Reviving Tradition, Redefining Impact: A Sustainable Development Analysis of Desi Hangover

Summary of the Report:

The report examines the business practices of Desi Hangover, a purpose driven Indian footwear brand. The report analyses sustainable development using theoretical frameworks such as Stakeholder theory, the Global Goals Relationship matrix and the Equality, Discrimination, and Fairness paradigm. The analysis explores how the company aligns with key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Based on this, a set of practical recommendations is provided to address the challenges. Overall, the report concludes that Desi Hangover exemplifies a socially inclusive, environmentally responsible business model while highlighting areas for strategic improvement to enhance long term sustainability.

Introduction

The report focuses on Desi Hangover, a sustainable Indian footwear brand that combines traditional craftsmanship with sustainable and ethical practices. The aim of the report is to critically analyse how Desi Hangover’s business practices align with SDG’s using theories and tools like Global Goals Relationship Matrix. The report also explores key challenges faced by the company in its manufacturing process and provides a set of practical recommendations to address it. In doing so, the report aims to understand how small business can meaningfully contribute to global development goals while staying true to their values and identity.

Overview of the Business and SDG’s

Desi Hangover is a footwear brand founded in 2014 by Arken Enterprise in India. Its mission is to revive the 800-year tradition of handcrafted leather footwear of Kolhapuris and empower rural cobbler artisans. The company operates from Maharashtra-Karnataka border in India. The company produces premium and sustainable footwear using upcycled leather and organic tanning methods. Desi Hangover blends heritage craftsmanship with contemporary design, promoting ethical production, economic and social upliftment and environmental responsibility. The company follows a triple bottom line approach of people, planet and profit with focus on sustainable development goals like SDG 5. Gender Equality, SDG 8. Decent work and economic growth, SDG 10. Reduced Inequalities and SDG 12. Responsible Consumption and Production.

Findings

The Global Goals Relationship Matrix (Thomson & Bates, 2022) is used as a guiding framework to analyse the interconnected impacts of the company’s business practice on the SDGs. The matrix allowed a structured assessment of company’s business areas where it exercise direct control, influence, and has a positive impact and negative impact. The matrix also helped illustrate the interdependencies between different SDGs.

Desi Hangover follow’s a variety of sustainable practices like using upcycled leather, promoting fair wages and engaging women in production through these practices the company directly contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s). analysing using global goals relationship matrix Figure no. 1. Desi Hangover is dependent for procurement of its raw materials from the waste of the meat industry and is highly reliant on the industry to produce their products. These practices align with the SDG 15 i.e. life on land and SDG 9 industry, innovation and infrastructure. however, it makes the company highly dependent on produce from the meat industry for their products. This reliance creates a strategic vulnerability for Desi Hangover. While upcycling waste leather supports SDGs, but it also ties the company’s core productions existence on the scaling of the meat industry. If regulations, consumer preferences or ethical standards shift away Desi Hangover may face supply constraint or reputation risk.

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**Figure no. 1**

The company holds a significant control over the way it influences several sustainable development goals through its daily operations. For example, the company chooses to partner with rural cobbler artisan rather than employing them under traditional factory. by doing this, they are not only creating decent work opportunities but also ensuring that artisans have a real stake in their own economic success. Desi Hangover does not prioritise only profit. Instead, it considers artisans, communities, customers and the environment as key stakeholders this demonstrates a stakeholder focused value creations and aligns with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984).Moreover, the company is also focused on combining traditional craftsmanship with innovation by implementing design innovation with ethical storytelling, breaking away from mass production norms. The company has integrated RFID tagging in the shoes to allow customers to understand the impact of their purchase this clearly aligns with Business Model Innovation Theory

Desi Hangover demonstrates a positive impact by directly partnering with rural cobbler families and offers them fair and reliable incomes, thereby tackling poverty and addressing SDG 1. Many artisan families, once trapped in low-paying, unstable work, now enjoy higher living standards and economic security, leading to better opportunities for their children and future generations. Their work also touches reduced inequalities SDG 10 in indirect ways. stable and improved incomes means families can afford better nutrition, healthcare, and education that were often compromised under previous conditions of financial hardship. In addition, Desi Hangover’s focus on involving women artisans, especially in the creative aspects of footwear design and lacework this supports gender equality SDG 5. women are not just employed but are given meaningful skilled roles that elevate their status within the household and wider community. It publicly celebrates their stories while building the inclusive narrative that supports ethical consumerism. moreover, Desi Hangover also invest part of its profit into artisans children’s education to promote and drive quality education which closely supports SDG 4. Through these inclusive practices, the company also addresses inequality within rural areas and empowering marginalised artisans regardless of age, gender, or social standing. Desi Hangover helps bridge income gaps and offers pathways for social mobility in regions where opportunities have historically been scarce. These practices promote sustained and inclusive economic growth for the artisans thereby addressing SDG 8. These operations reflect on the principles of Equality, Discrimination and Fairness Paradigm (Thomas & Ely, 1996) Overall, Desi Hangover’s operational practices reflect a genuine commitment to creating better economic, social, and environmental outcomes.

While Desi Hangover’s operations create many positive outcomes, there are also potential negative impacts that cannot be overlooked. Firstly, although the company upcycles waste leather and uses organic tanning methods, leather production still highly dependent on the livestock industry, which contributes to environmental challenges such as greenhouse gas emissions. even if waste leather is reused, Desi Hangover remains indirectly linked to industries that strain natural resources and biodiversity thereby contributing towards SDG 15 and SDG 13. Secondly, while the artisan partnership model offers greater dignity and autonomy, it also shifts more risk onto artisans themselves. without formal employment contracts, artisans might lack social protections such as health insurance, pensions, or security in times of economic downturn of the artisans affecting their livelihood which may lead to influencing SDG 8. Lastly, because Desi Hangover relies on traditional, time-consuming production methods, there is a possibility that inefficient use of resources such as water and energy may occur if scaling is not carefully managed, potentially conflicting with goals related to sustainable consumption and production therefore impacting SDG 9 and SDG 12.

These risk highlights the importance of continuous evolving practices to ensure that long-term sustainability ambitions are truly met across all dimensions. To further identify and narrow down on the SDG’s, Global Goals Zone in Figure no. 2 was used. The framework allowed for a structured evaluation of the sustainable development goals based on the company’s core business purpose, strategic important and business activities influenced. According to the analysis from Global Goal Zones the manufacturing challenges faced by Desi Hangover requires a strategic importance while addressing SDG’s 12 SDG 15 and SDG 9 and the interdependency between the other SDG’s

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**Figure no. 2**

Recommendations   
Desi Hangover is not only focused on achieving the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit, but also on setting long-term sustainability goals that promote inclusive growth, environmental responsibility and community empowerment. However to gain a competitive advantage in sustainability performance and to address the key manufacturing challenges, Desi Hangover should adopt a series a targeted initiatives that aligns with its core sustainable development goals. The company should explore partnerships with innovators in their field such as Banofi Leather to transition towards plant based and biodegradable leather alternatives. In parallel, Desi Hangover should invest in renewable energy solutions, such as solar installations suited for small scale production and implement energy efficiency programs to reduce the carbon emission, thus advancing SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy and SDG 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. To enhance the product quality work and consumer trust, the company should pursue certification like ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and Leather working Group (LWG ) accreditations to reinforce commitments towards SDG 8 (Decent work and Economic Growth) and SDG 12. Finally to reduce the waste productions defects and material wastage, Desi Hangover should enable lean manufacturing principles and Six Sigma quality methodologies into its artisan production practices, promoting innovation and sustainable resource use.

Conclusion

The findings of Desi Hangover’s business practices shows that the company is committed to creating positive impact on people, communities and the environment. By partnering with rural artisans, promoting gender inclusion, and using upcycled leather and organic tanning methods, the company actively support several key sustainable development goals. The report highlighted these practices as central to Desi Hangover’s long -term commitment to sustainability while addressing challenges in the manufacturing process, such as material sustainability, energy use and production efficiency, In response the recommendation proposed include adoption plant based leather alternatives, implementing renewable energy systems and improving quality control through certifications and lean production methods. This actions will not only strengthen Desi Hangover’s contributions to the SDG’s but will also support its continued growth as a purpose led and socially responsible brand.

References.

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