FUTURE SKILL REQUIREMENTS FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF SELECT ORGANIZED FASHION RETAIL OUTLETS:
A STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the skills and capabilities requirement of the employees in the organized fashion retail outlets. 560 questionnaires were distributed to the employees working in 28 various fashion retail outets viz. Multi brand and Exclusive brand outlets in and around Chennai. A total of 407 have responded and the response rate is 72.68%. The categories of employees had been ascertained based on the responses on 16 variables of primary skills and strategies. The reliability test has also been administrated to 16 variables and the Croanbach alpha value works out to 0.8744 which indicates that the variables taken up for the study holds good. Rotated component matrix of Factor analysis had been employed in grouping the categories of employees. Four components thus extracted were named as "Proactive", "Inquisitive" "Cordial" and "Habitual". Based on the categories of the employees of fashion retail outlets, the employees capabilities required today and future were identified. The reliability test has also been administrated to the group of eight variables each and the alpha value works out to 0.9056 and 0.9026 for each category which indicates the variables thus taken up for the study were good. Based on the mean and standard deviation values, the structured equation model was drawn for capability required for today and for the future and the same has been discussed in this paper.

KEYWORDS: Fashion retail outlet, Future skills requirement,Retail industry, Retail outlet employees, Textile and clothing industry.

INTRODUCTION

Technology has created more opportunities for work in different parts of the world influencing global labour migration. There has been increased racial, ethnic, cultural and gender diversity in the workplace and an increased emphasis on skills including communication, teamwork and networking. [1-4] The general skills identified as being important to employers included: Good communication and interpersonal skills ;A good level of numeracy and IT skills; Negotiation and persuading skills; Evidence of leadership and management skills; Drive and enthusiasm ;Good risk assessment skills; A well-developed commercial awareness ; A flair for creativity ;The ability to work well under pressure and deadlines (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions).[5]The most critical challenge for a business is the improvement of service and product quality. The perception of retail service quality varies

across different cities, the retailers can meet the customer expectations based on the factors drive them[6], Access, Communication, Competence, Courtesy, Credibility, Reliability, Responsibility, security, Tangibles and Understanding/ knowing the customer were 10 dimensions of service quality determinants. Later, they were simplified into five dimensions including Tangibles, Reliability, Responsiveness, Assurance and Empathy.[7]

In this study, the skills required for fashion retail has been grouped into four categories such as primary skill, organizational & environmental skill, skill development and future skills and the same isshown in fig 1. The employees for fashion retail outlets are categorized based on these skills and these employees views on future skills have been evaluated.

Fig 1. Fashion Retail Skills

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the study were

- To identify the basic skills and strategies required for the employees of fashion retail outlet
- To classify the employees based on the Fashion Retail skills and strategies and their demographic details.
- To identify the future skill expected on today's environment based on categorised user
- To identify the future skill required after three years based on categorised user
- To determine the structured equation for the required skill

HYPOTHESES

In order to identify the objectives the following hypotheses were formulated:

- There exist uniform opinion on primary skill required
- There exist significant difference on the skill expected in today's environment
- There is no significant difference on the skill requirement on future fashion retail outlet employees.

SAMPLE

560 questionnaires were distributed to the employees working in 28 various fashion retail outets viz. Multi brand and Exclusive brand outlets in and around Chennai. A total of 407 have responded and the response rate is 72.68%. The analysis had been carried out in *futureretail skills* required for today and tomorrow i.e next 3 years to manage in textile retail outlets. Before the detailed analysis, the demographic details of the respondents based on the gender, years of experience, nature of the retail outlet, where they employed and the product category in which the work was assigned were calculated.

Table1
Demographic Details of the Respondents

S.No	Description	Frequency	Percent
Nature of the Retail Outlet			
1	MBO	271	66.6
2	EBO	136	33.4
Gender			
1	Male	296	72.7
2	Female	111	27.3
Age			
1	21-30	275	67.6
2	31-40	103	25.3
3	41-50	24	5.9
4	50 and above	5	1.2
Marital Status			
1	Single	236	58.0
2	Married	171	42.0
Nativity			
1	Urban	177	43.5
2	Semi-urban	61	15.0
3	Rural	169	41.5
Years of Experience			
1	Less than 5	229	56.3
2	6 - 10	101	24.8
3	11 - 15	43	10.6
4	16 - 20	21	5.2
5	20 and above	13	3.2
Residence			
1	Owned	136	33.4
2	Rented	271	66.6
3	Total	407	100.0

It is seen from the table 1 that, 64.9% of the respondents belongs to male category and 56.3% are having the less than 5 years of experience. More than 66% of the respondents employed in multi brand outlets.

Reliability Test

To ensure that the research produces reliable findings and results, a reliable tool would need to be employed. Moreover, the exploratory nature of this study necessitated the need to conduct some form of test to check whether items used in the measures are tapping into the same construct (variables) or not. Such test was accomplished through the use of factor analysis. According to Coakes and Steed(2003)[8], factor analysis is a data reduction technique used to reduce a large number of variables to a smaller set of underlying factors that summarize the essential information contained in the variables. Two widely used methods in factor analysis are Principal Components and Principal Axis Factoring. However, this study adopted the former and applied it to all variables that employed multi-items measures.

Reliability is concerned with consistency of a variable. There are two identifiable aspects of this issue: external and internal reliability. Nowadays, the most common method of estimating internal reliability is Cronbachs alpha (α). The formula used is

$$\alpha = \frac{K}{K-1}\left(1 - \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{K}\sigma_{Y_i}^2}{\sigma_X^2}\right)$$

A commonly accepted rules for describing internal consistency using Cronbachs alpha (Cronbach, Lee and Shavelson 2004)[9] are α≥0.9 (Excellent), 0.9>α≥ 0.8 (Good), 0.8>α≥0.7 (Acceptable), 0.7>α≥0.6 (Questionable), 0.6>α≥0.5 (Poor) and 0.5>α (Unacceptable).

The concepts taken up for the study, variables and the Cronbach alpha value are shown in table 2.

Table 2
Reliability Test

S. No	Description	No. Of variables	Alpha value
1	Strategies and skills required	16	0.8744
2	Employees capability - today	08	0.9056
3	Employees capability – next 3 years	08	0.9026
	Total	32	

The reliability test using Cronbachs alpha (α) indicates that all the 32 variables under three categories thus taken up for the study were good and the value of the variables ranges between 0.8744 and 0.9056.

CATEGORIES OF EMPLOYEES

The catgoires of employees had been ascertained based on strategies and skills required for the respondents have been analyzed based on the variables such as: Objective oriented approach; Motivated colleagues; Inspired subordinates; Rigid and strictness; Intellectual ability; Participative; Informal; Humorous; Composure; Empathy; Energy; Confidence; Creative; Action focused; Flexible; Humility. The opinion of the respondents were obtained in a five point scale such as 'Strongly disagree'; 'Disagree'; 'No Opinion'; 'Agree'; 'Strongly agree'. The mean and standard deviation were calculated. The ranks were assigned based on mean and standard deviation. Rotated component matrix of Factor analysis had been employeed in grouping the categoires of employees.

As it can be seen from the annexure I, Eigen values were calculated for 16 variables. The four factors have Eigen values greater than 1. "1" was the criterion for retention of a factor, which indicates that only the four factors are to be extracted. It can be seen that the variances were evenly distributed in the rotated sum of the squared loading (23.576%, 38.769%, 53.428% and 61.206% respectively), which shows that the sixteen factors are interpretable. The first components thus extracted comprises of eight variables has been named as "Proactive". The second component thus extracted by the rotated component matrix has been named as "Inquisitive" comprises of threevariables. Three variables namely informal, empathy&humorous thus extracted has been named as "Cordial" and the last two variables namely rigid & strictness and composure named as "Habitual". . The variables, respondents' opinion, mean, standard deviation, rank and the four categories were shown in annexure I.

The no. of respondents based on the grouped categories of employees were shown in table 3.

Table 3
Nature of the Employees Category

S.No	Categories	No. of Respondents	Percentage
1	Proactive	72	17.7
2	Inquisitive	99	24.3
3	Cordial	111	27.3
4	Habitual	125	30.7
	Total	**407**	**100.0**

30.7% of the respondents belong to habitual in nature, 27.3% belongs to cordial and 24.3% were inquisitive in nature.

Based on the categories of the employees of fashion retail outlets, the employees capabilities required today and future were identified.

EMPLOYEES CAPABILITY FOR TODAY

The employees' capability for today have been analyzed based on the variables such as:- Managing Changes; Talent Management; Training and Development; Organizational Development; Leadership Development; Organizational Performance; Engaging Employee and Creativity and Innovation. The opinions of the respondents were obtained in a five point scale in the order of perceived importance with 1 as least important to 5 as most important. The mean and standard deviation were calculated and the ranks were assigned and the same is shown in table 4.

Table 4
Employees Capability To-Day

S. No.	Factors	Least important		Important to some extent		Moderately important		Important		Most important		Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Managing Changes	24	5.9%	41	10.1%	113	27.8%	137	33.7%	92	22.6%	3.57	1.121	8
2	Talent Management	3	.7%	45	11.1%	81	19.9%	146	35.9%	132	32.4%	3.88	1.01	6
3	Training and Development	10	2.5%	24	5.9%	101	24.8%	138	33.9%	134	32.9%	3.89	1.012	5
4	Organizational Development	13	3.2%	19	4.7%	88	21.6%	139	34.2%	148	36.4%	3.96	1.027	2
5	Leadership Development	7	1.7%	28	6.9%	82	20.1%	151	37.1%	139	34.2%	3.95	0.986	3
6	Organizational Performance	6	1.5%	27	6.6%	99	24.3%	143	35.1%	132	32.4%	3.9	0.979	4
7	Engaging Employee	7	1.7%	33	8.1%	81	19.9%	135	33.2%	151	37.1%	3.96	1.025	1
8	Creativity and Innovation	7	1.7%	39	9.6%	79	19.4%	162	39.8%	120	29.5%	3.86	1.005	7

Most of the respondents were on the opinion that the factors mentioned in table 6 are between moderately important and most important. Engaging employee is the prime factor with a mean value of 3.96 followed by organizational development (Mean - 3.96 and Std. Dev – 1.027). The least preference was given to managing changes (Mean 3.57, Std, Dev – 1.121) and the 7th preference was given to creativity and innovation (Mean 3.86, Std, Dev – 1.005). (Table 4).

The employees capability today of the respondents were analysed based on the four categories (table 5) and the ranking were assigned.

Table 5
Employees Capability To-Day Vs. Category of User

S. No.	Description	Proactive			Inquisitive			Cordial			Habitual		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Managing Changes	3.82	.924	8	3.82	1.034	8	3.62	1.079	8	3.18	1.227	8
2	Talent Management	4.01	.942	4	3.95	.962	7	4.01	.949	3	3.64	1.103	7
3	Training and Development	4.00	.872	5	4.11	.832	4	3.88	1.166	6	3.66	1.033	6
4	Organizational Development	3.93	.828	6	4.26	.777	1	4.03	1.091	2	3.67	1.169	4
5	Leadership Development	4.10	.842	1	4.19	.752	2	3.90	1.070	5	3.72	1.097	2
6	Organizational Performance	3.93	.845	7	4.14	.796	3	3.92	1.105	4	3.69	1.027	3
7	Engaging Employee	4.07	.893	2	4.04	.979	6	4.06	.856	1	3.74	1.226	1
8	Creativity and Innovation	4.01	.778	3	4.10	.898	5	3.76	1.089	7	3.66	1.077	5

The respondents were given first preference "engaging employee" who were cordial and habitual in nature whereas the factor "organizational development" was given first preference in inquisitive and "leadership development"in proactive nature. Based on the mean and standard deviation values, the structured equation model was drawn and the same is shown in fig 2.
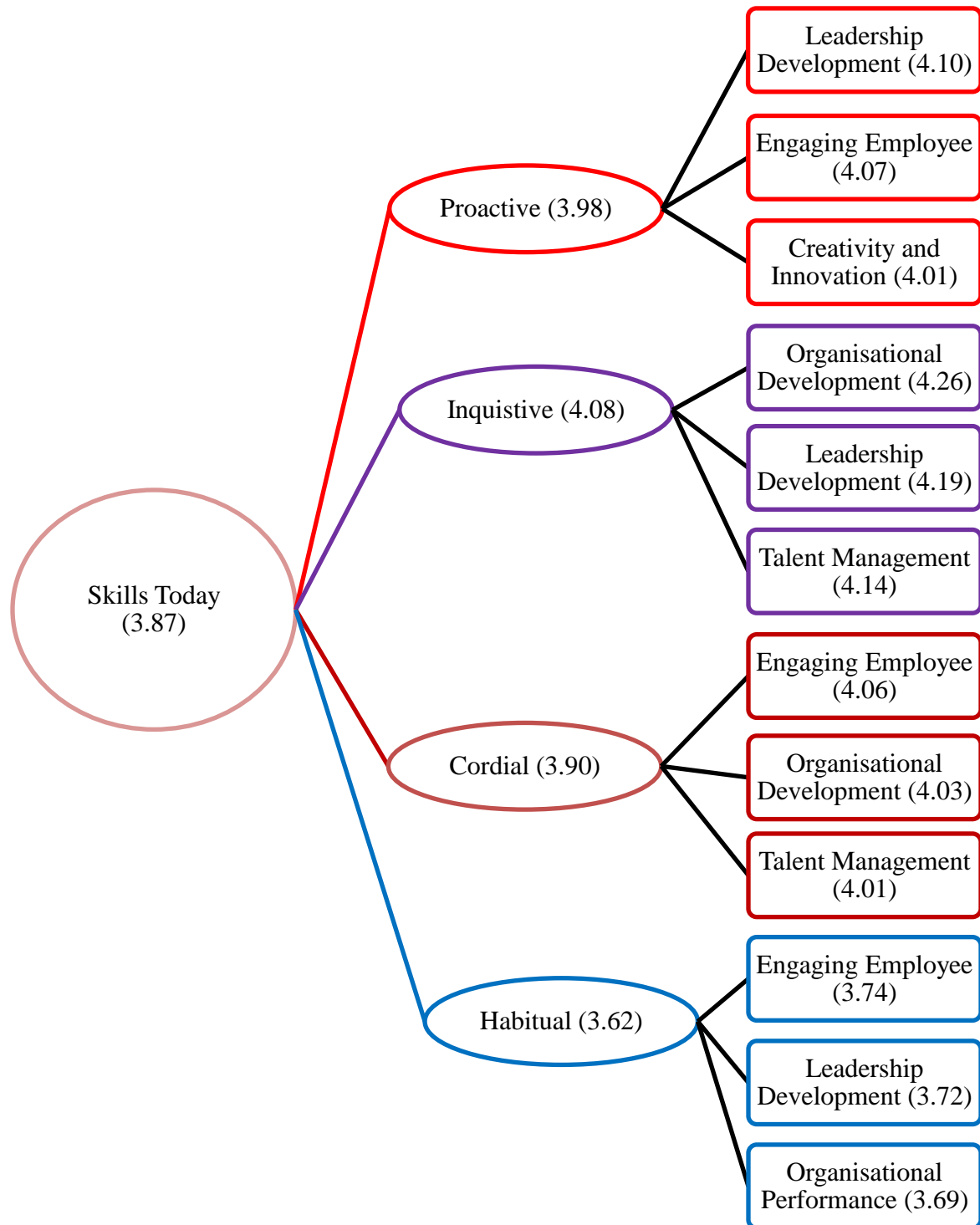
Fig 2 Structured equation model diagram - Today

Structured equation can be written as

$$FS_{today} = \alpha_1 * P_1 + \alpha_2 * I_1 + \alpha_3 * C_1 + \alpha_4 * H_1$$

Where $\quad FS_{today}$ = Future Skill

P_1 = Proactive

I_1 = Inquisitive

C_1 = Cordial

H_1 = Habitual

α_1 = P_1Constant = 3.98

α_2 = I_1Constant = 4.08

α_3 = C_1Constant = 3.90

α_4 = H_1Constant = 3.62

It is evident from fig 2 that all the four categories mean value are almost similar to the skills which are required today and the respondents were of the opinion that the top three preference's will help in grooming their skills in fashion retail industry.

EMPLOYEES CAPABILITY FOR TOMMORROW

Further, the opinion of the respondents were obtained based on the employees capability for tomorrow (table 6) i.eup to 3 years of future which were shown in table 8 and 9. The factors identified for today were analysedfor future skills too.

Table 6
Employees Capability Tomorrow

S. No.	Description	Least important		Important to some extent		Moderately important		Important		Most important		Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Managing Changes	22	5.4%	11	2.7%	25	6.1%	112	27.5%	237	58.2%	4.30	1.072	8
2	Talent Management	4	1.0%	24	5.9%	22	5.4%	121	29.7%	236	58.0%	4.38	0.904	7
3	Training and Development	5	1.2%	10	2.5%	26	6.4%	90	22.1%	276	67.8%	4.53	0.821	6
4	Organizational Development	7	1.7%	9	2.2%	26	6.4%	74	18.2%	291	71.5%	4.56	0.846	3
5	Leadership Development	7	1.7%	3	.7%	19	4.7%	72	17.7%	306	75.2%	4.64	0.759	1
6	Organizational Performance	5	1.2%	10	2.5%	21	5.2%	89	21.9%	282	69.3%	4.56	0.804	3
7	Engaging Employee	3	.7%	8	2.0%	28	6.9%	94	23.1%	274	67.3%	4.54	0.770	5
8	Creativity and Innovation	5	1.2%	11	2.7%	13	3.2%	98	24.1%	280	68.8%	4.57	0.788	2

The mean value of the 8 variables mentioned in table 8 falls between 4.30 and 4.64 and the standard deviation ranges between 0.7780 and 1.072. The overall opinion of the

respondents first preference is "leadership development" followed with "creativity and innovation" and "organizational performance". The least preferences are "managing changes" and "talent management". The opinion of the respondents in respect of the least preference "managing changes" is same for the skills required for today as well as tomorrow i.e in near future too.

Further the employees capability required for tomorrow were analysed with the four category of users. This analysis shows that the order of preferences were different and changes to the factor as well as the category of the users. (Table 7). Based on the mean and standard deviation values, the structured equation model was drawn and the same is shown in fig 3.

Table 7
Employees Capability Tomorrow Vs. Category of User

S.No.	Description	Proactive			Inquisitive			Cordial			Habitual		
		Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank	Mean	Std.	Rank
1	Managing Changes	4.56	0.729	8	4.44	0.928	7	4.62	0.775	2	3.77	1.345	8
2	Talent Management	4.67	0.65	4	4.29	0.906	8	4.59	0.731	5	4.09	1.063	7
3	Training and Development	4.72	0.61	2	4.61	0.74	3	4.59	0.889	7	4.3	0.882	6
4	Organizational Development	4.61	0.865	7	4.7	0.692	1	4.64	0.851	1	4.34	0.906	5
5	Leadership Development	4.75	0.687	1	4.62	0.779	2	4.61	0.876	4	4.62	0.669	1
6	Organizational Performance	4.67	0.751	5	4.48	0.8	6	4.59	0.898	8	4.51	0.747	2
7	Engaging Employee	4.65	0.735	6	4.49	0.862	5	4.61	0.703	3	4.46	0.767	3
8	Creativity and Innovation	4.68	0.624	3	4.58	0.701	4	4.59	0.878	6	4.46	0.848	4

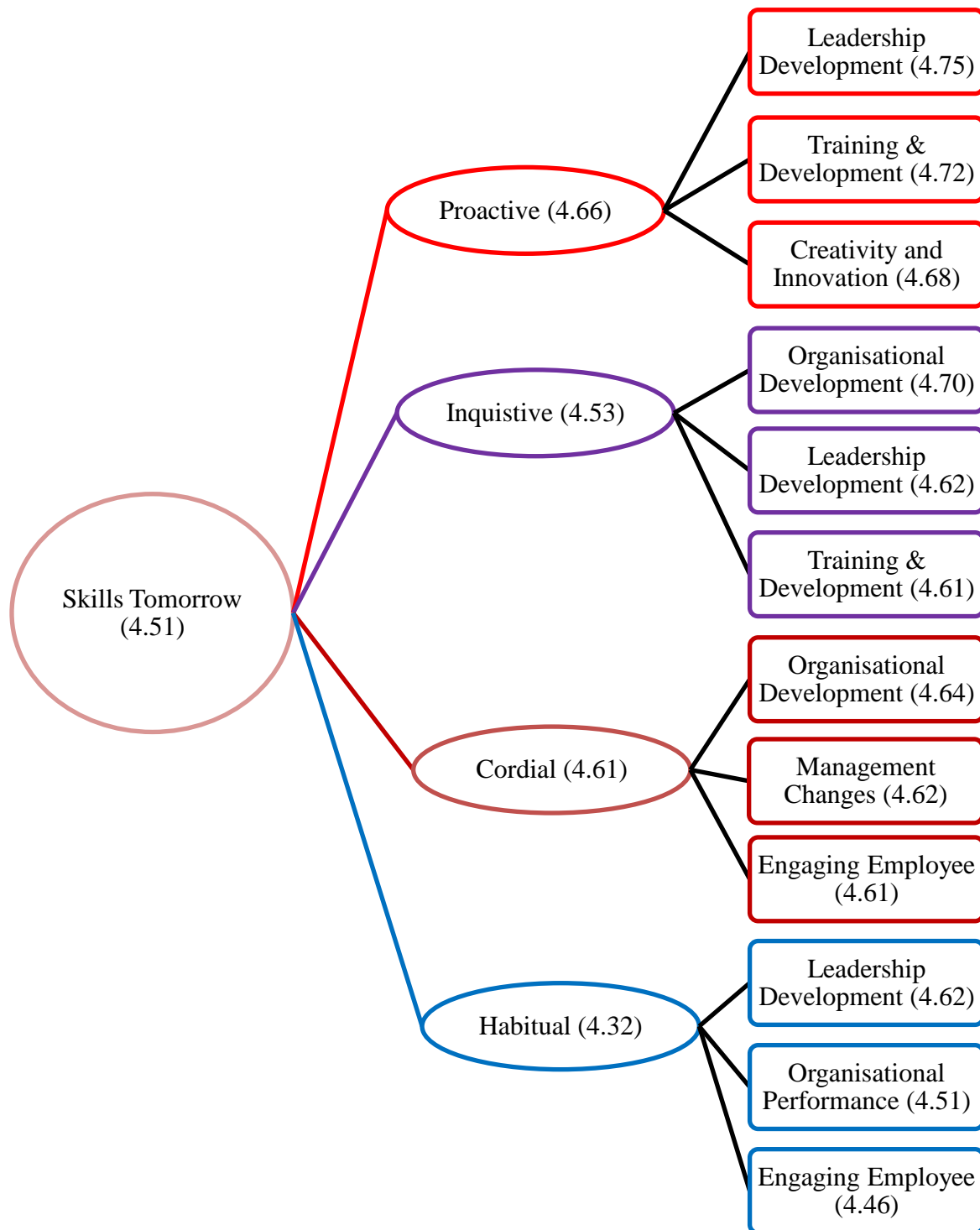**Fig 3 Structured equation model diagram**

Structured equation can be written as

$$FS_{tomorrow} = \beta_1 * P_2 + \beta_2 * I_2 + \beta_3 * C_2 + \beta_4 * H_2$$

Where $FS_{tomorrow}$ = Future Skill

P_2 = Proactive

I_2 = Inquisitive

C_2 = Cordial

H_2 = Habitual

$\beta_1 = P_2$Constant = 4.66

$\beta_2 = I_2$Constant = 4.53

$\beta_3 = C_2$Constant = 4.61

$\beta_4 = H_2$Constant = 4.32

Total Future Skill (FS) = $FS_{today} + FS_{tomorrow}$

$$= (\alpha_1 * P_1 + \alpha_2 * I_1 + \alpha_3 * C_1 + \alpha_4 * H_1) + (\beta_1 * P_2 + \beta_2 * I_2 + \beta_3 * C_2 + \beta_4 * H_2)$$

The structured equation model as shown in fig 3 shows the mean value of the category of the user as well as the top 3 preferences. As same as today's requirement, the mean value is almost similar to all the category of the user which confirms that the skills required in near future are essential for the future growth of the employees as well as the fashion retail industry. It is evident from the above fig 1 and 2 whether it is top preference or the least preference, one should inculcate the skills as their employee capability.

DISCUSSIONS

In this study, 16 basic primary skill thus required for the organized fashion retail outlets of textile and clothing has been identified which will enable the employees to enrich their skill. The responses paved way to categorize the employees based on the responses. The skills that are prevalent under each category have also been discussed. This will enable administrators to select the category of the employee to strengthen their organization. The eight skills that are essential for the future capability were also identified in the study.

The top preferences were "leadership development", "creativity and innovation" and "organizational performance" for the present day environment of these organized outlets. Similar preferences were also sufficient for the next years. A mathematical model has also been arrived using a structure equation model. The least preference was identified as "managing change".

CONCLUSION

Employers in organized fashion retail outlets of textile and clothing are looking for people for the managerial jobs with different set of talents such as Talent Management, Creativity and Innovation,   Organizational Development, Leadership Development, Organizational Performance, Engaging Employee, Managing Changes, Training and Development, besides academic excellence, communication skills, leadership skills, teamwork skills and work experience.Skill gap prevails not only for the entry jobs but for all levels of jobs. Proper mix of skills paves a way to enrich their skill in the present environment. The skills required for the future on these fashion retail outlets of textile and clothing refers to a person's capability of gaining initial employment, maintaining opportunity, and obtaining new

opportunity if required. This study helps working professional in defining the knowledge and skills required by individuals who seek, obtain and sustain in the global competitive environment.

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Annexure I – Categories of Employees based on Factor Analysis

S.No	Variable code	Description	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		No Opinion		Agree		Strongly Agree		Mean	Std.	Rank	Proactive	Inquisitive	Cordial	Habitual
1	1	Objective oriented approach	8	2.00%	8	2.00%	66	16.20%	129	31.70%	196	48.20%	4.22	0.923	7	0.553			
2	5	Intellectual ability	0	0.00%	15	3.70%	74	18.20%	164	40.30%	154	37.80%	4.12	0.833	10	0.430			
3	11	Energy	0	0.00%	11	2.70%	43	10.60%	169	41.50%	184	45.20%	4.29	0.763	4	0.739			
4	12	Confidence	8	2.00%	2	0.50%	30	7.40%	93	22.90%	274	67.30%	4.50	0.815	1	0.721			
5	13	Creative	6	1.50%	7	1.70%	44	10.80%	137	33.70%	213	52.30%	4.34	0.849	2	0.779			
6	14	Action focused	4	1.00%	10	2.50%	44	10.80%	138	33.90%	211	51.80%	4.33	0.84	3	0.594			
7	15	Flexible	9	2.20%	10	2.50%	40	9.80%	156	38.30%	192	47.20%	4.26	0.896	6	0.638			
	16	Humility	0	0.00%	9	2.20%	61	15.00%	153	37.60%	184	45.20%	4.26	0.791	5	0.566			
9	2	Motivated colleagues	2	0.50%	13	3.20%	62	15.20%	150	36.90%	180	44.20%	4.21	0.851	8		0.703		
10	3	Inspired subordinates	12	2.90%	10	2.50%	81	19.90%	124	30.50%	180	44.20%	4.11	0.998	11		0.827		
11	6	Participative	14	3.40%	6	1.50%	57	14.00%	140	34.40%	190	46.70%	4.19	0.97	9		0.615		
12	7	Informal	17	4.20%	19	4.70%	81	19.90%	146	35.90%	144	35.40%	3.94	1.056	14			0.810	
13	8	Humorous	8	2.00%	10	2.50%	72	17.70%	172	42.30%	145	35.60%	4.07	0.897	13			0.554	
14	10	Empathy	6	1.50%	7	1.70%	76	18.70%	174	42.80%	144	35.40%	4.09	0.858	12			0.638	
15	4	Rigid and strictness	40	9.80%	63	15.50%	90	22.10%	155	38.10%	59	14.50%	3.32	1.187	16				0.886
16	9	Composure	6	1.50%	31	7.60%	105	25.80%	161	39.60%	104	25.60%	3.8	0.956	15				0.465
														Eigen values		3.772	2.431	2.346	1.244
														Cumulative % of Variance		23.576	38.769	53.428	61.206

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

 **Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization

 a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations

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