

# A STUDY ON EMPLOYEES' ENGAGEMENT LEVEL IN TRAVEL ORGANISATIONS WITH REFERENCE TO KARNATAKA

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## ABSTRACT

*India known for its diverse culture and tradition creates a great appeal for the tourists to visit the country, which leading to increased inflow of tourists year by year as a result the tourism industry is seeing a rapid growth from past few years. Travel organisations being one of the prime stakeholders in tourism industry plays an important role in promoting the destination to the tourist. Thereby, the employees working in travel organisations equally plays an important role as, it is through them the destination packages are created, promoted and sold to the tourist. Employees need to be efficient enough to create and sell good tour packages to the tourist. Employees' efficiency level is greatly influenced by many factors, and one such factor is "employee engagement". In the recent years, employee engagement is the most heard word across different industries in all parts of the world and organisations are doing intense research in their companies to measure and understand the engagement level of employees, it is also an evolving topic in academic research; however research on employee engagement especially in travel organisations with reference to India is very limited. Thus, this study aims in measuring employees' engagement level in travel organisations and also aims in determining whether engagement level differs among demographic factors such as gender, age and tenure of the employees'.*

**Keywords:** *Employee engagement, intellectual engagement, social engagement, affective engagement, and travel organisation.*

## Introduction:

Tourism is considered as a social event because people travel around the world with their families and friends. According to UNWTO, "Tourism comprises the activities of persons travelling to and satisfying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes not related to the exercise of an activity remunerated from within the place visited".

The industry which facilitates and provides services related to tourism is termed as travel and tourism industry. Travel and tourism industry comprises of various sub sectors such as transportation, food services, accommodation, cultural services, recreation

and management, tour operators and travel agents, convention services, and many miscellaneous tourism services (tourism equipment, visa processing and issuing services), (Tribe and Airey, 2007). A "travel experience" to a tourist can be provided only if there is an absolute interaction among these sectors. The travellers need to interact with all these intermediaries from the beginning to the completion of the journey. According to the statistics provided by World Travel and Tourism council (WTTC) in 2014, the total GDP contribution by travel and tourism industry in India in 2013 was 6.2 per cent of the total GDP; with respect to employment in 2013 it was 4.9 per cent of total employment. This sector equally holds important with respect to its contribution to world GDP and

employment. In the year 2013 the total contribution towards GDP was 9.5 per cent of total GDP and contributed 8.9 per cent of total employment.

### **Introduction to Travel Trade:**

According to the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, travel trade is one sub sector of the tourism industry which comprises of travel agents, inbound and domestic tour operators, adventure tour operators and tourist transport operators. However there is a broader classification of travel trade which consists of tour operators who are more like wholesalers and sell their packages to travel agents who are generally the retailers. Hence, travel agency is a private retailer or a service agency providing tourism related services to the public on behalf of suppliers such as airlines, car rental companies, hotels, railways, cruise lines and package tours.

### **Human Resources in Travel Trade:**

Employees working in travel organisations are very important as they are the ones who come in contact with customers. Possession of professional knowledge and experience alone is not sufficient to develop and promote tourism, above all employees' commitment and engagement towards work and organisation are important. Only when employees are contented and engaged in their work, they are able to provide good work and good service to their customers. Hence, employees hired in travel trade can modify the quality of services offered and the whole atmosphere offered in the company. Therefore it is very important to pick upbeat and dedicated workers at all levels in a travel organisation. It is the job of the human resources manager to ensure that right people are chosen to work in the company and to also take continuous measures to make the employees committed and engaged to their work and organisation.

### **Research objectives:**

- To understand the concept "employee engagement".
- To determine the employees engagement level in travel organisations.
- To measure the influence of demographic factors like gender, age and tenure on employee engagement.

### **Review of literature:**

#### **Evolution of employee engagement:**

The concept employee engagement has gained the attention of academicians, companies as well as HR consultancy and various other research based institutions. Khan (1990, p. 694) developed the concept "Personal Engagement", which is explained as "harnessing of organisation members' selves to their work roles"; in engagement, people employ and

express themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances. Personal disengagement means "uncoupling of selves from work roles"; in disengagement "people withdraw & defend themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally during role performances". According to Khan (1990) there are 3 psychological conditions whose presence will lead to engagement and the absence of which leads to disengagement, they are psychological meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability. Though Khan (1990) was first to develop and explain the concept "engagement", but the term "Employee Engagement" was first coined and started applying at a business level by a consulting firm name Gallup in 1999. Thereby Buckingham and Coffman (1999) defined Employee Engagement as, "a fully engaged employee as one who could answer yes to all 12 questions on Gallup's workplace questionnaire". In a study by Welch (2011), it was said that scientific research on engagement was initially done only by academicians and only a decade later the term employee engagement coined by the consultancy firm Gallup. Harter, Schmidt, and Hayes (2002) was the first to study employee engagement at a business level, were 7,939 business units was considered from 36 companies, and also studied on the relationship between employee satisfaction, engagement and business outcomes. According to this study employee engagement was referred as, "The individual's involvement and satisfaction along with enthusiasm for work" (Harter et al., 2002, p. 269). Khan has developed and defined the term personal engagement and the constructs contributing to it. However the operationalisation of these constructs was not put forth. Maslach and Leiter (1997) had a different approach towards engagement. The authors defined engagement as "the antithesis of burnout as engagement" where engagement is measured with the opposite constructs of burnout. Hence the constructs of engagement consist of energy, involvement and efficacy in place of exhaustion, cynicism and inefficacy. The opposite of scores received by measuring MBI were considered to measure engagement (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). However it was understood that burnout is a different construct from engagement, hence the realization of measuring engagement as a separate construct led to the development of three constructs such as vigor and dedication (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2001) and absorption (Schaufeli et al, 2001). Engagement is not an activity which remains only for a particular moment rather; it is a state which remains constant for a longer period (Schaufeli et al, 2001). Thereby employee engagement was redefined as "positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption" (Schaufeli et al., 2001).

From the above mentioned reviews it is understood that each authors has conceptualised and as developed different dimensions of employee engagement. There are different views about employee engagement some have mentioned it as a “state engagement”, “trait engagement” or “behaviour engagement”. This was well brought out by Macey and Schneider (2008), where it was clearly mentioned how employee engagement is defined differently based on these 3 facets. After reviewing the work of different authors, the author has pointed out, that employee engagement is more like a state, and the variables comprising of trait engagement are more like independent variables or antecedents of employee engagement and the behaviour engagement such as OCB, role expansion or being adaptive are the outcomes of state engagement. One of the recent measures developed for employee engagement by Soane et al, (2012) consisted of three dimensions which are intellectual, social and affective. The authors developed the ISA employee engagement supporting and agreeing with the majority of authors’ view that engagement is a state and behavior enacted by the employees’ are more of the consequences of employee engagement. The authors define intellectual as “the extent to which one is intellectually absorbed in work”, social engagement as, “the extent to which one is socially connected with the working environment and shares common values with colleagues” and finally affective engagement is defined as, “the extent to which one experiences a state of positive affect relating to one’s work role”

#### *Demographic variables and employee engagement*

Demographic variables such as age, gender, length of work experience, civil state and education has an influence on employee engagement. Engagement level of employees in case of men is higher than woman (Jiandong, 2009; Jiandong & Min, 2009; SheeMun, Suhaimi, Abdullah, Rahman & Mat, 2013). But with respect to other studies there is no difference with gender and employee engagement (Training, 2012; Ariani, 2013). Similarly with respect to age it was determined that, employees’ below 25 years put in more work input and has projected happiness in their workplace and are enthusiastic about work when compared to age groups above 36 years (Jiandong, 2009; Jiandong & Min, 2009), also employees aged between 40-49 years are less engaged or disengaged (Training, 2012). Hence engagement level differs with reference to age groups of employees’. However there are studies which also proved seniors are more engaged than fresher’s or juniors (Training, 2012; SheeMun et al, 2013). In case of married employees they are more engaged than unmarried employees (Jiandong, 2009; Jiandong & Min, 2009). In a study by (Sharma & Anupama, 2006) it was determined variables such as age and length of work experience has a negative correlation with employee engagement. Hence most of the studies have proved that employee

engagement differs with demographic variables such as age, gender, qualification and tenure (Ngobeni & Bezuidenhout, 2011).

Hypothesis for the study are as follows

*H<sub>a1</sub>: There is a significant difference among gender and intellectual engagement.*

*H<sub>a2</sub>: There is a significant difference among gender and social engagement*

*H<sub>a3</sub>: There is a significant difference among gender and affective engagement*

*H<sub>a4</sub>: There is a significant difference among age and intellectual engagement.*

*H<sub>a5</sub>: There is a significant difference among age and social engagement.*

*H<sub>a6</sub>: There is a significant difference among age and affective engagement.*

*H<sub>a7</sub>: There is a significant difference among work experience and intellectual engagement.*

*H<sub>a8</sub>: There is a significant difference among work experience and social engagement.*

*H<sub>a9</sub>: There is a significant difference among work experience and affective engagement.*

#### **Research Gap:**

From the forgoing literature it was understood that employee engagement plays a vital role in organisations. Higher the employee engaged at work and in the organisation, higher the various positive outcomes and benefits to the organisation such as increased profitability, financial performance (Siddhanta & Roy (n.d); Cawe, 2006), increased retention, lower turnover (Siddhanta & Roy (n.d); Cawe, 2006; Andrew & Sofian, 2012; Soane et al., 2012). This was researched in many industries in many parts of world. However from the reviews none of the studies have given a picture on employee engagement in the travel industry and also with respect to India. It is evident that lower the engagement, organisations face more of negative effects and hence it is very important to determine the employee engagement level. And travel organisations being one of important sub sector of the tourism industry, their employees are also equally important. Thereby this study aims in extending the research to a new territory which consists of employees working in travel organisations with reference to Bangalore and their engagement level. Along with this, the research also wants to determine whether engagement differs with demographic factors. The study also helps in contributing to the existing theory of employee engagement.

#### **Methodology:**

In this study, population consists of employees working in travel organisations set up in Karnataka. Employees working in both national and international travel organisations were considered for the study and

sample of 150 was covered. The research used both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected based on a survey method and secondary data was gathered from articles, thesis, books, and websites. The tool consisted total of 12 items, the first three items of the questionnaire consisted of demographic factors such as age, gender and tenure and the latter part of the questionnaire measured employee engagement and it was adopted. Employee engagement was measured by ISA engagement scale which was developed by Soane et al, (2012), the scale was used after seeking permission from authors. The scale was measured on five point Likert scales ranging from one which stands for strongly disagree and five which stands for strongly agree. The cronbach alpha for each of the sub dimensions and overall value was found to be more than the required limit and was good. Tools such as descriptive statistics was used to analyse the demographic profile of the respondents, independent sample t-test and one way Anova was used to test the hypothesis.

Table 1 indicates the overall cronbach alpha value of employee engagement and Table 2 indicates the alpha value of employee engagement sub dimension wise.

**Table 1: Reliability Statistics for Employee Engagement**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.956	.956	9

**Table No 2: Reliability Statistics for sub dimensions of Employee Engagement**

Employee Engagement	No of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Intellectual Engagement	3	.921
Social Engagement	3	.883
Affective Engagement	3	.921

**Results and Discussion:**

The demographic profile of 150 samples is shown in table 3. Of the total respondents 57.3% of the sample fall into the age group of 22- 32 years, 27.3% between 33-48%, 11% between 49-51 years and only 4% was 51 years and above. Similarly with respect to gender 54.7% of the total sample was male and remaining 45.3% was female respondents. Data was also collected on the no years of experience they hold with the present company and it was found that 41.3% of the sample have 1-up to 2 years, 32.7% between more than 2 years- up to 3 years, 14.7% have more than 3 years- up to 4years and only 11.3% of the sample have more than 4 years' experience in the present company were they work.

Employee engagement consisted of three facets such as intellectual engagement (IE), social engagement (SE) and affective engagement (AE) and the mean score of each the three facets are shown in table 4. From the table it could be inferred that employees' working in travel organisation are high on affective engagement with a mean score of 3.8467 on a five point Likert scale, which explains that employees feel positive about their work, followed by intellectual engagement with a mean score of 3.7022 indicating that employees concentrate and focus on the work they do, and the least score was for social engagement with a score of 3.4889, which explains on how employees are socially connected with their colleagues and from the score it could be inferred out of the three facets social engagement score is the least. Hence companies need to take measures to inculcate socialisation culture at work place among employees, which helps in creating a positive and healthy work environment and it will also result in positive individual and organisational outcomes. All three sub dimensions of employee engagement had a mean score more than 3 and to find out the overall mean score of employee engagement, all nine items measuring employee engagement construct was considered. Further Table 5 illustrates the overall employee engagement mean score which is 3.6793 on a five point Likert scale and it can be inferred that most of the employees agreed that they are engaged in their organisation to a great extent.

**Table No 4: Mean score of 3 facets of Employee Engagement**

		IE	SE	AE
N	Valid	150	150	150
	Missing	0	0	0
<b>Mean</b>		3.7022	3.4889	3.8467
<b>Std. Error of Mean</b>		.09781	.07486	.08827
<b>Std. Deviation</b>		1.19790	.91688	1.08108

**Table No 5: Mean score of Employee engagement**

N	Valid	150
	Missing	0
<b>Mean</b>		3.6793
<b>Std. Error of Mean</b>		.08141
<b>Std. Deviation</b>		.99710

In order to test the hypothesis independent sample t-test and one way Anova was used.

**H<sub>a1</sub>:** There is a significant difference among gender and intellectual engagement.

**H<sub>a2</sub>:** There is a significant difference among gender and social engagement.

**H<sub>a3</sub>:** There is a significant difference among gender and affective engagement

**Table No 6: Difference among Gender and 3 sub dimensions of employee engagement Group Statistics.**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
IE	male	82	3.7967	1.20783	.13338
	female	68	3.5882	1.18464	.14366
SE	male	82	3.5732	.95189	.10512
	female	68	3.3873	.86886	.10537
AE	male	82	3.9187	1.04305	.11519
	female	68	3.7598	1.12686	.13665

**Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
IE	Equal variances assumed	.039	.844	1.062	148	.290	.20851	.19639	-.17958	.59660
	Equal variances not assumed			1.064	143.870	.289	.20851	.19603	-.17896	.59599
SE	Equal variances assumed	.251	.617	1.239	148	.217	.18592	.15011	-.11073	.48256
	Equal variances not assumed			1.249	146.610	.214	.18592	.14884	-.10822	.48006
AE	Equal variances assumed	.824	.365	.896	148	.372	.15890	.17743	-.19173	.50952
	Equal variances not assumed			.889	138.287	.376	.15890	.17872	-.19448	.51228

The above table 6 shows the output of independent sample t-test and from the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances it could be seen that the sig. values of intellectual engagement is .844, social engagement is .617 and affective engagement is .365 which is greater than .05 and thus the variances between male and female is not too much for all the three facets. Thus it can be concluded from the analysis that there is no significant difference among gender and three facets of employee engagement. Therefore we reject alternate hypothesis and accept null hypothesis.

*H<sub>a4</sub>: There is a significant difference among age and intellectual engagement.*

*H<sub>a5</sub>: There is a significant difference among age and social engagement.*

*H<sub>a6</sub>: There is a significant difference among age and affective engagement.*

**Table no: 7 Difference among age and 3 sub dimensions of employee engagement Descriptive**

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
IE	22-32 years	86	3.6124	1.20983	.13046	3.3530	3.8718	1.33	5.00
	33-48 years	41	3.9268	1.15112	.17977	3.5635	4.2902	1.33	5.00
	49-51 years	17	3.6078	1.35521	.32869	2.9111	4.3046	1.67	5.00
	52 years and above	6	3.7222	.90472	.36935	2.7728	4.6717	2.00	4.67
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>3.7022</b>	<b>1.19790</b>	<b>.09781</b>	<b>3.5090</b>	<b>3.8955</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>5.00</b>
SE	22-32 years	86	3.5039	.87484	.09434	3.3163	3.6914	2.00	5.00
	33-48 years	41	3.5528	1.01272	.15816	3.2332	3.8725	1.33	5.00
	49-51 years	17	3.2157	.94972	.23034	2.7274	3.7040	2.00	5.00
	52 years and above	6	3.6111	.80046	.32679	2.7711	4.4511	2.00	4.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>3.4889</b>	<b>.91688</b>	<b>.07486</b>	<b>3.3410</b>	<b>3.6368</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>5.00</b>
AE	22-32 years	86	3.8333	1.04256	.11242	3.6098	4.0569	1.67	5.00
	33-48 years	41	3.9431	1.11779	.17457	3.5903	4.2959	1.33	5.00
	49-51 years	17	3.6471	1.24984	.30313	3.0045	4.2897	2.00	5.00
	52 years and above	6	3.9444	1.06284	.43390	2.8291	5.0598	2.33	5.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>3.8467</b>	<b>1.08108</b>	<b>.08827</b>	<b>3.6722</b>	<b>4.0211</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>5.00</b>

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
IE	Between Groups	2.916	3	.972	.673	.570
	Within Groups	210.894	146	1.444		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>213.810</b>	<b>149</b>			
SE	Between Groups	1.546	3	.515	.608	.611
	Within Groups	123.714	146	.847		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125.259</b>	<b>149</b>			
AE	Between Groups	1.131	3	.377	.318	.812
	Within Groups	173.009	146	1.185		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>174.140</b>	<b>149</b>			

Table no: 8 Difference among tenure and 3 sub dimensions of employee engagement Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
IE	1-upto 2 years	62	3.4677	1.27389	.16178	3.1442	3.7913	1.33	5.00
	More than 2-upto 3 years	49	3.9388	1.04897	.14985	3.6375	4.2401	1.33	5.00
	More than 3-upto 4years	22	3.5303	1.16228	.24780	3.0150	4.0456	1.67	5.00
	more than 4 years	17	4.0980	1.22907	.29809	3.4661	4.7300	1.67	5.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>3.7022</b>	<b>1.19790</b>	<b>.09781</b>	<b>3.5090</b>	<b>3.8955</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>5.00</b>
SE	1-upto 2 years	62	3.3548	.88474	.11236	3.1302	3.5795	1.33	5.00
	More than 2-upto 3 years	49	3.5578	.83441	.11920	3.3182	3.7975	2.00	5.00
	More than 3-upto 4years	22	3.4697	1.04228	.22221	3.0076	3.9318	2.00	5.00
	more than 4 years	17	3.8039	1.06757	.25892	3.2550	4.3528	1.33	5.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>3.4889</b>	<b>.91688</b>	<b>.07486</b>	<b>3.3410</b>	<b>3.6368</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>5.00</b>
AE	1-upto 2 years	62	3.6344	1.09430	.13898	3.3565	3.9123	1.67	5.00
	More than 2-upto 3 years	49	4.0544	1.03715	.14816	3.7565	4.3523	1.67	5.00
	More than 3-upto 4years	22	3.6818	1.11496	.23771	3.1875	4.1762	1.33	5.00
	more than 4 years	17	4.2353	.97727	.23702	3.7328	4.7378	2.33	5.00
	<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>3.8467</b>	<b>1.08108</b>	<b>.08827</b>	<b>3.6722</b>	<b>4.0211</b>	<b>1.33</b>	<b>5.00</b>

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
IE	Between Groups	9.464	3	3.155	2.254	.085
	Within Groups	204.346	146	1.400		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>213.810</b>	<b>149</b>			
SE	Between Groups	3.042	3	1.014	1.211	.308
	Within Groups	122.217	146	.837		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125.259</b>	<b>149</b>			
AE	Between Groups	8.074	3	2.691	2.366	.073
	Within Groups	166.066	146	1.137		
	<b>Total</b>	<b>174.140</b>	<b>149</b>			

One way Anova output is shown in table 7 and the sig value of IE is .570, SE is .611 and AE is .812 which shows that the values are greater than 0.05 and hence it can be interpreted that the three facets of engagement level do not vary with different age groups. Therefore the alternate hypothesis is rejected and null hypothesis is accepted. It can be thus concluded that there is no significant difference between age and IE, SE and AE.

**H<sub>a7</sub>:** There is a significant difference among work experience and intellectual engagement.

**H<sub>a8</sub>:** There is a significant difference among work experience and social engagement.

**H<sub>a9</sub>:** There is a significant difference among work experience and affective engagement.

The above table indicates the output of one way Anova to find out the significant differences among work experiences and IE, SE and AE. The results shows that the sig. value of IE is .085, SE is .308 and AE is .073 which is greater than .05, and hence it can be determined that there is no significant differences among work experiences and IE, SE and AE. Therefore alternate hypothesis is rejected and null hypothesis is accepted.

**Conclusion:**

The finding of this research helps in understanding the evolution of the concept “employee engagement” and also the different views on the concept by various authors. The reviews also revealed on the need for managers working towards attaining engaged employees. When compared to any other industry, tourism is the only industry which is growing rapidly year by year and as a huge contribution towards the growth of the economy. Similarly the success or failure of a company to great extent depends on the employees’ working in these organisations. Employees being considered as a backbone of all organisations, it is therefore important to ensure that they are committed, satisfied and engaged to their work. From the data it was found that employees working in travel organisation are engaged to a greater extent at the same time it is also important for the organisations to take initiative in maintaining the engagement level as it is vital for the successful growth of the organisations. Engagement level do not differ much with demographic variables such as gender, age and tenure, thus organisation need to be concerned about such factors. Employee engagement being the buzz word across all industries, travel organisations also need to take measures to attain and maintain actively engaged employee in their organisations.

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