
Learning Social Entrepreneurship through Technology

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to analyze the learning method of social entrepreneurship adopted through a movie Padman. Numerous stakeholders such as family, community, social activists, entrepreneurs and policy makers were the target audience. The movie narrated the story a poor family residing in rural area and presented their social, cultural and financial problems where a social constraint was a cause of health risk to women. The problem was social in nature. It was converted in an opportunity and the remedy was found through an entrepreneurial venture which later served for the economic well being of the rural women. Based on the thematic analysis of the movie, themes were derived and discussed. Themes, discussion and conclusion are worth value to understand how social problem can be used as an entrepreneurial opportunity for economic and social development of masses at any part of the developing world including Pakistan.

Keywords: Indian movie Padman, women empowerment, Social Entrepreneurship, Health Entrepreneurship

Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a continuing process and requires the transference of knowledge, skills and attitude through education that can motivate the people to become entrepreneurs (Solomon, 2007). It is very challenging to educate people about dimensions of the subject of entrepreneurship which is theoretically embedded in economics but grows in social field. Therefore choosing the appropriate medium that can contribute to learning is important. Lately, the use of technology based tools has produced desired results. The use of audience friendly medium of mass communication that corresponds to wide and complex social issues in short and understandable form, gained popularity. The combination of technology with teaching methods has lead to the development of new tools of learning which are very effective (Hussain & Ahmad, 2016). Therefore movie is considered to be an effective medium for engraving a multifaceted subject in to the minds of people through an informal way with an element of entertainment associated with it. This research study analyzes the learning method of social entrepreneurship adopted in the movie Padman. This movie was written and directed by R.Balki, produced by Twinkle Khanna and released in 2017. The movie, Padman, was based on the life story of a person who made low-cost sanitary pads. The audience of the movie included household women, social entrepreneurs and other adults and the leading role was performed by a well-known Indian actor Akshay Kumar and actress Sonam Kapoor

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The movie begins with the story of lower middle class Indian family, residing in a small town of rural area of India. They were stereotyped in their local culture and traditions but still living happily. The hero of the movie Luxmi marries Gayatri whom he loves and cares. The other family members of Luxmi's family were his mother and two sisters. Basically he is a welding mechanic and works in a workshop. He works very professionally and is therefore, respected by his supervisor. The watering eyes of his wife during onion cutting hurt him and he was curious to find a solution, His curious nature attracted him towards a monkey toy beating drum, he got an idea and took it to his workshop, replaced the sticks of drum by two cutters and drum by onion and made an onion cutting machine. So the sense of care for his wife together with his mechanical skills and innovative mind, led to the solution for her problem costing very low price. He developed a product that solved his problem without the use of expensive technology. Gayatri was barred from household due to menstrual period as part of local tradition and she had to sleep separately at her house terrace from the rest of the family. Luxmi found his wife using cloth as sanitary pads that annoyed him. He went to a medical store and asked for pads. The shopkeeper provided him pads in a confidential way because culturally it was not considered appropriate to sell it openly and asked for fifty five rupees. The price of pads was very higher keeping in view his income level but he managed to buy pads. His wife initially got happy to see the pads but when she heard about the price she refused to use it and insisted him to return pads back to store. When Luxmi was on the way to medical store to return pads, he went to workshop where one of his colleagues while working in workshop accidentally got his arm injured. Luxmi covered his hand with the pad and took him to doctor. The doctor praised Luxmi and told him that pads are hygienic and use of cloth during menses is dangerous for health and may cause many diseases.

Laxmi was firm that Gayatri must use pads so he got idea to prepare handmade pads for his wife at low price. He bought some cotton, sticking gum, cloth and prepared pads. But after using them the results were bad. He again improved pads by adding plastic in to it. But all his family members including his married sister were unhappy due to the fact that in their culture it was considered unethical to talk about menses and pads by males. Finally he reached to a medical college with the intention to provide his pads along with feedback form to the educated and upper class family girls. But they refused to use it as according to them these pads were unhygienic.

A girl in his neighborhood just grew adult and was going through her first menses. She was shifted to the terrace. At night Luxmi silently approach the girl's terrace through a ladder and was telling her about the benefits of using pads. He was about to give her pad when girl's mother saw him and started yelling to gather all the people of the village. Everyone scolded him so as his mother and wife. They all decided to leave him. Somehow he convinced them about his caring intentions and promised Gayatri that in future he will not give pads to anyone.

At last Luxmi decided to test his pads on himself by placing a bag full of goat blood in his underwear over the pad and tighten a football tube with his trouser for pumping blood in to the pad. While riding his bicycle he found it leaking and making his white trouser red. Everyone was angry at him so as his family. The brother of Gayatri took her to his home. Laxmi was disgraced by his village community and he left his village.

Laxmi went to a cotton factory and there he found that the cotton used in a pad is known as

cellulose fiber. He wanted to know about it but he could not find it there. He then went to a university to ask a professor about it but no one was helping him. He then got a job at a professor's home. Where professor's young son told him about Google. The young boy searched him relevant information about cellulose fiber. Later the professor at his computer showed him video about the machine that makes pads. The machine was very expensive.

So being a professional welding mechanic, he understood the functioning of the pad making machine and decided to make it by himself through locally available mechanical parts in low cost. He went to a local capitalist and after a lot of buttering; he gave a loan of one hundred thousand rupees. He worked with commitment and after a lot of labor work he managed to prepare hygienic pads. Now again the issue was how to test it but no one was ready to use it. One night some girls came from city and were in need of pads in midnight while all the shops in the town were closed. They came across Luxmi asking him that from where they can get pad. He gave them pad from his pocket. Next day he went to the hotel where the girls were residing. There, he met Pari, one of the girls who used his pad. The feedback about his pad was good. Luxmi told her about the whole story. She was an educated girl who did graduation in business studies. She invited him to a national level business competition which was quite new for him where people presented their business ideas and products. He could not win first prize but was given a recognition prize. On returning back he paid his entire loan.

Pari educated him about patents, marketing, branding and packaging of his product. She told him that being male in a conservative society, it is not appropriate that he talks about pads. For this, women are the right people. So she developed a women sales force for him who through personal selling going home to home for selling pads at a very affordable price. He got famous and was in newspapers. His villagers, friend and family were shocked to see him in newspapers and television. They were of the view that he got popular but through what they call a "dirty thing". He was invited to United Nations where he delivered a speech.

But his purpose was not to earn money rather to save women from diseases. He does not want to go towards industrialization as it will increase the cost of production of pads and resultantly the customer will have to pay for it. So with the help of Pari, he made a business plan that the poor women will take the loan of two hundred thousand rupees from bank. Out of which one hundred thousand rupees will be paid to him for providing machine and from the rest money they will purchase raw material and will make pads. Thus they will hire a women sale force for selling pads. In this way they will be able to pay installments of the loan and will have their own business for earning money and will also save women from diseases by providing those pads in an affordable price. The plan worked and they were able to successfully make sanitary pads that save woman from diseases and also engaged them in to small business.

This movie not only unveils social problems of the women in rural areas of developing and underdeveloped world but also educates them about entrepreneurship. The sensitization of women in such parts of the world about their health, bad cultural norms and entrepreneurship enables them to find business opportunities within their socio-cultural contexts to improve their living and of other women in their surroundings.

Research methodology

This study was designed by using qualitative single case study research design. The authors

selected the Indian movie *Padman* as a unit of analysis in relation to the learning of social entrepreneurship. For which the researchers followed a descriptive approach of analysis. Furthermore, the study concentrated on the use of the selected movie for learning social entrepreneurship and the related skills to face the associated challenges of social entrepreneurial activities in our local context.

Based on the thematic analysis of the idea, script, dialogues and scenes; the entrepreneurial traits were identified which are: commitment and resilience; social entrepreneurship; opportunities in social problems; innovation; and women orientation. These traits contribute towards learning of social entrepreneurs.

Analysis and interpretations

The discourse analysis of each trait mentioned above in research methodology in detail form is as follow:

1. Commitment and resilience

Luxmi commitment to his objective to make low cost sanitary pads was so strong that despite having requisite resources and competency he remained focused on attainment of his goal. He said to his wife Gayatri “I am worried about your health and I took it as a challenge”. Though Luxmi faced a strong opposition from his family and society as it was against the prevailing social norms to even talk about sanitary pads, but his resilient character and continuous struggle enabled him to succeed in realization of his dream. Luxmi was initially perceived as optimist in his idea. He strived hard for getting required knowledge and machines. Luxmi’s commitment to his profession can be judged from advise he gave to his subordinate in which he said “the work is not complete until it has been evaluated by the expert himself”, he further said “before giving any product to the customer, the vendor himself should try it himself”. This shows that a man of such character can change the stubborn cultural norms to make the world better place for women to live without diseases and earning their own living.

2. Social Entrepreneurship

Luxmi in his speech at UN said “we do not require R & D (Research and development units) instead we require T & F (Try and failure). He further said “The product that I have manufactured was at the cost of good relationship with my mother, sister and wife besides a loan”. Pari insisted him to commercialize his product by registering patent. But he refused. This shows that his vision was above financial gains. He paid cost for his family and community. In turn he was able to have a healthy family and society because without healthier and financially sound women it is unlikely to have a prosperous society.

The Luxmi’s motive was based on threats to health of women due to the use of unhygienic cloth as substitute of sanitary pads during menstrual period. He also disliked the tradition in their village that during menstrual cycles, women were supposed to live in terrace of houses. His concerns became threefold when his own wife started using unhygienic cloths. This shows that he did not had any business motives. Even he was not aware of the terms like innovations, business opportunity, patents, marketing and branding. Once he succeeded in making prototype of his machine, Pari advised him to register patent and commercialize it.

But he was not ready to it as he said that he did not developed machine for the purpose of making money. His motive was to save women from diseases. But he served society with a remedy for the health issues to women in an affordable price along with making it a source of earning for them and for him-self too.

The health threat to the rural women of his country was reduced by manufacturing his sanitary pads. Its price was affordable for poor women. The women sales force were selling it door to door. The sanitary pads manufacturing machines were given to at least one woman in a village on affordable loan. Therefore it can be concluded that focusing on social problems may take us towards their solution also these solutions can become a source of earning.

3. Opportunity in social problems

Luxmi in his speech at UN said “more problems means more opportunities” he further said “Life without problem means nothing, if you want to have a problem free life then it is better to die”. It was initially not based on an entrepreneurial undertaking but later production of sanitary pads on mass level for the consumption of poor women in society combined with business ideas of Pari, developed it in to an entrepreneurial venture. Therefore it can be said that in the given venture, Luxmi entrepreneurial opportunity was found in his social network where her wife was faced by hygiene problem, so as other family members and community of his town.

Generally, it is difficult for entrepreneurs to find business opportunities. They focus more on financial outcomes of an expected business venture. That is why their thinking mostly circles around market demand and economy. Sometimes they extend it to new trends in international markets. While, they neglect the context around them which contain many social problems. Though Luxmi never thought to become entrepreneur and his focus was not on a business opportunity, but his concern for a social problem faced by his community, made him find an opportunity, which in business terms is considered as “entrepreneurial opportunity”.

4. Innovation

The sanitary pads were not introduced by Luxmi for the first time. But he found a new way of manufacturing sanitary pads with less cost of production and resultantly affordable for poor women. Luxmi had a bad experience when he visited sanitary pads industry and found the minds of personnel working there, pigeonholed in the type of machines and technology they are using. They recommended him to visit university for details. When Luxmi went to university to get information about raw material and manufacturing process of sanitary pads, the gatekeeper said to him “if you want to take little knowledge, submit a bank draft in university but if you want to gain more knowledge then submit cash to a Professor for tuition in evening”. He did not have money. He found an alternate for it and decided to work as housekeeper at a Professor’s home with the aim to get knowledge about his project. So he always used to think about substitute. But to his surprise he found professor’s stereotyped in his knowledge. But Professor’s young son introduced him to Google, he got information about cellulose fiber and sanitary pad making machine. This is how he learned the concept of the manufacturing process.

Luxmi was a welding mechanic by profession. He was professionally competent in his skills.

But he always utilized ideas which he got instantly by observing his surrounding, through his mechanical skills in to developing new products. Similarly he made cost effective sanitary pads making machine by using different instruments and devices which are mostly used in home appliances. Through his machine he produced substitute of cellulose fiber by pressing cotton. In this way he made the production process efficient and handy.

Pari's support in terms of using proper marketing tools in the context of target customers helped in success of his project. Women were hired for selling the sanitary pads through personal selling. As the society was sensitive for talking, using and selling of sanitary pads accepted its selling through women sales force. This was again an innovation in their marketing strategy.

In nut shell Luxmi after learning the concept, utilized his and Pari's skills to made innovate substitute of machines, marketing tools and small business establishment which were in line with his vision.

5. Women orientation about entrepreneurship

The field of entrepreneurship with reference to women has been established in developed and even developing countries. But still many women living in rural and remote areas of developing and underdeveloped world are unaware of it. This movie has sensitized such women to work for their well being by finding business opportunities within their social framework. Even these women were not educated but an orientation about business venture followed by training and facilitation made them entrepreneurs. Luxmi was neither a social activist nor expert in women entrepreneurship. He only knew the art of gathering available and affordable resources around him for a purpose that later were developed in to entrepreneurial venture through Pari's guidance.

Discussion

The Luxmi's struggle for a social cause accompanied by his resilient character enabled him to achieve his vision and even beyond it. The success of an entrepreneur is rooted in commitment (Tasnim, 2014) & Kirzner, 1999). A potential idea can be successful only if the personality of entrepreneur is enriched with the characteristic of confidence in the success of his endeavor. Ayala and Manzano (2014), sub-divided resilience in to optimism; toughness and resourceful; as the predictors of entrepreneurial success.

Luxmi's vision did not encircle around financial gains rather a social problem which was cause of threat to women health. After developing his product he did not went for commercialization aspect to earn money. Though he earned reasonably rather lavishly and enabled the women to find a source of earning for them. This projects the narrative that one way or another sources of earning can be explored and developed but if our vision is in the right direction which in this case appeared as social entrepreneurship, then it can gain multifaceted benefits for the society. Roberts (2005) considers social entrepreneurship as a healthier characteristic of society as it is aimed towards attainment of social needs rather commercialization. Similarly Martin, (2015) and Santos (2012) suggested that social entrepreneurship is the pursuit of sustainable solutions to neglected problems with positive externalities.

The movie also provides a lesson for those social activists and entrepreneurs who are in

search of business opportunities for poor women, which can be found in social problems within their surroundings. A sociologist Ronald Burt, presented network theory which reveals that entrepreneurial opportunities can be found in an individual's network if arranged in a particular way (Burt, 2000). This discloses that entrepreneurs instead of trend disciple shall look around their society where they may come across problems and their solutions may generate a business opportunity for them.

Luxmi made an innovation but it was the social cause in his mind that paved the way for it. Schumpeter (1982) considers an entrepreneur as the one who makes innovations or finds the novel ways of productions. It did not involved sophisticated technology. Even those who were more knowledgeable than him never thought about doing it in a simple way. This shows that mostly we are stereotyped by knowledge that we cannot do innovation. We may conclude that according to Joseph Schumpeter a renowned economist in his book "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy", published in 1942, Luxmi did the act of "creative destruction" which is to bring something new about the demise of whatever existed before.

The ultimate beneficiary of the whole struggle of Luxmi was women in terms of awareness about: health, bad cultural norms and establishing business. Even uneducated poor women can be turned in to a productive part of society through guidance, training about entrepreneurship and facilitation. The role of women in socio-economic development is very crucial. Entrepreneurship development and income generating activities are feasible solutions for women empowerment (Vasanthi, M. K. 2019). Until and unless the rural women are not independent economically, they cannot contribute their potential for development of world community.

Conclusion

The movie presented the scenario of rural area and the mindset of the people which was rooted in their culture. This was a causing threat to women health. A person with entrepreneurial traits observed it and despite having a strong resistance from his family and community, he developed a product that removed the health threat to women. Though that product was available in market before but it was expensive and unaffordable for the people of that area. So it was developed at low cost. Further its manufacturing machines and process along with financial guidance was opened for the poor women of that area and the surroundings. The movie beautifully elaborated a social problem causing health risk and its solution through the concept of social entrepreneurship for the economic upbringing of the community. The study concludes use of technology such movies can be used as learning medium for understanding any social problem and converting them in to economic opportunities in any part of the developing world including Pakistan.

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