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The Labor Market of The Retail Business in Northwest China
---A Case Analysis of the Xi’an Metropolitan Area

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I. Introduction

This research covers a variety of rarely explored issues related to the labor market of retail sector in P.R. China based on two large scaled surveys. These issues include labor market participation and various employments, labor demand and supply. And also issues related to jobs, such as job matching mechanism, job turnover, and job training. This study provides a fairly complete picture of the Chinese labor market and attempts to find a solution for a sustainable development approach for the retail sector and the improvement of well-being for its employees in Chinese context.

II. Retail Business in Shaanxi Province

- By the end of 2008, the total wholesale and retail business entity units in Shaanxi province raised to 27.688, which increased 9.281 units compared to the end of 2004, with a growth rate of 56.4%.
- The number of employees went up to 42.096 compared with 64.472 people in 2004, with an increase rate of 79.7%.
- By the end of 2008, the sales of main business in wholesale and retail sector peaked 633.598 billion Yuan, which exceeded 192.907 billion Yuan than the year 2004.

III. Case Analysis of Company G & Company D

- 57% of the workforce is female and 43% of them is male workers, and nearly 34% of young female employees is single.
- The retail workforce has one of the youngest age profiles, with almost 56% of workers aged from 22 to 29 and more than 19% aged from 30 to 39.
- The majority of workers in retail trade (54%) do not hold bachelor degree qualifications, reflecting the industry’s role as an entry point to the labor market for school leavers, students and part-time workers.

Conclusion

- A large majority of workers took induction training, occupations with lower skill levels such as sales workers have the greatest level of up skilling, with the proportions of workers with no high school education attainment expected to decrease under open doors.
- Based on the surveys, salespersons’ working time is longer than the new labor law (amended in 2008) regulated. In addition, they do not have extra pay for over-working according to the interview.
- 50% of workers found the working condition is acceptable, and another 30% found that they are satisfied with the current working condition, which reflects that the presence of retail sector looms large in absorbing young labor force than manufacturing industry.

Proposals for the Development of Retail Sector

- Stimulating rural consumption by increasing farmers’ income.
- Stabilizing the real estate market to encourage daily item consuming.
- Improving medical care, to activate the money flow and slow down saving.
- Reforming education system and lessen the burden for tuition expenses.