlights the benefits of having engaged employees in the organized retail sector.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This literature review investigates the antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement, various methodologies for its measurement, and its influence on organizational performance. Furthermore, it scrutinizes the impact of leadership, remote work, technological advancements on engagement.

Table No. 1: ROL at a Glance

Author	Year	Country	Contribution
Ritu Kumar	2024	India	The author explored strategies to enhance employee engagement, including leadership development, effective communication, recognition programs, work-life balance initiatives, and career advancement opportunities. This work examined their impact on engagement and organizational outcomes, identified implementation challenges, and proposed solutions.
Deepa. K	2024	India	The author found that private higher education institutions (HEIs) had higher employee engagement levels than public HEIs, attributed to resources and flexibility in offering better salaries, and career growth opportunities. Addressing these issues could improve engagement in both private and public HEIs.
Aditya Joshi	2023	India	The author asserted that HR professionals had to focus on addressing employee needs over wants for effective performance management. A motivational approach could boost productivity, trust, and teamwork, with awards, recognition, and fostering innovation being key to enhancing relationships and preventing disputes.
Ashraf Elsafty and Nabil A. Hanaf	2023	Egypt	This study explored how job resources, including the hybrid working model and manager coaching, impact employee engagement, alongside the moderating effect of long-term assignments (LTA). However, the study revealed that LTA negatively moderates this relationship, indicating a complex interplay between job resources and engagement in such assignments.
Dr. S. Sundararajan	2023	India	The author highlighted managers' role in low employee engagement, with only 14% of global workers highly engaged. This study explored the link between engagement, job satisfaction, and loyalty's impact on workforce quality. Findings suggested employees conformed to organizational standards, promoting engagement and retention.
Muzeyin J. R., Ahmed.	2022	Werabe,	The author identified employee engagement among Silite zone teachers, employing a cross-sectional descriptive and explanatory research design. From

H. M., Awoke. Y., Ferejo. F. M., Temesgen		Ethiopia	a total population of 5,902, a sample size of 375 was selected using Yamane's formula and stratified random sampling. Analysis conducted via SPSS version 26 unveiled significant determinants: reward and recognition, work-life balance, training and development, and job characteristics. However, communication was deemed insignificant. Recommendations entail enhancing reward practices, work-life balance, training, and improving job characteristics in Silite zone schools.
hokhar	2018	India	The author clarified employee engagement regarding its impact on employee retention and performance, as well as identifying critical factors for effective implementation. Study results provided future reference, indicating that implementing various engagement factors led to reduced employee turnover and improved productivity.
Sarangi, P. and Nayak. B.	2017	India	The author discussed how employee engagement drives organizational productivity, motivating employees towards commitment and participation in tasks. Using both primary and secondary data, the study aimed to analyze the impact of employee engagement on company success. It described six out of 10 Cs of employee engagement defined by Gambler (2007).
Paluku Kazimoto	2016	Wobulenzi-Luweero City, Uganda	The author explored how employee engagement affects organizational performance, analyzing factors in selected retailing businesses in Wobulenzi-Luweero City, Uganda. The study focused on non-financial factors, measuring employee engagement's impact on productivity and motivation in the retail sector.

Although employee engagement is a prominent term in contemporary business discourse, there is a paucity of literature on this subject across different sectors in India. Each sector upholds its unique core values regarding its workforce, and this endeavour aims to strengthen the bond between employees and organizations through the principles of employee engagement. By synthesizing existing literature, this review seeks to identify research gaps and propose future research directions to optimize recent trends in employee engagement within the organized retail sector.

Objectives of the Study

- To study recent trends of employee engagement in organized retail sector with the help of review of literature.
- To investigate recent trends in employee engagement within the leading organized retail sector in India.
- To study the practical implications and recommend a few practical suggestions for the stakeholders.

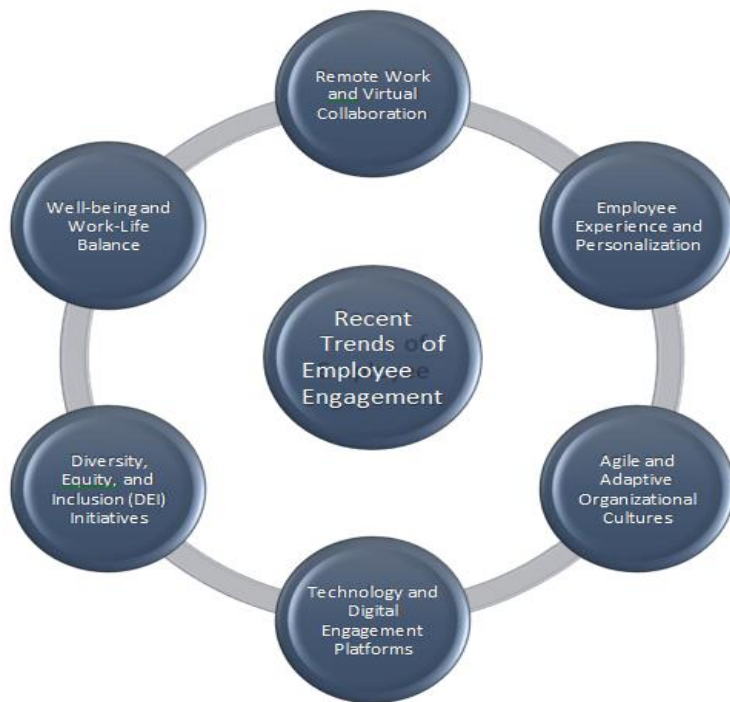
METHODOLOGY

The present paper is based on secondary sources, which include an extensive literature review. This review draws from reputable academic journals, well-regarded magazines, major newspapers, and relevant websites. These sources provide a comprehensive foundation for examining the topic and supporting the study's conclusions.

Recent Trends Shaping Employee Engagement

We have tried to cover into each of these trends shaping employee engagement in the organized retail sector. By examining these key areas, we can understand how they contribute to enhancing employee satisfaction, productivity, and overall organizational success.

Figure No.1. Key Areas of Recent Trends Shaping Employee Engagement



Developed by Authors on the basis of ROL

Remote Work and Virtual Collaboration in Organized Retail

The rise of remote work, accelerated by the global pandemic, has prompted the organized retail sector to reimagine employee engagement outside the traditional physical workspace. Remote work presents challenges such as isolation and communication difficulties, while also offering benefits like flexibility and improved work-life balance. Effective remote engagement strategies include regular check-ins, virtual team-building activities, and the cultivation of a supportive remote culture.

Technology and Digital Engagement Platforms in Organized Retail

Technology plays a pivotal role in enhancing employee engagement within the organized retail sector. Retailers are increasingly investing in digital platforms, intranets, and mobile applications to furnish employees with essential information, resources, and opportunities for collaboration. These technological tools facilitate connectivity, knowledge sharing, and participation in virtual communities among employees. Additionally, the integration of AI and machine learning technologies personalizes the employee experience by offering targeted learning opportunities and real-time feedback.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Initiatives in Organized Retail

DEI initiatives are vital for successful employee engagement in retail. Retailers are creating diverse and inclusive workplaces where all employees feel valued and empowered. DEI efforts include inclusive hiring practices, leadership development, cultural competency training, and fostering a sense of belonging. Embracing diversity enhances engagement, creativity, and innovation.

Well-being and Work-Life Balance in Organized Retail

Employee well-being and work-life balance are priorities for retail organizations. Addressing stress, burnout, and mental health issues improves performance and satisfaction. Retailers offer flexible work arrangements, self-care practices, mental health resources, and support services. Prioritizing well-being enhances engagement, retention, and resilience.

Employee Experience and Personalization in Organized Retail

Employee experience includes recruitment, onboarding, daily work, and career development. Retailers personalize experiences to meet individual needs and preferences, tailoring learning programs, career growth opportunities, and benefits. Meaningful and personalized experiences increase engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty.

Agile and Adaptive Organizational Cultures in Organized Retail

Retail organizations are fostering agile and adaptive cultures to embrace change and innovation. Agile retailers empower employees to own their work, experiment with ideas, and adapt to market changes. This culture requires trust, transparency, and collaboration, encouraging feedback and risk-taking. Agile cultures enhance engagement, resilience, and competitiveness.

By embracing remote work, leveraging technology, promoting DEI, prioritizing well-being, personalizing the employee experience, and fostering agile cultures, retail organizations can create environments where employees feel valued, motivated, and empowered to contribute to organizational success.

Companies Overview

The following are 5 leading organized retail sector companies have been taken up for the present study:

Pantaloon Retail

In the dynamic landscape of retail, Pantaloons Retail, a leading Future Group entity, stands out with over 1,000 stores across 73 cities in India, covering 16 million square feet. Embracing modern trends, they pioneered the hypermarket model through Big Bazaar in 2001. Pantaloons prioritizes employee engagement by fostering open communication, recognition programs, and career growth opportunities. Their emphasis on work-life balance and active employee involvement aligns with current trends, driving higher satisfaction, retention, and organizational agility amidst evolving market demands.

K Raheja Group

The K Raheja Group, a prominent Indian conglomerate, excels in real estate, hospitality, and retail, with a workforce of over 10,000 employees. They prioritize engagement through transparent communication, recognition programs, and opportunities for skill development and career advancement. Emphasizing work-life balance, diversity, and inclusion, the group fosters a positive workplace culture. This strategic focus has resulted in high employee satisfaction (80%) and retention rates (around 85%), boosting productivity and overall business performance.

Tata Group

The Tata Group, a 150-year-old diversified conglomerate, operates globally in sectors like steel, automotive, IT, telecommunications, and hospitality, employing over 750,000 people. Tata prioritizes employee engagement through transparent communication, recognition schemes, and growth opportunities, emphasizing work-life balance, health, and safety. Committed to diversity and inclusion, Tata involves employees in decision-making, fostering a supportive culture with high satisfaction (over 85%) and retention rates (around 90%).

Landmark Group

The Landmark Group, a leading retail conglomerate in the Middle East and India, prioritizes employee motivation and satisfaction for its 55,000-strong workforce. By ensuring transparent communication, tailored recognition programs, and growth opportunities, Landmark fosters high employee satisfaction and development. Emphasizing work-life balance, wellness initiatives, and diversity, the group cultivates an inclusive workplace culture. These efforts have led to impressive retention rates (around 87%) and significant organizational success.

Bharti-Walmart

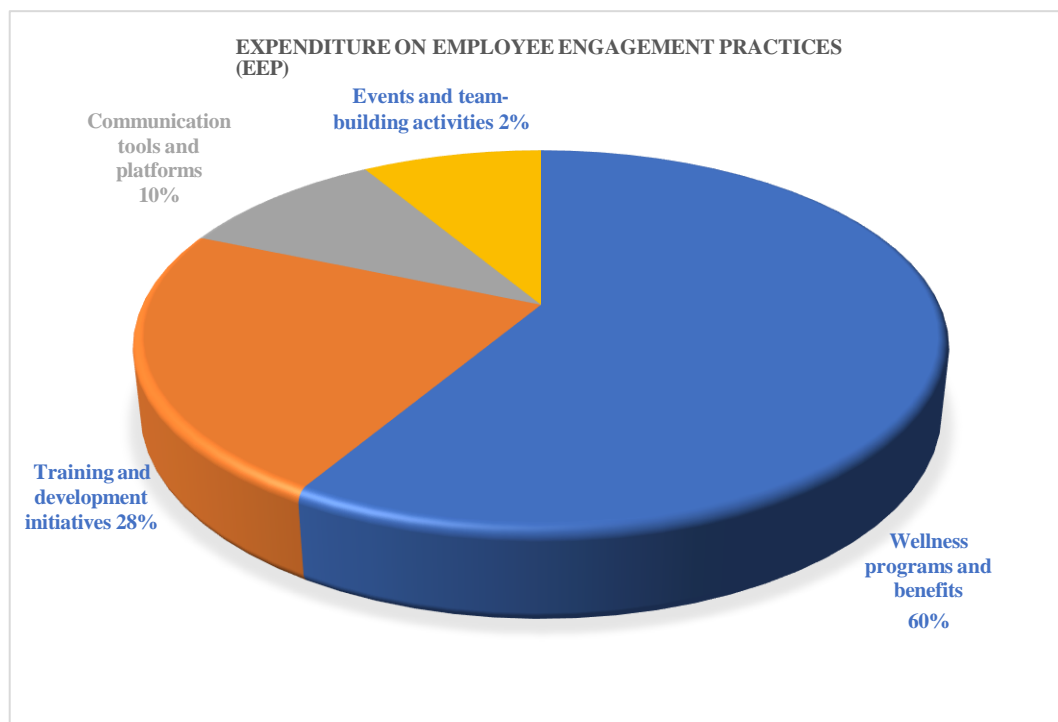
Bharti-Walmart, a collaboration between Bharti Enterprises and Walmart, places significant emphasis on contemporary employee engagement practices to drive organizational growth. Through dynamic communication channels, personalized recognition schemes, and continuous learning opportunities, Bharti-Walmart ensures employee motivation and development. Moreover, the company prioritizes initiatives promoting work-life balance, employee well-being, and diversity and inclusion. By actively involving employees in decision-making processes and fostering a collaborative work environment, Bharti-Walmart aims to enhance satisfaction, retention, and overall business performance.

Expenditure on Employee Engagement Practices (EEP): Indian Scenario

The expenditure on employee engagement practices varies greatly depending on the size of the company, industry, and specific initiatives implemented. On average, companies may allocate anywhere from 1% to 5% of their total operating budget towards employee engagement activities. However, larger companies or those in competitive industries may invest even more.

These expenses can include costs associated with:

Figure No. 2: Expenditure on Employee Engagement Practices (EEP)



Compiled and Developed by Authors

Wellness Programs and Benefits: Approximately 60% of organizations offer wellness programs, with an average annual investment of ₹50,000 to ₹60,000 per employee.

Training and Development Initiatives: Companies typically invest 3-5% of their payroll on employee training programs, with high-performing organizations sometimes exceeding 28%. In monetary terms, this can range from ₹15,000 to ₹35,000 per employee annually.

Communication Tools: Investment in communication platforms and tools can range from ₹7,500 to ₹37,500 per employee annually, depending on the size and needs of the organization.

Events and Team-Building Activities: Businesses spend about 1-2% of their annual budget on team-building and employee engagement events, amounting to ₹5,000 to ₹10,000 per employee.

By investing in these areas, organizations endeavour to empower their workforce, foster professional growth, and nurture a culture of well-being and collaboration. This strategic investment drives sustained success, with engaged employees showing 21% greater profitability and a 41% reduction in absenteeism, thereby enhancing overall competitiveness in the market.

Implications for Organised Retail Sector

Following are the implications of employee engagement for organizational success:

Enhancing Organizational Performance

Employee engagement has a direct impact on organizational performance across various key metrics, including productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction. Engaged employees are more committed, motivated, and aligned with organizational goals, leading to higher levels of performance and efficiency. They demonstrate greater discretionary effort, take initiative, and contribute innovative ideas to drive continuous improvement and success. By prioritizing employee engagement initiatives, organizations can optimize their human capital, improve operational effectiveness, and achieve better business outcomes.

Fostering Innovation and Creativity

Employee engagement is closely linked to innovation and creativity within organizations. Engaged employees are more likely to feel empowered to share their ideas, experiment with new approaches, and collaborate with colleagues to solve complex problems. They are also more receptive to feedback and open to challenging the status quo, fostering a culture of innovation and continuous learning. By creating an environment that values and rewards creativity, organizations can unleash the full potential of their workforce and drive innovation-driven growth and competitiveness.

Nurturing Employee Well-being and Resilience

Employee engagement is intertwined with employee well-being and resilience, both of which are essential for sustaining high performance and organizational success. Engaged employees experience greater job satisfaction, work-life balance, and overall happiness, leading to reduced stress levels and improved mental and physical health. They are also better equipped to cope with challenges and setbacks, demonstrating greater resilience and adaptability in the face of change. By prioritizing employee well-being and creating a supportive work environment, organizations can enhance employee engagement, retention, and organizational resilience.

Building a Culture of Trust and Engagement

Trust is the foundation of employee engagement and organizational success. Engaged employees trust their leaders and colleagues, feel valued and respected, and are more likely to collaborate and communicate openly. Trust fosters a positive work environment where employees feel safe to take risks, share ideas, and challenge the status quo, leading to higher levels of engagement and performance. By prioritizing transparency, integrity, and accountability, organizations can build a culture of trust and engagement that fuels collaboration, innovation, and long-term success.

Overall, employee engagement is a critical driver of organizational performance, innovation, employee well-being, and culture. By investing in strategies to enhance employee engagement, organizations can create environments where employees thrive, contribute their best, and help achieve organizational goals and objectives.

Limitations

This study has certain inherent limitations like:

- This study tends to focus on in-depth exploration of specific contexts, which may restrict the ability to generalize its findings statistically to broader populations or situations.

- This study is based on secondary data. These include a lack of control over data quality, and the possibility that the data may not perfectly align.
- Only confined to organised retail sector with reference to selected retail groups.

CONCLUSION

Throughout this research paper, we have made an attempt to the current trends, explores the evolving landscape of employee engagement within India's organized retail sector. From its origins in the early 1990s to its modern-day significance, employee engagement has become crucial for organizational success. Key trends, including remote work, technology integration, diversity initiatives, and well-being programs, are reshaping employee engagement strategies. We've highlighted how leading companies like Pantaloon Retail, K Raheja Group, Tata Group, Landmark Group, and Bharti-Walmart invest in employee engagement practices to drive success.

Our analysis underlines the pivotal role of engaged employees in driving sales, enhancing customer satisfaction, and maintaining organizational resilience in a competitive retail landscape. By prioritizing employee engagement, organizations can optimize human capital, foster innovation, and build cultures of trust and excellence, ensuring long-term success and growth in the dynamic retail sector.

Future Directions for Research

Significant strides have indeed been made in understanding employee engagement, but there are still uncharted territories that merit further exploration. One crucial aspect deserving attention is the lasting impact of remote work on both employee engagement and the broader dynamics within organizations. As remote work becomes increasingly prevalent, understanding its implications for employee engagement and organizational culture is essential for shaping future workplace policies and practices.

Additionally, there's a pressing need to assess the effectiveness of technology-driven engagement strategies. Investigating the efficacy of these strategies will provide valuable insights into how best to leverage technology to foster meaningful engagement in the digital age. Furthermore, research on the intersection of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives with employee engagement is crucial, particularly in diverse workplaces. Understanding how DEI efforts impact employee engagement can help organizations create more inclusive and supportive environments where all employees feel valued and respected.

Another area ripe for exploration is the role of employee well-being programs in bolstering engagement and organizational resilience. By delving into these research areas, organizations can cultivate environments where employees feel valued, supported, and motivated to excel. This, in turn, will enhance organizational success and competitiveness in today's ever-evolving business landscape, ensuring sustained growth and resilience in the face of change.

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