

Strategic Identity Assessment of Tentree Clothing Company

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Introduction

Tentree Clothing Company is a sustainable and environmentally conscious brand that practices tree planting initiatives to help reduce climate change. Their goal is to plant 1 billion trees by 2030 and become one of the most successful brands in the fashion industry. The company was founded in British Columbia, Canada, by Derrick Emsley, its CEO, in 2012. Tentree Clothing Company's reputation is built on sustainable and ethical manufacturing practices aimed at reducing climate change, giving it a solid strategic identity with customers and employees.

1. Purpose of Report

This report assesses the relationship between the organization's identity and image, as well as analyzes whether Tentree Clothing's image and identity align. It explores whether there are gaps and conflicts in the company's image. Finally, this assessment will determine if the overall long-term reputation of the organization is healthy.

2. Overall Conclusion

The overall conclusion of this report shows that Tentree Clothing Company has a strong connection between its identity and image. The organization's high standards meet the target for sustainability and making a positive impact on the environment. Tentree is a legitimate brand with a reputation for producing high-quality clothing and creating trust with its customers and employees while maintaining the image and identity of a solid, ethical company.

Identity

Tentree Clothing Company is a sustainable producer of environmentally conscious clothing whose identity is reflected in its consistency of environmentally friendly apparel that appeals to all ages of consumers. The organization is guided by three principles – stewardship, transparency and community. The advantages of Tentree's corporate identity are its distinctiveness as a high-quality brand, its positive impact on the environment, and its primary stakeholders, the customers. The customers value Tentree's efforts to plant trees for every item sold; this, in turn, gives the organization a transparent image within the community and enhances Tentree's reputation as a leader in the fight against climate change.

Tentree is an environmentally conscious clothing company that symbolizes the growing movement of climate change activists who are committed to preserving the planet. The company's identity is conveyed through images of forests and models wearing outdoor brand clothing. The use of nature imagery helps to establish Tentree's reputation as an Earth-first apparel brand that is dedicated to saving the planet one tree at a time. Tentree's pictures and photos are symbolic as a part of identity construction. By aligning its identity, image, and reputation with an environmental movement that sells clothes, Tentree communicates its commitment to being a responsible steward of the planet.

Tentree Clothing's identity is conveyed through the behaviour of its solid image of transparency in sourcing and ethical manufacturing while aligning company values with its employees. Tentree empowers its employees with a culture of belonging and

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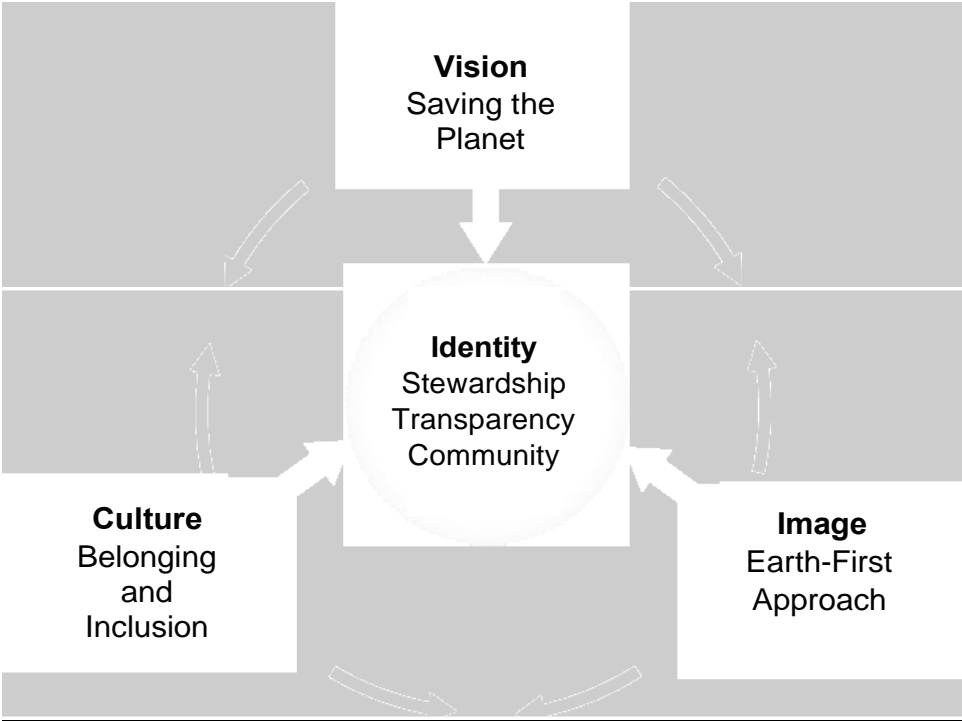
inclusion; this fosters trust and connection between workers. An example of this inclusion can be seen in 2022, when Tentree collaborated with a Vancouver-based non-profit company, QMUNITY, to offer Queer Competency Training workshops. This helped Tentree's employees better understand and support the LGBTQ community. This belonging and inclusion empowered employees to use their voices to improve the organization's work environment.

Image

The images held by Tentree Clothing Company can be seen in its stakeholder groups, mainly its customers, employees and investors. These stakeholder groups perceive the organization regarding values, transparency and community. Firstly, Tentree's customers see the company as an environmentally sustainable clothing manufacturer that provides an open, ethical shopping experience while being a high-quality brand of apparel that helps fight climate change. An example of this type of practice can be seen in Tentree's ability to create a feeling of warmth and safety with its consumers around the organization. Consumers connect with Tentree Clothing by relating to the brand and having an emotional connection to the clothing; Tentree's practice of planting trees for every item sold makes customers feel like they care about the environment and saving the planet. As (Kim et al., 2021) state, "Small businesses, like Tentree, can position themselves as warmer and more caring than larger companies [47]. Doing so made it possible for Tentree to enter the competitive casual apparel market, which has been dominated by large multinational players" (Kim et al., p. 111). Non-profit environmentally conscious groups benefit from this because consumers create people over-profit schemes that encourage consumers to buy products and charities to donate to companies like Tentree.

Furthermore, the perceptions of the company's employees and investors are evident through the transparency of Tentree's environmentally conscious corporate strategy. Tentree's implementation of an environmental, social, and governance culture (ESG) improves employees' overall performance by creating low staff turnover and increasing talent that cares about climate change and sustainability. Lastly, investors see Tentree's contribution to the environment of planting ten trees for every purchase as a good image builder for the business environment while displaying responsible corporate citizenship. Tentree has collaborated with the GRID investment and Suuchi to increase efficiency and data visibility through ethical sourcing and logistics; this allows Tentree to improve the efficiency of its automated operations. As Figure 1 shows, Tentree's vision, image and identity of an environmentally friendly culture is built through its image of environmentally sustainable apparel ethics, which drives the company's profits while satisfying environmentalists.

Figure 1 - Tentree Clothing Culture–Vision–Image Model (Source: *Hatch & Schultz, 2001: 131.*)



Alignment

Based on the research on identity and image in the previous section, there is a strong alignment of Tentree's corporate image in the minds of its customers (stakeholders) and the organizational culture experienced by employees. An investor's corporate vision of the company also aligns with the other two stakeholders mentioned. This organization's vision seems to align between internal identity and external image while remaining transparent. Tentree Clothing Company's vision of its identity appears consistent with its customers' experiences.

There are areas where there are gaps in alignment with the company's employees and its investors in new markets globally. This can affect the overall authenticity, transparency and credibility of Tentree as an organization. An example of gaps in the business is its possible decision to move production overseas where working conditions are not up to the standards of North American laws. Tentree's image as an environmentally conscious brand based in North America means its reputation with its customers and employees must remain solid and stay in alignment with its identity of stewardship, transparency and community as an ethical company that stays true to its roots in fighting climate change and providing a feeling of warmth and safety with its stakeholders.

Secondly, it can be risky for Tentree Clothing to invest in offshore companies with low capital; the company would have to make significant investments to expand to this type of audience. The "risk/return trade-off" could force the organization to take long-term loans with high-interest rates, making it challenging to expand globally and threatening Tentree's overall credibility with its investors. As a result, the company would have excess goods in North America, affecting its stakeholders or groups investing in the organization's business.

Some strategies that might be useful to fix Tentree's alignment related to these stakeholders would be to continue its social mission as a sustainable, friendly company that fights climate change and puts these responsibilities above making huge profits. Also, staying in North America for manufacturing would help the company's marketing with its customers and attract employees who want to work for an ethical clothing manufacturer. Secondly, pushing business in North America might help Tentree Clothing attract better investors who don't like to risk high-interest rates and outsourcing with overseas countries that would compromise the quality of the brand and possibly lose the reputation of Tentree as a uniquely established fashion apparel clothing company that builds trust with its stakeholders; mainly its customers and employees. This, in turn, might align the organization's authenticity, transparency and credibility. Tentree Clothing's image and identity rests on its strong connection with consumers, employees and investors as an eco-friendly organization trying to save the planet from climate change.

Reputation Management

Given these points, Tentree Clothing Company's overall reputation seems solid and transparent with its alignment and identity. The only threats to the organization appear to be the gaps in the company's possible decision to move manufacturing overseas, affecting its employees (secondary stakeholders). If Tentree is to keep its reputation as an environmentally conscious brand based in North America, it must align with its three principles: stewardship, transparency and community. Secondly, the risk of investing with offshore companies threatens Tentree's overall credibility with its investors. This might force the organization to take long-term loans with high-interest rates, making it challenging to expand globally. Finally, the organization's primary stakeholders, its customers, must see Tentree's identity and image as an environmentally friendly apparel brand that continues to support climate change communities and provide ethical, fashion-conscious clothing to consumers while providing a unique shopping experience.

Overall, Tentree Clothing Company is a socially responsible apparel brand whose long-standing reputation with its stakeholders holds up with most recent image problems. The gaps in its identity, image and reputation are few compared to the organization's solid and ethical position as an environmentally sustainable fashion company. However, a recent CBC article claims fashion companies like Tentree have misleading labels about manufacturing sources for their clothing, particularly regarding the fabric content of the garments. Many consumers throw away large amounts of brand-new clothing when finished with them; this contributes to landfill pollution and climate change. Companies such as Tentree must be careful not to put misleading claims about their apparel on the market, which might damage their reputation and image as a leading producer of sustainable clothing. As Agro et al. (2023) state, "Retail brands like H&M, The Gap and Nike have gone to great lengths to satisfy growing consumer demand for sustainable clothing, but many of the companies' labels and claims do not stand up to scrutiny, particularly when it comes to recycled materials" (Agro et al. 2023). Many companies have outsourced their manufacturing to third-world countries and used recycled materials to make clothing because it's cheaper and less labour-intensive. For example, some of Tentree's men's T-shirts are composed of recycled polyester, which seems more environmentally friendly but creates more waste for the planet as consumers throw away clothing of less lasting quality. Tentree Clothing's overall reputation with its customers (main stakeholders) must remain a Canadian-owned company with an Earth-First approach and a vision of saving the planet one tree at a time. Its social responsibility and integrity rely upon how it successfully manages image problems like misleading clothing labels and customer dissatisfaction.

Therefore, Tentree Clothing's alignment with its identity and image, combined with its overall reputation, makes this company a solid, authentic brand that has a strong connection between its identity and image; this, in turn, satisfies its primary stakeholders, mainly customers, employees and investors. Through sustainable and ethical manufacturing practices, Tentree builds a strong reputation as a clothing company that reduces climate change and aligns with its identity and image of an Earth-First approach organization. This analysis shows the integrity and cohesion of Tentree Clothing as a transparent apparel brand loyal to its stakeholders. Finally, this assessment shows the overall long-term reputation of the company is healthy. Their goal of planting 1 billion trees by 2023 could help future generations make more informed purchase choices while attracting more sustainable investors and providing consumers with a culture of belonging and

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inclusion. This company will continue to trade on its long-standing reputation as an environmentally conscious brand to weather the storm of recent image problems by being a Canadian-based clothing brand that projects stewardship, transparency and community. These three main principles will continue to enhance Tentree Clothing Company's overall reputation in the global market.

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