

An Empirical Study on the Identification of Salesforce Engagement Drivers: A Study of Selected Retail Outlets in Visakhapatnam

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Abstract

Salesforce are the people who are highly responsible for the inflow of revenues in any organization, and the retail sector is not an exception. The study of salesforce engagement in retail outlets would enable the retailers to understand how they can attain better business performance and customer satisfaction. If the needs of the salesforce are properly addressed by the retail managers, the customers' needs in the retail outlets will be addressed properly by the salesforce. Salesforce engagement is one of the practices to address the needs of the employees in a proper manner. But the million dollar question is : How to engage the sales employees ? This study addresses the area of engaging the salesforce in their job of retailing and also attempts to find out the most significant engagement drivers that need to be concentrated upon by the retailers . Sixteen drivers of salesforce engagement were identified, and out of the said drivers, Autonomy-at-Work was identified as the highest ranked driver of salesforce engagement in the retail sector.

Keywords: salesforce engagement, Indian retail sector, drivers of salesforce engagement, employee engagement, factor analysis

JEL Classification: M10, M12, M30, M31

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As a part of the Indian government's strategy to gradually open up the retail sector to foreign retailers, the 2005 budget allowed 26% foreign direct investment (FDI) in this sector. The Indian government recently reopened its gates for global retailers by increasing FDI up to 51% for multi branded retailing and up to 100% in single branded retailing (under certain conditions automatic up to 49% and Government route beyond 49%) according to the Consolidated FDI Policy Circular (2014). Some of the global retail giants like Wal-Mart already started their operations with joint ventures with Indian corporates, whereas others are in plans to enter into the Indian retailer sector with their brands.

The Indian retail industry is mainly divided into organized retailing and unorganized retailing (Ernst & Young, 2012). Organized retailing refers to trading activities undertaken by licensed retailers, that is, those who are registered for sales tax, income tax, and so forth. These include the corporate-backed hypermarkets and retail chains, and also the privately owned large retail businesses. Unorganized retailing, on the other hand, refers to the traditional formats of low-cost retailing, for example, the local grocery shops, owner managed general stores, convenience stores, hand cart and pavement vendors, and so forth. The Indian retail sector is highly fragmented, with 97 % of its business being run by the unorganized retailers. Organized retail, however, is at a very nascent stage. The sector is the largest source of employment after agriculture, and has deep penetration into rural India,

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generating more than 10% of India's GDP (Ernst & Young, 2012).

There are some 12 million retail outlets deeply penetrated across the country and contributing to more than 10% of the country's GDP. The Indian retail market was estimated to grow from \$427 billion in 2010 and is expected to reach \$637 billion by 2015 (Srivastava, 2008). According to Dabholkar, Thorpe, and Rentz (1996), the retail environment today is changing more rapidly than ever before. It is characterized by intensifying competition from both domestic and foreign companies, a spate of mergers and acquisitions, and more sophisticated and demanding customers who have great expectations related to their consumption experiences (Sellers, 1990). The Indian retail sector is highly prospective, being the second largest employment provider after the agricultural sector, also the second largest untapped market after China.

Statement of Importance

Retail stores belong to the service industry, which offer a hybrid of goods and services. Thus, retail product management not only has the common characters of goods quality, but also has the special characters of service quality. The retail arena today is very different - the opportunities are incredible, but exploiting them is extremely tough. A successful retail enterprise needs to have a vast network of people and error-free processes on the floor. Human resources play a vital role in retail business houses by extending their services as well as executing their selling skills. The salesforce plays major role in the success or failure of any retail business format. The salesforce are said to be engaged when they show positive attitude towards the retail outlet and express commitment to remain with the outlet for several years. If a salesman's needs are addressed properly in his/her job of selling; relatively, the customers' needs will be addressed properly by the salesman in the retail outlet. Salesforce engagement makes the salesforce as brand ambassadors of the retail outlet, thereby making the outlet as a brand.

A satisfied salesforce leads to customers being satisfied with a retail outlet. Here, the million dollar question is how to engage the salesforce in the retail sector so as to achieve better customer satisfaction and better business performance. When the salesforce is engaged in the retail sector, it forms an emotional connection with the outlet, thereby giving their best towards customer service and satisfaction. The study of salesforce engagement in retail outlets is very much significant for the retailers or retail managers to achieve better business performance and better customer satisfaction.

Theoretical Background of the Study

Indian retailing is growing fast and is imparting consumer preferences across the country where market liberalization and changing consumer behavior have sown the seeds of a retail transformation. According to India Retail Report (2009), the Indian retailing industry has been present in India throughout history and is considered as one of the largest sectors in the Indian economy, contributing around 10% to the GDP and employing around 7% of the total population. The Indian retail sector is estimated to have a market size of about \$180 billion, but the organized sector represents only 4% share of this market, and was likely to increase its share to over 30% by 2013. India has over 5 million retail outlets, and today, retailing is the largest contributing sector to the country's GDP, that is, 10% as compared to 8% in China, and 6% in Brazil. The Indian retail market was estimated to grow from \$427 billion in 2010 and is expected to reach \$637 billion by 2015 (Srivastava, 2008).

The Indian retail market consists of 14 million outlets and has the largest retail outlet destiny in the world (Sinha & Uniyal, 2007). Organized retailing in India accounted for 4.6% (\$ 12.4 billion) of the \$ 270 billion retail market, with an expected 40% plus annual growth rate, and is expected to grow further (India Retail Report, 2007). Arshad and Hisam (2008) and Ghosh, Tripathi, and Kumar (2010) discussed that 47% of India's population is under the age of 20, and this will increase to 55% by 2015, and this young population will immensely contribute to the growth of the retail sector in the country. Mulky, Nargundkar, and Rajendra (2003) opined that the Indian retail sector is largely traditional, but stores in modern formats are emerging. As compared to traditional stores, new format stores are pre-engineered retail outlets, characterized by well designed layout, ambience, display, self

service, value-added services, technology-based operations, and many more dimensions with modern outlook and practices.

Traditional retailing is typically small family business (Bianchi & Meena, 2004 ; D'Adrea, Lopez, & Aleman, 2006 ; Sim, 1999) linked with local culture (Goldman, Ramaswami, & Krider, 1999) and non-organized distribution. The organized retail sector has also grabbed the attention of foreign companies, who have been showing their interest to enter India (Dalwadi, Rathod, & Patel, 2010). Aggarwal (2008) and Bhardwaj and Makkar (2007) stated that the organized retail industry will mean thousands of new jobs, increased income levels, better standards of living, better products, better shopping experiences, and so forth.

Several demographic indicators show favorable trends for the growth of organized trade in India, and these became the important drivers for retail industry in India, like rapid income growth, increasing urbanization, and a growing young population (Swar, 2007). Satish and Raju (2010) identified major Indian retailers who have highly contributed to the retail sector in India - these are Pantaloons, Tata Group, RPG Group, Reliance Group, the Aditya Birla group, and so forth. India is expanding internationally due to saturation of markets and challenges faced by international retailers. Food and grocery, health and beauty, apparel, jewellery, and consumer durables are the fastest growing categories of organized retail, and the fashion sector in India commands a lion's share in the organized retail pie (Shukla & Jain, 2007).

The growing middle class, a large number of earning youth customers, increase in spending power, improvement in infrastructure, the liberalization of the Indian economy, and India's booming economy are the various opportunities for organized retailing in India. On the other hand, complexity in taxes, lack of proper infrastructure, and high cost of real estate are the hurdles which need to be removed for the success of retail in India (Dash & Chandy, 2009). In India, a consuming class is emerging as a result of increasing income levels and dual career families with high disposable incomes (Goyal & Aggarwal, 2009). Mishra (2008) opined that mall space, demography, rising young population, availability of brands, rising retail finance, changing lifestyles, modern retail formats, and foreign direct investment are the strengths and opportunities for modern retail models. On the other hand, real estate cost, improperly developed malls, lack of skilled personnel, underdeveloped supply chain, and taxation hurdles are the weaknesses and threats for modern retail formats.

Hino (2010) observed that the emergence and expansion of supermarkets gradually decreased the market share of the traditional formats by displacing them, and the factors that helped supermarkets in gaining consumers' favors over the traditional stores are the "consumers' economic ability" and the "format output". Goyal and Aggarwal (2009) indicated that the most appropriate retail formats for various items in India are: Food and grocery- supermarket; health and beauty care services - supermarket; clothing and apparels - malls; entertainment-malls; watches-hypermarket; pharmaceuticals-hypermarket; mobile, accessories, and services - hypermarket; footwear - departmental store.

➤ **Previous Studies on Employee Engagement :** The origin of the term engagement lies in research into the extent to which people employ, or leave out their personal selves when performing work roles (Kahn, 1990). Early research on employee engagement by Kahn (1990) was primarily a descriptive work and was valuable because it provided the necessary foundation for the subsequent work on employee engagement. The term engagement was coined by Kahn (1990). Towers Perrin (2003) categorized employees into three types: Disengaged employees, moderately engaged employees, and highly engaged employees. Another influential practitioner based definition is that of Towers Perrin (2003), which sees the engagement as the employees' willingness and ability to contribute to the company's success by putting extra time, brain power, and energy into their work. According to Crabtree (2005), there are three types of employees, they are:

➤ **Engaged Employees :** Work with passion and feel a profound connection to their company. They drive innovation and move the organization forward.

➤ **Not-Engaged Employees :** Are essentially "checked out". They are sleepwalking through their workday, putting time-but not energy or passion-into their work.

➡ **Actively Disengaged Employees :** Are not only just unhappy at work, but they are busy acting out their unhappiness. Everyday, these workers undermine what their engaged coworkers accomplish.

Some researchers have argued that employee engagement and employee commitment are interchangeable concepts. Jones and Harter (2005) argued that engagements are an antecedent of commitment and other concepts, including organizational citizenship behaviors, job involvement, and job satisfaction. Whilst there has been relatively little research so far on Kahn's framework, it has been influential in recent academic research. It has also found support in the positive psychology movement which emphasizes employees' strengths and capabilities, rather than their weaknesses, and potential benefits of employees' well being (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2002).

Buckingham and Coffman (1999) sparked the current interest in employee engagement. The authors analysed more than a million Gallup surveys and more than 80,000 interviews with managers to identify how these parties made themselves and their work units effective. What differentiated effective from less effective units was not what happens at the executive strategic level, but the way in which the manager of the unit behaves: A manager who clarified expectations, cared about people, encouraged their development, focused on their talents, allowed them the opportunity and resources so that they could do their best were more likely to have a work unit with higher levels of performance, customer satisfaction, profitability, and lower levels of turnover. Their analysis also led to the development of a widely used measure of employee engagement, the Gallup Q12 or Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA).

Affective commitment is positioned as a positive form and includes a desire to remain as well as a willingness to exert discretionary effort on behalf of the organization. A range of studies using this framework have found strong support for Allen and Meyer's (1990) original work, and recent literature on employee engagement has built further on this theme. Engagement represents a more local and less general construct than commitment as suggested by Kahn (1990).

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the present study is to find out the current practices of salesforce engagement in the retail sector and analyzing the perception of the salesforce towards execution of those practices in outlets. The study also focuses on analyzing the most significant drivers of salesforce engagement to be concentrated upon by the retailers. Finally, the study offers recommendations for the engagement of the salesforce to deliver better customer satisfaction, thereby leading to better retail outlet performance.

Methodology

The methodology of the study is designed in such a way that it addresses the objectives of the study. For this purpose, the study is divided into two parts. Part one discusses about the current salesforce engagement practices and the perception of the salesforce towards implementing those practices. The objective of this analysis is to observe the current engagement practices, and to what extent the salesforce are able to engage themselves in their job. These practices were identified during fieldwork and while making observations when visiting various retail outlets. A total of twenty statements (variables) were taken into consideration to measure the engagement levels of the salesforce. The respondents were asked to give their opinion (using a 5- point Likert scale ; *Strongly-Agree* [5], *Agree*[4], *Slightly-Agree*[3], *Disagree*[2], *Strongly-Disagree*[1]) on the 20 variables. Factor analysis was performed on the data of satisfaction of the salesforce with the current engagement practices in the retail sector. Factor analysis reduced the data into definite factors of dimensions by removing the redundant variables. By applying this tool on the data of the current salesforce engagement practices, the variables that were not making the salesforce happy in the engagement process were revealed (because these variables were eliminated by factor analysis).

Part two discusses about the preferences of the salesforce towards engagement drivers with which they can better engage themselves in their job. The objective of this analysis was to give recommendations to the retailers to implement those engagement drivers in the outlets which were most expected by the salesforce. A total of 16 engagement drivers were identified from previous studies and past literature. The respondents were asked to respond (with their expectations) on a 5- point scale (*Most-Expected* [5], *Expected* [4], *Slightly-Expected* [3], *Least-Expected* [2], *Not-at-all-Expected* [1]) regarding 16 engagement drivers (variables). Once again, factor analysis was performed on the data of expectations with the engagement drivers. In order to know the most expected engagement drivers used by the respondents, factor scores were assigned to the 16 engagement drivers. According to the assigned factor scores, we were able to identify that the factors with the highest scores were the most expected engagement drivers in the retail outlets.

The study is mainly an empirical one, and the variables used are both quantitative and qualitative in nature. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The secondary data was collected from various in-house magazines of corporate outlets, retail and marketing journals, and so forth to identify the current practices used by the salesforce and to ascertain the drivers of salesforce engagement. The primary data were collected from 200 sales employees (salesforce) working in different leading retail outlets in Visakhapatnam like Big Bazaar, More, Spencer's, Pantaloons, Vizag Central, CMR Central, and so forth. The respondents were randomly selected from the retail establishments.

➡ **Research Instrument:** A structured questionnaire was specifically designed to elicit the opinions of the respondents depending on the objectives of the study. Firstly, the questionnaire concentrated on analyzing the socioeconomic characteristics of the salesforce working in retail outlets in Visakhapatnam. Next, it analyzed the current salesforce engagement levels, finally finding out the significant drivers of salesforce engagement in the retail sector. Questions (in the questionnaire) were framed in such a manner that the respondents gave their opinion mostly for questions on a 5- point likert scale, and in some cases, with the given options. The questionnaire also had some open-ended questions. The study was conducted in Visakhapatnam, which is one of the north coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh.

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Analysis and Results

An attempt has been made to define the profile of the salesforce (as shown in the Table 1) who were working in various retail outlets in Visakhapatnam. Among the 200 sample respondents, 53% of the respondents were male and 47% respondents were female. This shows that a fair percentage of women respondents were working in the retail sector. As far as age group of the respondents is concerned, 31% of the respondents belonged to the age group of 18 - 20 years, 46.5% belonged to age group of 21- 30 years, 19.5% were in the age bracket of 31 - 40 years, and 1.5% of the respondents fell in the age bracket of 41 - 50 years. With reference to marital status of the respondents, 24.5% of the respondents were single, 67.5% were married, 1.5% of the respondents were widows, 5.5% were widowers, and 1% of the respondents were divorced. Education levels of the salesforce in retail outlets were categorized into three groups - higher secondary / diploma (14.5%), graduation (39%), and post graduation (46.5%). Hence, it can be seen that majority of the respondents were graduates and post graduates. With reference to income levels, 6% of the respondents earned less than ₹10,000 per month, 32% earned in between ₹ 10,001 - ₹ 15,000 , 30% earned in between ₹ 15,001 - ₹ 20,000, 10.5% of the respondents earned in between ₹ 20,001 - ₹ 25,000, and 21.5% of the respondents earned more than ₹ 25,000 a month.

Part One: Analyzing the Engagement of the Salesforce in the Retail Sector

In this section, an attempt has been made to identify the current engagement practices of the salesforce in the retail outlets, and also, the perceptions of the respondents on the identified engagement practices were ascertained. The respondents were asked to respond to 20 items/variables (statements) that determined their engagement levels.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Categories of variable	Frequency
Gender	Male	106 (53%)
	Female	94 (47%)
Age	18 - 20 years	62 (31%)
	21 - 30 years	93 (46.5%)
	31 - 40 years	39 (19.5%)
	41 - 50 years	3 (1.5%)
	above 50 years	3 (1.5%)
Marital Status	Single	49 (24.5%)
	Married	135 (67.5%)
	Widow	3 (1.5%)
	Widower	11 (5.5%)
	Divorced	2 (1%)
Education	Higher Secondary / Diploma	29 (14.5%)
	Graduation (UG)	78 (39%)
	Post Graduation (PG)	93 (46.5%)
Income per month	Less than ₹ 10,000/-	12 (6%)
	Between ₹10,001/- and ₹ 15,000/-	64 (32%)
	Between ₹15,001/- and ₹20,000/-	60 (30%)
	Between ₹ 20,001/- and ₹ 25,000/-	21 (10.5%)
	More than ₹ 25,000/-	43 (21.5%)

Table 2. Reliability Test Statistics of Measurement of Salesforce Engagement

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	N of Cases
0.855	20	200

The current level of salesforce engagement indentified in the study area was found to be 3.75 on a 5- point Likert scale. Factor analysis is a statistical technique used for determining the underlying factors or forces among a large number of interdependent variables or measures (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2007). Factor analysis was performed to identify the key dimensions affecting the engagement levels of the salesforce in the retail sector. Each statement was considered as a variable for performing factor analysis, and relative factor scores were allotted to each variable to measure the levels of salesforce engagement in the retail sector. After performing the factor analysis, the 20 items were reduced to six factor dimensions, which explained 65.80% of the overall variance, which indicates that the variance of original values was well captured by these six factors.

➔ **Reliability Test - Reliability Test Statistics :** The Table 2 shows the reliability of the data, where the value of Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.855, which shows that the data was 85.5% reliable. The value was calculated for the questionnaire administrated to the respondents in order to determine the reliability of the data, where the alpha value greater than .70 is the recommended level (Bernardi, 1994). This test was performed for 200 samples on 20 variables, which determined the engagement levels of the salesforce in retailing.

➔ **Reliability of Data: Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test :** To determine the appropriateness of factor analysis for the identified variables of sales force engagement, Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's test

Table 3. KMO and Bartlett's Test for Measurement of Salesforce Engagement

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.727
	Approx. Chi-Square	1560.19
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	<i>df</i>	190
	Sig.	.000

Table 4. Measurement of Salesforce Engagement in the Retail Sector

VAR	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
I am proud and happy to work in this retail outlet (Q8).	0.824					
My supervisor provides information about the outlet's future plans (Q16).	0.756					
All employees in the retail outlet are treated equally (Q7).	0.662					
The leaders in the retail outlet are role models (Q2).	0.569					
I have direct interaction with my managers (Q4).		0.731				
I am consulted when the performance standards are to be set (Q10).		0.598				
I receive useful and constructive feedback from my managers (Q14).		0.562				
My contributions are received positively (Q6).		0.564				
Teamwork is practiced and encouraged in this outlet (Q19).			0.875			
Top management communication to the employees is effective (Q20).			0.676			
In this outlet, enough opportunities are available to learn and grow (Q12).			0.757			
I am satisfied with the stress relief programs organized at my work place (Q13).				0.574		
I have trust in my management regarding my career advancement (Q11).				0.812		
I am satisfied with my pay package (Q17).				0.597		
Career advancement in this retail outlet is based on merit (Q9).					0.594	
My responsibilities in the retail outlet are reasonable (Q1).						0.864
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis						
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.						

were performed. KMO measures the magnitude of observed correlation coefficients to the magnitude of partial correlation coefficients. Bartlett's test measures the correlation of variables. The KMO measure was observed to be 0.727 and Bartlett's test showed a value of 0.000. Hence, it can be interpreted that there was no error in 72.70% of the sample. The level of significance, which is less than 0.05 is desirable and acceptable as shown in the Table 3. Finally, it can be concluded that the data collected for this research was appropriate for factor analysis.

➤ **Factor Analysis :** Factor analysis was used to remove the redundant variables from the survey data and to reduce the number of variables into a definite number of dimensions. The application was done in SPSS 16.0. Factor analysis was performed using principal component extraction method with varimax rotation. The number of variables were reduced from 20 to 16; further, the variables were classified under six dimensions based on the factor loading scores. The sorted rotated values of factor loading with minimum value of 0.5 or more were considered to form the factors (Table 4).

Based on the results of the factor analysis, the variables were classified into six factors. Generally, factor loading represents how much a factor explains a variable, where high loading indicates that the factor strongly influences the variable. The variables having factor score of more than 0.8 indicate that the variables strongly influenced the engagement levels of the salesforce in their jobs.

Table 5. Factor Eigen Values, Cumulative Value, and Goodness of Fit

Factors	Eigen Values	% Total variance	Cumulative %
FACTOR 1	5.703	28.52	28.52
FACTOR 2	2.045	10.22	38.74
FACTOR 3	1.597	7.99	46.73
FACTOR 4	1.508	7.54	54.27
FACTOR 5	1.193	5.97	60.23
FACTOR 6	1.114	5.57	65.80

Table 6. Factor 1 : Equal Opportunity

VAR	Variables	Factor Scores
Q8	I am proud and happy to work in this retail outlet.	0.824
Q16	My supervisor provides me information about the outlet's future plans.	0.756
Q7	All employees in the retail outlet are treated equally.	0.662
Q2	The leaders in the retail outlet are role models.	0.569

Table 7. Factor 2 : Organizational Communication

VAR	Variables	Factor Scores
Q4	I have direct interaction with my managers.	0.731
Q10	I am consulted when the performance standards are to be set.	0.598
Q14	I receive useful and constructive feedback from my managers.	0.564
Q6	My contributions are received positively.	0.562

➤ **Factor Eigen Values, Cumulative Value, and Goodness of Fit :** The Eigen values, explained cumulative values, and chi-square value- a test for goodness of fit - all are presented in the Table 5. All variables together explained 65.80% of the variance, with Eigen values more than 1. The Eigen value or latent root is the sum of squared values of factor loadings relating to a factor (Krishnaswami & Ranganatham, 2007). The calculated chi-square value is 1560.18, which was found to be significant at the 5% level (with degrees of freedom = 190). This indicates that the said variables were statistically valid to explain all the 20 propositions as six factors.

➤ **Factor 1 - Equal Opportunity :** The first factor was formed with four variables having an Eigen value of 5.703. All the four variables together explained 28.52% of the variance (Table 6). The first variable in the factor is pride and happiness, which is loaded with the highest score of 0.824. This implies that the salesforce possessed organizational pride, and were happy to work for their retail outlets. The second variable is information given by the supervisor about future plans of the retail outlets (0.756). The respondents were quite concerned with knowing about the forthcoming changes in their retail outlets. The third variable is equal treatment (0.662). With respect to opportunities, all respondents were treated equally in the retail outlets. The fourth variable is role model leaders (0.569) in the retail outlets. The respondents were greatly influenced by their superiors at the retail stores, and they were learning and growing along with their leaders.

Hence, it can be concluded that the retailers or retail outlet managers have to plan for proper career advancement of the employees. In addition, the employees need to be kept in the loop about the future plans of the retail stores. The retail outlets have to provide effective leaders who ensure that all employees are provided equal opportunities for growth.

➤ **Factor 2 - Organizational Communication :** The second factor was formed with four variables having an Eigen value of 2.045, where all the four variables together explained 10.22% of the variance (Table 7). Among the four

variables, direct interaction with managers (0.731) got a good factor score, which implies that the respondents in the retail outlets had a direct communication channel with their managers. The next variable is consulting the salesforce regarding performance standards (0.598). The employees were consulted when the performance standards were being set. This implies that the respondents wanted to take part in the decision making process of setting performance standards by giving their consent towards achieving realistic sales goals. The third variable is managers providing feedback to the salesforce (0.564). The respondents in the outlets were provided timely feedback by the managers regarding their performance and other job related issues. The last variable in this factor is reception of suggestions given by the salesforce (0.562). The suggestions given by the respondents were considered by the retailers/retail managers in their decision-making processes.

From the Factor 2, it is evident that the salesforce in the retail outlets were engaged in their jobs as they were consulted while setting performance standards, and they had a direct communication channel with their managers. The suggestions given by the respondents regarding the well being of the retail outlets were also taken seriously by the management, and the retail managers provided regular feedback about the employees' performance. Overall, a good communication system existed in the outlets, that is, both employee /employer communication channel and upward / downward communication channel.

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➤ **Factor 3 - Teamwork** : The third factor was formed with four variables having an Eigen value of 1.597, where all the four variables together explained 7.99% of the variance (Table 8). Among the four variables, team work got the highest factor score (0.875). Hence, the respondents perceived that teamwork is practiced and encouraged in their outlets. The second variable is top management's communication (0.757), which implies that the top management's communication with them was important. The next variable is availability of opportunities (0.676) in the outlets. The salesforce were given opportunities to learn new things in their regular job related activities for their career growth. The last variable is organizing stress relief programs (0.574). The respondents were satisfied with the stress relief programs organized in their retail outlets.

Finally, it can be concluded (Factor 3) that adequate teamwork happened in the retail outlets. In addition, the respondents were given opportunities to learn and grow. The communication from the top management was adequate, and a good number of stress related programs were being organized to deal with and reduce the stress levels of the employees.

➤ **Factor 4 - Earn & Grow** : This factor is formed with two variables having an Eigen value of 1.508, where both the two variables together explained 7.54% of the variance (Table 9). Among the two variables, trust in management got a higher factor score of 0.812. The respondents revealed that they had entrusted their

Table 8. Factor 3 : Teamwork

VAR	Variables	Factor Scores
Q19	Teamwork is practiced and encouraged in this outlet.	0.875
Q20	Top management communication to salesforce is effective.	0.757
Q12	In this outlet, enough opportunities are available to learn and grow.	0.676
Q13	I am satisfied with the stress relief programs organized at my work place.	0.574

Table 9. Factor 4 : Earn & Grow

VAR	Variables	Factor Scores
Q11	I have trust in my management regarding my career advancement.	0.812
Q17	I am satisfied with my pay package.	0.597

Table 10. Factor 5 : Career Planning

VAR	Variables	Factor Scores
Q9	Career advancement in this retail outlet is based on merit.	0.594

Table 11. Factor 6 : Role Clarity

VAR	Variables	Factor Scores
Q1	My responsibilities in the retail outlet are reasonable.	0.864

managements with their career advancement, which means that the employees believed that their managements will take adequate steps for their career advancement. The second variable in this factor is satisfaction with the pay package (0.597). Overall, the Factor 4 reveals that trust in the management and satisfaction regarding pay package were important variables influencing respondents' engagement with their jobs.

➤ **Factor 5 - Career Planning :** This factor was formed with only one variable having an Eigen value of 1.193, where the variable explained 5.97% of the variance (Table 10). The only variable in the factor is career advancement, which is loaded with a score of 0.594, which means that the respondents strongly perceived that career advancement in the retail sector is dependent on merit.

➤ **Factor 6 - Role Clarity :** The last factor was formed with only one variable having an Eigen value of 1.114, where the variable explained 5.57% of the variance (Table 11). The only variable in the factor, reasonable-responsibilities is loaded with a score 0.864. This means the respondents perceived that their responsibilities in the retail outlets were reasonable and they were not loaded with tasks that they could not handle.

➤ **Eliminated Variables from the Factor Analysis :** As discussed earlier, after performing the factor analysis, 20 variables were reduced to 16 variables, and four variables were eliminated from the analysis (which were loaded with less factor score than the threshold value of 0.5, which means that these variables were not explaining any factor significantly). The four eliminated variables are shown in the Table 12. These variables were not contributing to salesforce engagement, and were not useful for measuring the engagement levels of the respondents in the retail sector.

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Part Two: Highly Expected Drivers of Salesforce Engagement

In this section, an attempt has been made to measure the expectations of the salesforce from the identified drivers of salesforce engagement. A total of 16 engagement drivers were identified from previous studies and past literature on employee engagement principles and practices. The salesforce were asked to respond on a 5-point Likert scale regarding 16 engagement drivers. After performing the factor analysis, the 16 drivers explained 60.39% of the overall variance.

➤ **Reliability Test - Reliability Test Statistics :** The Table 13 shows the reliability of the data, where the value of Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.852, which shows that the data was 85.2% reliable. This test was performed for 200 respondents on 16 variables, which determined the significant drivers of salesforce engagement in retailing.

➤ **Reliability of the Data - Kaiser Meyer Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test :** The KMO measure was observed to be 0.758 and Bartlett's test revealed a value of 0.000, which means significant. Hence, it can be interpreted that there was no error in 75.80% of the sample. The level of significance, which is less than 0.05 was desirable and

Table 12. Eliminated Variables from Factor Analysis

Q3	My participation and views in this outlet are valued.
Q5	My colleagues and team members are professional.
Q15	This retail outlet functions according to its customers' needs.
Q18	I am able to satisfy both my responsibilities at home and at work.

Table 13. Reliability Test Statistics for Drivers of Salesforce Engagement

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	N of Cases
0.852	16	200

Table 14. KMO and Bartlett's Test of Drivers of Salesforce Engagement

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.758
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1217.95
	df	120
	Sig.	0.000

Table 15. Drivers of Salesforce Engagement

S.No.	Drivers	Factor Loadings	Rank
1	Integrity and Trust	0.615	7
2	Nature of Job	0.562	11
3	Career Development	0.688	3
4	Team Members	0.660	5
5	Organizational Pride	0.682	4
6	Training & Development	0.564	10
7	Relationship with Managers	0.557	12
8	Rewards and Recognition	0.573	9
9	Competitive Pay Package	0.508	15
10	Autonomy at Work	0.738	1
11	Healthy Work Environment	0.723	2
12	Clarity in Communication	0.533	14
13	Effective Leadership	0.633	6
14	Employer Commitment	0.465	16
15	Work Life Balance	0.549	13
16	Fair Performance Management	0.612	8

acceptable as shown in the Table 14. Finally, it can be concluded that the data collected for this research was appropriate for factor analysis.

□

Discussion

In this section, some more implications for engaging the salesforce are clearly defined based on the expectations of the employees from the sales job engagement drivers. The objective of this analysis is to provide recommendations to the retailers to concentrate upon certain drivers of salesforce engagement based on the priority of their expectations. If the retailer or retail managers are unable to implement all drivers, they can

concentrate on some of the drivers based on the size of their businesses and scale of operation as per the ranks shown in the Table 15. In order to identify the significant drivers that motivated the employees (salesforce) working in the retail outlets, the drivers of salesforce engagement are ranked on the basis of their factor scores.

It can be observed that the employees in retail outlets needed more Autonomy-at-Work as it was given the first rank with the highest factor score. Healthy Work Environment and Career Development are the next drivers of salesforce engagement after Autonomy-at-Work. Organizational Pride was another important driver for the salesforce as they wanted to experience a sense of pride while working in their retail outlets. Encouragement of teamwork (Team Members) is the driver that was given the fifth rank. This driver shows the significance of using the right recruitment strategy to employ the right persons for the right job. The sixth ranked driver of salesforce engagement is Effective Leadership as it shows that the leadership in the outlets drove the salesforce to engage in their jobs. Integrity and Trust is the next driver of salesforce engagement, which keeps the salesforce motivated to work for the retail outlets. The eighth ranked driver of salesforce engagement is Fair Performance Management. The respondents perceived that fair performance management practices in retail outlets will engage them in their jobs.

Surprisingly, Rewards and Recognition ranked ninth as a driver of salesforce engagement as most of the times, the general perception is that the employees are more concerned about rewards and recognition than the other factors. Regular Training and Development programs given to the employees also engaged them in their work life as it occupies the 10th rank. The Nature of the Job of retailing occupies the 11th rank as the job of retailing includes more physical and mental stress in almost every activity of retailing - right from procurement of products, managing inventories, to selling of the products to the customers. Cordial Relationship with Managers is the next salesforce engagement driver as the employees wanted to have a good working relationship at their work place. The 13th rank goes to Work-Life Balance of the employees. Clarity in Communication in the retail outlets occupies the 14th rank as the employees expected clarity in all official communication. Competitive Pay Package is the 15th engagement driver, which means that the employees in the retail sector did compare their pay package with industry standards. Employer's Commitment towards the outlet as well as co-workers working in the outlets is the last identified driver in this study, which means that not only employee commitment, but employer commitment is also considered by the employees to engage themselves in their jobs.

Managerial Implications

After analyzing current engagement practices in the retail sector, it can be noticed that the employees perceived that the retail organizations have implemented some of the engagement practices like Equal Opportunities (Factor 1), Organizational Communication (Factor 2), Teamwork (Factor 3), Earn & Grow (Factor 4), Career Planning (Factor 5), and Role Clarity (Factor 6).

➤ The most expected engagement driver is Autonomy at Work. The salesforce expected that they should have autonomy at their work place with which they can engage themselves in their jobs. The retail organizations have to define salesforce job descriptions in such a way that autonomy at work is an important job component.

➤ A Healthy Work Environment, Career Development, and Organizational Pride are other expectations of the salesforce. A healthy working environment can be achieved by implementing continuous organizational change and development initiatives. Career development and planning must be performed for each and every job/position in the outlets, and the same must be communicated to the employees from time-to-time.

➤ Team Members, Effective Leadership, Integrity and Trust are other salesforce engagement drivers. The top management has to define top level and operational level strategies so that these expectations can be fulfilled.

➤ There should be Fair Performance Management, reasonable Rewards and Recognition, continuous Training & Development in order to engage the salesforce.

- The salesforce expect good working conditions and Nature of Job, Cordial Relations with Managers, existence of Work Life Balance so that they can optimally perform in this hard and hazardous job of selling.
- Clarity in Communication, Competitive Pay Package, Employer Commitment are other engagement drivers that were expected by the salesforce.
- It is suggested to the retailers/retail managers to implement these salesforce engagement drivers in their retail outlets so that maximum sales targets can be achieved. If the retailers/retail managers are not able to implement all these drivers at a time due to lack of sources like time or capital, they are advised to implement the drivers in the order of rank / priority as shown in the Table 15.

□

Conclusion

The concept of salesforce engagement forms an emotional connection with the organization, thereby influencing its attitude towards customer service and satisfaction. The study of salesforce engagement in retail outlets enables the retailers or retail managers to understand what drives their employees to perform better in order to achieve better customer satisfaction and thereby, better business performance. If the needs of the sales employees are addressed properly, and they are engaged in their jobs, the customers' needs will be addressed by the salesmen in the retail outlet. Salesforce engagement makes the salesmen like brand ambassadors of the retail outlets by making the outlet as a brand.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research

This present study was conducted in and is limited to the organized retail outlets only. Furthermore, the study is limited to an Indian city of Visakhapatnam. Hence, the results may not be applicable to other states and cities of India. The study attempted to find out the highly expected engagement drivers from 16 drivers only, but there may be more than 16 salesforce engagement drivers that are practiced and reviewed.

The study can be extended to the retail outlets located in other cities of India. Furthermore, the study can be extended to the salesforce of other sectors like manufacturing sector, services sector, and so forth. The study can be conducted for unorganized retail outlets as well.

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