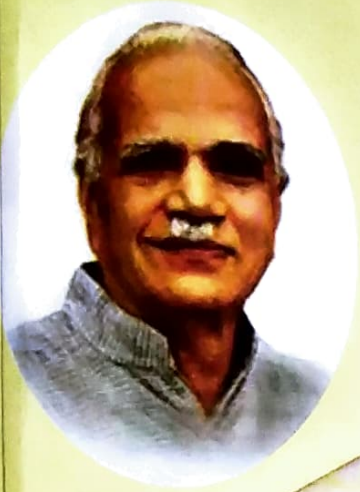


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Social Entrepreneurship as a Tool for Sustainability Development

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Abstract

Privatization has brought new players to increase competition, leading to improvements in the quality, price, accessibility and availability of goods and services to a wider range of society. Business organizations want to expand and grow rapidly and do not mind adopting unethical means which could harm society and the environment in the long run. It is observed that a majority companies selling their products by doing advertisements in exaggerated ways. Many of them do not comply with the standards and norms set by the Advertising Standards of India (ASCI).

Today, people have choice of products and services but they still lack purchasing power to acquire them. Governments at all levels are concerned at the ballooning gap between the haves and the have-nots in both rural and urban India. They are worried at the lack of social concern in the corporate world. It is in this context this research paper examines the socially oriented marketing initiatives of some Corporates in India which are structured on social entrepreneurship triggering societal transformations. Such models with social bias can provide viable alternative for sustained business development and organization growth besides bringing about socio-economic rejuvenation and inclusive growth. The tripod of social entrepreneurship is innovation, market orientation and system change. It focuses on changing systems and processes that causes environment degradation, poverty and marginalization of people. Business organizations should use social enterprise for the twin objective of organization success and social upliftment.

Key words : Social Entrepreneurship, Social values, Innovation, Inclusive growth, Sustainability.

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is all about recognizing the social problems and achieving a social change by employing entrepreneurial principles, processes and operations. Social entrepreneurship has a long but chequered history. It at once reminds one of Florence Nightingale who worked to help the wounded soldiers of war in adverse circumstances risking her life. She was pioneer in setting up the first nursing school and developer of modern nursing operations. Vinoba Bhave is prominent figure in Indian modern history and was the founder and leader of the land gift movement that helped reallocate land to untouchables. In the twentieth century Professor Mohammad Younis set up the Grameen Bank in 1976

aiming to empower women through financial inclusion. It brought financial services to the door step of the poor, particularly to the women, and helped them establish profitable vocational activities and gainful employment. He combined business rules and regulations for social endeavour. Robert Owen is associated with cooperative movement. Dr Kurien set up AMUL at Anand, Gujarat which brought white revolution in India and helped India become self sufficient in milk production and distribution. Social entrepreneurship catalyzes social transformation by meeting social needs. Value creation in social enterprise is in both social and economic aspects though the focus is on social values. Social entrepreneurship is spread across the globe in both developed and developing countries. It is largely due to the enterprise or initiative of an individual or an organization motivated by a social perspective for meeting societal needs. Baba Amte's pioneering efforts in Anadwan in Chandrapur in Maharashtra is an example of social enterprise to provide shelter and means of livelihood to the neglected class of leprosy afflicted people and thus make them live a dignified life. While wealth creation is the end in itself for business entrepreneurs, for social entrepreneurs it is the means to an end. Social mission is explicit and central in social enterprise.

In recent decades, social enterprise activities combining environmental and social benefits are particularly centered around employment creation and work experience targeted at underprivileged groups and societies. The focus areas of such endeavours include, interalia, nature conservation, community-based renewable energy, sustainable housing, transport, food production and distribution, and environmental education, raising awareness of environment issues such as global warming, climate change, etc.

2. Rationale for the Study

Social entrepreneurship is a process that creates value by combining resources in new ways so as to explore and exploit opportunities thereby creating social value by stimulating social change or meeting social needs. Social entrepreneurship combines resources creatively to address social problems and thereby alter the existing social structure in positive ways. Social entrepreneurship results in providing services and products in innovative ways. It can occur in an existing organization or in a new organization. This research study examines the socially oriented marketing initiatives of some of the Corporates in India.

3. Objectives of the Study

1. Overview of social entrepreneurship through literature review
2. To examine socially oriented marketing enterprises of some Corporates in India

4. Research Methodology

Data and information for the research study were collected and analyzed from secondary published sources viz., books, newspapers, web sites and research studies.

5. Literature Review

Recent literature examines entrepreneurship and innovation that is motivated by environmental and social / ethical concerns. Researchers conclude that it depends on the entrepreneurs' propensity for innovation, experimentation and risk taking.

Dr.Hemantkumar P Bulsara, et al (2015) – The researchers has focused on the growing trends of social entrepreneurship in India and the new initiatives taken by various social entrepreneurs. They gave brief idea of different theories of social entrepreneurship. Efforts are made to provide detailed information related to the support activities of social entrepreneurship and its ventures in India. The paper based on secondary data collected from different sources. Researchers studied detailed about various organizations such as Amul, SELCO India, Ladakhi Women's travel company, Global foundation, DARC, CRY and so on.

According to Prabhu (1999), networking is a critical skill for social entrepreneurs because social entrepreneurship demands establishing credibility across multiple constituencies, and the ability to mobilize support within those constituencies. He observes that social entrepreneurs are often highly supportive of each other's efforts.

A.N Rao et al.(2017) – The researchers emphasis the role of females play in social entrepreneurship by way of case studies of women who have overcome odds to presently lead successful social enterprise in the field of waste management, education, environment conservation, health and cultural upliftment. The paper follows the journeys of those women and their method of thinking out the box to develop a unique innovative approach to fight against poverty and social inequality to ensure a better tomorrow.

Mr. Utpal Pal et al(2020) - The researchers aim to underline the roles and responsibilities of social entrepreneurs in India society as well as to study the overall contributions of social entrepreneurship for the sustainable economic development. The research work completely based on secondary data of various reports published through government bodies and research paper published by various authors on related theme. Researchers found that social entrepreneurs are facing a lot of challenges in India and those challenges are very evident, as the growth of social entrepreneurship is very low as compared to other regions in developed nations.

From the reviews we find that the studies mostly rely on survey evidences which are exploratory in nature. Social entrepreneurship initiatives now focus towards community engagement which would benefit the communities at large and at the same time provide business opportunities for organizations on a sustainable basis. The of-shoot of social enterprises is also the result of fiscal incentives, emphasis on CSR activities, public sector reforms, and outsourcing of public services.

6. Social entrepreneurship initiatives of individual entrepreneurs and Indian Corporates used as marketing tools are given below.

6.1 eGovernance

Srikanth Nadhamuni developed a series of “e-governance” software modules and co- founded the eGovernments Foundation with the intention of strengthening the functioning of the Indian government, and thereby improve daily life for Indian citizens. The Foundation provides free eGovernance software for use in governance all across India.

Currently, the eGov Foundation has programs running in many cities throughout India, with a family of software products and solutions to increase efficiency while decreasing corruption.

eGovernance applications deals with collection and assessment of tax revenues, property tax collection, public grievance and redressal, municipal accounting, birth and death registration, ward works management, parcel mapping and other visual decision making, and workflow processing, security, and authentication.

6.2 Drishti

70% of the people in India live in rural areas, many parts of which have deficient communication facilities. Being resource deficient, they lack easy access to the information adversely affecting their agriculture or business. Women, the elderly and low income and landless labourers are the worst sufferers due to their limited access to resources. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) can therefore play a significant role in making information and services available at a affordable cost to rural people. Drishtee added services such as Gram Daak (village mailing system), Gram Haat (Online auction place), Vaivahiki (Matrimonials) etc. Additional kiosks (all private) came at different locations.

Drishtee is a for-profit organization to create and implement a sustainable, scalable platform of entrepreneurship for enabling the development of rural economy and society with the use of ICT. Drishtee facilitates the establishment of ICT nodes enabling access to information as well as local services to the rural community at nominal cost. It is run by the village entrepreneur, who owns the village node to operate a self-sustaining, profitable kiosk which provides access to information like

government records, agricultural data, and health insurance, help in filing of applications for licenses, certificates, compensations, and benefits; commodity product rates in different markets, education like computer courses, and Spoken English Programs. The village entrepreneur earns by charging the community a nominal fee for the services provided.

6.3 Project Shakti

The path breaking marketing program "Project Shakti" of Hindustan Unilever Limited (HUL) to penetrate and tap rural markets in India is a classic example of innovative business strategy with societal concerns. While Project Shakti resulted in empowerment of women and the rural poor, it helped to position HUL as a socially responsible organization.

HUL started Project Shakti in 2001 with the aim of increasing the company's rural distribution reach simultaneously providing rural women with income-generating opportunities.

The growth strategy was to ask SHGs to operate as rural direct-to-home & teams of saleswomen, who would accomplish several tasks by raising awareness and educating people about HUL products as well as selling them directly within their communities. The idea was for the women to not only act as salespeople but also as brand promoters, often physically demonstrating products, such as shampoo, by offering hair washes at religious festivals, the local village market, or performing hand washing experiments to compare washing with soap to simply washing with water.

Apart from selling, the women would work on changing people's mindsets. For example, convincing them that a simple wash with water did not guarantee hygiene, or that shampoo could be used as a grooming product for the hair instead of just using soap to clean it. These rural consumers did not have access to television or radio but the SHG Star Sellers, by demonstrating and promoting HUL products at the haat, made up for this lack of audio-visual brand advertising.

Shakti Entrepreneur is a 'direct-to home' distributor in rural markets who receive stocks at their doorstep from HUL rural distributor and sells direct to consumers and other retailers in the village. HUL chooses one person in the SHG. To get started the Shakti woman borrows from her SHG. With training and hand-holding by HUL for three months, she begins her door-to-door journey selling HUL products.

Shakti is a IT-based rural information service to provide demand driven information and services across large variety of sectors such as agriculture, education, vocational training, health and hygiene. The iShakti kiosks are operated by the Shakti Entrepreneur.

The overall impact of the HUL initiative is unquestionably positive. HUL benefited with new markets and consumers and villagers, especially rural women, got economic freedom. It helped in sustainable development

of villages. It is a business initiative with social benefits. Impact on woman along with the ripple effect on her family and surrounding community is immense. Project Shakti provides a powerful example of a business that profits while improving the livelihoods and quality of life for its customers.

Project Shakti of HUL seeks to empower underprivileged rural women by providing income generating opportunities. It helped HUL increase market share in personal care and hygiene products as also in regular usage of HUL brands. The success of the Project is also due to basket of products available to SHGs to sell.

6.4 ITC Chaupal

ITC Chaupal Sagar is one of the first organized retail effort in rural area extending its warehouses in to rural shopping-cum-information center to attend to the needs of the rural consumers. It provides wide range of products such as hair oils, mixer grinders, toothpastes, televisions, motor cycles, water pumps, shirts, etc., besides, providing farmers all the information, products and services they need to enhance farm productivity, improving farm-gate price realization and cutting transaction costs. Farmers have access to latest local / global information on weather, scientific farming practices as well as market prices through their web portal in Hindi.

6.5 Some more examples of social entrepreneurship initiatives

Corporate companies in India realizing the potential of rural market initiated several innovative strategies for pushing their sales. Some more examples of corporate marketing initiatives of Indian companies with social overtones are given below.

i) Airtel and IFFCO jointly formed a company called IFFCO Kisan Sanchar Ltd (IKSL) for targeting farmers of IFFCO societies. Under the package called 'Grameen Pack' IFFCO societies farmers get Airtel mobile connection at Rs.50. Farmers using the 'Gramen Pack' receive 5 free voice messages on a daily basis informing them about market rates, weather and other agriculture related matters.

ii) Airtel partnering with Nokia developed two handsets that provide menu and SMS facilities in Kannada language. With the purchase of either of the handsets, customers get free Airtel mobile connection in addition to recharge of Rs.295 along with life time validity and local calling rate at Re.1 pm and STD calling rate of Rs.1.50 pm. Each handset has a Kannada portal. Through this, customers can access information in Kannanda and entertainment services like songs, dialogs, folk songs, jokes and hello tunes in Kannada.

iii) BPCL introduced Rural Marketing Vehicle (RMV) as a rural marketing strategy. The vehicle moves from village to village and fills

cylinders on the spot for the rural customers. Considering the low-income of rural population they introduced smaller size cylinders to reduce both the initial deposit cost as well as the recurring refill cost.

iv) Dabur India Ltd tied up with Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to tap the rural markets. IOC's retail outlets all over the country will stock and sell Dabur's products consisting of healthcare, oral care, personal wash, skin care and home care products. The Kisan Seva Kendra is a one stop retail rural outlet of IOC which offers fuel and non fuel products like fertilizers, grocery, tools used for cultivation, seeds, personal care products, auto spares, etc. There are 1,600 such IOC outlets across India.

v) "Godrej Aadhaar" set up Godrej Agrovet Ltd for retailing products and services to rural consumers. They offer apparel, food items, footwear, grocery, furniture, kitchenware and home appliances; they also provide value added services like banking, postal services and pharmacy. Godrej has plans to set up 1000 such stores across the rural India in the next five years.

vi) Indian Oil is tapping the rural market by opening Kisan Seva Kendras across the rural areas to provide fuel and non fuel services to rural consumers.

vii) MP Government proposes to develop Rural Shopping Malls across the state to cater to the needs of rural population. These will act as a two way supply chain. While selling goods to the farmers, these malls will also buy their farm products. Raw material and finished goods are traded under one roof.

viii) Maruti Suzuki introduced various innovative schemes to push their products in rural areas. The company targeted India's state government employees through its 'Wheels of India' scheme. This helped to sell more than 5,000 automobiles. Another scheme called 'ghar ghar mein maruti: mera sapna meri maruti' targeted village panchayat members who are highly influential and respected in rural areas and nearby towns. Under the scheme, Maruti increased sales by 16,600 units..

ix) Tata Tea partnered with NGOs with wide reach among UP's rural masses to make further inroads. The 'gaon chalo' project not only created employment opportunities to the youth of villages and small towns but also brought steady income to those who are the distributors of Tata Tea. Their rural market share thus rose from 18% to 26.6%.

x) FMCG companies are making innovative efforts to develop markets for their products in rural areas. For example the 'Sushmita Sens', 'Aishwarya Rais' of rural India can now get recognition with FMCG majors organizing beauty contests in villages in a bid to promote their skincare and hair care range. Cavin Kare recently begun its 'Fairer Pari Mobile Road Show' which will reach out to women in 178 villages

and towns across UP. Beauty contests are one of the various activities connected with the road shows in usage of fairness creams in rural areas to help drive sales and build brands. The idea is once people become familiar with these products, they would perceive them as necessities.

6.6 Web to Village

Kanpura a village about 25 kms from Ajmer, Rajasthan is one of the ten villages in Ajmer district where the panchayats have been on the net for the past few years. This has helped villagers track real-time mandi prices, get good rates for their produce and see their land records online. Children are able to see their exam results online. The panchayat is starting classes to get more villagers acquainted with the internet.

During the visit of US President Barack Obama to India he spoke with the villagers via teleconferencing. He greeted them with a 'Namaste' and told them that their village could become a model for other villages. Almost two years after Obama's visit, the Kanpura model is being replicated in about 55 gram panchayats who would get connected to broadband as part of an ambitious project that aims to get India's roughly 2.5 lakh gram panchayats on the net within 18-24 months. That mobiles have a big role to play in rural internet is already being borne out. According to a report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IMAI) and IMRB, an increasing number of Indian villagers are comfortable using their cellphones to browse the net. At least 12% of the rural internet users access the web on their mobiles (Tarun Abhichandani). "As of June 2012, there were 3.6 million rural mobile internet users — a number that has grown 7.2 times in the past 2 years."

7. Conclusion

Prompted by the growing demand in rural areas, marketers of FMCG are aiming at improving their presence and market share among rural consumers. FMCG companies such as HUL and ITC are working towards increasing their visibility and reach through marketing cum corporate social responsibility projects such as Project Shakti and e-choupal respectively. Other companies like Nirma Chemical Works, Colgate Palmolive, Parle Food Products and Malhotra Marketing have also made their way into the heartland of rural markets with social themes.

While entering rural market, companies should focus on social responsibilities as well. For example, HUL Project Shakti not only brings revenues to the company, but it helps the poor rural women to become income earners, by selling the company's products in the rural hinterland. It provides entrepreneurial opportunities and thus improves the living standards of rural women. This is also creating health and hygiene awareness among rural women. It is a win-win partnership deal between

the company and the consumers.

SHGs as channel partners are emerging to promote consumer durables and non durables in rural hinterland. Strategic corporate tie-ups / joint ventures with different verticals are emerging to reach the rural masses.

Looking at the challenges and the opportunities that rural markets offer to the marketers, the future is very promising for those who can understand the dynamics of rural markets and use the rural manpower as co-entrepreneurs. Marketing with social bias has assumed an important and prominent place in companies overall marketing strategy. While the thrust of the companies in rural areas would benefit them with increased sales, it will also uplift the rural population with increased job opportunities and consequent demand acceleration and resultant prosperity to the villages.

8. Significance of the Study

The study would be useful to manufacturers, marketing students, researchers, and society in general in understanding how marketing initiatives with social connotations can provide companies a distinct competitive edge and help increase growth and bottom-line for the corporate, and simultaneously help to uplift the under privileged sections of society in rural and urban areas with increased job opportunities with resultant prosperity and consequent demand acceleration. The study underscores that there are ways and means by which industries and manufacturers can leverage social enterprise for business objectives.

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