BUILDING STRATEGIC EMPLOYEE TRAINING FRAMEWORK IN EVER EVOLVING RETAIL SECTOR: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Training is a key to improved performance in today's dynamic world, the responsibility of which lies on the organization to update the skill sets of its employees so that they contribute in raising the overall productivity of the organization. This research aims to study the impact of factors of training on the employee performance which is categorized into task performance and contextual performance. The response of 360 cross sectional employees from the multi branding retail stores operating in the major cities of U.P. region namely Lucknow, Kanpur, Allahabad and Banaras was collected through a questionnaire addressing three factors of training which are Training need identification, training content and delivery, transfer of training and training evaluation. The data was analyzed through multiple linear regressionsusing SPSS version 22 which revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between training and employee performance. Also factors of training show different proportion of impact on task as well as contextual performance. It was seen that identification of training needs has major impact on training, followed by transfer of training and evaluation as the second important factor in enhancing the performance of employees. Training delivery and content showed different level of significance for both task as well as contextual performance.

This research has managerial and developmental implications for the policy managers and employees working in the multi branding retail sector in the U.P. region and can be extended to other regions by increasing the sample size.

KEYWORDS: Task performance, Contextual performance, Training need identification, training delivery and content, training evaluation.

INTRODUCTION

Every organization must understand the fact that training is provided with the target to improve the performance and not to grade its employees. It has been observed in many organizations that even when the employees do not possess enough skills they are reluctant to acquire training because of the fear of being rated after the training is completed. This has been one of the major loop holes in gathering the positive impact of training on performance in majority of the organization. With this we can realize an important mistake in the employer as well as employees apprehension of training. So the most important hurdle in getting the results out of training is removing this wrong perception from the minds of both employer and employee. In this present study an effort is made to analyze some of the major factors which are reducing the effect of training on the employees working in the most booming sector of multi-branding retail in the U.P. region.

Employee performance can be understood as a means to accomplish the mission, vision and goals of any organization and also as human resource is the most active source of these accomplishments care must be taken by the organizations to provide relevant training for upgrading the skills of their employees (Herbert, John & Lee 2000). Many studies have proved that the overall productivity and profit of the organization is directly influenced by the performance of their employees. (Harrison 2000; Guest 1997) in their earlier studies have found out relationship facts about training and employee performance. Their work proves that training generates performance improvement by enhancing employee knowledge, skills, ability, competencies and behavior. Training has been regarded as an equipment to curb skills and performance gaps in order to improve organizational performance. It is relevant that employees possess skills and knowledge to some extent but training acts as a means to cut down the gap between the possessed and the desired skills of the employees in order to meet the ever changing requirements of the

organization (Swart et al. 2005). Their study also highlights the continuity of training programs in order to keep filling the desired gaps and the employee performance.

WHY MULTI-BRANDING RETAIL?

The Indian retail scene can be studied in two aspects 1) organized retail and 2) Unorganized retail. According to the IBEF report 2017 the Indian retail has grown with a CAGR of 7% with its total share rising from USD 518 billion in 2012 to $ 672 billion in 2016. As per the Global Retail Development Index 2017, Indian retail sector was ranked at the first position, with China at the second. It also pointed out that the pace with which online retail is utilized in India it will reach up to 7% of the total retail share. All this is a result of growth oriented policies of the Indian government. In January 2012 policy was reframed and it was decided to allow 100% ownership in single brand retail and a compulsion that the single brand retailer will source its 30% products from India, thus keeping in mind the growing Indian retail market. By December 2012 the FDI in multi brand retail was open with 51% foreign share. Last year, the government took a decision to permit 100% ownership in B2B e-commerce businesses and for retailers that sell food products.

As per the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) report the employment base provided by this booming organized retail was 45 million in 2017 which is expected to reach approximately 56 million jobs till 2022, for the upcoming job oriented youth of India. The type of Job profiles offered in this sector range from retail associate/customer service associate, after sale service associate which accounts for around 75-80% jobs to the middle and higher management level jobs of departmental heads or store managers which account for 2-3% of the jobs in this sector, the remaining 20-25% jobs belong to the specialist positions like inventory and merchandising experts, retail advisors, store accountants, logistics and supply chain experts etc. It can be well understood that the employees in retail are experiencing new challenges daily due to the up gradation of the retail avenues and changes in the retail environment. Also there is acute shortage of professional training courses and training institutes in our country because of which there is a major skill gap in the skill set of the employees recruited in various job profiles. This results in low job productivity giving rise to low job morale and thus results in raising the attrition levels in these stores. Thus, in order to facilitate better productivity and performance of the hired staff there is a huge need of developing better training initiatives which can cater to every type of job profile and specialist position in the retail avenues. The above problem faced by this sector backed by various reports and personal discussions with the store heads was the major motivation for undertaking this empirical study to link the training related factors with the performance levels of the employees in this sector.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's competitive times the two major hurdles faced by the management in effective management are firstly recruiting and deploying the right human resource for the organization and secondly keeping the skill sets of these employees up to date according to the dynamically changing environment. It is thus believed that training is the key to provide a sustainable growth to the overall performance of the organization. (Iftikhar Ahmad and Siraj-ud-din, 2009) in their research proved that training and development positively increase the overall performance of the employees provided the evaluation of the given training is appropriately conveyed to the participants. Other research by (Qaiser Abbas and Sara Yaqoob, 2011) present that on the basis of three factors which are delivery style, on the job training and training design have a positive impact on improving the overall performance of the employees. Swart et al. (2005) here also emphasize on continuity of the training programmes with a view to fill gaps in the employee performance from time to time.Most of the researches use the famous Kirkpatrick model developed in 1959 to evaluate the impact of training on employees. It has been established that training effects the performance based on the cognitive and behavioraldevelopment of employees which results in improvement in the organizational performance. A study conducted by (Satterfield and Hughes 2007) on the medical college students explores the sequence of impact of training on performance. It refers that training initially affects cognitively and then later causes behavioral changes in the employees which results in change in employees' mindset towards performing his

tasks. This way the employees instill more creativity and commitment towards their jobs. In a broader perspective training is also important because its impact on performance results in the impact on the overall productivity of the organsiation.(Wright &Geroy 2010) in their study made an attempt to prove that there is a strong relationship between the employee performance and the organizational productivity. The study aimed at linking the development of employee's social as well as physical factors through training which finally raises the overall productivity of the organization. Many studies have attempted to relate the raised employee performance after training with the overall productivity of the organization. (Harrison, 2000) and (Guest, 1997) report that training increases the employee performance in regards to their skill, knowledge, competencies and behavior and this improvement helps to increase the overall performance of the organization.

Another important aspect here is to trace the factors based on which the relationship between training and performance can be studied. Majority of the studies have taken training evaluation as the main factor which impacts the employee performance. These studies are mainly based on the Kirkpatrick model of training evaluation. Alice Kasau, (2014) studies this relationship by evaluating the service delivery by the employees working in the financial trust. Another study by Shouvik Sanyal* Mohammed WamiqueHisam (2018) worked on evaluating four factors namely identification of training needs, interactive training sessions, the knowledge and skills learnt at the training programs for concluding that training impacts performance. (Karthikeyan K., Karthi R, D. Shyamala Graf 2010) in their study on public and private banks in kerela evaluated training programmes based on the parameters such as employee's attitude towards training inputs; quality of training programmes; training inputs and application of training inputs to the actual job.(Rama Devi V.1* and Phanindra R.2014) in the study on private banks took under study factors like training motivation, good training design, training implementation, effective learning and transfer of learning to work place.

It was thus concluded here that in our study the impact of training on performance can be studied based on the four factors namely; training need identification, training delivery and content, transfer of training and training evaluation.The second important conclusion we made was that the training impact studies have been taken up mainly either in the government set ups, IT industries or banking sector. Thus, the multi-branding retail is a booming sector and at the same time the training programmes here are comparatively less developed. This provides a sufficient gap for undertaking this study in the multibranding retail context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research design in this study is descriptive as well as survey based. This design is descriptive in nature, based on the main purpose of research which is to define the relationship between the variables. In this study the independent variable is training which includes sub variables namely; training need identification, training content and delivery and transfer of training and evaluation. Whereas the dependent variables that are analyzed in the present study are workforce performance (sub divided into task and contextual performance).Questionnaire was used to collect the responses of the employees of multi-branding retail sector spread across major cities of Uttar Pradesh. Various multi-branding retail outlets operating in the city of Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad and Banaras were selected for data collection. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed among the employees, through department heads or the branch heads. Finally, a total of 360 completed questionnaires were collected by the researcher and were used for the analysis. Quantitative data analysis was conducted after collecting the required data. The employees had to rate their responses under 5-point Likert scales having responses namely;1) Strongly Disagree,2) Disagree, 3) Neutral,4) Agree and 5) Strongly Agree

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the research is to examine the impact of training on workforce performance an in the organized in the multi branding retail sector in India. Specifically, the research aims to achieve the following objectives:

1) To empirically examine the relationship between training and overall work performance of employees in the multi branding retail sector in U.P region.

2) To empirically examine the relationship between training and task performance of employees in the multi branding retail sector in U.P region.

3) To empirically examine the relationship between training and contextual performance of employees in the multi branding retail sector in U.P region.

Dependent and independent variables

In this study work performance bifurcated into task performance (skill and ability of employee to perform his core task) and contextual performance (behavioral aspects which support in performing the core task) are the dependent variables. The sub factors of training identified after literature review and analyzing training related issues in the actual retail settings are training need identification, training delivery and content, transfer of training and training evaluation will be the independent variables in our present study.

Development of Research instrument

A five point likert scale research instrument was developed for the present study based on the following pre-developed research scales for each factor of training under study and work performance. The scales referred were as under:

- Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) (Koopmans, 2014). The scale has 13 items, 5 representing task performance and 8 representing contextual performance.

- Transfer of training was measured based on 16 factor Learning Transfer System Inventory scale (LSTI) developed by Holton, Bates and Ruona(2000). Depending on the retail training scenario few items were modified according to the requirement. The Cronbach alpha coefficient was reported to be 0.799 for the 8 items in present tool.

- Paul Spectors (43- item) Job training and Job Satisfaction survey (1985) and Choo and Bowley (2007) 30-item research scale was used for researching items to measure training delivery and content items. After few changes the Cronbach alpha coefficient range for the present tool was reported to be 0.706

- Hennessey Hicks training need identification tool was used in measuring the status training needs. Originally this instrument consists of 30 items but was modified as per the retail settings related to the present study. Few additional items were also added. The Cronbach alpha co-efficient was reported to be 0.803 for 16 items.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

H1—There is a significant correlation between training and overall performance of Employees in the multi branding retail sector.

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between factors of training and overall work performance

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between and factors of Training and contextual Performance.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between and factors of Training and task Performance

SAMPLE SIZE

Initially the measurement scale was developed and was pilot tested on 30 multi branding employees to measure the reliability and validity of the construct. The reliability found for each variable is mentioned below in a tabular form. After this the questionnaire was distributed to 400 cross sectional employees working in different brand outlets in the four cities namely: Kanpur, Lucknow, Allahabad and Banaras. Some forms were also distributed through google forms. Total completed forms received were 360. The questionnaire finally addressed five constructs namely; training need identification (TNI), training delivery and content (TDC), transfer of training and evaluation (TTE), Task performance (TP) and Contextual performance (CP). Few questions on demographic variables were also a part of this questionnaire.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Validity and reliability of Research Instrument

The data was checked for its reliability and validity by using Varimax rotation and Cronbach alpha which are shown in table 2 and 3. Factor analysis resulted in reduction of some of the items of the construct which had factor loadings

less than 0.4. For TNI 16 items were selected and 2 were removed. For TDC 8 out of 10 items were selected, TTE also 8 out of 10 items were selected. Based on the factor loading for performance items 5 for TP and 11 for CP were selected out of6 and 10 items initially. Thus,out of 54 items 48 items were finally taken into consideration for data analysis and hypothesis testing. Cronbach alpha coefficient values for the variables are given in the table 1 below.

TABLE 1. Cronbach alpha coefficient values

Construct		Number of items	Cronbach's alpha (α) coefficient
Training		32	0.840
	Training need identification	16	0.803
	Training content and delivery	8	0.706
	Transfer of training and evaluation	8	0.799
Workforce Performance		16	0.910
	Task performance	11	0.900
	Contextual performance	5	0.881

TESTING OF RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Multiple regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 22 for testing the hypothesis under study. **H1**— There is a significant correlation between training and overall performance of Employees' in the multi branding retail sector.

TABLE 2. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.365[a]	.133	.126	.66366	.000	1.228

a. Predictors: (Constant), TTE, TCD, TNI

b. Dependent Variable: OVERALL_FACPR

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.099	3	8.033	18.239	.000[b]
	Residual	156.796	356	.440		
	Total	180.896	359			

a. Dependent Variable: OVERALL_FACPR

b. Predictors: (Constant), TTE, TCD, TNI

The model summary table here gives us the value of R which shows that there is moderate degree of co-relation between the two constructs of factors of training and the overall performance of the employees in the multi branding sector thus here we accept the H1. Also the R square values is 0.133 which shows that the proportion of variance in the overall performance due to the training is around 13.3% which is not as low to be ignored. The ANOVA table shows that the F value is 18.213 which is greater than the critical value of 3.95, thus we reject the null hypothesis (Archdeacon, 1994,p.168).

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between factors of training and overall work performance.

TABLE 3. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.373	.223		10.653	.000		
	TNI	.286	.072	.214	3.998	.000	.851	1.176
	TCD	-.115	.056	-.108	-2.055	.041	.875	1.143
	TTE	.204	.047	.245	4.310	.000	.756	1.323

Dependent Variable: OVERALL_FACPR

Among the four independent variables of training the p value for TNI, TDC and TTE is 0.000, 0.041 and 0.000 respectively which show that there is a significant impact of TNI and TTE but not TDC on overall performance of employees. Thus we accept the H2 hypothesis which asserts that there is a significant positive relation between factors of training and overall performance of employees. The beta coefficient for the two factors i.e. TNI and TTE are 0.214 and 0.245 respectively. But the beta coefficient for TDC is 0.108, which shows that the training delivery and content will have sufficient impact on performance only when the organization places more importance to TNI and TTE.

H3: There is a significant positive relationship between and factors of Training and contextual Performance.

The model summary table again establishes that there is a significant positive relationship between the factors of training and contextual performance as R value is 0.392. Also the R2 shows that the percentage change in contextual performance will be 15.3% due to change in factors of training.

TABLE 4. REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.392[a]	.153	.146	.62448	.000	1.223

a. Predictors: (Constant), TTE, TCD, TNI

b. Dependent Variable: CP_FAC1PR

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	25.146	3	8.382	21.493	.000[b]
	Residual	138.832	356	.390		
	Total	163.978	359			

a. Dependent Variable: CP_FAC1PR

b. Predictors: (Constant), TTE, TCD, TNI

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	2.416	.210		11.527	.000		

TNI	.276	.067	.217	4.097	.000	.851	1.176
TCD	.112	.053	.110	2.116	.035	.875	1.143
TTE	.218	.045	.275	4.903	.000	.756	1.323

a. Dependent Variable: CP_FAC1PR

The F value is also 21.493 which are higher than the standard of 3.95. Thus, we accept the H3 hypothesis and reject the null hypothesis.

The beta coefficients here show that there is different level of impact of all the three factors of training on employee performance. Table shows that p value for TNI, TDC, TTE are 0.000, 0.035 and 0.000 respectively all significant at 0.05 levels. But at the same time we can see that the percentage impact of TDC is lower (0.110) as compared to percentage impact of TNI (0.217) and TTE (0.275) being the highest. With this we can infer that if employees aregiven more authority or freedom to transfer their learnt skill on the job and are evaluated efficiently the overall impact of training on contextual performance can increase.

H4: There is a significant positive relationship between and factors of Training and task Performance

The above relationship was detected using multiple regression analysis. The value of R is 0.300 which shows that there is moderate degree of correlation among the two constructs of factors of training and task performance. R square value is 0.260 which shows that the relationship between the two can predict 26% change in the dependent variable i.e. TP. The F value here is 11.729 which is higher than the table value of 3.95 thus we reject the null hypothesis.

TABLE 5.
REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics Sig. F Change	Durbin-Watson
1	.300[a]	.260	.082	.80134	.000	1.328

a. Predictors: (Constant), TTE, TCD, TNI

b. Dependent Variable: TP_FAC2PR

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.596	3	7.532	11.729	.000[b]
	Residual	228.607	356	.642		
	Total	251.202	359			

a. Dependent Variable: TP_FAC2PR

b. Predictors: (Constant), TTE, TCD, TNI

Coefficients[a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance	VIF

1	(Constant)	2.301	.269		8.556	.000		
	TNI	.303	.086	.192	3.508	.001	.851	1.176
	TCD	.121	.068	.097	1.789	.074	.875	1.143
	TTE	.180	.057	.183	3.150	.002	.756	1.323

a. Dependent Variable: TP_FAC2PR

The ANOVA table here highlights the p value is significant at 0.05 level. This shows that we accept the hypothesis that, there is a positive significant relationship between factors of training and task performance.

A closer look at each of the variables show that the significance of factors of training is 0.001 for TNI, 0.074 for TDC and 0.002 for TTE which predicts that the relationship is highly significant for TNI and TTE in relation to TP of the employees. Whereas for TDC the significance level is not reached which indicated that employees place more importance to the need identification and opportunities for training transfer as well as proper evaluation of training.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this research prove that there exists a positive significant relationship between factors of training and employee performance in the multi branding retail sector. This study can be a useful to the policy makers in understanding the loopholes in the training procedures carried out in their organization and results can be implemented to rectify the problematic areas. This research proves that the factors under study namely training need identification, training delivery and content, training transfer and evaluation of training have direct and significant impact on task as well as the contextual performance of employees working in the multi branding retail sector. Thus, although the training initiatives in multi branding are not well advanced efforts must be put in by the policy makers to consider these factors and make appropriate changes and motivate the employees to improve their overall performance on the job. The analytical model provides the standardized beta coefficients showing the impact of factors of training on task as well as contextual performance of the employees. Here we conclude that employee performance is highly affected when there is proper need identification of the areas in which the employees actually need training. This motivates them to acquire training with a positive and a purposeful attitude. If employees'do not find training sessions relevant with their need areas they are reluctant to make improvement in their existing skill sets. It is however the most important exercise but often neglected by the organizations (Schneier, et. al., 1988). Managers can examine the job and task descriptions to understand the relevant training needs. Also they can derive self administered questionnaires to know the areas where training is required. These findings are in similar lines with (Winfred Jr, et. Al., 2003) which showed out of the total sample surveyed only 6% reported need assessment carried out by the organization. Another study by (Amalia Santos & Mark Stuart, 2003) reported that the training programs were not focused and tailored according to the needs of the employees.

Another important finding reveals that the second most important factor that affects performance is transfer of training and evaluation. If the employees donot get authority and supervisory support in executing the learnt skills in the actual job environment the training imparted becomes meaningless and does not show any considerable change in their work performance. Also both these factors namelyTNI and TTE have higher impact on the contextual performance as compared to task performance which indicates that training initiative in the multi branding retail are not musk technical and task based in nature. The behavioral training is showing more impact as contextual performance is significantly impacted by training (Thomas N. Garavan. 1997) But more task based training should be encouraged so that their performance in their core areas improve. This research shows that employee performance is least impacted by the content and the delivery methods used in the training which is not a positive sign for the overall productivity of these stores. If employees do not find the content and delivery style relevant to their improvement they will not be engaged and the whole essence of the training will be lost (Phillip seamen et al., 2005). Thus, the training content should be reconstructed based on the requirements of the employees. For these in depth discussions should be done by the HODs' or staff members.It is important that the training content should meet their expectation in their area of work, be relevant and encourage them for improvement in their task

performance. It is also important to provide sufficient authority to the employees to transfer the learnt skills in their job so that they improve their task performance. The sessions should contain proper evaluation of the training attended at the end of each session so that their requirements can be incorporated in the next sessions as presented by as reported by (Lerman, et. al., 1999; Wagonhurst, 2002) in their research which also motivates the employees in transferring their skills on the actual job.The multi branding retail sector is the most upcoming sector which caters to variety of customers and dynamic retail environment, thus the task performance of the employees need to be improved by providing up to date skill training.

The present research is limited in terms of region (U.P.), similar studies can be conducted in other regions and the results can be incorporated and be used by various retail training institutes and organizations so that future training initiatives are modified. Also the number of items in the construct relating to task performance can be increased to analyze the similarity of results pertaining to impact of training delivery and content on the task performance of the employees to reach at many accurate conclusions.

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