

**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYER
BRANDING AND EMPLOYEE RETENTION OF STAFF LEVEL
EMPLOYEES: THE MEDIATION EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT IN THE APPAREL SECTOR COMPANIES AT
KATUNAYAKE EXPORT PROCESSING ZONE, SRI LANKA**

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Employee retention remains a critical task in Sri Lankan apparel sector, particularly in the Katunayake Export Processing Zone (EPZ). Using employee engagement as a mediator, this study uses a quantitative research design to investigate the link between employer branding and employee retention. 126 staff-level employees from three apparel companies in the Katunayake Export Processing Zone (EPZ), Sri Lanka were asked to complete a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale. Representativeness across subgroups was guaranteed by the stratified random sampling technique. Using SPSS, statistical analyses were conducted to assess the hypotheses, including correlation, regression and mediation analysis. To improve engagement and retention, those findings highlight the necessity of a strong brand and a positive work environment. The examine gives actionable insights for groups to cope with retention challenges, emphasizing the importance of strategic employer branding and fostering engagement. However, the studies are restrained via its attention at the Katunayake EPZ, go-sectional layout, and reliance on self-suggested information. Future studies must explore longitudinal research, extra variables along with management and repayment, and tailor interventions to organizational contexts. The findings function a realistic framework for enhancing employee retention in competitive industries.

Keywords: Apparel Sector, Employee Retention, Employer Branding, Employee Engagement, Katunayake EPZ, Sri Lanka

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