TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE BRANDING: CASE STUDY OF ARAATRIKA- A PUNE BASED STATIONARY PRODUCTS MANUFACTURING FIRM

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Abstract:
In this Article we present the sustainable Branding approach of a start up in Pune, Araatrika, who are engaged in the exploration of Eco-friendly alternatives for our everyday products. With the vision of Reuse, Refuse, Recycle and Reduce, Araatrika has introduced Eco-stationery with their signature Products -Happy Pencils, Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils and Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens. The latter part of the article talks about the cost, benefit (Environmental and Social) analysis of the Eco-Stationery with the classical versions of pencils and Pens, produced and circulated by potential competitors and existing players in the stationery Products Market. With the growth of output and export potential of Araatrika for Eco-Stationery since its inception, this article backs the argument that Sustainable Branding is the New Normal for 21st century.

Keywords:

Introduction:
The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in its Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) otherwise known as Global Goals, called for a universal action plan to protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. The 17 goals includes areas like climate change, innovation, sustainable consumption etcetera. These Goals are interconnected and the key to success on one will involve tackling issues more commonly associated with the other.

In our analysis of Araatrika the 12th SDG, is relevant which spells – Responsible Consumption and Production, meaning thereby it urgently requires us to reduce our ecological footprint by changing the way we produce and consume goods and resources.

In Araatrika, the production of Happy Pencils involves the use of Recycled Newspaper thereby explicitly eliminating the use of wood, secondly the Happy seed Pencils or the Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils has seeds encapsulated at the end, when the pencil is too short to use, assorted vegetables can be grown, similarly the Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens uses 70 percent less plastic as compared to the traditional Pens, making it the most eco-friendly Pen available in the market.

The Eco-Stationery is explicitly contributing towards achieving the goal of responsible consumption and production as envisaged by UNDP in its 12th SDG.
So as to survive in any market your products and services should have some added value to it. The following segment throws light on Sustainability Branding used by Araatrika in the production and distribution of its Eco-Stationery and how Sustainable Branding will be the New Normal for 21st century.

Objectives:
The paper aims to analyse the following objectives:
1. Cost and Social benefit associated with stationary products.
2. Cost and Environmental benefit associated with stationary products.

Hypothesis:
The sustainable branding approach incorporating cost involved and benefit associated with the products being sold will be the new normal for 21st century.

Araatrika and Sustainable Branding:
Economic Development can’t be separated from Social and Environmental aspects. While society considers sustainable development as a necessity, industry considers it as a compromise. Following increasing pressure and a sense of responsibility towards Environment and Society at large, industries have started moving towards adapting a sustainable development approach in general and sustainable branding approach in particular.

Sustainability Branding is the process of creating and maintaining an identity of a specific product, service, or business that reflects special added value in terms of Environmental and Social benefits (2).

Corporate Social Responsibility or “CSR” is more than just a way for brands to stand out, but added values associated with its products in terms of Environmental and Social benefits will be the driving force for branding in the 21st Century. A Brand is only perceived as being Sustainable if it can credibly convey sustainability benefits which are noticeable by and relevant to the consumer (3).

Brands also have the capability to tap into the Emotions of a target audience, drive actions and cultivate change. As we are aware of the damage our lifestyles are causing to the world we’re beginning to search for effective ways to protect our environment. It is time for the firms to move from profit maximization, and use their influence to make an impact on the issues that really matter, like climate change, global warming and peace and prosperity at large.

Araatrika with its Eco-Stationery is providing that alternative way to protect our environment with the help of Responsible Production and Consumption and products which are environmentally sensible and socially responsible.

4.1. Contribution of Araatrika to Stationery Products Market:
Since its inception, Araatrika strengthens its position in the stationery products market as evidenced by the remarkable performances recorded in recent years with an Eco-stationery production of 2,25,000 units of Happy Pencils, 1,50,000 units of Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils and 50,000 units of Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens.

Further if we look at the export side of the products manufactured by Araatrika, it shows remarkable performance since it started exporting to various countries. The major importer of Happy Pencils, Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils and Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens, is Dubai
and Australia. The other countries importing the Eco-Stationery excluding pens are UK, Ireland (Dublin), Germany and the USA.

If we look at the employment side, the number of employees over the years has been limited to 8 members, with zero occupational hazards as a result of sustainable and responsible production process. The following graphical analysis throws light on the contribution of Araatrika to the international market. Out of the total 2,25,000 units of Happy Pencils, 1,50,000 units of Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils nearly 14.5 percentage of the total output has been exported to various countries. The following schedule shows the country and its share.

Table No.1: Importing Country and percentage of output exported.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Importing Countries</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dubai</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. Negative Externalities of Stationery Industries:
The stationery products industry activities have negative external effects due to emission of various types of waste which can pollute air, soil, water, flora and fauna in general and henceforth the Environment in particular.

From social perspective the industrial activities involve reallocation of population (forced displacement of population due to deforestation especially in tribal belts) furthermore community structures are weakened and cultural identity is at risk.
Theoretical Framework:

Sustainable Development: Foundation and Confrontation:

Sustainable development has long been considered as a comprehensive and complex concept. The most suitable and comprehensive definition was documented in the Brundtland report “our common future” of the World Commission on Environment and Development published in 1987 by the United Nations, which pronounces - sustainable development is a development mode which meets the present needs, while preserving the needs of future generation(4).

So as to meet their sustainable development targets firms undertake CSR activities. Now CSR notion is materialized through triple bottom line concept: economic prosperity, environmental friendliness, respect and enhancement of social cohesion.(5) This notion of CSR, takes into account three major dimensions of sustainable development and proves to be comprehensive. Start-ups like Araatrika instead of engaging in CSR are involved into responsible production and consumption which is an easy and effective way of Sustainable Development in general and Sustainable Branding in particular.

Sustainable Development in Stationery Industry:

It is usually believed that sustainable development approach requires huge investment in technology, experienced and skilled manpower and requires a lot of time to reap its benefits.

For the stationery products industry, sustainability relates to qualitative supply of products which are environmentally sound, socially responsible and economically viable and which can be translated into responsible future and healthier environment.

Explanatory Approach: Case of Araatrika:

In order to understand sustainable development in general and sustainable branding in particular for stationery products, we have chosen to explore the case of Araatrika.

Sustainable branding in stationery products involves various challenges specific to its industry. This study involves exploration of present state, identification of sustainable development practices, sustainability approach (benefit – environmental & social) adopted by Araatrika.

Methodological Framework:

In this research, we chose to study the case of Pune based start-up, Araatrika who is pioneering in Eco-stationery with its signature products- Happy Pencils, Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils and Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens. Further we will also provide a schedule which compares the cost and benefits of Eco-stationery with its close substitutes. We relied, to realise our study on data collected during a telephonic interview with the concerned person dealing in sales.

The interview was aimed at precisely understanding: the Sustainable Development approach in general and Sustainable Branding in particular with the help of data pertaining to output, export potential, number of employees, environmental and social Benefits of their products etcetera. We also enriched our article with additional data obtained from various other studies on the phenomenon in question (Sustainable Branding).

Case Study:
Presentation of Araatrika Case:

Araatrika is engaged in the production of Eco-stationery with its signature products- Happy Pencils, Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils and Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens. The firm responds to local and international demand for its Eco-Stationery products.
With its inception, Araatrika was a turning point for the Stationery products industry. Since actively starting the production, Araatrika has manufactured over 2,25,000 units of Happy Pencils, 1,50,000 units of Happy seed Pencils or Recycled Newspaper Plantable Pencils and 50,000 units of Happy Pens or Recycled Paper Pens. They have provided consumers with sustainable products as a choice or substitute for the traditional ones using the concept of Choice Architecture. Choice Architecture refers to the practice of influencing choice by changing the manner in which options are presented to people. For example, “framing”, Framing Effect pronounces that Choices can be presented in a way that highlights the positive or negative aspects of the same decision, leading to changes in their relative attractiveness. Araatrika uses the same concept to promote its output by using and mentioning the environmental and social benefits of its products as compared to that of its close substitutes.

**Sustainability Branding:**
The following schedule compares the cost and benefit (Social, Environmental and in kind) of Eco-Stationery with the close substitutes available in the market. The purpose of this schedule is to reflect special added value of the products in terms of Environmental and Social benefits and credibly convey sustainability benefits which are noticeable by and relevant to the consumer.

**TABLE No. 1: Cost and Benefits (Social and Environmental)-Close Substitutes for Pencils.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Product (Pencil)</th>
<th>Price Per piece</th>
<th>Price Per box</th>
<th>Benefits Social</th>
<th>Benefits Environmental</th>
<th>Kind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Apsara</td>
<td>Rs. 7</td>
<td>Rs. 70</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Faber Castle</td>
<td>Rs. 5</td>
<td>Rs. 50</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Camlin</td>
<td>Rs. 5</td>
<td>Rs. 50</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Happy Pencils</td>
<td>Rs. 9</td>
<td>Rs. 55</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Happy Seed Pencils</td>
<td>Rs.10.50</td>
<td>Rs. 105</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;</td>
<td>***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ _ _ Denotes- null
*** Denotes- Eraser and or Pencil Sharpner.
@ Denotes- Responsible Consumption through the use of recycled paper Products.
>> Denotes- seeds for growing assorted vegetables or elimination of wood.

**Table No. 2: Cost and Benefits (Social and Environmental) -Close Substitutes for Pens.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Product (Pen Ballpoint)</th>
<th>Price Per piece</th>
<th>Price Per box</th>
<th>Benefits Social</th>
<th>Benefits Environmental</th>
<th>Kind</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Reynolds</td>
<td>Rs.10</td>
<td>Rs. 100</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Flair</td>
<td>Rs. 10</td>
<td>Rs. 100</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Cello</td>
<td>Rs. 10</td>
<td>Rs.100</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rotito</td>
<td>Rs. 10</td>
<td>Rs.100</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Happy Pen</td>
<td>Rs.10</td>
<td>Rs.100</td>
<td>@</td>
<td>&gt;&gt;</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_ _ _ Denotes- null
@ Denotes- Responsible Consumption through the use of recycled paper Products.
Denotes elimination of Plastic up to 70% as compared to the regular Pens and the use of recycled paper.

Conclusion:
The future of Branding is Emotional, Responsible and Driven by the quest for a healthier Globe. In this work we have presented and explained the sustainable Branding approach used by Araatrika and the choice architecture used by them to push their output in the market efficiently and effectively.

With its Eco-stationery; though a little expensive as compared to its close substitutes, Araatrika is pioneering in the social and Environmental Benefits arising out of responsible production and consumption of its products in comparison to what is provided by any of its competitors. With its growing user base and multi-directional reach in the domestic and overseas market, we can support our argument that Sustainable Branding can be the New Normal for 21st century.

Brands with socially sound and environmentally responsible features will drive the markets of 21st century. One such step in the stationery products market is taken by Araatrika with its signature Eco-stationery. The performance of Araatrika by integrating interactions between society and environment is commendable. Finally so as to fulfil all the goals mentioned in the SDG of United Nations Development Programme, all the actors especially Public Sector (National & State) and population (locals & Employees) must fully assume their responsibilities. In other words we promote the argument that self-conscious efforts, by institutions in the private and also the government sector, to steer people’s choices in the directions that will improve their lives. Thus Araatrika is self-consciously attempting to move people in directions that will make their lives better.

References:
1. The 2030 Agenda in Action: What does it mean? – United nations Development Programme