

## **The Leadership Traits: Analysing the Role of Harpreet Singh Bedi in the Film Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year**

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### **Abstract**

This descriptive and analytical paper on leader traits of Harpreet Singh Bedi, protagonist of the film Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year aims to identify leader traits of Bedi and study its impact on organization, employees and customers. The paper comprises of extensive secondary literature on leaderships traits and critical analysis of the film in order to establish the link between positive leadership, organization and customer satisfaction. A highly motivated and positive leader influence and motivates his team, helps the business to grow, organization to flourish and customers to remain satisfied and loyal.

### **Keywords**

Leadership, Leadership Traits, Organizational Culture, Customer Satisfaction, Positive Leadership, Employee Satisfaction.

### **H1: Introduction**

Leadership qualities are important characteristics of an individual that impacts the functioning of an organization, team, and customer behaviour. Positive leaders are the catalyst in bringing the team together, achieves goals, and ensures customer satisfaction and retention. The purpose of this paper is to examine the role of a happy leader “*Happy Singh*,” protagonist of the film Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year, and his contribution towards the organization, team, and customers. The leadership qualities that are

highlighted through the character of the protagonist are clear indicators of employee's performance, growth, and organizational outcome. The goal of this descriptive study is to highlight the positive traits of good leaders and the cause and effect it has on the organization.

The right leadership is also a competitive advantage for organizations as it helps to stay ahead of its competitors. Individuals with specific characteristics, qualities, and strengths play a key role in the growth of an organization and have also proved helpful in dealing with diverse situations. They are effective as leaders with the right set of leadership qualities. Leadership has been defined by researchers and scholars as follows: Northouse (2007) says that leadership is a method of influencing others to help them achieve their objectives. Kanodia and Sacher, 2016 in their research show that leadership qualities are inborn as well as acquired. Keeping this view in mind, numerous training institutes and professional programs help leaders in developing the right skillset needed for individual growth as well as organizational efficiency.

Films help us see society and its happenings. Functioning of organizations, the role of leaders, team performance, customer management, competition, the corporate rivalry are also reflected through films. Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year is one such film that is apt for understanding the role of a leader, leadership qualities, organization culture, and customer service. Set around a multinational company AYS, the film revolves around the acumen of Harpreet Singh Bedi (role played by Ranbeer Kapoor) who despite being an honest average student shows his marketing skills by running a parallel company named Rocket Sales Corporation while being employed as a salesman with AYS. The Economic Times summarises the plot as follows:

Harpreet Singh Bedi (Ranbir Kapoor) has always been a mediocre student who wants to be a salesman after post-graduation. He starts as a trainee at a computer sales company, but makes a mistake early on, resulting in managers abusing him and colleagues mocking him. Harpreet is confined to his desk, unable to go out on the field, and knows that his views are out of step with today's so-called professionals. Soon after, he devises a plan to avenge his boss Puri (Manish Chaudhary) by forming his own underground sales and service agency while continuing to work for his previous employer (Malani, 2009. The Economic Times).

Few more employees of AYS join hands with Rocket Sales Corporation. Rocket Sales Corporation headed by Harpreet Singh Bedi works on simple yet concrete principles of business. RSC offers computers at lower price than its competitors, offers better and

twenty – four hours services, values customers and works with ethics and integrity. The way Bedi prepares his team and manages customers is noteworthy. Movie review in The Times of India aptly summarises the concept as:

Indeed, *Rocket Singh*, beautifully scripted by Jaideep Sahni, captures the new India that is forming in front of our eyes. One, in which the average person is gradually condemning both government and corporate corruption. Also, one in which the user (read aam aadmi) is truly king, and vfm (value for money) is the only distinguishing feature (unique selling proposition) (Times of India, 11 Dec 2009).

This paper explores to analyse his role and way of working to understand leadership traits and organization functioning.

### **Significance of the Study**

The trait theory has a wide purview that can be used to study the qualities of an individual about leadership. The study can be implemented in any organization whether big or small to identify the appropriate skill set among its employees. Top management can use the study for the identification of a suitable candidate for leadership roles. It will also help them assess their position as leaders and will provide valuable input for enhancement. A thorough analysis of one's strengths and weaknesses will help them learn, grow, and develop as individuals and strengthen their position in the organization.

### **Research Objectives**

Films reflect society. Characters, situations, events woven in a story are a replica of real life. It helps to understand and identify the real scenario around us. *Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year*, is one such film that highlights leadership traits in its protagonist and how he uses those qualities for his benefit and his organization. The objectives of this study are to identify leadership traits in the protagonist Harpreet Singh Bedi; second, to study the impact of positive leadership qualities on the growth of organization and team; and third, to study the impact of right leadership characteristics on customer management.

### **Research Methodology**

This descriptive and analytical study is conceptual in nature, which provides an interpretative approach to human psychology and their behaviour. The study is a pure research as it augments the existing stock of knowledge about leadership trait by showing its application in Bollywood film. This qualitative work uses film as text to study its

character, situation and events to gain first hand information about organization and leaders. Work also borrows information from secondary sources available on internet, books, magazines, and journals.

## **H2: Leadership Traits**

The trait or distinctive qualities of an individual had been studied for a long. It dates to the sixth century BC when the works of Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu and Confucius addressed the importance of leadership (Hieder, 1985; Bass, 1990). Bass (1990) also identified detailed mentioning of leadership qualities in the works of nearly Egyptian, Babylonian, Asian, and Icelandic sagas. First empirical research on individual characteristics was carried out in 1904 by Terman to differentiate a leader from a non-leader (Holsinger). Hailed as one of the oldest theories of leadership, it created the ground for various leadership researches. As the name suggests, it focuses primarily on characteristics of an individual that helps to differentiate a leader from followers or subordinates. The theory assumes that leaders are born with these qualities that help them prevail over any situation.

Trait, the term, has been defined in different ways by researchers. According to Daft (2015), traits are the defining personal characteristics of a leader, which include intellect, honesty, self-confidence, and appearance. The term is described by Antonakis et al. (2004) as relatively stable and coherent integrations of personal characteristics that promote a consistent pattern of leadership success across a variety of group or organisational circumstances. Kanodia and Sacher (2016) explained the meaning of trait in the following words.

Traits are the persistent and habitual patterns of thoughts, feelings, behaviour, emotions, or actions that distinguish one person from another in situations and over time. Traits are distinguishing qualities or a unique collection of characteristics, especially of one's own unique nature. Individualistic characteristic behaviour can change dramatically through adaptive processes, but traits are not set. They serve as foundation tendencies that remain constant over the lifespan. Every extreme location on the behavioural dimensions correlates to a trait, which is an inner feature (Kanodia and Sacher, 2016).

Prior to 1950, the study of individual qualities was known as the great man theory. Later, it came to be called the Trait theory. Trait theory is an approach to studying a human personality that defines and tests the degree to which certain personality traits, such as anxiousness, shyness, pessimist thinking, optimist thought, and openness to new ideas, are

recurrent patterns of thoughts and actions in every human (Kanodia and Sacher, 2016). Trait researchers based their study on different aspects that included behaviour, skills, temperament, and intellect. The most common characteristics that researchers based their study on were - self-confidence, intelligence, ambition, perseverance, assertiveness, emotional stability, creativity, and motivation.

According to researchers' and as found in the works of Fleenor and Holsinger, leaders exhibited qualities such as "*height, intelligence, extraversion, adjustment, dominance, and self-confidence*" (Fleenor, 2006), "*ambition, conscientiousness, integrity, persistence, and honesty*" (Holsinger). Antonakis et. al (2004) in their work cited certain distinguishing characteristics as "*congeniality, verbal fluency, intelligence, goodness, low emotionality, liveliness, and daring.*" Stogdill in his study conducted between 1904 and 1948 identified relevant leadership traits as "*intelligence, self-confidence, alertness to others' needs, understanding of tasks, hold positions of dominance and control, sociability, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, adaptability, and verbal faculty, capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status*" (Stogdill, 1974). Bass (1990) placed Stogdill's 32 attributes into six categories: physical characteristics, social background, intelligence and ability, personality, task-related characteristics, and social characteristics. Mann (1959) after studying 1400 individuals concluded leadership qualities to be "*intelligence, dominance, masculinity, adjustment, extraversion, and conservatism.*" Terman (1904) identified positive traits as "*verbal fluency, intelligence, low emotionality, daring, congeniality, goodness, and liveliness.*" Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991) found other set of differentiating characteristics that distinguishes a leader from followers are "*drive, motivation, integrity, confidence, cognitive ability, and task knowledge.*" Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) identified social intelligence as the distinguishing factor. Social intelligence included social awareness, social acumen, and self-monitoring. Jung and Sosik (2006) found that charismatic leaders consistently possess traits of "*self-monitoring, engagement in impression management, motivation to attain social power, and motivation to attain self-actualization.*" John W. Gardner (1989) conducted an exhaustive study of several leaders and zeroed down on the following characteristics of a leader as "*Physical vitality and stamina, Intelligence and action-oriented judgment, Eagerness to accept responsibility, Task competence, Understanding of followers and their needs, Skill in dealing with people, Need for achievement, Capacity to motivate people, Courage and resolution, Trustworthiness, Decisiveness, Self-confidence, Assertiveness, Adaptability/flexibility*" (Fleenor, 2006). Northouse (2013) reviewed leadership list accumulated over a period of 60 years and finally categorised them as "*intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability.*"

**Table 1 List of Leader Attributes identified by researchers**

Researchers	List of Leader Attributes
Antonakis et. al (2004)	<i>“congeniality, verbal fluency, intelligence, goodness, low emotionality, liveliness, and daring”</i>
Jung and Sosik (2006)	<i>“self-monitoring, engagement in impression management, motivation to attain social power, and motivation to attain self-actualization”</i>
Stogdill (1974)	<i>“intelligence, self-confidence, alertness to others’ needs, understanding of tasks, hold positions of dominance and control, sociability, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, adaptability, and verbal faculty, capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, and status”</i>
Mann (1959)	<i>“intelligence, dominance, masculinity, adjustment, extraversion, and conservatism”</i>
Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004)	<i>“social intelligence”</i>
Northouse (2013)	<i>“intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability”</i>
Terman (1904)	<i>“verbal fluency, intelligence, low emotionality, daring, congeniality, goodness, and liveliness”</i>
Bass (1990)	<i>“physical characteristics, social background, intelligence and ability, personality, task-related characteristics, and social characteristics”</i>

### H3: Analysing the Role of Harpreet Singh Bedi based on Research Objectives

#### Leadership Traits in the protagonist Harpreet Singh Bedi

Harpreet Singh Bedi exhibits a passion for sales and customer service. His interpersonal skills helped him put forth his point in front of customers. He is a team player, excellent negotiator, empathetic with a “*never say die*” attitude. Effective communication is critical for any leader. Leah (2005) explains the importance of effective communication for a leader -

Empathy, or the ability to consider and anticipate how others will respond in a given situation, is the foundation for successful communication. Internal (management to employee) and external (employee to customer) interactions require this empathetic capacity. Employee satisfaction suffers as a result of ineffective communication, as does the efficiency of the service rendered and, as a result, customer satisfaction. An increase in role conflict, a decrease in role clarification, an increase in job tension, and a decrease in overall job satisfaction may all be attributed to a lack of effective communication (de Ruyter et al, 2001; Rogers et al, 1994).

Thus Bedi’s skillful talking helps his business to grow manifold. His intelligence lets him study his competitors – their offerings to customers, strengths, and weaknesses. Knowledge so acquired helps in strategizing and policy formulation to gain a competitive advantage. Anchan (2020) writes, in the movie, Harpreet recognised that his boss's company is often dishonest and unconcerned with customer satisfaction, and this is where he made a difference. A risk-taking attitude is another factor that makes Harpreet Singh

Bedi stand out from the crowd and emerge as a leader. In the film, he talks about risk-taking by bringing in the example of spiderman and says, “*Risk toh Spiderman ko bhi lena padhta hai, mai toh phir bhi salesman hoon*”, which translates to: “*Even Spiderman had to take a risk, and I’m only a salesman*”.

Provided below is list of leadership attributes found in the protagonist Harpreet Singh Bedi of the film Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year.

**Table 2 List of Examples of Leader Attributes of Harpreet Singh Bedi corresponding to Leader Attributes**

Researchers	List of Common Leader Attributes	List of examples of Leader Attributes in Harpreet Singh Bedi
Antonakis et. al (2004); Terman (1904)	congeniality	Bedi is warm and friendly, approaches his team and customers with love and respect.
Antonakis et. al (2004); Stogdill (1974); Terman (1904); John W. Gardner (1989)	verbal fluency	Bedi’s ability to talk wins the heart of his customers and team. He is a glib negotiator and influencer.
Antonakis et. al (2004); Stogdill (1974); Mann (1959); Northouse (2013); Terman (1904); Bass (1990); John W. Gardner (1989)	intelligence	Bedi is sharp to understand the need of business and jumps in with a solution. He does competitive study to strategize and formulate his plans and policies.
Antonakis et. al (2004); John W. Gardner (1989); Terman (1904)	Daring, courage	Bedi has risk taking attitude and ventures to start Rocket Sales Corporation under the nose of AYS.
Stogdill (1974); Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	initiative, drive	Bedi goes out of the way to offer computers to a start up at a reduced price, which becomes the stepping stone of Rocket Sales Corporation.
Stogdill (1974); Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991); John W. Gardner (1989); Northouse (2013)	self-confidence	Bedi is confident of his abilities and qualities needed to be successful in running a parallel business.
Stogdill (1974); John W. Gardner (1989)	alertness to others’ needs	Bedi gauged the needs of his customers and team. Thus offers better customer service to customers and partnership to his team.
Stogdill (1974)	persistence	Bedi remains dedicated and devoted to the cause of customer service.
Stogdill (1974)	responsibility	Bedi took the responsibility of ensuring happy and delighted customers by offering them 24*7 customer helpline.
Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	motivation	Bedi was motivated to be a salesman and follow his righteous path in business dealings.
Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991); Northouse (2013)	integrity	Bedi’s strongest tools were his honesty, integrity that helped his business to escalate.
Kirkpatrick and Locke (1991)	cognitive ability	Bedi’s sharp mind and intellect helped him understand his customers and team.
John W. Gardner (1989)	Physical vitality and stamina	Bedi works actively to achieve his dreams.
Northouse (2013); John W. Gardner (1989)	determination	Bedi was determined to follow ethical business ways for business dealings.
John W. Gardner (1989)	Trustworthiness	Bedi successfully cultivated trust in his customers and team so that they remained loyal to him.
John W. Gardner (1989)	Decisiveness	Bedi took firm decisions at the right time, which helped him succeed as leader and business man.

### **Impact of Positive Leadership Qualities on Growth of Organization and Team**

The film is replete with examples of positive organizational culture that values and respects its employees. Rocket Sales Corporation is founded on the principles of integrity, respect, and honesty. It follows business ethics while dealing with its team. Khan (2010) showed that authentic leaders have positive effects on the employee's attitudes and behaviours that increase organizational performance. Harpreet Singh Bedi respects and values his employees. He identifies his team based on their efficiency and potential. He does not hesitate to recruit his boss despite his unethical ways because of his experience as a salesman. Malhotra (2019) writes –

In the movie, an office boy becomes a “partner” in Ranbir Kapoor a.k.a Happy's Computer Business Company. The turning point was when Happy calls him by his actual name, tells him that you are amazing at assembling computers and we will give you x% share. Happy was able to identify his true value and respect him for that. Learning – you don't respect your employees, they will never give a 100% to your cause.

Harpreet Singh Bedi had the vision of “*Delighting Customers*” and shared this vision with his team. Each member of his team worked diligently towards achieving this goal. Malhotra (2019) says, “*Irrespective of the positions, Happy made sure that his entire team is dedicated to the common vision of “Delighting customers”* - be it the customer service lead, computer assembly guy, the sales guy. Workers were inspired to work for that goal because they all spoke the same language; Learning – Always include employees in your common vision and make them understand how their work will help the company achieve that vision. Business partners, in this case, the computer suppliers or vendors are also given due importance. Rocket Sales Corporation recognizes its contribution to its growth and ensures to keep them happy and satisfied. Customer service is enhanced by happy, committed, and efficient employees (Heskett, et al, 1994). Employees that are satisfied work in an atmosphere that provides them with support programs and policies that help them communicate with customers. These satisfied and loyal workers generate value, which in turn generates loyal and satisfied customers (Sergeant & Frenkel, 2000). In all of his dealings, Harpreet Singh Bedi maintains a high level of confidence and goodwill.

Employee engagement is another card played by Harpreet Singh Bedi. He does not offer money to keep his team going but uses psychological elements of equality and humane approach. So, employee motivation leads to enhanced employee performance and employee satisfaction. Employees who are frustrated and disappointed find it difficult to

provide outstanding service (Rogers, et al, 1994). Malhotra (2019) pens down the aspect of employee engagement in the following words.

Happy's first step is to treat everyone fairly, to respect their point of view, and to never let the team's camaraderie deteriorate. His down to earth and humane approach makes the employees believe that their leader will be with them even in the toughest of times. They are engaged to work and deliver day after day and were not once dis-engaged even if they could not get the returns. Learning – Employees are engaged when they are empowered, empathized with and encouraged to take risks and make mistakes. Celebrate their success and support their failures. R&R is not about tangibles. It is about patting on the back and saying “Great job done” (Malhotra, 2019).

Rocket Sales Corporation's staff is enthusiastic about the company's principles, products, and services. Every member of Harpreet's hidden enterprise has a special talent that adds to the enterprise's efforts, resulting in a great work synergy (Anchan, 2020, Filmyloop.com). Such a dynamic team could be created because of the leader's vision and trust in his employees. The level of employee satisfaction has a significant impact on the company's earnings, which are derived from customer satisfaction and retention. Internal customer satisfaction is critical to achieving external customer satisfaction (Kondo, 2001).

### **Impact of Right Leadership Characteristics on Customer Management**

Customer is the king and Harpreet Singh Bedi took the statement literally. He is passionate about his customers contentment. Anchan (2020) reports, Even if it means going the extra mile, you and your team should be excited about seeing the smile on your customer's face. You can leave no stone unturned in order to fulfil all of your clients' needs. Far more than an appealing product or service offering is needed or demanded for a successful company. Harpreet was intent on following the route he had chosen.

He never focused on numbers but on people. A dialogue in the film forms the foundation of customer service, “*Sir, mujhe toh kabhi number dikahi hi nahi diye. Dikhe toh sirf log. Kaun kya kar sakta hai, kise kya karne mein mazza aata hai. Log khush the aur number apne aap hote gaye*” (Literal translation to English – “Sir, I never focused on numbers, I focused on PEOPLE. Who likes doing what, what are they good at and what makes them happy. I just ensured that happens and kept them engaged. The sales numbers happened automatically”. Further, Harpreet Singh Bedi in the course of the film offers “respect, love, and value” to his customers, which in turn helps him get positive word of mouth. Positive review of customers further establishes him as customer friendly and results in

steady growth of business. Customers who enjoy better service are less likely to complain and are less likely to cause problems for employees.

## **Conclusion**

The film *Rocket Singh: Salesman of the Year* is about a young graduate out of college, filled with high morals of integrity and honesty lands up with computer sales job that demands him to be unethical in his dealings with customers. Determined and persistent to make a career in sales, he makes use of the business gap that exists between his employer and the customers. Manoeuvring his leadership skills, the protagonist decides to run a parallel organization that thrives on high ideals of business-like integrity, honesty, trust, value for money, dedicated and satisfied team and excellent customer service. He runs his business with a small but highly engaged team that works with complete dedication to win their customers by offering a 24\*7 customer service helpline. The film shows that positive leaderships characteristics are instrumental in maintain a healthy organization, dedicated team and loyal customers.

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