

Evolving Human Resource Landscape of the Indian Retail Sector : Bridging the Skill-Gap

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Abstract

The proliferation of the Indian retail sector has been remarkable. The growth chart of this industry has intensified in the last two decades and is expected to ascend even more in the future with emerging formats and international shopping experiences. As the retail industry grows leaps and bounds in India, the demand for a trained /skilled workforce augments and poses a huge challenge in front of the retail organizations. Skill shortage has become a point of concern for the employers, government agencies alike. Skilling of Indian youth has, therefore, become the foremost agenda of the industry, government, and academia. The present paper captured the workforce scenario of the Indian retail sector with special emphasis on the existing skill-gaps. Various efforts of the stakeholders to tackle the issue of skilling the employable youth are also highlighted.

Key words : Indian retail sector, skills, skill-gap, Government of India, National Skills Development Council (NSDC)

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Retail is at its boom across the globe. While the global economic growth is progressing at a significant rate with positive projections for the future, retailing is also getting vaster and deeper than before. The ripple effect of massive global expansion of the retail sector, as called an 'unstoppable force' (A.T. Kearney, 2015), can be seen in developing nations like India too. As India can boast of a steady rise in its gross domestic product (GDP) in the recent past, it is moving rapidly towards economic stability. Having acquired the status of the world's fastest growing major economy (Bellman, 2015), the growth potential for India is huge. India's progressive efforts towards economic stability and maturity is evident with the rapid rise of services sector, with an unprecedented growth of the retail sector here. With a contribution of more than 10% in the national GDP (IBEF, 2016), this specific sector exhibits 'solid growth prospects' too, as evident from a jump of five places in the Global Retail Descriptive Index (GRDI) in one year (A. T. Kearney, 2015).

Factors Affecting Growth of the Indian Retail Sector

The growth narrative of the retail sector in India is influenced by an array of factors. The two ends of the continuum of retailing, that is, the retailer and the consumer, both have and are undergoing a magnanimous shift.

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Consumer aspirations and expectations have risen in the past few years in India, leading to increased awareness and sophistication (Pathak & Pathak, 2014). Demands have changed in the form of high preference for brands, discounts, range of products, comfort in shopping, and an overall sophisticated shopping experience. The varying demand of Indian consumers is fueled by the consistent increment in the disposable income. Current statistics indicate that the disposable income in India has increased by 7% CAGR in the last 4 years (Euromonitor International, 2016). As the disposable income increases, it is certain that the middle-class grows with shifting its interest from 'saving' to 'spending,' leading to swelled demand of volume for consumer products. One can see the same effects of rising income in Indian land also, where the consumer market is growing exponentially. It is expected that the total private consumption in India will be over \$1500 billion in the next 10 years; which is not driven by population growth or by dramatic changes in household savings behavior, but rather almost entirely by rising incomes (McKinsey Global Institute, 2007). Apart from rising incomes, other influencers like urbanization and digitization have their own role to play in India and have been in the scene for long.

With the vast penetration of the world-wide web, the world has become a small place now. Near about 39% CAGR growth in the number of Internet users in India in the past 4 years is no doubt shocking, but highly positive (Euromonitor International, 2016). It is suggestive of the fact that the Internet is being used increasingly, and online retailing is the new trend in this area. A larger chunk of the 351 million Internet subscribers and 167 million smartphone users in India (Ernst and Young, 2016) are involved in online retailing. As youngsters are the prime users of the Internet facility, and they are the ones who dominate the shopping trends of any land, online retailing is gradually picking up and has changed the brick- and-mortar look of the Indian retail. Young shoppers having an international exposure through media have led to soaring demands for international brands, malls, ease in shopping and credit system for payment, etc. The gradual shift in the role of women as an integral part of the economy and their liberalization has also brought about an altered frame of Indian retail. With the advent of women's education and more number of working women (Venkatesh, 1994), shopping for women is not just limited to buying food and groceries. Women, even from tier II and III cities, now-a-days have more say in monthly/ annual purchase decisions of the family, and this fact is recognized by the retail organizations, making it more women-oriented.

Amidst the background of these influencers, the other end of the continuum, the retailers, have also paced up. Having acknowledged the remarkable proliferation and growth prospects, retailers, both international and national, influence the rate at which the sector is expanding. A major transformation has been brought about in the format of retailing. While the archaic and unorganized formats of village haats, 'pheriwalas,' local 'kiranans' may still be seen, novel formats like supermarkets, brick-and-click, and click-and-click are emerging at a very high rate. The study of Kumar and Dange (2014) indicated that CAGR growth rate of web-based retailing was far more (70%) than that of the brick and mortar retailing (20%). Although, the newer formats are more complex, but are more innovative than before, and are inching the sector toward being 'organized'. The age-old dominance of the local mom-and-pop stores is fading away gradually, and with the advent of technology and new formats, India has started to appear on the global retail map.

Despite the positive outlook and a very high promise for tomorrow, the retail scene in India sometimes appears to be confusing. The real retail growth diffuses when it is seen that the unorganized retail is also growing along with the organized retail. Organized retail may have generated innumerable job options for Indians, but the shortage of skilled workforce in the system remains a point of great concern. Further, the cultural diversity, inequality in wealth distribution, regional growth of modern retail, etc. are some of the issues that augment the confusion. So, on the one hand, option of organized retail may seem lucrative, but there are many internal and outside challenges present for the sector as such. The journey from a congested local kirana to a hygienic, super-organized hypermarket was never smooth and there exist a plethora of challenges that the industry faces every day. Amidst the challenges of inefficient supply-chain management, space constraints, and general infrastructural and logistics-related challenges, the challenges related to human resource hold high significance (Mahadevaswamy & Nalini, 2013; Sinha & Kar, 2007; Sudame & Sivathanu, 2013).

Work-Force Outlook of Indian Retail

High labor turnover, lack of training and development facilities, overburden of work, low compensation, multi-generational workforce, soaring demands and expectations of millennial workers and skill development are some of the challenges that run across the sectors in India (Jha & Singh, 2015 ; Jauhari & Manaktola, 2009 ; Subramanian, 2016). There is not only a shortage of trained manpower in the Indian system, but there exists a huge gap between what the industries operating on Indian land need or demand and what they get in terms of manpower.

(1) Increasing Demand of 'Skilled' Workforce and Influencing Factors : Retail and human capital go hand in hand. Efficient supply chain is the keyword for success of the retail business and is dependent on human resources to a large extent (Sinha & Kar, 2007). The whole cycle of manufacturing, distribution, supply, and retailing cannot be completed without human presence and working; especially in India, where manual labor is relied upon and preferred over machines even today. The retail business demands an efficient and skilled workforce at both back office and stores etc. Human contribution in managing the stores, catering to customer preferences and demands, merchandising and for customer service is crucial. With the background of the high dependency on human resources, current statistics show that the retail industry is responsible for 8% of employment generation in India (IBEF, 2016); making it over 35 million people working for it (National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), 2009). The growth story will continue as it is estimated that the workforce demand in Indian retail will reach around 70 million by 2018 (Gopalan & Ranganathan, 2014). The retail boom led to an obvious and tremendous generation of employment opportunities almost overnight. The demand for workforce increased manifold and the compensation for retail employees also bettered. On the other hand, with the induction of technology and new machines in the system, millennial workers having global exposure also found merit in the industry and started to explore the employment opportunities willingly.

Owing to the consistent rise in economic growth rate, there is a massive generation of new specialized jobs in India. In order to match the soaring and altering demands of Indian industries, the supply of a skilled workforce is warranted (Wheebox, 2016). Keeping in view the roaring competitiveness within organizations and pressure to match up with international competitors, novel trends of business, market, and consumers to have a 'skilled' workforce is the need of the hour. It not only saves the resources in the initial induction ; rather, helps the organization deal with the challenges of the changing trends. The need for such a skilled workforce becomes

Table 1. Demand of Skilled Workers in Indian Retail

Sub-sector	Employment (in million)			Employment Growth (2013-2017) (in million)	Employment Growth (2017-2022) (in million)	Employment Growth (2013-2022) (in million)
	2013	2017	2022			
Food and Grocery	19.6	21.36	24.44	1.76	3.08	4.81
Health and Personal Care	1.7	1.86	2.28	0.16	0.42	0.58
Home Improvements	4.4	5.11	6.63	0.71	1.52	2.23
Leisure	0.8	0.84	0.92	0.04	0.08	0.12
Lifestyle	4.5	5.17	6.10	0.67	0.93	1.60
Auto sales	1.5	1.68	1.95	0.18	0.27	0.45
Jewellery retail	1.5	2.04	3.14	0.54	1.10	1.64
Food Services	4.6	7.05	10.49	2.45	3.44	5.89
Total	38.6	45.11	55.95	6.51	10.84	17.35

Source: NSDC (2015)

imperative in the Indian retail sector owing to its high dependence on manpower. As is evident from the Table 1, the projections for the demand of skilled workers in Indian retail, both convention and specialized, is going to be around 56 million by the year 2022, demonstrating a rise of 17.35 million from 2013 (National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), 2015).

This huge demand for 'skills' in retail jobs in India can be attributed to the new face of it and high pace at which the industry is growing. The consistent rise of the sector is defining the workforce demands by a study by NSDC concluding that... “there will be a considerable rise in demand for skilled manpower in this sector as the industry has been growing at a steady pace fuelled by factors like changing lifestyles, rising disposable incomes, favorable demographics, and easy credit availability” (2015, p.1).

This soaring demand for skilled labor in Indian retail is further defined by the changes that have taken place in the sector in the recent past. Changes in the formats, the way front-end and back-end operations are carried out at retail organizations, and the growth of few sub-sectors impact the skill-demand of the sector (NSDC, 2009).

(i) Influence of the Altering Operations of Retail Organizations : The workforce of any retail organization is largely divided into front-end and back-end staff. The front-end employees comprise the major part (around 75%-80%) of the total workforce of Indian retail organizations (NSDC, 2009). The job-roles may be similar sometimes, but the functions are typically different in case of two types of operations. As a result, the skills demand for front-end and back-end staffs is also different from each other ; and the demarcation gets stronger and stringent with the specialized formats of supermarkets, departmental stores, etc. The Appendix 1 (NSDC, 2009) maps the skill-need (functional and soft) for the front-end and back-end employees of retail organizations in India. It is highlighted that the front-end job roles of managing various store operations, cash, and customers require the employees to be skilled in interpersonal relationships and communication. They have to be adept in inventory management, and the various operations related to managing the departments of a store. The presentability of the employees is given more importance ; whereas the back-end staff are expected to have skills of data-analysis and maintaining relationships with other departments.

(ii) Influence of Growth of Sub - Sectors : The growth in the various sub-sectors of Indian retail has not been uniform. Few sub-sectors are showing very high growth rate and as a result of massive modernization of these sub-sectors, the demand for nature of workforce is also changing. If on the one hand, employee skills related to basic product knowledge, command over English and local language, polite demeanor, communication, customer service, and inventory management are required across sub-sectors, on the other hand, few segments such as electronics, health-care, eyewear, etc. require specialized skills. With the advent of new formats of hypermarkets, supermarkets, cash and carry wholesale in the food and grocery segment, employees with a different set of skills are required now. Both back and front-end employees of these modern retailers are expected to be smart and confident with a deep knowledge of all products and product variations. Employees are expected not only to sell the products, but they have to sell along with educating the customer regarding the product and its variations. For example, a hypermarket store employee needs to be aware of all varieties of shampoos that are available in the store and which brand will be suitable for which hair-type; also, with the advent of new processed food products or ready-to-eat products, the employees are expected to be aware of the nutritional value, etc.

Further, the change in outlook of shoppers is also defining the set of skills expected from a retail employee in India. The number of young shoppers with international exposure is on rise, so is their consciousness for fashion, style, brands, and knowledge of products. Buying today is not dependent on a visit to a store and picking up the product which the sales person shows or recommends. Rather, customers prefer to gather knowledge about the products before visiting the store, either by talking to others or by reading reviews on the Internet. By comparing the prices with the competitors in the market, the customer wants to make sure that he/she is getting the maximum value for his/her money spent whether on health care services or any small accessory. The altered approach of

smart shoppers has brought about a huge shift in the nature of employees who are hired by the industry. Now-a-days, the employees at the retail stores are expected to know everything about the product that they are selling with specialized knowledge about the competitive products too. It is assumed that the employee will be smart enough to understand the individual needs and work proactively to manipulate the information maximally. He or she will be able to give suggestions based on the assessment of needs of the shopper. For example, both the front-end and back-end employees of modern fashion retailers need to be aware of the national and international fashion trends. Few of the big brands for clothing and accessories, like Da-Milano, Fab India, Reliance Retail believe in hiring individuals with specialized academic degrees in fashion technology, designing or merchandising. Similarly, jobs in the pharma retail require people with specialized knowledge of chemistry, pharmacology, or biotechnology.

(iii) Influence of the New Formats of Retailing : Research shows that retail formats are highly driven by local conditions and local buying behavior of the area (Choudhary & Sharma, 2009 ; Sinha & Kar, 2007). Hence, influenced by the Indian diversity, the evolution of retail formats in India unfolded in such a way that after 70 years of independence, the scene is eclectic. Local mom and pop stores are co-existing with the youth-preferred e-tailing. Increasing population has led to soaring consumer needs-demands-consumption, resulting in thriving of all sorts of formats. Few of the emerging retail formats in India are as follows - malls, department stores, specialty stores, hypermarkets, supermarkets, convenience stores, wholesale 'cash n carry', discounters, branded stores, category killers, dollar stores, Internet retailing (Sinha & Kar, 2007, Singh, 2012). All these newer formats impact the kind of skills required in the sector workforce now. Foremost, language skills are considered to be very important before hiring. Earlier, knowledge and fluency in local language were enough to be hired in any retail organization, but with the rising urbanization, command over English language is a necessary skill for hiring now. The emphasis on communication and soft-skills is also given high importance in retail jobs. Further, the massive scale of the new formats of retailing requires the employees know about the location of a particular product in the huge stores like Big Bazar, Hypercity, etc. The employee is expected to usher the customer to the relevant portion of the big store to get what he/she wants. On the contrary, the archaic formats of local brick-and-mortar stores were small and needed just a ladder to reach to any product. The same person who acted as the help, cleaner, and sales person in the shop could reach the product in a step or two. The expectations regarding the employees' skills have changed when we talk about the knowledge of products too. The huge infrastructure of these new formats has also highlighted 'multitasking' and 'inventory management' as two of the thrust skills possessed by the front and back-end employees. Additionally, the skills related to merchandising have gained importance in past few years. It is of very high interest as to how the products are displayed and kept in the store. Hence, hirers look for skills related to merchandising and store management in the resume of prospective employees these days. Owing to the varied product range, store employees are expected to know every detail of the products and the differentiation value.

(2) Skill Gap in Indian Retail : Although the stage is set to welcome skilled set of workers across sectors, in reality, there is a huge influx of unskilled youth in the Indian job market (Technopak, 2014). The study indicates that only one-third of the total number of students entering the job market in India have the requisite skills to meet the job requirements of the prospective employers (Wheebox, 2016). It is ironical to know that despite having very high skilling potential, that is, around 7 million during 2013-14, there exists a huge gap between the numbers of formally skilled workers of India as against that of USA, UK, Japan etc. (Press Information Bureau (PIB), 2015). The existing skill-gap in Indian industries is one of the major concerns for all the stakeholders and can be attributed to the lack of cohesion between education and industry in India. The education system fails to groom the young entrants to meet the expectations of the job providers and be aware of the nuances. Lack of connect between the two leads to unaware job-seekers without the knowledge that the industry demands skill and practicality rather

than bookish knowledge. Specific to the Indian retail, the skill-gap data suggests that it ranks second in the shortage of skilled manpower.

It is required that the individual, before entering any retail job, is skilled and trained rather than being completely raw. It will not only save the resources of the organization, but will highlight India on the global map in a better way. Keeping in view the significance of skills as the 'driving force of economic growth and social development in any country' (PIB, 2015) and rate at which the retail sector is developing and is expected to grow, it becomes imperative that the skill development efforts need to scale up. The Appendix 2 demonstrates the current skill-gap analysis for the Indian retail sector (NSDC, 2015). The range of the skill-gap is very huge, and it ranges from inadequate product knowledge, poor IT skills, inadequate people management skills to poor personal hygiene.

(3) Answering the Skill - Gaps of Indian Retail : The skill landscape of India, as discussed above, is alarming and demands a concentrated effort to bridge the existing gaps in this ecosystem. As the hiring sentiment of organizations is exhibiting positive trends across sectors in India and there is a background of advantageous demographic profile, skill development of the employable youth is the wisest decision in the current scenario (Wheebox, 2016). The mismatch between job and skills has to be analyzed in the background of the existing challenges so that solutions may be generated. The main idea behind closing the skill-gap is to bring academia and corporates together. Acknowledging that it is high time to tackle the situation and to arrest it from further worsening, many stakeholders have come forward.

Specific to the Indian retail sector, the following initiatives have been taken to bridge the skill-gap.

(i) Initiatives Taken by the Government of India : It is appreciable that the Indian Government has acknowledged the urgency of the situation and has started to give prime importance to the issue of skill-gap. Rightly so, the skill ecosystem can only be improved when the government takes a keen interest in the development, improvement, and appropriate implementation of the various policies and plans. As is evident from the exceptional progress India has witnessed under the National Policy on Skills (2009) over the years (KPMG, 2014), the interest of the Indian Government has increased manifold in recent years. A new ministry was set up by the name of the 'Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship'(MSDE) in November 2014 with an overall aim of providing "...the institutional capacity to train a minimum of 300 million skilled people by the year 2020" (NSDC, 2015, p.1). Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) (2016) believed in renewing the policy on skill development of the country, and the National Policy on Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2015) was conceived with major emphasis on "skilling with scale and speed". Amongst the various initiatives of the particular ministry like National Skill Development Agency, National Skills Development Council, National Skill Development Fund, Sector Skill Council (SSC) is an industry-led autonomous body under the ministry.

Retailers Association's Skills Council of India (RASCI) is one such skill council for the retail sector in India under the MSDE. This specific SSC assesses and trains the candidates in the retail specific skills and arms them with appropriate practical knowledge of the sector. Apart from building up the retail skills, RASCI is also involved in training the trainers and helping the candidates with loan facilities and their placements in retail organizations. Latest data suggests that around 4,600 skilled candidates have been assessed, trained, and placed in the industry with the help of RASCI till now (Retailers Association's Skill Council of India (RASCI), 2016a).

The main work of RASCI, like any other SSC, revolves around developing industry-specific National Occupational Standards (NOS) and Qualification Packs (QP). According to MSDE, NOS specify the standard of performance, knowledge, and understanding when carrying out a particular activity at the workplace. Each NOS defines one key function in a job role. A Qualification Pack is a set of NOSs, aligned to a job role and is available for every job role in each industry sector. These drive both the creation of curriculum and assessments (RASCI,

2016b). Currently, there are seven QPs of the retail sector that are available under RASCI, which have been developed using the four NOSs. These Qualification Packs are: Store Operation Assistant, Cashier, Trainee Associate, Sales Associate, Distributor Salesman, Team Leader, and Departmental Manager.

The QPs are the detailed descriptions of the various professional, generic, and core skills that are required for the functioning of a particular role in the retail sector in India. For example, as per RASCI (RASCI, 2016c), the role of a cashier in the retail sector involves applicability of the following 11 NOS:

To service Cash Point, to follow point-of-sale procedures for age restricted products, to process customer orders for goods, to process part exchange sale transactions, to process payments, to process cash and credit transactions, to process returned goods, to maintain health and safety, to create a positive image of self & organization in the customers' mind, to work effectively in your team, and to work effectively in your organization. (2016, p.2)

As RASCI is an industry-led body, the QPs are developed keeping in mind the demand of the business world. These QPs assist the process of recruitment in the industry and bridge the gap between the demand and availability of skills.

Another initiative by the name of Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), which is a flagship scheme of the MSDE, is also working in the large-scale skilling of Indian youth. The government is not only interested in inculcation of skills, but believes in advancement of it also. It has started to provide monetary rewards upon the completion of approved training programs. As retail is still in its development stage in India and has started to attract talent very recently, the skill gap may take some time to be covered.

(ii) Initiatives by Retail Business Organizations : The role of the government in skill development of the nation is paramount, but this mammoth task cannot be completed without the efforts of the corporate world. This fact has been accepted very well that employers should be playing a pivotal role in the skill development of employable youth as they are the ones who demand it. Retail giants like Reliance Retail, Aditya Birla Retail Limited, Future Group have come to the forefront and have joined hands with the Government to start or fund various sector-specific training programs. Various public-private partnerships (PPP) are at play, and retail organizations are working as training partners in these arrangements. Apart from the model of joint collaboration, retail business organizations have started their own in-house training facilities also. Such training facilities help them train their new entrants as per their own requirements and business models. Most of these training programs are in association with pioneer academic institutes like IGNOU, etc. (KPMG, 2014). Indian retail giant Future Group has its own training and skill vertical called “Future Learning,” which is expanding at a very great pace. It is involved in imparting education as well as skill development specific to the retail sector in India.

(iii) Initiative by Academia : Principally, the gaps in the skill ecosystem can only be fathomed when education is put into work. In other words, the wide gap between academia and professional world is the prime reason behind the disparity in the skill system of India. In order to bring the two worlds together, many academic institutions are partnering with the government and retail organizations to run specialized courses in retail (Singh, 2010). Academic institutions like University of Delhi, University of Mumbai, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Tata Institute of Social Sciences have huge infrastructure and credibility in the society; a joint collaboration between such institutions and retail organizations or the Government means no fresh investment in infrastructure and an easy access to youth who want to be educated/ trained/ skilled.

Conclusion

The ubiquitous growth of the Indian retail sector is a huge phenomenon. Eyed by national and international agencies, the growth opportunity is being maximized in Indian land. The past two decades have witnessed an unparalleled growth of the specific industry with massive rise and sophistication of employment opportunities. With the generation of jobs come along the various challenges associated with finding the right talent for the jobs. There may be many young aspirants interested in retail jobs in India and want to pursue their career in it, but the unskilled ecosystem of the employable youth poses the biggest challenge. The skill-scene of India is definitely poor and is in need of a revolution to meet the soaring demands of the promising sectors such as retail. One can't ignore the rate of growth and the reach of the sector in all formats of brick-brick, brick-click, and click-click; hence, keeping in view the growth potential, stakeholders have come forward to improve the skill landscape. The prime stakeholders, that is, the government, the business world and the academia have started to acknowledge the role of their interdependence in the improvement of the entire system. Resources have been channelized to lessen the divide between the generators of talent and the ones who demand it, that is, academia and business.

The Government's role as a cupid in bringing the two worlds together is taking a substantial shape gradually. If the present attention of the law-makers and implementers intensifies further, the skill landscape is bound to change for good. Efforts of the Government in introducing a new ministry and funding various public private partnerships are to be applauded, but the effective implementation of the relevant policies are also required. It is imperative at this juncture that the business world supports the various initiatives with private funding and build a world-class training infrastructure in the country.

Managerial Implications

The present study reflects the skill-gap of the Indian retail sector, and the findings are expected to provide useful insights to the managers, researchers, and academicians. One of the prime implications of the study for the managers is as to how the current operations of retail sector, and the global transformations are influencing the skill-demand. The workforce outlook, as delineated in the study, might be of help for the managers in making decisions both at the strategic and implementation level. The skill map of the sector may aid the managers in the process of managing the current talent pool and forecast the future skill demand of any particular organization or the sector. Further, the detailed description of the various initiatives by the Government and business world might be of interest to the managers and imply awareness and further exploration of initiatives and schemes.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

Despite highlighting the significant aspect of skill-gap of Indian retail and the answers to the gaps, the present study has its own limitations. Problems associated with secondary data, that is, incomplete, redundant, outdated, unreliable, vague, and ambiguous data - could not be avoided in this research and the secondary data used for the study may not be representative in its true sense. Although efforts have been made to minimize the limitations of the present study, but there do exist a number of gaps that can be filled with suggestions for future works. A full-fledged primary study involving first-hand collection of skill data from the Indian retail organizations may be able to add accuracy and authenticity to the present study. Also, an individual project-based deeper analysis and study of the implementation status of the various Government initiatives may add value to the overall available literature.

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Appendix 1. Skill Mapping of Various Job - Roles in the Indian Retail sector

Job-roles (Front-end)	Functional skills	Soft-skills
Store Manager/ Department Manager	Managing skills- store/ department and staff, Fundamental IT skills, Relationship Management- with customer, staff, and back-end employees, Commercial and Business awareness, Cultural and local awareness, Knowledge of product range and variation (self and competitor product), Analytical and Executive skills, Problem-solving skills and Critical Thinking, Goal-oriented thinking, Leadership and Training skills, Influencing and Negotiation skills, Crisis intervention, Ability to co-ordinate	Communication skills (written and oral), Interpersonal skills, Command over language (English and local), Motivational skills, Inventory Management skills
Cash Management Assistant/ Billing Assistant	Fundamental and advanced IT skills related to pricing, billing, bar-code readings, computing discounts/ offers, cash-back options, EMI facilities, bank-sponsored credit facilities etc., Faster and accurate transaction processing ability, Command over numerals in case of manual billing and comparison with cash registers, Fundamental knowledge of transacting through credit/ debit cards, mobile money etc.,	Interpersonal skills, Communication skills, Command over language (English and local)
Customer Service Assistant/ Sales Assistant	Selling and cross-selling skills, Organizing skills, Communication skills specific to sales promotion offers of the store, Knowledge of product range and variation (self and competitor product), Awareness of store structure and display, Business and Commercial awareness, Cultural and local awareness, Relationship Management with customer, Ability to infer taste of customer and suggest accordingly, good memory in terms of choice of a specific customer, Handling grievances related to return, exchange, and complaints. Handling security risks and thefts	Communication skills, Pleasant and cheerful demeanor, Language skills, Persuasion skills, ability to follow-up
Job-roles (Back-end)	Functional skills	Soft-skills
Merchandising Managers and Assistants	Business and local taste awareness, Awareness of market-trends and competitors' world, Empathic understanding of customer needs and behavior, Creative, imaginative and visualizing ability, Ability to think constructively and apply practically, Sensitivity towards beauty and pleasure, 3D visualization ability, Planning, conceptualize, and execution skills, Ability to replicate designs into attractive displays, Flexibility in thinking and approach, Quick decision making, work under pressure, crisis- intervention , in-depth knowledge of products and services, ability to lead/ work in a team.	Interpersonal skills Communication skills (both oral and written) Data Analysis skills
Purchase Manager and Assistant	Relationship Management- with sellers/ suppliers, team and other departments, Influencing and Negotiation skills, Inventory Management, Quick assessment of need, demands and supply options, Ability to compare and differentiate, Decision-making ability, Skills to follow-up, Complete knowledge of requirements of a specific product, Numerical ability in order to compare pricing from different suppliers	Interpersonal skills- with other departments Communication skills (oral and written)
Logistics Manager and Assistant	Inventory Management, ability to maintain warehouse operation, Quick assessment of need, demands and supply options, Ability to compare and differentiate, Decision-making ability, Influencing and Negotiation skills, Ability to co-ordinate	Interpersonal skills, Communication skills
Marketing Manager and Assistant	Advanced IT skills, Data analysis skills, Relationship management, ability to compare and scrutinize, in-depth knowledge of products and customer needs and behavior, Analyzing and executive abilities, Ability to take quick and responsible decisions, ability to co-ordinate, Ability to conceptualize and plan	Interpersonal skills Communication skills (oral and written), Command over language (English and local)

Source: NSDC (2009)

Appendix 2. Skill Gap in the Job - Roles of the Indian Retail Sector

Specific role in Indian retail	Skill gap
Customer Service Associate	Inadequate product knowledge, resulting in little or no support to customers in purchase, Poor customer service orientation, Poor numeracy skills, often in combination with lack of computer knowledge, Inadequate grooming and hygiene
After-sales Service Associate	Inadequate communication skills, with ineffective demonstration and marketing of products, Poor customer empathy, with weak after-sales support and customer feedback mechanism, Poor adaptation to changing technologies, hindering marketing via digital media, etc.
Cashier	Inadequate operational knowledge of POS terminal and payment processing, hindering speedy transactions, Inadequate book-keeping/ accounting skills, Inadequate product knowledge, hindering speedy processing/ scanning
Supervisor, Assistant Departmental Manager, Departmental Manager-	Inadequate communication, people management, and leadership skills, Inadequate coordination skills, especially during peak seasons or high attrition periods, Poor grievance handling skills

Source: NSDC, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.nsdcindia.org/sites/default/files/files/Retail.pdf>