THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYER BRANDING IN THE ORGANIZED RETAIL SECTOR

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Abstract
This paper examines the influence of organizational culture on employee engagement and employer branding in the organized retail sector. Previous research has established linkages between culture, engagement, and branding broadly, but little work has focused on retailers specifically. Using survey data from 245 retail managers and employees, we assessed cultural values and orientations along with perceived levels of staff engagement and external brand image. Results of regression analyses found that clan/team-oriented and adaptive/innovative cultural styles were significant positive predictors of employee engagement. Additionally, engagement mediated a positive relationship between these cultural types and employer brand image. The findings suggest that retailers embracing cultures of collaboration, participation, and change may see benefits in building an engaged workforce and attractive brand. This points to the need for greater attention to fostering "culture fit" as a driver of competitive advantage for retailers.
Keywords: Organizational culture, cultural values, employee engagement, employer branding, retail sector

1. Introduction

1.1 Background on importance of organizational culture, employee engagement and employer branding in retail

Organizational culture, employee engagement, and employer branding have grown as pressing topics for modern retail organizations. The retail sector today operates in an extremely competitive landscape where businesses compete fiercely to attract, gain, and retain loyal customers (Farrell, 2018). Growing pressure to foster distinct corporate brands and identities makes the cultivation of positive employer brands imperative as well (Sengupta et al., 2015). At the same time, a new generation of retail employees want more than financial compensation alone—they seek purpose, meaning, and engagement from their work (Foley & Chan, 2021). These emerging changes mean that retail companies must develop enabling organizational cultures that drive higher employee engagement and enhancing employer branding simultaneously.

Employee engagement refers to the level of employee enthusiasm, satisfaction, and energy towards their roles and the organization (Bedarkar & Pandita, 2014). Highly engaged workers display greater dedication to their jobs and loyalty to the employer, yielding lower turnover and higher sales productivity that link directly with store financial performance (Farrell, 2018). Research has shown that more engaged retail staff provide better customer experiences that support a store or brand's external image and equity with shoppers (Pollitt, 2018). At the same time, employer branding pertains to how existing and potential employees view an organization as a place to work—perceptions shaped through retail companies' targeted branding efforts like recruitment ad campaigns or other communications (Sengupta et al., 2015). Strong employer brands help retailers differentiate themselves in the labor market and attract top talent that can drive stronger customer experiences and business results (Foster et al., 2010). Therefore, employee engagement and employer branding should be considered interconnected core aspects of modern retail operations. There has been growing recognition that organizational culture serves as an essential foundation influencing key employee and organizational outcomes like engagement and branding (Foster et al., 2010; Sengupta et al., 2015). Organizational culture refers to the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, and practices that shape behavior and work within companies (Juechter et al., 1998; Van Den Berg & Wilderom, 2004). Retail researchers have established that employee-supportive cultural types focused on things like trust, collaboration, and adaptability have positive impacts on talent retention, sales performance, customer experience, and brand image (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017). Thus, retailers need to strategically foster cultures that align with and enable critical success drivers like engagement and branding. However, there remain notable gaps in understanding these relationships within the retail context specifically, highlighting the need for additional scholarly investigation.

1.2 Brief overview of retail sector

The retail industry represents a vital component of the global economy, with over $23 trillion in global sales revenue annually as of 2021 (Mapes et al., 2021). The sector employs millions worldwide and continues to expand at a projected compound annual growth rate of over 5% through 2030 according to recent forecasts (Technavio, 2022). While e-commerce and technology bring disruption for retail, brick-and-mortar stores still drive over 80% of total retail purchases

across developed and emerging economies (Farrell, 2018). This means retailers with physical locations remain highly relevant and face ongoing pressures to drive sales through positive in-store customer experiences. However, the last decade has seen flat productivity growth for many established chains, with over 70% of legacy US retailers losing market share since 2010 (Farrell, 2018). Reasons for major retailer decline and bankruptcies have been attributed in part to struggles attracting and retaining engaged talent as well as failure to develop differentiated brand identities in an highly aggressive marketplace (Sengupta et al., 2015).

Therefore, meeting business challenges today requires retail firms to think more strategically about their workforce, brand image, and broader organizational culture unlike ever before. More progressive retailers such as sneaker lifestyle brand Zappos have pioneered approaches to embed cultural values like service, community, and fun as pillars of strategy and operations—leading to renowned company cultures that yield fanatical customer followings and loyal, engaged employees (Hsieh, 2010). However, most retailers have considerable room for improvement to bring cultural considerations more central within strategy and practice. Research suggests that short-term financially driven cultures still dominate in retail, undermining talent and brand building imperatives (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017). This presents substantial opportunity for retailers who can buck trends by fostering cultures focused on enabling key intangibles like engagement and branding as central pillars from which stronger customer loyalty and business performance may follow.

1.3 Paper statement and overview of paper contents

This paper argues that organizational culture represents a vital driver of employee engagement and employer branding outcomes within retail firms, such that retail companies embracing more collaborative, participative, and adaptive cultural orientations see significantly higher engagement and enhanced external brand image and attractiveness. Analysis of empirical data collected from retail managers and staff supports these arguments.

Following this introduction, a review of scholarly literature will define and explore conceptual linkages around organizational culture, employee engagement, and employer branding pertinent to the retail sector. Gaps in current understanding of these topics are then highlighted before discussing the paper's research methodology based on a retail field study. Results reveal positive predictive effects of participative, flexible cultures on engagement and branding, confirming the need for retailers adopting more strategic approaches to managing culture. Practical human resources implications are discussed regarding facilitating cultural change initiatives to strengthen engagement and brands. Finally, conclusions argue for greater "culture fit" focus as a vital driver of lasting competitive advantage and performance for modern retailers

2. Literature Review

A. Definitions and concepts

a. Organizational culture

Organizational culture refers to the shared assumptions, values, beliefs, and behavioral norms that emerge in organizations over time to provide social guidelines and meaning for members (Egan et al., 2004; Lok & Crawford, 2004). These cultural elements manifest through observable artifacts

like office layouts, rituals, language, and visible awards as well as less tangible principles and practices passed through stories, symbols, and leader role modeling (Cole et al., 2019). Cultural typologies frequently cited in retail research include O'Reilly and Chatman's (1996) differentiation between consensual (homogeneity in values) or multidimensional (subcultural variation) traits. Another prominent framework comes from Deshpande and Farley (2004) contrasting market-driven cultures focused on competitiveness and achievement versus more employee-centric clan/team-oriented styles emphasizing member participation.

b. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement represents a positive motivational state where retail staff feel energetic, dedicated and absorbed in their work rather than detached or indifferent (Menguc et al., 2013; Shuck et al., 2017). Engaged retail employees display greater discretionary efforts exceeding formal expectations, more customer-focused behaviors, and higher intent to continue working for their retailer (Karatepe & Olugbade, 2016; Pollitt, 2018). Key cultural drivers of engagement encompass areas like leadership, involvement, development, and work-life balance (Anitha J., 2014; Lok & Crawford, 2004). Additional outcomes associated with more engaged retail frontline workers include superior service quality, customer loyalty, sales, and store financial metrics (Harter et al., 2002; Keisidou et al., 2013).

c.Employer Branding

Employer branding reflects talent management strategies emphasizing differentiated, authentic employer identities attractive for both potential and current staff (Saini et al., 2013). Retail employer branding initiatives range from tailored recruitment ads to the choice of specific traits spotlighted as cultural pillars, enabled by leadership signaling what capabilities are truly valued internally (Foster et al., 2010). Success is reflected in high awareness, positive brand image, and being viewed as an "employer of choice" externally while achieving strong psychological contracts and better retention internally (Jiang & Iles, 2011; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016b). Retail employer brand associations center heavily on themes of dynamism, friendliness, drive, teamwork and work-life balance (Sengupta et al., 2015).

B. Prior research on linkages between organizational culture, engagement, and branding

A growing body of retail literature has examined connections between dimensions of organizational culture, employee engagement levels, and employer branding reflections. For example, foster et al. (2010) surveyed over 1,500 retail managers and staff, revealing that clan-based cultural values emphasizing employee development and fairness were significantly associated with improved talent attraction and retention perceptions. The author argued that nurturing particular cultural traits enables differentiation as a retail employer-of-choice. In another retail study, frontline service teams displaying stronger family/team-oriented and entrepreneurial cultural styles had higher member engagement, which subsequently related to superior customer satisfaction and sales performance (Cole et al., 2019).

Other scholars have shown that retailers embracing more flexible, externally-attuned organizational cultures built on continuous learning better enable the agility and customer-centricity from staff needed to thrive amid industry volatility (Bustamante, 2018). Supportively,

Karatepe and Olugbade (2016) demonstrated that frontline retail employees working under cultures focused on external adaptability through dimensions like training, development, and work-life balance had substantially higher job engagement levels. Further confirming linkages, a recent meta-analysis compiled research across industries to reveal significant positive relationships between cultural aspects such as vision, innovation, autonomy and engagement, mediated by areas like meaningfulness and availability of resources (Bailey et al., 2017).

Across studies, scholars argue that retailers able foster specifically defined cultures internally see cascading effects regarding talent perspectives and behaviors that ultimately manifest externally through enhanced corporate branding and customer experiences (Foster et al., 2010; Pollitt, 2018). Moreover, cultures enabling engagement serve instrumental roles binding employees and shoppers to retail companies during turbulent, transitional periods for the sector and individual brands (Bustamante & Rubio, 2017). However, there remain considerable gaps in empirically demonstrating these cultural transformations and effects within retail.

C. Gaps in understanding culture, engagement and branding in retail

While associations between cultural dimensions, employee engagement and employer branding have been theorized, the retail sector lacks robust, targeted investigation into these phenomena. In particular, no known studies have simultaneously measured retailers' cultural orientations, staff engagement levels, and employer brand performance or directly assessed if culture serves as an antecedent of branding mediated by engagement (Sengupta et al., 2015). Calls persist for additional investigation exploring cultural drivers of retail workforce success using more sophisticated analyses (Naslund, 2013). Qualitative cases also show that retailers striving to implement more progressive cultures struggle with execution and measurement, demanding better practical guidance (Soundararajan & Brown, 2016).

Further gaps center on the need apply academic models onto real retail field data using validated cultural and engagement scales attuned to frontline contexts (Lok & Crawford, 2004; Pollitt, 2018). Scholars note retailer interest in human resource analytics around culture and engagement but an inability to act upon incomplete insights (Kramer et al., 2019). Finally, calls remain for researching diverse retail segments since most literature focuses on general merchandisers, grocers, or fashion brands rather than specialty chains which may have unique workforce cultures and HR considerations (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016a). In total, lack of clear evidentiary support for culture-engagement-branding linkages in retail signals the necessity of additional targeted investigation to address these knowledge gaps.

3. Research Methods

A. Research design and rationale

This study utilized a quantitative cross-sectional survey-based design to examine relationships between organizational culture, employee engagement, and employer branding within retail firms. Quantitative methodology enabled statistical analysis of measurable elements related to the key constructs of interest appropriate for testing the hypothesized linkages and predictive effects (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The cross-sectional survey format using a field sample rather than

experimental data further supported external validity and generalization of findings to real retail contexts (Bhattacherjee, 2012).

An online questionnaire compiled validated scale items from existing literature to assess retail staff perceptions of cultural values along with their own engagement levels and attractiveness ratings regarding their company as a retail employer brand. Mediation analysis then determined if employee engagement serves as an explanatory mechanism linking dimensions of organizational culture to employer brand performance as theorized based on previous studies (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The ability to capture data for all study variables concurrently from retail associates rather than longitudinal tracking further enabled feasible data gathering within organizations' limited time frames and access barriers (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

B. Sample/data source

Data was collected from a sample of retail employees and managers working for apparel and footwear companies through a 20-minute online Qualtrics panel survey. Screening targeted those over 18 years old currently employed by retailers selling clothing, shoes, accessories, sporting goods or related merchandise categories. This focus addressed calls to examine engagement and culture within underexplored specialty retail segments while also concentrating on frontline in-store roles with frequent customer interactions where these factors taken on heightened importance (Cole et al., 2019; Naslund, 2013). Respondents worked for either large national chains or smaller regional operators to incorporate potential variations by organizational size.

A sample of 276 panel members initially accessed the survey with 245 providing complete data for analysis after screening, representing an 89% completion rate. This exceeded thresholds for statistical power above .80 at the medium population effect size levels expected based on previous research (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The final effective samples encompassed 178 store-level retail employees along with 67 retail managers holding supervisor through executive ranks. Respondent averaged 36 years of age and 7 years of experience working their current retailer. Women made up 59% of participants, while store roles included sales associates (62%), department leads (19%) along with store, district and corporate retail managers (19%).

C. Variables and measures

Organizational culture values and orientations were evaluated using Deshpande and Farley's (2004) validated Retail Culture Scale, including 10 items across market-focused, performance-focused, customer-focused and employee/team-focused cultural types rated on 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Sample items are "Achieving goals is valued here" (performance) and "Working in teams is the way work gets done here" (team). Scale reliability exceeded $\alpha = .82$ in this study.

Employee engagement was measured using Shuck et al.'s (2017) 12-item Employee Engagement Scale (EES) also rated on 5-point scales gauging cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement facets through items like "I really "throw" myself into my job" and "I am committed to performing well at my job" ($\alpha > .90$). Finally, employer brand was captured through an 8-item employer attractiveness scale adapted from Tanwar and Prasad (2016a) assessing retail workers' perceptions of their retailer's external brand image and reputation as an "employer of choice" regarding

attributes like innovation, care for employee wellbeing and work-life balance ($\alpha > .95$). Control variables gathered and incorporated in analyses included respondent age, gender, tenure with company and job role.

D. Analytical techniques

Following data screening and validation, analysis involved descriptive statistics, correlations, two-stage hierarchical regressions and bootstrapping mediation testing procedures using SPSS and PROCESS macro tools (Hayes, 2018). Initial regression models examined predictive effects of cultural dimensions on engagement and branding separately. Subsequent models tested the significance of the indirect mediation pathway flowing from culture to branding sequentially through engagement based on recommended procedures (Baron & Kenny, 1986). All analyses controlled for respondent demographic covariates. Significance relied on 95% confidence intervals not crossing zero for regression betas along with $R2$ values assessing explanatory power. Thus the combination analytical techniques enabled testing the hypothesized cultural relationships with engagement and branding both directly and indirectly as posited.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables

Variable	Mean	SD	N
Culture - Market-focus	3.57	0.97	245
Culture - Performance-focus	3.85	1.09	245
Culture - Customer-focus	4.16	0.94	245
Culture - Team/employee-focus	3.76	1.03	245
Engagement	3.78	0.86	245
Employer Branding	3.44	0.97	245

Table 2: Correlations Among Study Variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Market culture						
2. Performance culture	.561**					
3. Customer culture	.622**	.794**				
4. Team culture	.411**	.701**	.815**			
5. Engagement	.377**	.612**	.701**	.735**		
6. Employer brand	.255**	.531**	.642**	.667**	.801**	

Note. ** $p < .01$ level

Table 3: Regression of Cultural Values on Employee Engagement

Variable	B	SE B	β
Market culture	.124	.055	.124*
Performance culture	.283	.048	.321***
Customer culture	.195	.061	.194**

Team culture	.357	.056	.357***
R2	.597		
F	117.491***		

- p < .05; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

Table 4: Regression of Cultural Values on Employer Branding

Variable	B	SE B	β
Market culture	.106	.061	.094
Performance culture	.243	.053	.242***
Customer culture	.205	.067	.178**
Team culture	.381	.062	.338***
R2	.485		
F	73.215***		

Table 5: Mediated Regression Predicting Employer Branding

Antecedent	B	SE B	95% CI

Culture → Engagement	.547	.039	[.469, .624]
Engagement → Brand	.901	.050	[.804, .998]
Indirect effect of culture on brand	.493	.044	[.406, .580]

Table 6: Moderated Mediation - Conditional indirect effects of culture on employer brand at values of engagement

Engagement	Indirect Effect	SE	95% CI
-1 SD (-0.86)	.180	.039	[.111, .263]
Mean (0)	.493	.044	[.406, .580]
+1 SD (+0.86)	.806	.071	[.670, .949]

Table 7: Regression Models Summary

Model	R2	F	ΔR2	ΔF
1. Culture → Engagement	.597	117.491***		
2. Engagement → Branding	.641	251.018***	.044	46.430***
3. Culture + Engagement → Brand	.685	165.392***	.043	27.780***

4. Results

A. Descriptive findings regarding culture, engagement and branding

Initial examination of variable means highlights retailer cultural values centered around customer-focus (M = 4.16) and performance-focus (M = 3.85) as most prevalent among the sample. By comparison, market-oriented (M = 3.57) and team-oriented (M = 3.76) cultural emphases were slightly less pronounced though still above scale midpoints on average. For employee attitudes, engagement levels trended reasonably high (M = 3.78) while employer branding lagged as more moderate in perceptions (M = 3.44).

Further analysis of scale item scores sheds light on specific cultural strengths perceived. For example, over 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their organizations highly value meeting customer needs before employees and have norms focused on achieving aggressive sales targets. However, only 40% felt strong market-driven principles were instilled, suggesting retailer cultures may promote a performance/results focus more internally rather internally than related to external competitiveness. Regarding engagement, the sample reported moderate-to-high levels across cognitive, emotional and behavioral facets, although over 1 in 5 employees disagreed they really throw themselves into their jobs. Lastly, examination of employer branding items reveals employees recognize efforts to support work-life balance (65% agreement) but fewer see their retailers as truly innovative industry leaders (49% agreement).

B. Key statistical relationships between study variables

Hierarchical linear regression analyses assessed the ability of cultural dimensions to predict employee engagement and employer branding, followed by mediation testing. Control variables of age, gender, tenure and job role explained only 3% of variance in engagement. However, adding the set of cultural values increased explanatory power enormously to 60% ($R2 = .597$, $p<.001$). Team-oriented and performance-focused cultural emphasized showed the strongest positive relationships with employee engagement ($\beta = .357$ and $\beta = .321$ respectively, $p<.001$), although customer-focus and market-focus also associated positively. Nearly identical patterns emerged predicting employer brand perceptions ($R2 = .485$) such that clan culture and performance again took on primary importance ($\beta = .338$ and $\beta = .242$, $p<.001$), with all styles linkages positively.

Mediation analyses then tested if engagement transmits effects of culture onto branding outcomes. Results confirmed full mediation given culture predicting engagement first, followed by engagement subsequently impacting branding while reducing the direct cultural effects to non-significance (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The indirect mediation pathway from culture through engagement remained highly significant (B = .547, 95% CI [.469, .624]). Further probing this linkage revealed culture had over twice the impact on branding through engagement at higher (+1 SD) levels compared to lower (-1 SD) levels, demonstrating mediation variations. Thus culture indeed appears to operate on employer branding through the mechanism of employee engagement.

C. Additional analyses

Some scholars argue employer branding stems more from external factors like recruitment advertising than internal culture (Saini et al., 2013). Additional testing inserting recruitment spending and retention rates as controls did not change study findings, affirming the unique effects

of culture-engagement drivers. Also, given variations in branding focus for large versus small firms (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), multi-group analyses compared pathways between organizations with over 100 locations (45% of sample) and those with less. Results revealed a stronger culture → engagement → branding linkage within smaller retailers. While speculative, this suggests cultural shaping of engagement and talent branding may provide more competitive differentiation for organizations with inherently less visibility and name recognition.

5. Discussion

A. Summary and interpretation of main findings

This study examined the interconnected relationships between organizational culture, employee engagement, and employer branding within the vital retail sector. Results support the hypothesized notion that retailers embracing certain cultural values and orientations see cascading benefits regarding their talent engagement capacity and overall attractiveness as an "employer of choice" externally. Specifically, retail firms characterized by clan/team-based cultures prioritizing collaboration and participation as well as those displaying more adaptive, innovative principles realize the strongest engagement levels from employees. Subsequently, higher engagement transmission positive effects onto employer brand image perceptions.

On the cultural drivers, aligning with past retail research, dimensions focused on people and flexibility take on particular importance compared to more controls-based orientations (Cole et al., 2019; Naslund, 2013). Retail traditionally relies on high involvement from customer-facing employees to deliver brand experiences, suggesting cultures facilitating participative climates and engagement can enable key priorities (Bustamante, 2018). However, culture-performance linkages also emerged as retailers strongly focused on goal achievement, sales, and results do appear able to activate engagement concurrently. This integration of orientations counters certain assumptions that "soft" cultural focuses somehow diminish competitiveness. Instead, as desire for retail differentiation grows, blended emphases on teams and performance may become most advantageous.

Findings also confirm employee engagement does provide connective energy transferring culture's effects externally for branding. Retailers first need to "walk the walk" internally to support desired images in the talent market. Those unable to foster impactful cultures risk disengaged workforces, who then broadcast negative signals regarding the organizations as employers (Saini et al., 2013). Thus culture and engagement take on important explanatory roles amid growing retail employer competition. However, branding implications go beyond recruitment alone in also shaping current employee dedication, discretionary efforts, and ambassadorship behaviors that ultimately influence customer brand experiences (King & Grace, 2009).

B. Practical human resources implications

For retail executives, investment priorities and change management initiatives could well shift given the centrality of these intangible identity drivers relative to more visible marketing channels. While specific cultural developments must align with brand strategies and positioning, general best practices suggest starting through clarifying values first, followed by realigning policies, training, incentives and communications accordingly (Groysberg et al., 2018). Retail leaders

should gauge existing states through organizational culture audits and engagement diagnostics to reveal strengths, disconnects or subculture variations. Many change efforts falter by simply pushing new visions or programs across groups rather than addressing actual underlying cultural barriers first (Cole et al., 2019).

Ongoing tracking can monitor progress with regular pulse surveys and internal branding health checks. Specifically, assessing team and performance focuses while probing for issues like burnout, resources, or work-life conflicts may provide entry points to shape culture and recharge engagement. As metrics accumulate, retail HR leaders can make stronger business cases to invest in cultural transformation initiatives as value creators. Some initial steps like instituting transparent incentive structures have proven effective cultural realignment catalysts within retailing (Soundararajan & Brown, 2016). Above all, efforts require consistency, authenticity and patient leadership signaling over time.

C. Limitations and directions for future research

This study provides some of the first quantitative support for linkages between culture and branding mediated through engagement using retail field data. However, limitations should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional methodology cannot confirm causal or long-term effects over time. Retail researchers suggest tracing the dynamics and evolution of cultures and engagement with longitudinal data (Bustamante, 2018). Mixed methods designs incorporating interviews and content analysis could also enrich understanding of how culture specifically manifests in retention, branding, or customer experience impacts using triangulated data.

Additionally, common methods bias may influence relationships given the use of self-report measures from the same source. Some scholars further critique applying generalized cultural models rather than allowing retail-specific dimensions to emerge through qualitative investigation first (Naslund, 2013). Survey samples balancing more company representations could strengthen generalizability as well. Issues like social desirability and exposure also require consideration for sensitive topics around employer brands.

Broader opportunities remain to extend this research across retail segments, geographic regions, job roles and in comparison with other industries. Potential segmentation variables may include public/private ownership, unionization, product categories, channel formats like online integration, as well as national context variations. Identifying boundary conditions around optimal cultural or engagement profiles would further benefit retail practice. Scholars also propose analytical techniques like fsQCA to model complex interactions between cultural elements and outcomes (Naslund, 2013). Overall this study provides an early step examining key 21st century retail talent issues, but calls continue for more extensive investigations to guide this vital industry.

6. Conclusion

A. Importance of "culture fit" for engagement and branding

The concept of "culture fit" has become a popular talent management notion, however often lacking empirical backing regarding its actual impacts. This study helps quantify the vital alignment of organizational culture with critical areas like employee engagement and employer branding specifically for retailers. Results reveal retail firms able to cultivate cultural styles

emphasizing teamwork, participation, adaptability and performance realize substantial benefits in terms of workforce dedication and external brand image. In this sense, culture fit moves from cliché to competitive diferentiator.

These interconnected findings showcase the mounting importance of cultural cultivation as a talent strategy amplifier for the sector. Retailers display strong capacities to mold values-based identities and climates internally which then transport effects outward to the talent market. Executives shouldnizing culture fit open expanded pathways to empower engagement while also broadcasting appealing brand associations to future employees. Thus human resource goals around activating talent and attracting applicants can become more fully embedded elements of broader retail strategies. Those firms falling behind on culture fit now stand warned regarding the mounting disadvantages this brings as current and prospective team members vote with their feet towards more compelling options.

B. Recommendations for retailers

This research carries important implications regarding retail priorities and change commitments moving forward. Clearly culture should now receive greater strategic emphasis beyond typical HR confinement given its broad influence. Retail execs would benefit from embracing proactive culture development imperatives tailored their brand objectives. This entails starting initiatives to assess and reshape values, transparency, incentives, communications and related practices/policies to enable cultures supporting engagement and branding advantages.

Leaders play central roles through behaviors signaling priorities like trust, accountability, development or work-life balance. Reinforcing cultural pillars then provides foundations for which bold aspirations like distinctive employer brands and fanatical customer loyalty may actually materialize through enabled, inspired workforces. Purposeful culture transformations further support navigating industry disruptions. Of course this requires patience, investment and newly expanded metrics. However for forward-looking retailers, the ultimate returns from culture fit could pay dividends for decades ahead.

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