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Inclusion of Happiness as a Retail KPI

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ABSTRACT

India ranks 144 in World Happiness Report³ of 156 countries. Adding fuel to it, India amongst worst hit in the world by depression. 6.5% of the Indian population suffers from some form of the serious mental disorder. The average suicide rate in India is 10.9 for every lakh people. Majority who commit suicide are below 44 years of age. Mental Health Workers in 2014, it was as low as "one in 100,000 people". Recently, the first-ever annual India Happiness Report studies happiness in the thirty-six states and union territories of India. A conscious effort is to give inputs into policy-making and strategies for organizations and governments for creating a happier India, aspiring for the better well-being of its citizens.

KEYWORDS - EMPLOYEES, FOOTFALL, HAPPINESS, KPI, RETAIL.

I. INTRODUCTION

LET'S HAVE A QUICK LOOK AT WHERE WE STAND IN OUR HAPPINESS QUOTIENT.

India ranks 144 in World Happiness Report of 156 countries. Adding fuel to it, India amongst worst hit in the world by depression. 6.5% of the Indian population suffers from some form of the serious mental disorder. The average suicide rate in India is 10.9 for every lakh people. Majority who commit suicide are below 44 years of age. Mental Health Workers in 2014, it was as low as "one in 100,000 people". Recently, the first-ever annual India Happiness Report studies happiness in the thirty-six states and union territories of India. A conscious effort is to give inputs into policy-making and strategies for organizations and governments for creating a happier India, aspiring for the better well-being of its citizens.

This is where we stand as of now. Let's make a pursuit towards getting our Happiness. It's as much an individual Pursuit as it is a collective drive at Home and at Work. Let the awareness at least begin here, let it begin with Retail. Knowing Retail is the highest contributor to the GDP, let's pursue with Happiness to be the highest contributor to the Happiness index as well. Retail also is the largest employment generator; the health of Retail is directly proportional to the Physical and Mental health of the people employed in retail.

A. HAPPINESS IN RETAIL?

THE UPANISHAD⁴ SAY'S "SARVE BHAVANTU SUKHINAH, SARVE SANTU NIRAMAYA, SARVE BHADRANI PASYANTU, MA KASCHID DUKHABHAGA BHAVET." ARTHATH, (MAY ALL BE HAPPY, MAY ALL BE FREE FROM DISEASE, MAY ALL PERCEIVE GOOD AND MAY NOT SUFFER FROM SORROW) AGES BACK MASLOW⁷ HAS GIVEN US THE HIERARCHY OF NEEDS. VERY FUNDAMENTAL NEEDS TO ACHIEVE EMPLOYEE HAPPINESS WOULD BE; PHYSICAL, MENTAL, EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL WELLNESS. SIMPLY MEANING ADEQUATE REST, EXERCISE, NUTRITION, FEEL VALUED AT WORK, ALLOW BEING CREATIVE IN THEIR WORK SPACE, MAKING THEM A PART OF THE BIG PICTURE.

So, Happiness by engaging and being satisfied. How difficult can it be to achieve that in a Retail work atmosphere? Or else, be prepared to find employees engaging themselves on their laptops or mobile phones browsing job sites while at work. Out of our own experiences we have learned that happy employees produce best results. Retail has never been anyone's dream job, It's never even Plan B, always 'if nothing else' as a last resort. I was also there by accident, today I take pride in calling myself a Dookandar (Shopkeeper). The largest contributor to the GDP, the largest employment generator, Retail, still does not have Industry status, getting qualified and trained work force is an HR nightmare, retaining is no lesser challenge, and in this whole milieu, HR loses its Happiness. There are factors to keep employees engaged, energized and satisfied. The employees got to know that the company believes in their wellbeing. That they work in a transparent and a clear communication

organization and are also heard and their views valued. A place where their being is respected, there are opportunities of self – development and growth within the hierarchy. Great perks, Rewards and Recognition with a great working culture. So YES, Happiness and Retail are great in bed together. I can vouch for it.

What are most defining pointers in Retail?

Footfall, being the major one be it physical or virtual. Its erratic, it's like earthquake one cannot predict, when it comes you have achieved your target, you have earned your incentive, you are Happy. How about when there is silence, calmness, this is the time when the Boss gets jittery and expresses it with calls, WhatsApp, snapshots of CCTV capture, mail and every other tool available. Then, when the earthquake comes, the staff has less energy to deal with it, presence of mind restricted, loss of sale inevitable, whatever was taught, soft skill or product skill all forgotten. This is a phenomenon in every other Industry I would like to believe. To ensure every transaction is successful, it is extremely important to keep people directly connected to the transaction to be engaged. They have to be 'Mindfully engaged' to ensure every footfall is acknowledged and attended to.

Topline, the reality of any business. There are all possible ¹KPI's and Metrics to measure, more so in the Online space as compared to brick and mortar. The trick is in the experience in any format and not just in the product or its features or promotions. Everyone seems to know it, and acknowledge it too but few seem to be believing and practicing it. The experience is not just the ambience, olfactory senses, the technology to navigate and suggest will take you to a point, the final essence is the people connect. At this juncture, if the people in front are not in a Happy state of mind once again you end in losing a transaction thereby loss of revenue. Once again, to ensure every transaction is successful, it is extremely important to keep people directly connected to the transaction to be 'Mindfully Engaged'. No mention of Product separately though that is a defining pointer, covering the softer aspect only.

Bottom-line, this is the sanity part of the business. This sanity can be achieved when people across all functions are made aware of company objectives, and aligned in the execution as a team. The organizational Values are known by all and there is meaning, there is purpose to every individual associated with the organization. In the businesses that we run, there is general belief that front liners have nothing to do with bottom-line their job is to focus on Top-line only. That thought needs to change, while their core responsibility remains as Revenue generators, they must also be told and acknowledged how important their contribution is in the growth and survival of the organization. Their efforts will go in vain if they are not told of their contribution to keep their store, their function, their company sane.

B. IS THERE A CO-RELATION BETWEEN HAPPY EMPLOYEES AND COMPANY PERFORMANCE?

A couple of Retail Organisations have started to figure in "Best Places to Work". Good to see that, not questioning the authenticity of the process, we can take it up another time. BUT more pertinent question is, are these Best places Happy places as well? We all understand when we say Retail is Detail. It's the last point in the value chain and the most important touch point because of the customer interface. Last few months of the Pandemic has further expanded the technology reach and many retailers who were only contemplating are now convinced to go the Omni channel way or adapting to Technology with additional channel presence to sell, that, is the new survival kit. But does the customer really care about which channels the retailer is available in? Is there a strategy in place? Or are we just pursuing tricks or mechanisms to impress or suppress the competitors. It's easy for everyone to say my customer is the center of my business? My recent experience's with Big Basket Daily, Liscious and a couple of others has led me to believe once again, If I have to be Happy as a customer with my experience then my happiness is directly proportional to the Happiness of the people right from the buyer to packer, Logistics to the delivery guy at my building lobby. That thought will require a mindset change to adapt to Happiness measures leading to the Success quotient. So, Is there a co-relation between Happy employees and their Performance? This is a typical Murgi- Anda (Chicken-Egg) - funda. Is the Retailer struggling because unhappy employees are the root cause of the loss of business or Footfalls going in the direction of the competitor OR the bosses started demanding more and caring less making the employee unhappy? My answer to that would be 'Both' however, even if it is either, then there is an established co-relation between Happy employees and company Performance.

WHY HAPPINESS MAPPING AS A RETAIL KPI*?

Happiness is a state characterized by contentment and general satisfaction with one's current situation. Happiness is not a trait, it's a state, a fleeting, changeable state. Knowing that Retail is all about customer

engagement, wouldn't we want it to be fronted by Happy people?

"Psychology is not just the study of disease, weakness, and damage; it also is the study of strength and virtue. Treatment is not just fixing what is wrong; it also is building what is right. Psychology is not just about illness or health; it is about work, education, insight, love, growth, and play. And in this quest for what is best, **Positive Psychology** does not rely on wishful thinking, self-deception or hand-waving; instead it tries to adapt what is best in the scientific method to the unique problems that **human behavior** presents in all its complexity." (Martin Seligman 2002)⁵

The Pandemic has emotions like depression, grief, and hopelessness crept in, particularly as more and more people have lost loved ones to the virus, lost source of livelihood. We want to find some sense of happiness, meaning, and social connection in our lives. That's where the science of positive psychology comes in. Do not mistake it to be only about happy faces and ignore real problems. It's about overall well-being. We can decide to dwell in the current misery and spiral ourselves down to a painful and unhealthy situation. Alternatively, you can also act it out, put up a plastic smile and say "Don't Worry Be Happy" and suppress it. None of the above is going to help, what can help is to be human to believe that there are miseries, there is grief, take that and fuel yourself to address the situation.

TAKE A SMALL SELF-REPORT TEST FOR YOURSELF AND MEASURE WHERE YOU ARE. YOU CAN KEEP THE RESULTS TO YOURSELF.

There are new rules being written, new normal is talked about. Retail Fundamentals are strong enough to be managed, however the last few months have thrown in new light and it is time to infuse the element of Happiness as a KPI, as a metric of measuring success of business. This is an attempt to a fresh approach without taking away the current practices or KPI's followed by us in the business of Retail. My understanding is it could be applicable in every other industry as well, I would like to seek views and suggestions to make an attempt to implement it. I find the time right for the inclusion of Happiness as a Retail KPI.

THE METHOD: Positive Psychology has explained through its extensive research over a period of last few decades and has suggested tools which will help to measure the state of mind of individuals, Suggest Interventions to help engage and find meaning in life. There are various tools to assess, some of the most important and the most defining tools are mentioned below:

1. Character **STRENGTH** Survey to be undertaken by every individual
(24 defining Character strengths under 6 Virtues)
2. **PERMA** Survey
(Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, Accomplishment)
Survey invented by Martin Seligman.
3. Survey on **OPTIMISM**
(Will map the Permanence and Pervasiveness individually)

Period of Assessment: While HAPPPY will be yearly KPI, there would be quarterly assessment mapping every individual's happiness Quotient. Necessary Interventions can accordingly be suggested for improvement. These tools will also help to hire the right talent. Various self-report tools can be deployed at regular intervals for assessment.

Sample of self-Report Scale: One prominent psychological dimension of well-being is happiness. In psychology, the scientific term for happiness is subjective well-being, which is defined² (Braco Pobric) by three different components: high life satisfaction, which refers to positive evaluations of one's life in general (e.g., "Overall, I am satisfied with my life"); positive feelings, which refers to the amount of positive emotions one experiences in life (e.g., peace, joy); and low negative feelings, which refers to the amount of negative emotions one experiences in life (e.g., sadness, anger) (Diener, 1984)⁶. These components are commonly measured using subjective self-report scales.

I. FIGURES AND TABLES

Below are five statements that you may agree or disagree with. Using the 1 - 7 scale below, indicate your agreement with each item by placing the appropriate number on the line preceding that item. Please be open and honest in your responding.

- 7 – Strongly agree**
- 6 – Agree**
- 5 – Slightly agree**
- 4 – Neither agree nor disagree**
- 3 – Slightly disagree**
- 2 – Disagree**
- 1 – Strongly disagree**

- In most ways my life is close to my ideal.
- The conditions of my life are excellent.
- I am satisfied with my life.
- So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.
- If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.

Scoring:

- 31 - 35 Extremely satisfied**
- 26 - 30 Satisfied**
- 21 - 25 Slightly satisfied**
- 20 Neutral**
- 15 - 19 Slightly dissatisfied**
- 10 - 14 Dissatisfied**
- 5 - 9 Extremely dissatisfied**

Figure 1. SELF REPORT SCALE

II. CONCLUSION

There are new rules being written, new normal is talked about. Retail Fundamentals are strong enough to be managed, however the last few months have thrown in new light and it is time to infuse the element of Happiness as a KPI, as a metric of measuring success of business. This is an attempt to a fresh approach without taking away the current practices or KPI's followed by us in the business of Retail. My understanding is it could be applicable in every other industry as well, I would like to seek views and suggestions to make an attempt to implement it. I find the time right for the inclusion of Happiness as a Retail KPI.

III. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The views and expressions are of the author. A passionate retailer and academician, wishes to indulge in the well-being and growth of every individual and organization, thereby the country. Wishes to contribute and value add to the Happiness Quotient.

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