

GREEN INITIATIVES OF INDIAN STARTUPS TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABILITY – A STEP FORWARD

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INTRODUCTION:

Globally, with the thrust on sustainability and the corporates world over joining the fight against climate crisis, Indian startups are not far behind. With the Government initiative for startup India intended to catalyze the startup culture and to build strong ecosystem, the Government of India has taken various measures. The Indian startups are doing their part to save the globe by producing sustainable products. Startups create jobs and thus act as vehicles of socio economic development and thereby contributing to the larger economy by creating more employment opportunities and which in turn leads to stronger economy.

Consumer perception on environmentally friendly marketing activities is a crucial need in maintaining the company's image and reputation (Haery et al., 2013). Additionally, companies that implement corporate social responsibility along with other products are increasingly favored by consumers and investors. They tend to have more interest in their companies (Susanto, 2007). The reputation of green companies impacts to increasing the company's positive image in conducting its business and meeting its social responsibility (Susilo, 2014). "Companies, as stated by Saxena & Khandelwal, (2012) must have green products and environmental health, and green philosophy in its practical ground. Environmental degradation has not been an integral part for many companies. Companies must adopt a model that integrates social, economic and environmental dimensions in their business. The community will resist a company when it does not deem paying attention to social, economic and environmental aspects. Regarding this, the companies consider in a very limited sustainable responsibility and prefer to rely on eco-friendly marketing. Smart companies are indicated by their ability to see create environmental problems as opportunities rather than threats in order they can create more benefits in satisfying consumer needs (Silveira et al., 2018). Adopting new strategies, adaptation to new development issues help companies create more benefits through meeting their customers' satisfaction on green products and green environment (Yusuf et al., 2014). According to the European Commission, over two-thirds of Europeans consider climate change to be a serious problem, and almost 60% believe that it is one of the most pressing issues facing the world today.

For modern businesses, sustainability is crucial because it affects all aspects of growing and running the firm, including how customers, employees and investors see and value them.

Reasons for adopting Sustainability as a strategy

There are various reasons why a startup or a company should adopt sustainability as strategy.

The reasons may vary from growing awareness among the consumers and the investors and the young India who prefer working for a company which promotes sustainability.

1. Investors: There is growing awareness among the investors about the importance of sustainability. People are aware the how the environment is being affected by the emissions generated by the waste generated by the companies. So they would like to put their money in

startups that are doing their part to save the environment by producing products that are ESG compliant.

2. **Consumers:** There is also awareness among the consumers to consume products which are environmentally safe. They are likely to promote the companies which demonstrate commitment to sustainability.

3. **Manage risks:** Sustainability can help business manage risk. Some of the systematic risk like water scarcity, climate change, and social unrest can impact any of the business. The companies by adopting sustainable practices can manage some of the risk.

4. **Cost saving:** Companies by adopting sustainable practices can save water, reduce waste, less power consumption can cut down on costs which leads to significant saving.

5. **Tax incentives:** The Government of India has provided various tax benefits to the startups like Waiver from income tax at the initial stage, Waiver from 'Angel tax', Relaxation for carrying forward losses and set-off, Exemption from long-term capital gains tax to investors of startups Relaxation in the taxation of Employee Stock Options ('ESOP') for startups' employees

6. **Brand reputation and publicity:** Fostering positive consumer relations through sustainable initiatives generates brand value and improves a company's image.

7. **Resource limitations:** As scarcity increases, cost also increases. At some point the resources with which we depend upon will be more expensive or we won't be able to get it. So companies need to be prepared to protect those resources so they will be plentiful or find alternate resources for their products and services. The winning companies will do both.

8. **ESG requirements:** Startups are not required to report their environmental practices to the government agencies, but in the long run it is expected that non financial reporting is necessary to win business. Startups should be ESG ready for any markets they want to serve.

Government Initiatives providing thrust to Private players

India is moving forward with its sustainability strategy thanks to government measures and industry initiatives. The backing of the government, in the form of laws and promises to increase the use of renewable energy sources and advance clean energy ideas, has been essential in fostering growth. In order to meet the nation's goals set forth in the Paris Agreement, the authorities have also been working on a number of sizable sustainable electricity projects. By 2022, India wants to have 175 GW of capacity for renewable energy. In 2010, the "National Solar Mission" was introduced with the dual objectives of promoting environmentally friendly growth and addressing India's energy security issue. Shri Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, decided to increase the nation's solar power capacity objective under the National Solar Mission to achieve 100 GW in June 2015.

Policy Initiatives for Sustainable Development

Government of India policies in direction of achieving SDGs. These include Swachh Bharat mission, Beti Bacho Beti Padhao, Pradhan Mantri AwasYojana, Smart Cities, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyay Gram Jyoti Yojana and Pradhan Mantri UjjwalaYojana, among others.

The **Namami Gange Mission**- a key policy priority towards achieving the SDG 6 - was launched as a priority programme with a budget outlay of Rs.20,000 crores for the period 2015-2020. Major components include sewerage project management, urban and rural sanitation, tackling industrial pollution, water use efficiency and quality improvement, ecosystem conservation and Clean Ganga Fund, among others.

Climate Finance and India's Nationally Determined Contribution

The Paris Agreement emphasizes the role of climate finance in strengthening the global response to climate change. Though the international community witnessed various claims by developed countries about climate finance flows, the actual amount of flows is far from these claims. The

Survey quotes UNCTAD, 2014 report and states that there is a shortfall of US\$2.5 trillion per year in current investments in developing countries for achieving SDGs.

As per the Survey, concerted global efforts are required to address the climate challenges along with other developmental imperatives. Implementing India's Nationally Determined Contributions requires investments of scale and size which is unprecedented. This essentially means that along with domestic public budgets, international public finance and private sector resources would have to be mobilized from a variety of sources.

Talking about the developments in Sustainable Finance arena, the Survey states that India stands at 11th position in global country ranking and accounts for 33% of the Certified Climate Bonds by number in emerging markets.

The developing countries like India will endeavour to do the best possible within their own domestic resources, keeping in mind the sustainable development imperatives. It is time for the global community to exhibit the requisite momentum to act upon their responsibilities on establishing the enabling environment for climate action, the Survey adds.

Simple steps to get started

There are several ways for startups to make positive changes for the environment – and cut costs too. These may include switching to a paperless system, providing bike vouchers to commuting employees, recycling and properly disposing of waste, and turning off unused devices and lights in the office. These actions can not only help to protect the environment, but also reduce costs for the organization.

Think about establishing clear and achievable objectives to improve sustainability. This can include anything from eliminating single-use plastic, setting a minimum number of hours for team members to volunteer for environmental causes, or setting aside a certain percentage of revenue for sustainable initiatives. It's important to set goals that are realistic and achievable, as this can help to ensure that progress is made towards improving sustainability in a meaningful way.

Selecting the right suppliers is an effective way for businesses, including technology companies, to improve their sustainability. Even if a tech company does not manufacture or sell physical products, there are still opportunities to make positive changes in the supply chain. It's important to consider the environmental impact of all products and services offered, including financial services, recruitment, equipment, and refreshments. Tech businesses can demonstrate their commitment to sustainability by partnering with suppliers that align with their values and are taking steps to become more environmentally friendly. This can help to reduce the overall environmental impact of the business and send a clear message about the company's priorities

Indian Environmental Startups

India is not far behind when compared with the world. Startups in India are doing their part to contribute to sustainability by producing goods which are environmentally safe. Here is a list few Indian startups that are thriving to achieve sustainability.

Health Horizons:

Health Horizons, a Noida based startup established in 2017 is a GMP certified, USFDA approved hemp seed processing company. It has been actively focusing on breaking the taboo created around hemp/cannabis and educating people about the array of nutritional and medicinal benefits that people can have with its consumption.

They have introduced several products like Sativa Nubs, Hemp Powder to the Indian market which are extracted from one of the five sacred plants mentioned in Vedas. The brand is dedicated to making the products readily available in different varieties as **superfoods**. Not only this, Health Horizons is also emphasizing on bringing the positive **environmental impact hemp cultivation** brings to global warming issues.

The products are also natural, easy to use and a delicious addition to one's diet.

Phool:

[Phool is a Kanpur based startup](#) founded in 2017. They collect floral waste from the temples and mosques in Uttar Pradesh, thus preventing 7600 kgs of waste flowers and 97 kgs of toxic chemicals from getting into the river Ganges daily.

The waste is handcrafted by rural women self-help groups into patented organic fertiliser and incense sticks via flowercycling. The company plans to expand this movement by having a pan-India presence in the years to come. Today, their product line consists of vermicompost, incense cones and incense sticks.

Florafoam, made from temple-flowers, is a high-performing, mouldable and durable material used for packaging. It is 100% biodegradable and can be buried in a garden after usage. It is customisable to any shape, size, and strength, depending upon the usability.

The Summer House:

The Summer House is a Bengaluru-based online-only [sustainable apparel](#) and homeware label started in 2015. The Summer House is on a mission to bridge the gap between modern wardrobes and old fashioned craftsmanship through statement garments that can be worn effortlessly, everyday. They design shapes that work season after season, in materials that last.

Working in close partnership with traditional handloom artisans to create the most beautiful fabrics, the brand also sources the most sustainable fabrics possible and is on it's way to being a zero waste company. All the garments are made in an in-house studio with a sharp focus on quality and intentional design. In silhouettes that celebrate femininity in every shape.

Just Organik:

Just Organik is a Delhi based startup established in 2013. Just Organik is a brand signifying Just and Ethical supplies of [Organic produce](#), is owned by Treta Agro (P) Ltd, an agriculture produce oriented group with prime working area in the Himalyan state [Uttarakhand](#) India.

The goal of this venture is to make safe and healthy (Organic) food more accessible to the consumer and create sustainable wealth for the farmers by motivating them to adopt [organic farming](#) practices. This Start Up India registered company is certified as per [India Organic](#), USDA and EU organic standards.

Boss Lady:

Boss Lady is a Mumbai based startup established in 2019. With a desire to have good yet humane and responsible makeup products in the market, Boss Lady is a vegan, natural and cruelty-free cosmetics brand in February 2019. The products at the brand are made using ingredients like jojoba oil, sunflower wax, almond oil, calendula wax among others.

Since they began their operations, and have launched about 15 products that comprise different shades of lipsticks, eyeliners, and highlighters, that provide perfect cruelty-free makeup alternatives to women who can express themselves while feeling the guilt of hurting nature.

WAE:

Water, Air, and Energy (WAE) Limited helps businesses reduce their carbon and water footprints by providing goods and services that eliminate the use of bottled water. This Noida-based startup is an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) that provides water-related goods and services. It also offers products that are sustainable helping companies lower their carbon and water footprints. Depending on the type of bottled water the firm uses, WAE asserts that it can cut down this cost of water for businesses by half. WAE also received the CII-ITC Sustainability Award in 2019—an award granted by the CII-ITC Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development to companies who are attempting to be sustainable and inclusive in operations.

When Anupam V Joshi looked to set up a company nearly 14 years ago there was a clear strategy—to enter the water purification business. In the year 2008, the water industry was different. Most of Anupam's competitors were looking at households with little focus on corporates and offices, which were left to rely on plastic bottles or plastic jars.



Conclusion:

In summary, sustainability should be a priority for startups. Incorporating sustainable practices can help to reduce costs, improve efficiency, and contribute to a positive social and environmental impact. By considering sustainability early in the journey, startups can set themselves up for long-term success and a more sustainable future.

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