Chapter 10

Brand Obsessed Society: Branding Yoga Guru Baba Ramdev in India

Chinmaya Kulshrestha
Management Development Institute (MDI), India

Avinash Kapoor
Management Development Institute (MDI), India

ABSTRACT

He is a Yoga Guru, spiritual beacon, Nano-Bio Ayurveda expert, brand ambassador of Indian States, brand ambassador of the UNO mission, political influencer, animation series character, media czar; Baba Ramdev is overall a huge brand! The purpose of this chapter is to explore the value propositions and the sustainable key differentiators to analyze the brand status and brand strategy of spiritual beacon Baba Ramdev. The chapter concludes that there is a strong synergy between image and identity of brand Baba Ramdev resulting in strong personality that offers him a competitive advantage to get across to the consumers.

INTRODUCTION

Baba Ramdev is a renowned Yoga and Ayurveda guru. He is well versed in Sanskrit Grammar, Ayurveda, and Vedic Philosophy. His practical approach to Yoga has won him millions of followers throughout India. Yoga and Pranayam were once considered as something exotic. Swamiji has given a new birth to Yoga by bringing it to public and benefiting people with it. He has helped Yoga become popular among the common man. He is responsible for a revolution in Yoga and health. His vision of an India claiming back its once coveted leadership position through Yoga has found resonance with millions. In addition, this yoga Guru, Spiritual beacon, Nano-Bio Ayurveda expert is brand ambassador of states, Brand ambassador of the UNO mission political influencer, animation series character, media czar: Baba Ramdev! Overall, a Huge Brand!
India has a tradition of mystical gurus, albeit Swami Ramdev represents a new phenomenon: the television yoga evangelist. Almost all his congregations have been drawn through his shows. The television guru is also available in other continents including Africa, Australia, Europe, and America. The huge power, respect, and awe that Brand Ramdev commands can be judged by the fact that his yoga shows “Swami Ramdev’s yoga” on Aastha television channel are shown across 170 countries and have a viewership of 20 million people. After taking over Aastha channel, Swami Ramdev is now all set to launch two channels exclusively for bhajans and Vedas.

Further, at 5 a.m. beneath the Shivalik hills in northern India, Swami Ramdev sits cross-legged swaddled in saffron robes commanding the rapt attention of 500 devotees of his brand of yoga. The crowd consists of people suffering from chronic conditions for which traditional medicine offers comfort. Each “patient” pays 7,000 to 40,000 Indian rupees, to be among the first to spend a week at the swami’s village of 300 bungalows offering spiritual retreat. In sum, Swami Ramdev’s vouchers that pranayama, the ancient Indian art of breath control, can cure an incomprehensible range of diseases. “Asthma, arthritis, sickle-cell anemia, kidney problems, thyroid disease, hepatitis, slipped discs and it will unblock any fallopian tubes,” he tells his audience in the yoga village, who line up to have their blood tested and receive herbal remedies.

Baba’s Brand Strategy

Baba Ramdev also addresses the value Propositions like Product, Leadership, Operational Excellence and Customer Relationship. He has developed a unique blend of Ayurveda and Vedic philosophy to cater to create value for his customers. This brand has mass customized itself to satisfy all and thus have made a distinct place for itself. In an era when the marketers are faced with the challenge of getting their message heard by consumers who are hard to find and even harder to influence, this brand has worked wonders and all because of its all-inclusive image.

**Unique Selling Proposition/Unique Yogic Proposition**

The factors that differentiate Swami Ramdev are his emphasis on teaching and making available the practice of Pranayama for the masses. This is different from other yoga teachers who place more emphasis on yoga postures along with his 500 hospitals in the country that are said to register 30,000 patients per day. He has constantly utilized his target segment as partners in innovation, marketing, and growth of his organization. Similarly, he also studies his programs during his yoga camps where his staff collects on-the-ground data from participants before, during, and after the camp. Given the vast attendance in each of his nearly weekly camps, the volume of data that is collected and analyzed is large. He takes this feedback and periodically revises his programs, based on the results of constant research. The way his yoga camps have evolved, it is clear that he has succeeded in simplifying the efforts required to gain maximum benefits from his exercises, with enough room for flexibility and ease of involvement for the average follower.

Swami Ramdev has built some powerful partnerships with various well-known TV channels to broadcast his yoga camps worldwide. During the camps, he routinely asks participants to get up and share their ‘pranayama success stories’. Inspirational accounts ranging from control of diabetes, blood pressure to healthier cholesterol readings and curing joint pains and skin ailments have proven to be invaluable marketing assets for him. Moreover, best of all, they come at no cost!

Swami Ramdev has not done any charity. He has skillfully veiled what could have been straightforward ‘pay-per-service’ such as the Art of Living programmes. He charges for attending his camps but through price discrimination. Those
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