



Chapter 3

Understanding the aspirations of the Rubans

"Aspiration - something you hope to achieve"

- Cambridge Dictionary

Chapter 3: Understanding the aspirations of the Rubans

What is Aspiration?

“This is the aspirational India, the India that wants good jobs, the means to buy a two-wheeler or a car, to have fun and enjoy the good things of life.” – (Pai, 2013)

According to Cambridge dictionary, aspiration is “something you hope to achieve” (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2014). This simple definition throws much light on what aspiration is. It is something which we desire to achieve and there is a good possibility of achieving it. Aspiring for a better quality of life is a universal aspiration. Indian economy has been a growing economy and has seen a rapid change in terms of improved economic status in less than one generation. This makes the Rubans confident about future and they are quite comfortable about aspiring for a better life, because it will, in all likelihood, happen within their life time (Bijapurkar, we are like that only - understanding the logic of Consumer India, 2009).

Aspiration is a function of exposure to information and demonstration effect. Better flow of information with the ubiquitous television, mobile and the internet has manifested itself in many ways, one of them being the changing aspiration of the rural population, especially the youth. Today, the aspiration of the Ruban is no different from an urban youth.

Aspirations of rural India have changed dramatically. People in rural India, especially the youth, are no more satisfied with mere traditional jobs in agriculture and connected trades and a sedate life. They want better paying jobs, want a vehicle to commute and enjoy good things of life.

Understanding Ruban Aspiration

This purpose of this Applied Research was to understand the Ruban aspiration and not to measure it. The term “measure” normally would imply a scale, be it a qualitative scale or binary scale. This Applied Research made no such attempt to “quantify” the aspiration as the study was exploratory in nature. As such, the methods

adopted were to video graph the interviews with Rubans (trainees at HHH) to understand their aspiration.

The above objective can be broken down into the following sub-objectives:

1. Get a clear understanding of the requirements of Rural Entrepreneurs to understand what kind of help is required by them.
2. Understand how the entrepreneurs and Rubans can develop themselves to meet their aspirations.
3. Using the knowledge gained in point ‘2’, we have to identify the support required by the Rubans so that they are equipped and skilled enough to pursue their aspirations. The support activities identified will be shortlisted on the basis of feasibility.
4. Understand how far the current plans of Head-Held-High (HHH) are in line with the expectations of the Rubans.

Using the knowledge gained in point ‘4’, propose how the programme of HHH needs to showcase the aspirations of Rubans to corporates. The objective of showcasing to corporates has two purposes:

1. Help the corporates understand the potential available with the rural masses and rural entrepreneurs which can be harnessed.
2. Provide the corporates a roadmap to access local rural talent.

Research Questions

1. How can the training programme of HHH be modified to make it more effective in terms of better communication skills, developing a habit to think creatively, inculcating leadership skills and building team spirit.
2. What are the services which the VEF needs to provide to make it into a sustainable business model?
3. What are the aspirations of the trainees, who represent a sample of the Rubans?
4. What could be an efficient marketing strategy to market the training programme?

5. Is there a difference in terms of communication skills in English, ability to handle pressure, creativity and general awareness between the trainees of HHH at Gadag and the students from the engineering college at Gadag?
6. What is the nature of the brand awareness and brand loyalty among the rural people?

Related Questions

- a) Is there a difference between the trainees of HHH at Gadag and the students from the engineering college at Gadag in terms of communication skills in English, ability to handle pressure, creativity and general awareness.
- b) What is the brand awareness and brand loyalty of the rural masses.

Methodology of the Study

The primary method of study was through video analysis. The nature of the research was 'exploratory'. Exploratory research is used when one is seeking insights into the general nature of the problem, the possible decision alternatives and the relevant variables which need to be considered. Since there was little data to build up upon, the applied project proceeds based on **qualitative research**.

Sample size and sample description

Twenty (22) trainees who were at Gadag and Hindupur centre were interviewed. Four (4) Trainers and six (6) entrepreneurs were interviewed. The sampling technique was convenience sampling. Since the study was exploratory in nature, the data collected was anecdotal in nature and hence no rigorous analysis involving statistical techniques were neither intended nor applied.

There were five categories of people with whom the interns had to interact with – Trainers at HHH, Trainees at HHH, Rural entrepreneurs and SMEs, Members of Corporates and Faculty members of SDMIMD. The purpose of the interaction with trainers and trainees was to understand how the current training programme at HHH could be improved. The purpose of the interaction with SMEs and rural entrepreneurs was

to understand what could be the correct model for the Village Entrepreneurship Forum (VEF) which was still in the planning phase. There were two purposes of interacting with corporate bodies and with the faculty members of SDMIMD. First, certain portions of the recorded videos could be used for promotional purposes of the company. Second, it would give the research team a holistic view of the topics related to the concept of Rubanomics. The finding could be used to write research paper on Rubanomics¹. Also, it could serve the purpose of projecting a picture to the corporates regarding the potential available in rural India in terms of human resource and in terms of a market and its viability. A detailed questionnaire was prepared for each category of respondents (See Annexures for details). Since the research was exploratory in nature, the questions in the questionnaire were open-ended. Initially a set of topics were identified, for each category of respondents, which were relevant to the research objective. They were broad topics which covered multiple aspects. Then the topics were sequenced, starting with the general ones and then gradually focussing down on specific ones. Once the sequencing was done, the topics were classified as per the research objectives. The classification was important to ensure that the research remained focussed on the research objectives. After the classification, each topic was broken down into a set of questions. The questions were framed in such a way so as to ensure that the opinions of the interviewee about the multiple aspects or facets of the given topic were all recorded. A lot of time was spent to ensure that the questions were framed in a lucid manner, so that the respondent would have no trouble in understanding them. The questions under each topic also served the purpose of a checklist, ensuring that opinions about all the aspects were recorded.

Before getting into asking research specific questions, the research team asked a few, very general questions, to the respondents for two purposes – making the interviewee feel comfortable in the interview environment, where camera recording was involved, and ensuring that our entry into specific research questions would be gradual and not abrupt.

Methods adopted

Exploring aspirations of Rubans using Drawings

One of the research questions was to understand the aspirations of the Rubans. To find the answer, the team engaged with some of the trainees at the Head Held High centre at Gadag. The team chose the trainees at the Gadag centre as a sample of Rubans because they were rural people who had joined the training programme to full fill their aspirations.

Psychologists have long been using questionnaire to assess the aspiration of people, especially children. In looking for alternatives, DiCarlo et al used drawings to investigate the aspiration of street children in Honduras, suggesting that standardised tests fails to reveal the strength and resourcefulness of the street children. Drawing is commonly used as it is perceived as fun and non-threatening (Brian Merryman, 2007). The Rubans could also be expected to be more expressive through drawings rather than in words as their level of formal education and exposure is not high. Thus, the research team did not use the interview with a questionnaire approach for one part of the research; instead, it adopted getting Rubans to draw pictures indicating their dreams. The team did not use a questionnaire approach to gauge their aspirations as from past experience the team had learnt that ‘aspiration’ was a very broad and vague term and simply questioning the respondents about their aspirations would only yield vague answers. So, the team asked the respondents to visualise

themselves five years from the time their training at HHH was over and draw a sketch of how they imagined their life would be, on a piece of paper. The team members were able to identify certain common aspirations through this approach.

Exploring skill gaps between groups of Rubans using Debates

The interview approach was not used to compare the trainees at the Gadag centre of HHH with those of the engineering students from an engineering college (REC) at Gadag. Two separate interactions were convened to establish the results of the comparison. The structures of the interactions were the same for both the meets. The respondents were judged on the following parameters: proficiency in English, ability to handle pressure, creativity and general awareness. The programme interaction process had three rounds. In the first round the respondents were asked to participate in a debate. This was to gauge their proficiency in spoken English. In the next round, they were asked to design an ad campaign for a particular given product. This was to gauge their ability to work under pressure and their

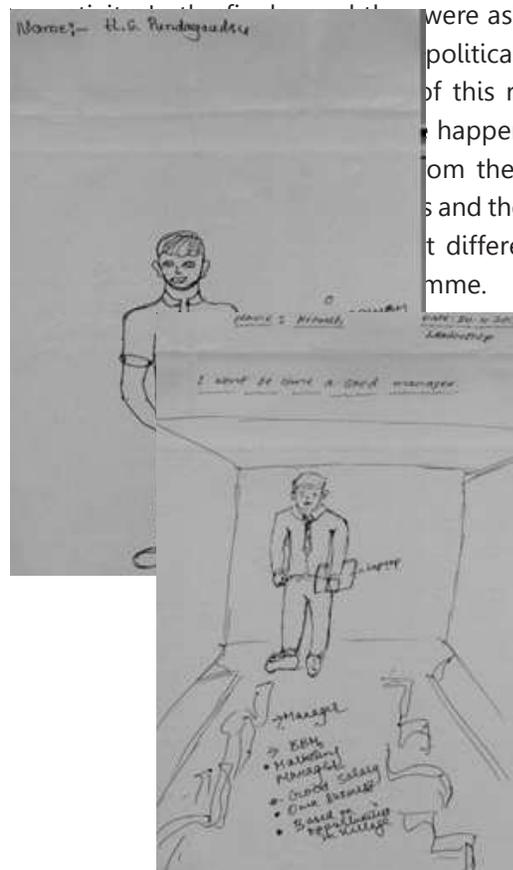


Figure 6: Sketches by Rubans indicating their aspirations,

Source: Field work by the intern, Sandip Chakraborty

Attraction of the cities:

From the interactions that we had with the trainees, it was clear that most of them want to move to the cities. When asked why, it was stated that a life in the cities was desired only to have new experiences and face new challenges which would polish them into more rounded personalities. However, when debated about the better quality of life in cities compared to that of villages, many fiercely tried to claim that village life was better than that of the city. The reason behind the stress with which both of the contradictory views were stated could possibly mean that the rural population desires for the facilities and opportunities of cities to be present in villages.

Comparison of HHH trainers with Engineering college students:

Finding: When the trainees at the Gadag Centre were compared to the engineering students from a college at Gadag, the proficiency in English of the engineering students was found to be just a little better than those of HHH trainees. However, the trainees at were found to be a little more creative when compared to the engineering students. Both the trainees and the engineering students were found to do well in terms of being able to work under pressure. However, the level of awareness of HHH trainees was found to be lower when compared to that of the engineering students.

Brand awareness and brand loyalty among Rubans:

Finding: The trainees were questioned about their level of brand awareness, understanding of the value of a brand, difference between branded and unbranded products and changes in brand preference after the training process. It was found that the trainers were well aware of various brands in the FMCG and automobiles sector. When asked about the value of a brand they explained value in terms of performance and quality of the product.

From the interviews with SMEs and Dr Niranjana Vanalli from the department of journalism at the University of Mysore it was found that in the villages the mentality is such that a customer will choose an unbranded product

over a branded product even at the price of buying adulterated goods. It is the cheaper price which is more attractive, when compared to the assurance of quality of a branded good.

From the interaction with a rural entrepreneur at Gadag, who ran an electronics shop, researchers came to know that the demand for branded electronic goods was pretty high in rural markets. However, it was the non-availability of money which hindered the sale of electronic goods. Due to low presence of bank accounts the rural masses are not able to take the advantages of EMI facilities. Also, the demand for simple electronic devices like television, refrigerator etc. were higher when compared to complicated electronic devices.

Online shopping

The trainees at Hindupur and Gadag were quizzed about their knowledge of e-commerce. It was found that the trainees who had learnt to use the internet or had been recently introduced to the internet were aware of e-commerce. However, many of them were curious about how e-commerce works and were not aware of the process or the requirements to undertake an online transaction. Those who were aware of the process and the requirements appeared sceptical about the security of disclosing personal information online. Some feared that there is a chance of being cheated where the seller would charge a higher amount than the one which appears on the website. Some said that they were not able to give online purchase a try as they did not have a credit or debit card. We can conclude by saying that the respondents largely appeared uncomfortable about doing an online transaction due to a lack of trust.

Labour Issues

Labour was found to be a problem across sectors. There is a high level of attrition and absenteeism among the labourers. Most of the respondents from among the rural entrepreneurs and SMEs at Gadag stated that the labour laws are such that an average labourer can work for just four days in a week and find his income sufficient to sustain him for the whole week. This results in high absenteeism. Government policies to provide rice at very

cheap rates is one factor which have greatly reduced the incentive of working regularly. From our interaction with Professor S. S. Malini at the University of Mysore, it was suggested that it will be difficult to hold back the labourer until the labourer finds some strong incentive for coming to work. It was understood that certain incentives like spreading awareness among the women folk of the labourers about women's health, encouraging them to send their children to school and explaining banking services and the value of saving could be of help.

Marketing activities of SMEs:

Even SMEs who have been in the business for some time do not market their products. They survive the competition with the trust that they have gained in the market over years. Also, SMEs do not try to compromise on quality and appreciate the fact that the trust gained by supplying quality goods is very important to survive the competition.

a) Role of education:

In the opinion of the SMEs we spoke to at Gadag, corporates will find it very difficult to penetrate rural markets until there is spread of education among the rural masses. Only then the rural masses will start to appreciate the quality which is assured by a brand.

Recommendations

Recommendations arising out of this part of research are given under the Chapter "Recommendations"

End Notes

1. A paper titled "Rubanomics – Breaking the dichotomy between Rural and Urban", authored by Prof N.R.Govinda Sharma and Dr Ashwini Kumar B. J., was presented at the International Conference on "Dynamics of Rural Transformation in Emerging Economies", Organised by Sambhram School of Management, Bangalore, on 27th and 28th March 2014.