

## Film Review

### ”Real Value”

#### 1. Introduction

The film we have chosen is a documentary from 2014 called Real Value. Featured in the film are business owners in apparel, biofuel, agriculture, insurance industry and Dan Ariely, a world-renowned professor in psychology and behavioral economics. The documentary highlights the positive outcome of leading socially responsible companies, both for the climate and the local community.

Real Value is a documentary based on true stories of companies that reached success with the idea of sustainability as the main goal. The film shows us the way the leaders of these businesses came to the idea of not only creating profit but also wealth by serving and bringing back to the community. Through the entrepreneurs personal experiences, we understand how to implement a more sustainable business model that is not only efficient but also bring value for all.

#### 2. Analysis

The documentary does not call for action, rather focuses on inspire individuals to develop socially responsible businesses and companies. Hearing the different aspects from the people interviewed you get a deep understanding on how a business can change the community. It takes a local community’s perspective, focusing on how our towns, cities and the countryside change depending on a company's actions. Businesses can either contribute to the local market, investing in people and the community’s wealth and health. Or it can foster the opposite, drowning the community on its resources and make it dependent on import and work from neighboring cities. It is an interesting perspective as it is applicable on communal, national and global level as well as in both developing and non-developing countries.

The documentary reflects the entrepreneurs’ perspectives. However, the movie omits the perspectives of governments, large companies, and employees in factories.

In the beginning of the documentary the term "value" is questioned. What is real value? It makes us question how we define value and what makes a product valuable. With the commentary of Dan Ariely, it attempts to explain how consumers make certain choices and how they perceive "value". From a traditional economist's point of view, the value of a product is whatever people are willing to pay for it. But it does not mean it correlates with the products quality. This perspective challenges our consumption society. Today, marketing thru social media affects us everyday, influencing what we choose to buy and invest in. Marketing is based on capturing people's interest, which today's social media driven society are big consumers of. A product's value is defined by who is using it, the design and how well it is portrayed on social media. However, would we have more Fair Trade, socially responsible and climate friendly fast-moving consumer goods, it would benefit them too or even more.

The film brings up the importance of trust and how Carol Koury from "Sow True Seed" puts it; "sticking to principals is profitable". A social responsible business model puts the social and environmental impact in the centre and lets the consumer look in. It values transparency and honesty over profit and record sale numbers. The business follows its principals in order to build up trust between them and the consumer, nourishing a healthy consumer mind-set rather than exploiting the consumer. It highlights how economy and social profit can work together to save communities and our climate. The documentary does not focus on what it takes to achieve a social responsible society and the forces working against it. It takes a positive approach which is maybe what we need in order to get people and companies moving?

### 3. Evaluation

Throughout the film, the entrepreneurs provide reasons for how they learned to conduct business that both serves local communities and generates sustainable profits. According to the individuals featured in the movie; socially responsible businesses can be a solution to the problems facing our societies and our climate. The business owners encourage people to both produce and consume locally so that local businesses and communities can benefit each other.

This movie supports individuals' and small local entrepreneurs' eager to give back to their community, giving us an idea on how it can bring about significant changes on a global scale.

The movie doesn't call governments or corporations for direct action. It rather targets consumers and business owners; portraying success stories of agriculture, biofuel, apparel, and insurance businesses that are making contribution to their communities and environment. The documentary highlights the importance of operating a business in a transparent manner. The owner of the apparel business explains that he provides full information to the customers about the whole supply-chain of his business. Even though he agrees that this information might be used by his existing or future competitors, he makes it clear that his main goal is to be honest with his customers.

While the movie attempts to explain that socially responsible communities and businesses can be a solution to the social and environmental issues, it doesn't reflect on perspectives of governments, large businesses and employees in factories. As governments are mainly funded by tax returns, it is highly likely that small-scale local businesses contribute less to the state than large-scale corporations do. The movie provides examples of apparel products made in Bangladesh, China, and Turkey. It is likely that there are two reasons why large scale apparel businesses based in developed countries move their production overseas. First, as the movie explains, consumers are more focused on the "price" of the product. This means that in a competitive market, such as apparel industry, there is a strong need to cut the costs so that companies can offer lower prices. Thus, major players in apparel industry cut on labor costs by moving production facilities to developing countries. Second, establishing productions in developing countries would not be possible without consent of local governments. Politicians in developing countries weigh costs and benefits of having a foreign factory. In many instances they prefer to support foreign companies as they create employment opportunities for local citizens as well as generate tax returns. Furthermore, having a foreign production facility established in communities in developing countries is beneficial for the people who face limited economic opportunities.

#### 4. Relevance to Global Challenges and Sustainable Futures

Real Value is a film that questions economic growth and gross domestic product and hence omitting social and environmental factors. Is economic profit the best indicator of the well-being of a nation? What about environmental and social impact of the businesses? The businesses featured in the documentary are great examples of companies that have drastically changed the traditional business model relying heavily on profit. They have proven that you can generate profit as well as bring environmental and social benefit to the community

If we do not change the ways we are making business it could have a major impact on society and the environment. Today, prices are low for fast-consumer goods, unrealistically low. We save money today but in the long term it will bring greater loss within our communities. Losing our sacred values, as trust and respect, and leaving a drowned society.

Through the movie we can observe how profits and wealth can be united to saving our climate. Socially responsible business models are the key to take our societies forward and start building local networks of trust and respect. By creating strong communities; where the consumers and business owners have a close relationship, where your fuel comes from last weeks food waste and where food is harvested locally, we also create strong and healthy nations. A sustainable future is possible when we start looking at our communities. It might be difficult making global changes, but starting out in our hometowns we could actually make a difference.

Knowing that there are other alternatives to starting and running a company and that we as consumers have the power to choose what we want to support with our money can spur change. Knowledge is power and this documentary really equip viewers with information on how small businesses and consumers can make a difference. Remember this; “All profits are not created equal, those that carry a social benefit are better” (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

#### References:

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