

Dragon Tattoo – Balancing Growth and Brand Integrity

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Fourteen years ago in the year 2009, Mr Vijay Sharma embarked on a journey in the world of entrepreneurship through the establishment of his brand Dragon Tattoo. Since childhood Mr. Sharma demonstrated his entrepreneurial skills, His first taste of earning came during his school days through a typewriting job that paid him a modest 100 Rs per day. Later on for some time he ventured into the mobile repairing segment, overcoming financial challenges with the help of friends, In 2009, inspired by a friend's success in tattooing, he embarked on a self-preparation journey to become a tattoo artist through YouTube. Financial support from friends and family, coupled with rigorous practice for 20 days, led him to his first significant earnings as Tattoo artist. Vijay Sharma, the founder of Dragon Tattoo, stands at a crossroads, facing a pivotal dilemma that could shape the future of his thriving brand. Having successfully navigated the challenges of the tattoo industry in India, Sharma is confronted with the question of whether to expand Dragon Tattoo to UK. He is also worried regarding the probable brand dilution of Dragon Tattoo if he goes for expansion.

Overview of the Beauty and Wellness Industry in India

The beauty and wellness sector in India is growing at a compounded annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.6 percent driven by a flourishing Indian economy The sector is booming due to the rise of an aspirational middle class that has started considering beauty and wellness as a necessity instead of a luxury.

In a country where traditions are deeply rooted, the emergence of tattoo culture may seem surprising. However, a significant cultural shift is underway, as more individuals view tattoos as a canvas to display their narratives and a medium of self-expression. This adoption of body art reflects changing mind-sets and the desire to break free from traditional customs.

Influential Factors Driving the Industry's Expansion

Several factors have contributed to the unprecedented growth of India's tattoo industry:

1. Celebrity Endorsement and Influence

Celebrities, often considered as influencers and trendsetters, have played a critical role in popularizing tattoos. From actors to athletes, their flaunting of ink on social media platforms has created a ripple effect, inspiring a new generation to seek artistic self-expression.

2. Cultural Acceptance and Shifting Norms

Traditionally, tattoos held negative connotations in Indian culture. However, the perception is shifting, with tattoos now being embraced as a form of storytelling, spirituality, and identity.

3. Modern Artistry Meets Ancient Traditions

Tattoo artists are blending modern tattoo techniques with traditional Indian motifs, creating a captivating fusion that resonates with a diverse clientele seeking unique designs.

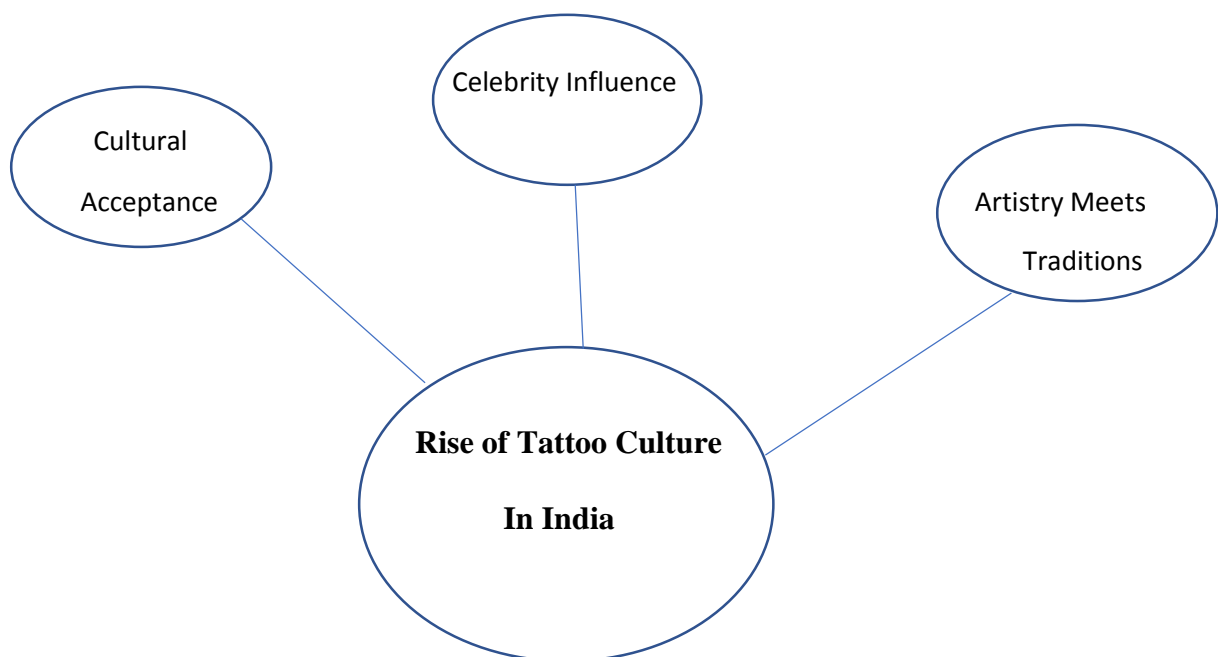


Figure 1 – Prepared by Authors

Background

Mr. Vijay Sharma, since his school days, demonstrated entrepreneurial capability. His first job role was of a typewriter. In this job, his salary was Rs. 100 per day. In the year 2007, he learnt mobile repairing. The course fee to learn mobile repairing was Rs. 1800. Mr. Sharma's friends helped him and he enrolled for a course to learn mobile repairing. He finished half of the course

and started to work in a mobile store for Rs. 500 per day. Since his childhood, he made sure that whatever he is doing he do it with whole heart and dignity. In the year 2009, one of his friend pursued a course of tattoo making. After completion of the course, his friend's salary was Rs. 7000-8000 per month. Mr. Vijay Sharma got fascinated to learn tattoo making. But the fees of the course was around Rs. 2, 00,000 and his family was not in a position to afford that much fee. So, with the help of YouTube, he started to self-prepare himself. And he purchased a tattoo kit for Rs. 9,000. He accumulated these Rs. 9,000 by helping his father in his furniture business. And he also received a help of Rs. 5,000 from one of his friend Nagesh living in Mumbai. After purchasing the kit, he practiced for 20 days. And then he made a tattoo on one of his friend. The results were amazing. And his work got the attention of people. And there was a day when he earned Rs. 10,000 in one single day. But this was irregular income. Tattoo is a lifestyle product. People may not feel it urgent or they may not consider it as their basic need. So, the stream of income was irregular. But Mr. Vijay Sharma was firm determined to go ahead and achieve success in this sector.

Inception of Dragon Tattoo

Mr. Sharma's father's friend generously offered a vacant shop in Gurukul, Ahmedabad, for Mr. Vijay Sharma to start his tattoo studio without any rent. Recognizing the importance of location for a lifestyle business, Mr. Sharma was captivated by the area and established his studio there. His brother's friend, an avid reader, contributed several naming ideas for the studio. After much deliberation, 'Dragon Tattoo' was chosen as the name, marking the birth of Dragon Tattoo Studio.

Initial Challenges and Near Closure

Initially, the studio was generating revenue of rupees 1000 to 2000 per day. But Mr. Sharma maintained his patience because he understood that tattoo is a lifestyle product. Slowly and gradually, my work will speak for myself and clients will come based on word of mouth communication. Mr. Sharma faced huge problem of few clients cheating on him. In his own words, “say suppose 10 persons are visiting for tattoo making, 8 will run away after availing the service and only 2 will pay their fees”. Because tattoo is very personal service and utmost attention need to be given to every client, so few clients were taking undue advantage of their services. So there was a lot of nuisance. In fact, Mr. Sharma took help of police in some cases. There was a time when he decided to close the business in the year 2012. Less income and

more fear was the situation at that time. Even his father suggested him to join their family's furniture business.

Growth, Operations and Achievements

In 2013, Mr Sharma expanded his tattoo business by opening a new studio in Prahladnagar, Ahmedabad, naming it '1920' after a horror movie released that year. He entrusted the studio's daily operations to his first mentee, while he split his time between the original Gurukul studio and the new Prahladnagar location. With minimal competition at the time, his work became well-known among the target audience. This period marked the beginning of Dragon Tattoo's journey to becoming the leading brand it is today. Dragon Tattoo provides four broad services. First one is tattoo training that means tattoo making training, more than 68 students have been trained so far in tattoo making. Second is tattoo removal and third is piercing and last one is events. Mr. Sharma also calls himself a motivational speaker. He keeps on motivating his team and his students who come to him for tattoo making training. Today Dragon Tattoo has seven branches in Ahmedabad. It also has a branch in Udaipur and Hyderabad. The total team size in the seven branches of Ahmedabad is 48 members. There are three levels in the organizational hierarchy. Senior artists, middle level artists and junior artists. The salary of senior artists is around 50,000 per month. Middle level artists get around rupees 20 to 25,000 per month and junior artists get around 12 to 15,000 per month. Mr. Vijay Sharma feels proud when he sees that many of his students are doing better than him. Dragon Tattoo has made more than 12 lakh tattoos since its inception.

Marketing Strategies

Mr. Sharma believes that word-of-mouth communication is the most effective source of brand promotion. "Dragon Tattoo has grown over the years because of our satisfied clients and a satisfied customer becomes brand advocate" Mr Sharma Adds. Therefore, Mr. Vijay Sharma considers word-of-mouth as a strategic tool for promotion. Other than this, he is active on Instagram since 2015. Dragon Tattoo also gives sponsorships to colleges, universities and other institutions. Every client is felicitated with a gift once he or she avail services of dragon tattoo. Clients get free entry in the festive events organized by the brand like holi party, Diwali celebration, and navratri events among others. Dragon Tattoo participates in various tattoo making events and exhibitions, especially in Goa for visibility and public relations. "It is our passion and commitment to work which has made us a trustworthy brand among our clients, our policy is no questions asked and no excuses when it comes to addressing the concerns of

our clients after they avail our services. Every client big or small is equally important for us, Today we consider nobody as our Competitor we have well positioned ourselves as prominent brand in the hearts and minds of people, we spend to give more to our clients” says Mr. Sharma

Table below gives a glimpse of 4Ps of Dragon Tattoo.

Product / Service	Tattoo Training, Tattoo Removal, Piercing, Events
Price	500 Rs per inch
Place	Tattoo Studio (Dragon Tattoo has 7 Branches in Ahmedabad)
Promotion	Word of Mouth, Exhibitions, Sponsorships, Social Media

(Table I – Prepared by Authors)

Future Plans & Challenges

Mr. Vijay Sharma plans to expand his tattoo business by offering custom tattoos and immediate tattoo removal services. He's also eager to continue learning by attending tattoo events worldwide. Despite having invested in a UK branch and hiring two staff members there, he's concerned about the risk of brand dilution and the impact on his Indian market if he shifts his focus to the UK. He views his dragon tattoo brand as his baby and is determined to safeguard and develop it.

This Case is prepared by Dr. Neha Sharma & Dr. Prashant Pareek, Shanti Business School, Ahmedabad, Gujarat, India. Cases of the Shanti Business School, Ahmedabad are prepared as a basis for classroom discussion. They are not designed to present illustrations of either correct or incorrect handling of administrative problems.

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