Research Article

Analyzing The Role of Boomerang Employees in The Beauty and Wellness Industry

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Abstract

Boomerang employees are individuals who leave an organization and later return to it. The phenomenon has become increasingly relevant as careers have grown more mobile and organizations increasingly recognize former employees as part of a wider talent pool. This article examines the role of boomerang employees in the beauty and wellness industry through an extended literature review and a practical human-resource framework. The literature indicates that returning employees can possess a distinctive combination of organization-specific knowledge and experience gained outside the organization, which may support faster coordination, customer continuity and knowledge transfer. At the same time, published studies do not establish that boomerang employees are universally superior to internal or external hires. Their outcomes depend on the reason for departure, previous performance, external learning, organizational fit, reintegration and expectations after re-entry. The article connects this literature with the Indian beauty and wellness sector, where a 2023 skill-gap study projected employment of approximately 15.8 million people in 2024, 20.3 million in 2027 and 26.3 million in 2030. A Boomerang Rehire Suitability Model (BRSM) comprising eight assessment dimensions is proposed. Because this article does not contain primary employee-level data, no artificial model-accuracy percentage is claimed; instead, a complete validation framework using accuracy, precision, recall, F1-score and longitudinal retention is presented. The study concludes that boomerang employment can be treated as a strategic talent-management option when it is supported by evidence-based assessment and structured reintegration.

Keywords: boomerang employees; rehiring; employee retention; beauty industry; wellness industry; talent management; job satisfaction; organizational commitment; reintegration; employee turnover.

1. Introduction

The beauty and wellness industry is a highly people-oriented service sector. Unlike industries in which the final product can be separated from the worker who creates it, beauty and wellness services are often experienced through direct interaction between the employee and the customer. A customer's experience can depend on technical competence, communication, trust, consistency and familiarity with individual preferences. For this reason, human-resource decisions have consequences that extend beyond recruitment and payroll.

Hair stylists, beauticians, aestheticians, spa therapists, wellness practitioners, makeup artists, receptionists and managers all contribute to the service environment. When experienced employees leave, organizations can lose operational knowledge, customer familiarity and informal relationships. Recruiting a new employee can fill the position, but it may not immediately replace the knowledge accumulated by the previous employee.

The idea of the boomerang employee introduces another possibility. Instead of treating departure as the permanent end of an employment relationship, organizations can maintain professional relationships with former employees and consider them for future positions. Swider et al. (2017) define boomerang employment in terms of temporally separated periods of employment with the same organization and show that learning and career transitions can influence performance after return.

The issue is especially relevant in India because the beauty and wellness sector is large and expected to continue expanding. The Beauty & Wellness Sector Skill Council and KPMG (2023) projected that employment opportunities could reach approximately 15.8 million in 2024, 20.3 million in 2027 and 26.3 million in 2030. The same study identified beauty and salon activities as the largest employment-generating sub-sector and highlighted a substantial need for vocational training.

Against this background, the present article asks how boomerang employees may contribute to beauty and wellness businesses, which conditions affect their usefulness, and how organizations can evaluate a returning employee systematically rather than relying on assumptions.

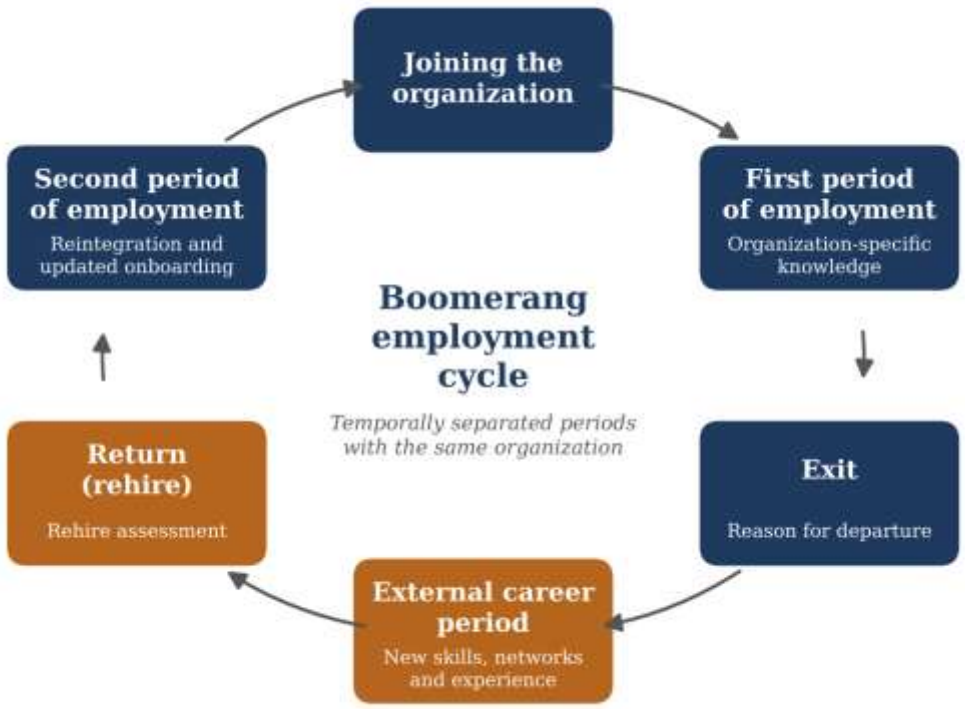


Figure 1. The employee lifecycle can become circular when a former employee returns after an external career period.

2. Objectives of the Study

1. To review the major literature on boomerang employment, employee turnover, organizational knowledge, job satisfaction, organizational commitment and reintegration.
2. To connect this literature with the specific employment characteristics of the beauty and wellness industry.
3. To identify the potential benefits and risks associated with rehiring former employees.
4. To propose a practical model that salon, spa and wellness managers can use as a structured assessment tool.
5. To establish a scientifically appropriate method for testing the model's predictive accuracy in future primary research.

3. Methodology

This article uses a literature-based conceptual approach. Published academic studies on boomerang employees were reviewed alongside sector reports concerning beauty and wellness employment. The literature was organized thematically around career mobility, turnover, knowledge, psychological contracts, satisfaction, performance, reintegration and retention. Sector evidence was then used to identify why these themes may be relevant to beauty and wellness organizations.

The proposed model is not presented as an already validated statistical instrument; it is a conceptual framework derived from the reviewed literature. This distinction is important because an academic article should not report a predictive accuracy percentage without testing the model against observed outcomes. The empirical design suggested later in this article provides a method for validating the framework.

4. Overview of the Beauty and Wellness Industry

The beauty and wellness industry includes a wide range of services, from traditional beauty and salon activities to aesthetic skin services, spas, rejuvenation, wellness, yoga and fitness, nutraceuticals and related product activities. The sector skill-gap study for India described the industry as highly fragmented, while also highlighting a trend toward formalization and consolidation. It projected that the beauty and salon sub-sector would continue to account for the largest share of employment opportunities (B&WSSC & KPMG, 2023).

The scale of the workforce makes employee management strategically important. The sector report projected approximately 26.3 million employment opportunities by 2030 and estimated that a substantial share of the workforce would require technical and vocational qualifications. It also projected a large incremental training requirement during 2022–2030.

This training-intensive environment makes the movement of skilled workers especially relevant. A former employee who returns may bring both previous knowledge of the organization and new skills acquired elsewhere. However, the organization must determine whether those skills are relevant to its current services and whether the employee's expectations are compatible with the present workplace.

5. Concept of Boomerang Employees

A boomerang employee is a worker who leaves an organization and is subsequently rehired by the same organization. The employment relationship therefore contains at least two separate periods of employment. The concept differs from an internal promotion because the employee has spent a period outside the organization, and it differs from an ordinary external hire because the employee has previous organizational experience.

Swider et al. (2017) place boomerang employment within the broader movement toward dynamic and boundaryless careers. Their study found that intraorganizational and extraorganizational knowledge construction, disruptions and transition events were related to return performance.

The concept is useful because it highlights the possibility that employee mobility can generate knowledge rather than only loss. An employee may leave, acquire new skills and later bring those skills back. At the same time, external employment may change the employee's expectations, professional identity and relationships, which means the return should be managed as a new career transition.

6. Literature Review

6.1 Boomerang Employment and Career Mobility

The career literature traditionally focused on relatively stable employment relationships, but modern careers often involve movement between organizations. Swider et al. (2017) developed a framework in which boomerang employees are not simply former employees returning to a previous job; they are employees whose career experiences between the two employment periods may shape their subsequent performance.

This perspective is important for beauty and wellness businesses. A stylist might leave to join a larger chain and learn new service techniques. A spa therapist might move to a premium property and gain experience with international customers. A salon manager might move into a corporate role and acquire stronger knowledge of sales, staffing or digital marketing. If such employees return, the organization receives a worker with a different knowledge profile from the one who originally left.

6.2 Turnover as a Process Rather Than a Single Event

Turnover is often treated as a binary event: the employee either stays or leaves. Boomerang research complicates this view. Shipp et al. (2014) examined boomerang employees in relation to the unfolding model of turnover and demonstrated that employees who eventually return can differ from those who leave permanently. This supports the idea that departure should be analyzed in terms of its causes, timing and circumstances rather than treated as a uniform event.

For beauty organizations, the reason for leaving is therefore a central variable. Departure for education, relocation, career experimentation or skill development may create a different future relationship from departure following unresolved workplace conflict. A rehire policy should document these differences instead of placing all former employees in one category.

6.3 Organizational Knowledge

Organizational knowledge is one of the strongest arguments for considering boomerang employees. Returning employees may understand service protocols, scheduling systems, management expectations, customer preferences and informal communication patterns. This knowledge is partly explicit and partly tacit.

Tacit knowledge can be especially important in service businesses. A senior stylist may know how a regular client prefers to communicate, while a spa therapist may understand how a customer responds to different service options. Such knowledge is difficult to transfer through manuals alone.

6.4 External Knowledge and Skill Development

The second side of the boomerang advantage is external learning. The employee may return with techniques, ideas and professional networks that were unavailable during the first period of employment. The value of this external learning depends on its relevance to the returning role.

External learning can also create tension. Employees may return expecting the former employer to adopt methods used elsewhere. Managers therefore need mechanisms through which new knowledge can be evaluated, adapted and shared without undermining established service standards.

6.5 Empirical Evidence on Performance

Evidence on boomerang performance is mixed and context-dependent. Keller and colleagues studied a large healthcare sample and reported an initial performance advantage for boomerangs under particular conditions, especially where internal coordination was important. This finding suggests that familiarity can have operational value, although healthcare is not identical to beauty and wellness.

Arnold et al. (2021) conducted a large longitudinal study involving 1,318 boomerang managers, 20,850 external hires and 8,546 internal promotions. The study provides a useful counterpoint: boomerangs did not show a universal long-term performance advantage, and the trajectories of the comparison groups differed.

The combined implication is that managers should not assume that a returning employee is automatically better or worse than a hire from another source. Instead, the organization should examine the specific employee, role and context.

6.6 Psychological Contract and Organizational Commitment

Snyder et al. (2021) examined boomerang employees through the lens of talent management and renegotiated psychological contracts. Their professional-services study found improvements in compensation, satisfaction and organizational commitment following re-entry relative to matched internal employees, while performance was broadly comparable.

This finding is important because re-entry can change the psychological contract. A returning employee may negotiate different pay, responsibilities, flexibility or development opportunities than during the first period of employment. If these expectations are not discussed clearly, the return may become unstable.

6.7 Organizational Attachment

Research on organizational reattachment suggests that returning employees may experience changes in interpersonal connections, perceived fit and financial satisfaction (Snyder & Stewart, 2015). The evidence indicates that reattachment is a distinct process rather than a simple restoration of the previous employment relationship. This is relevant to beauty businesses because teams, managers and customers may have changed while the employee was away.

6.8 Reintegration

Reintegration is a critical but sometimes overlooked stage. A returning employee can feel familiar with the organization while still being unfamiliar with its current reality. New colleagues may not know the employee, former colleagues may have moved into different positions, and software, policies and service menus may have changed.

Consequently, organizations should provide updated onboarding. The returning employee should receive information about current procedures, compensation, reporting relationships, safety standards, customer-service policies and performance expectations.

6.9 Employee Satisfaction in Beauty and Wellness

Beauty-industry research provides another layer to the boomerang question. Studies of beauty professionals have examined emotional labour, burnout, job satisfaction, work environment, interpersonal relationships and turnover intention (Jang, 2021; Kang & Rhee, 2012; Kwak & Song, 2014). These variables matter because an employee who returns to an unchanged source of dissatisfaction may leave again.

The literature therefore suggests that rehiring should not be separated from workplace improvement. If the original reason for departure was low satisfaction, poor scheduling or inadequate development opportunities, simply rehiring the employee without addressing the underlying condition may reproduce the same problem.

6.10 Skills and Workforce Development

The Indian sector report's emphasis on vocational training reinforces the importance of skill development. The report projected a large incremental training requirement between 2022 and 2030, with beauty and salon and aesthetic services among the areas requiring substantial numbers of professionally skilled personnel.

This creates an interesting role for boomerang employees. Employees who gain training outside the organization may become a source of knowledge transfer when they return. Organizations can use returning professionals not only to fill vacancies but also to contribute to internal training and mentoring.

6.11 Contradictions in the Literature

The literature does not present one universal conclusion. Some research identifies performance or attachment benefits, while other evidence indicates that boomerangs may perform similarly to comparison employees or may show different long-term turnover patterns. These differences may arise from industry, role, employee characteristics, the time between employment periods and the quality of reintegration.

For the beauty and wellness industry, this means that a useful research model must be multidimensional. Previous performance alone is not enough; external skills alone are not enough; and organizational familiarity alone is not enough.

7. Research Gap

The reviewed literature reveals a clear intersection that deserves further study. Boomerang research has largely examined professional services, healthcare, professional sport and management contexts, while beauty-sector research has often concentrated on turnover intention, burnout, emotional labour, satisfaction and work–life balance. There is less direct empirical research combining boomerang re-entry with the operational realities of salons, spas, aesthetic businesses and wellness centres.

A sector-specific study could examine whether customer continuity, technical skill transfer and organizational familiarity have stronger effects in beauty and wellness than in jobs with less direct customer interaction. It could also examine whether the benefits differ between front-line service employees and managers.

8. Proposed Boomerang Rehire Suitability Model (BRSM)

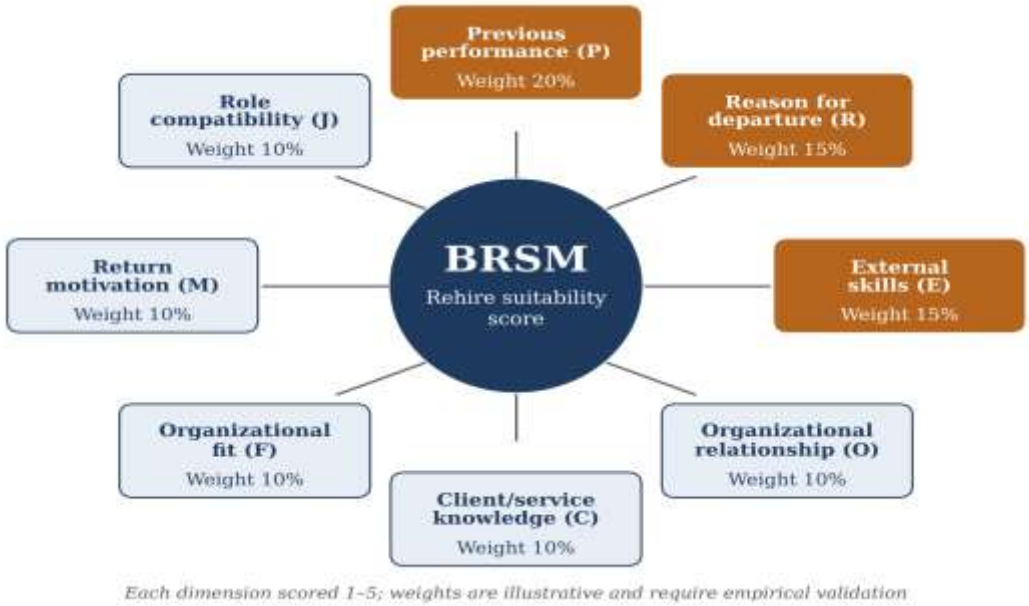


Figure 2. Proposed BRSM: a structured assessment framework rather than a validated predictive test.

The proposed model contains eight dimensions. Previous performance receives the highest proposed weight because historical evidence about service quality and reliability is directly relevant. The reason for departure is given substantial weight because unresolved problems can reappear. External skills are included because new knowledge is one of the principal theoretical advantages of boomerang employment.

Organizational relationship, client knowledge, organizational fit, return motivation and current role compatibility complete the framework. The purpose is not to reduce a hiring decision to a single number, but to ensure that managers consider the major variables identified in the literature.

Table 1. Dimensions and proposed weights of the BRSM

Dimension	Weight	Examples of evidence
Previous performance (P)	20%	Past appraisals, customer feedback, productivity, attendance
Reason for departure (R)	15%	Career growth, education, relocation, compensation, workplace issues
External skills (E)	15%	Training, certifications, new services, management experience
Organizational relationship (O)	10%	Relationships with former managers and peers, professionalism
Client/service knowledge (C)	10%	Customer familiarity and service continuity
Organizational fit (F)	10%	Current culture, policies and service standards
Return motivation (M)	10%	Clarity, stability and realism of expectations
Role compatibility (J)	10%	Match between current skills and requirements of the available position

The conceptual score is calculated as follows, with each component scored from 1 to 5:

$$\mathrm{BRSM} = 0.20\mathrm{P} + 0.15\mathrm{R} + 0.15E + 0.10O + 0.10C + 0.10F + 0.10M + 0.10J$$

The proposed weights are illustrative and must be tested empirically before being treated as validated weights.

9. Comparative Analysis

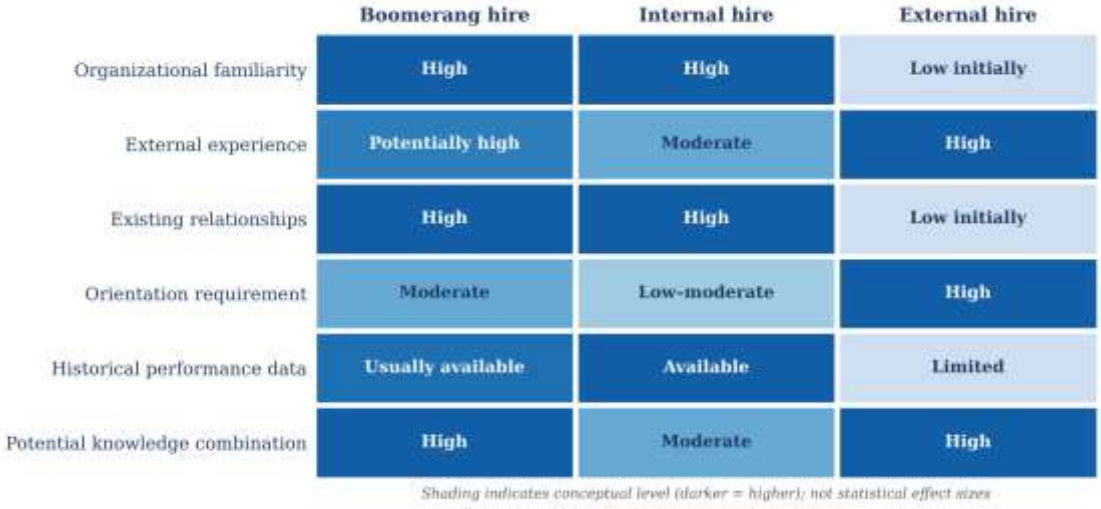


Figure 3. Conceptual comparison. The values illustrate mechanisms and are not statistical effect sizes.

Boomerang employees occupy a middle position between internal and external hiring. They have prior organizational familiarity similar to that of internal employees, but they may also bring external learning. Their orientation requirement may be lower than that of a completely new employee, although updated reintegration remains necessary.

Table 2. Conceptual comparison of hiring sources

Factor	Boomerang hire	Internal hire	External hire
Organizational familiarity	High	High	Low initially
External experience	Potentially high	Moderate	High
Existing relationships	High	High	Low initially
Orientation requirement	Moderate	Low–moderate	High
Historical performance data	Usually available	Available	Limited
Potential knowledge combination	High	Moderate	High

10. Practical Application in a Salon

Consider a senior hairstylist who worked in a salon for three years, left to join another organization, completed advanced colouring training and later applied to return. The salon already knows the employee's previous performance and customer relationships. The employee, however, has also gained external technical knowledge.

The manager can use the BRSM to structure the interview. Questions can address why the employee left, what was learned externally, which customers remain familiar, what has changed in the salon and what the employee expects from the new role. The final decision can then be based on evidence rather than on the emotional reaction of seeing a familiar former employee.

11. Practical Application in a Wellness Centre

A wellness centre may face a similar situation with a therapist who leaves for a larger spa and later returns. The returning employee may know existing customers and internal procedures while bringing exposure to different treatment systems. The organization should verify current qualifications, update the employee on current protocols and establish clear expectations about role, compensation and responsibilities.

The case illustrates why a return should be treated as both a recruitment decision and a reintegration process. Familiarity reduces some uncertainty but does not eliminate the need for current assessment.

12. Results of the Literature Review

The review yields five principal findings:

1. Boomerang employees can retain organization-specific knowledge that would otherwise be lost when they leave.
2. External experience can create a new knowledge resource.
3. The performance effect is conditional: published evidence does not justify a universal claim that boomerangs outperform all other hiring sources.
4. Reintegration is a separate organizational process.
5. The beauty and wellness context makes customer relationships and technical skills particularly relevant.

Taken together, the literature supports viewing boomerang employees as a distinct talent category. They should be neither automatically preferred nor automatically excluded. Their suitability should be evaluated using a combination of historical evidence and current organizational requirements.

13. Model Accuracy and Validation

The proposed BRSM has no claimed statistical accuracy because the present article does not use a primary dataset. This is a deliberate methodological limitation: a percentage accuracy figure reported without observed predictions and outcomes would be misleading.

A future study could collect data from salons, spas, aesthetic clinics and wellness centres. Researchers could record BRSM scores before rehiring and then observe outcomes after six, twelve and twenty-four months. Successful outcomes could be defined using a combination of retention, manager-rated performance, customer satisfaction and repeat-booking measures.

Classification accuracy could be calculated as follows, where TP, TN, FP and FN denote true positives, true negatives, false positives and false negatives:

$$\text{Accuracy} = \frac{\text{TP} + \text{TN}}{\text{TP} + \text{TN} + \text{FP} + \text{FN}} \times 100$$

Precision, recall and F1-score should also be reported. Cross-validation or a separate test sample should be used to reduce the risk of overfitting. If the model is used to predict continuous performance rather than a binary outcome, regression-based validation and error measures would be more appropriate.

Content validity can be assessed through HR experts, construct validity through factor analysis, and predictive validity through longitudinal employee outcomes. The proposed weights should also be compared against empirically estimated coefficients.

14. Human Resource Strategy for Boomerang Employees

A practical strategy begins at the time of exit. Organizations should conduct professional exit interviews and document the employee's reason for departure. Former employees who leave in good standing can remain part of an alumni talent pool. This does not require promising future employment; it simply maintains a professional relationship that may support future opportunities.

When a former employee applies again, the organization should conduct a structured rehire assessment. Previous performance records should be reviewed alongside current references and external experience. The organization should then negotiate the new role clearly, including compensation, responsibilities, reporting relationships, working hours and development opportunities.

After re-entry, the employee should receive an updated orientation. Reviews at 30, 60 and 90 days can help identify whether the employee is adapting effectively. Managers should also monitor team relationships, because a returning employee may occupy a different status from the one held during the first period of employment.

15. Benefits of Boomerang Employees

The most frequently discussed potential benefit is reduced uncertainty. The organization already has information about the employee's earlier performance and behaviour, which can complement the limited information available when recruiting a completely new candidate.

A second benefit is organizational familiarity: the returning employee may need less time to understand basic systems. A third potential benefit is customer continuity. Where employees have established relationships with customers, their return may help preserve service familiarity.

A fourth potential benefit is knowledge transfer. External experience can be shared with colleagues through mentoring and training. The value of this benefit depends on whether the organization creates opportunities for the returning employee to contribute knowledge rather than simply perform the old job.

16. Risks and Challenges

The first risk is repeated turnover. If the employee left because of an unresolved problem and that problem remains, the employee may leave again. The second risk is changed expectations. A returning employee may expect higher compensation or authority because of the experience gained outside the organization.

The third risk is organizational change. The workplace may look familiar but function differently; new managers, colleagues, technology and service standards can make the return more complex than expected. The fourth risk is relationship disruption, as former colleagues may not automatically accept the returning employee's previous status.

These risks reinforce the importance of structured reintegration. Rehiring should be understood as a new employment stage rather than a simple restoration of the previous contract.

17. Implications for Beauty and Wellness Managers

Managers can use the boomerang concept to broaden their talent strategy. Instead of focusing exclusively on current employees and new applicants, they can maintain a professional alumni network. This can be especially useful for specialized roles in which skilled workers are difficult to replace.

However, an alumni network should not become an informal preference system. Former employees should still be assessed against current job requirements. Documentation, transparent criteria and consistent interviews can reduce the risk of favouritism.

The approach is also compatible with employee development. A business can view former employees as potential future mentors, trainers or managers if they return with relevant expertise. In this way, external career movement can become part of a wider talent-development ecosystem.

18. Future Research Directions

Future studies should collect primary data from Indian beauty and wellness organizations. A multi-city study could compare independent salons, organized chains, spas, aesthetic clinics and wellness centres. Researchers could also compare front-line employees with managers, because the importance of organizational coordination may differ by role.

Longitudinal research would be particularly valuable. Instead of measuring satisfaction immediately after rehiring, researchers could track employees for twelve or twenty-four months. Outcomes could include performance, turnover, customer retention, employee commitment and promotion.

Future research should also examine whether the length of time away from the organization changes the value of a boomerang employee. A return after six months may differ substantially from a return after five years. Similarly, research could investigate whether employees who leave specifically for skill development create greater knowledge-transfer benefits than employees who leave for unrelated reasons.

19. Conclusion

Boomerang employees occupy a distinctive position in the modern employment relationship. They leave an organization but may return with a combination of previous organizational knowledge and new external experience. The literature indicates that this combination can create value in certain contexts, but it does not support the assumption that every returning employee will outperform an internal or external hire.

The beauty and wellness industry provides a particularly relevant setting because service quality depends on technical skills, customer relationships, teamwork and organizational routines. India's expanding beauty and wellness workforce further increases the importance of effective talent management, and sector projections indicate substantial employment and training requirements through 2030 (B&WSSC & KPMG, 2023).

The proposed Boomerang Rehire Suitability Model offers a structured way to assess former employees using previous performance, reason for departure, external skills, organizational relationships, client knowledge, fit, motivation and role compatibility. Its accuracy should be tested with real employee data rather than assumed. For managers, the practical lesson is to maintain professional relationships with former employees, evaluate rehire opportunities objectively and treat re-entry as a new transition requiring updated onboarding and reintegration.

Overall, boomerang employment can be incorporated into a broader talent-management strategy without replacing conventional recruitment. The most useful future contribution will come from empirical research that determines which conditions make returning employees effective in specific beauty and wellness roles.

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