

Gender Gaps in Indian Retail Sector - Reflections on Gender Equity Measures

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Abstract- This paper examines the approaches to augmenting women participation and employment in Retail Sector. Women are best known for their inventiveness and entrepreneurship. They can fit in any type of task and they would give their best performances. Across the globe retail sector employment and career opportunities are escalating as nearly 60% of the employees in retail sector are women. Women are responsible for nearly 70% - 80% of the household purchasing decisions, and are key decision makers in food and domestic product purchase. But despite this striking statistics, retail sector is still dominated by men. Even though women are employed in this sector their career progression to the higher ranks are very less. Hence many retail sector experts are suggesting strategies towards increasing career opportunities for women in this sector. This is a challenging task because Indian societal norms and cultural constraints often restrict women from involving jobs which demand nonflexible work hours and rigid career tasks.

Indexed Terms- Indian Retail Sector, Gender skill gaps Gender Equity, challenges, Strategies to overcome.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Indian retail industry is emerging as most dynamic and fast paced industry. Several foreign companies are investing in retail sector in India. Total consumption expenditure as shown in this table-1

Year	Total consumer expenditure	Billion US \$
2016-2017	1,824	Billion US \$
2020-2021	3,600	Billion US \$

Source: IBEF 2019 March 31

Indian retail sector counts for 10% of the country's GDP and 8% of the total employment. India is listed as the fifth largest global destination in global retail sector. India's retail market size is expected to increase by 60% to reach 1.1. Trillion US \$ by the year 2020.

Several factors have added to this rise

1.	Economic liberal policies
2.	Globalization
3.	Rise in the middle class population
4.	Increasing Urbanization
5.	Rise in income level
6.	Changing Life style factors of middle class
7.	Increased digital connectivity
8.	Increase in youth population addicted to online shopping
9.	Rise in income spending habits

II. GROWTH DRIVERS

India is expected to become the world's fastest growing e-commerce market driven by vigorous investment in the sector and rapid increase in number of internet users various agencies have high expectations about growth of Indian e commerce markets. The Indian retail trading has received Foreign direct Investment equity inflows totaling 1.59 billion US\$ in the month ending December 2018. All these developmental inputs are favorable for finding jobs in retail sector, but when it comes to employment ratio of women in retail sector the growth trends are rather poor. It is often noticed that even though women work in different capacities in retail sector their number is not increasing favorably. There are several causes for this poor turn out

1.	Rigid or nonflexible Work hours
2.	No paid maternity leave
3.	Poor career advancement schemes
4.	Very less salary and perks
5.	Fewer opportunities to diversification in job roles

Women can be best employed in retail sector and support women with gender equity strategies. This will also enhance leadership and entrepreneurship qualities.

III. INDIAN RETAIL SECTOR - LEADERSHIP & ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Managing Diversity task forces:**
Indian Retail Sector offers diversity of tasks for women and women can emerge as cross functional team managers and lead company’s diverse priorities with their expert communication skills.
- **Diversity evaluation of managers:**
Indian Retail Sector also provides creative minded women to indulge in adding diversity in to other team member’s tasks and inclusion metrics in performance reviews. Women can breathe innovate practice to the team and enhance the company’s profile to newer heights. Women have always showed interest in the diversification of responsibilities. They initiate additional smartness to a task and make it look more outstanding and noticeable.
- **Women friendly policies of the retail sector companies:**
Indian Retail Sector companies offer certain policies and practices which support women

1.	Flexible scheduling in all Retail Sector companies
2.	Employee assistance programs for women in Retail Sector
3.	Dependent care expense accounts-
4.	Sexual harassment training
5.	Diversity training-
6.	Paid sick leave-
7.	Protection and extra safeguards

- **Retail Sector & Career Development for Women:**
Women can find a number of career opportunities with retail sector with provision for training along with graduation courses. As shown in this diagram women can be provide with job training, management training and formal training



- **Retail Sector training for women:**
Indian retail sector provides formal job training for specific roles that provide initial or continuous skills building. Each practice, has been proven to be effective in advancing women to management roles and companies that are more successful at retaining, engaging and advancing women employ practices across these all three areas . These practices are not widely implemented especially in trail stores. Less than half of the retail companies in the metro cities were using even one of the evidence based practices to support women in frontline roles in stores, while implementation in head quarter offices was more wide spread.

Several retail companies have initiated women friendly entrepreneurship trainings both short term and long term. This training normally includes a year-long leaderships and mentorships programs for women to develop their skills as managers and team leaders in retail sector. With women estimated to be responsible for around 70% of the house hold purchasing decisions, the impact in the sector needs challenging. It is essential that the management department of retail companies reflect demographic ratio of their customer base periodically. The industry offers vast, diverse and revolving role so bright ambitions women should been encouraged to consider retail as a career option. A career in the retail can also offer greater flexibility than other sectors. This also allows people to work with

elasticity. Many companies introduced flexible working hours and diversified programs as their response to the economic down turn in 2008. Not only to manage costs but also to retain extreme talent reducing the need for extensive recruitment costs to re-hire. There is a common misconception that retail many not offer the same financial rewards as other sectors. It is no secret that squeezed budgets in recent years. As a challenge retail landscape but it has also brought opportunities. It is consumers are rethinking that way they shop. And those in the sector who have adjusted to meet these changes will reap the rewards. The explosion of on line retail has in many circumstances created more opportunities for retailers not fewer. With 60% adults using the internet to buy products many retail enterprise have met the most of this and launched their enterprises from their kitchen table meaning relatively little start-up costs are required.

It is imperative that identify the incalculable contributions of women make to the retail industry and adapt our working practices accordingly. Family friendly values flexible working hours clear personal development plans and lifelong training that can be adopted to suit a women's responsibilities and needs varying stages of her life. Studies have also found that simple segregation of these practices is not enough in fact some practices are quite intentional. Women actually have hindered advancement because of they are considered to secondary positions.

To overcome systematic factors a barriers that women of colour experience in the workplace. It is recommended that companies carefully track the impact of these interventions have on all types of women. These interventions are needed for all of them. Time to move from commitment to action on gender equality and equity is now given that gender inequity has been proven to create business values we hope that companies will take stalk of which evidence based practices they have in a place identify one's that are missing and introduce new practices to address the skill gaps. They will find that investing women talents will pay dividends for their bottom lines and it will pay dividends for society as well.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus Companies deploying resources to advance women in their workforce are outperforming their competition and capturing value in multiple ways, including higher profitability, improved team performance and problem-solving, and a greater ability to attract and retain talent. As seen across experiences of other countries, retail sector employs more than 2.8 million workers in the UK, more than 4.5 million in US and 2.95 million in Australia and nearly 60% -75% of them are women. But despite this favour women progression to the higher ranks are very less. In India, retail sector is still dominated by men. Women are an asset to any company, the fact that they are underutilized cause major problems in their progression. The can be made to find career opportunities if provided with basic training. A co-ordinated strategy to include training facilities for women in their colleges can be very supportive.

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