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LOST IN TRANSLATION: A CLOSER LOOK AT THE SWEDISH ORGANIC CERTIFICATION AGENCY – KRAV**KHAN RIFAT SALAM****LECTURER****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION****IBAIS UNIVERSITY****DHAKA****MAHZABIN CHOWDHURY****LECTURER****DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION****IBAIS UNIVERSITY****DHAKA****ABSTRACT**

This paper takes in the view points of the Swedish Organic Certification Agency 'KRAV' in light of their poor performance in the 2010 World Wildlife Foundation's (WWF) report on global organic certification agencies. Despite having a superior set of certification policies KRAV received unfavorable reviews due to the lack of standard documentations in English. The article finds that KRAV does have strict and defined certifications standards some of which are unique in the industry. The lessons from this incident may be thought provoking for similar and other firms that wish to expand beyond their comfort zone and gain global recognition.


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KEYWORDS

Fishing Industry, Importance of Standard Documentation, KRAV, Organic Certification.

BACKGROUND

 In the eve of the 2012 UEFA Champions League Final, Jupp Heynckes, the manager of Bayern Munich, called Chelsea forward Didier Drogba a 'Schauspieler' – the German word for an actor or a performer. The media decided to use 'actor' as the translation for Mr. Heynckes' remarks. In the soccer world, 'actor' is not a complement - If anything, it signifies cheating. While this could well have turned into an ugly battle of words, thanks to Didier Drogba that it didn't. Mr. Drogba, in a later press event, assured the media that he believes that the Munich manager thinks of him as a great performer in the field and not an actor. Lost in Translation.....almost.

In this age of globalization and instant communication, can a similar case happen to a business entity where it fails to make its desired impact due to lack oftranslations? As it appears, yes it can. Look no further than the 2010 Seafood sustainability certification report (published in December, 2009) from the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF). On that report, the Swedish organic certification agency KRAV scored a meager 54 on a 100 point scale and came in 4th among the 7 agencies evaluated. On top of that, WWF noted that if it (WWF) had employed stricter quantitative evaluation techniques, the scores for KRAV would have been even worse (WWF, 2010).

WHAT ABOUT THE SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTALISM?

It is common knowledge that Sweden along with the other Scandinavian countries have been known to be more environment-conscious or environmental awareness rich areas when compared to other areas across the world (Porter & van der Linde, 1995; Lynes&Andrachuck, 2008; Palmer *et al*, 1999). Typically the Swedish consumers as well as business entities are known to be more environment conscious as well (Porter & van der Linde, 1995). In addition, Lynes&Andrachuck (2008) find that people from Scandinavia are not only conscious and aware of the environmental issues but also very proactive towards protecting and preserving the environment. Therefore, it can only be assumed that as the largest organic certification agency from Sweden, KRAV would rank among the best in the globe.

So, such an evaluation, especially coming from a worldwide reputed organization as the WWF, should raise some eyebrows concerning the certification programs of KRAV. However, in a statement issued on the 24th January 2010, KRAV assured that their certification is top notch and their poor performance in the WWF report was due to, you guessed it, lack of translated documents. KRAV argued that while such a report from WWF is greatly appreciated, it did not reflect the true nature and performance of KRAV and its certification programs.

Now, with the widespread reputation of Sweden as an extremely environment conscious society, it does not bode well for the most respected Swedish certification agency to receive such low rating and less than favorable evaluation. It was time for action.

KRAV'S POINT OF VIEW

"It is true that during that time, we did not have our standard evaluation details available in English on our webpage and most of our official documents were only in Swedish" – exclaims Lars Hällbom, the Standards Director of KRAV, in an interview with the authors from his Uppsala office. "We did have the general outline or summary of our certification requirements and processes available in print and online, but as the (WWF) report would suggest, that wasn't enough", he continues.

KRAV also mentions that many of the core criteria of their seafood certifications were not even included in the ranking process. "We are the only organization that takes the entire fishing process into account to certify a seafood product. The KRAV certification of a product begins at the producer's office and ends at the supermarket".

Such words are not empty as the KRAV certification document for sustainable seafood (available in only Swedish prior to 2010) obtained from KRAV's official webpage outlines not only the size, weight, fishing quantity of a given fish species, but also provides strict guidelines regarding the optimal emissions from the fishing boats, environmental training of the crew members, and the use of eco- friendly engine fluids even paints in the boat (KRAV, 2010a). In short, the organization's certification process evaluates the entire fishing operation of the concerned firm before a certificate is issued.

While KRAV certifies all sorts of food items for consumption in the Swedish market, it puts extra emphasis on its fishing certification program. "We do believe that we have to do all in our power to protect the environment and protecting our oceans definitely should be the top priority" exclaims Mr. Hällbom.

UPON FURTHER REVIEW

Academic scholars (King, 1995; Sharma, 2000; Newton, 2002; Vasilev, 2011) have emphasized the importance of preserving the natural environment and ranked protecting the marine life as the top priority. Bavaria (1994, p.40) calls fishing industry a prominent natural resource-dependent industry and puts maximum emphasis in its protection. Vasilev (2011) goes a little further and brands the fishing industry as premium polluters because the fishing companies usually go beyond just air and water pollution by overfishing and thus making the entire ecosystem vulnerable.

KRAV acknowledges all these scholarly elements of the debate and points out that they were the only organic certification agency (during the preparation and publication of the 2010 WWF report) to accommodate all the above mentioned aspects. Official KRAV documents from 2010 shows that, in order to become a KRAV certified fishery, a firm had to –

- Comply with a clear and strict emissions standard for its fishing fleet.
- Comply with a well-defined list of authorized paint and other chemical materials to be used on the fishing fleet.
- Have trained and KRAV certified crew members on board its fleet.
- Catch only a predefined amount of a certain species of fish and/or seafood. It must be noted that KRAV only certified capturing of eight (8) different species of seafood/fish in 2010. The size of the seafood/fish, fishing period, and fishing zones were predefined by KRAV.
- Comply with the KRAV approved means of storage of seafood/fish for both onboard and onshore storage facilities. This particular restriction was aimed at reducing the emission of harmful gases resulting from conventional refrigeration.
- Adopt KRAV approved packaging methods to ensure sustainability.
- Ensure the energy (electricity) used during the storage, packaging, and other stages comes from a renewable source.
- Accommodate KRAV inspectors at any time at any of its certified facilities (such as fishing boat, storage, or packaging) for standard inspections.

The three other organizations that scored better than KRAV on the WWF report were Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Friend of The Sea, and Naturland. A thorough inspection of the WWF report reveals that KRAV scored really low points on stakeholder issues and working conditions when compared to these three organizations. When encountered about these issues, Mr. Hällbom's response was that both of these issues are of high importance to KRAV and form an integral part of the basic documents of any certifications. However, for this report, KRAV provided WWF with the specific fishing related sustainability certification documents and these two issues were not elaborated in the English document. The Swedish version of the document deals with all of these aspects in great detail. Therefore, Mr. Hällbom feels that this assessment by the WWF is unfair to KRAV.

In all fairness to KRAV, the Swedish version of the 2010 document (KRAV, 2010b) does contain some of the strictest fishing related environmental regulations even in today's standards. For example, the regulations regarding approved paint and chemicals for the fishing fleet has not yet been included in any other certification body's standard documents. To strengthen this point further, Naturland's certification document from 2012 (Naturland, 2012) seems compatible with the above mentioned standards of KRAV. However, the details regarding limiting pollution by the fishing vessels (such as use of various chemicals on board) are extremely limited and fall short of KRAV's 2010 standards. Many such instances can be cited to illustrate the point that KRAV applies some of the best industry practices when it comes to organic certification of seafood/fish products and deserves better than 'Average' or 'Above Average' as deemed by the WWF report. While KRAV never claimed to be the best organic certification body in the world, it declines to accept that it is the 4th best among such organizations.

LOST IN TRANSLATION AND THEN

Bruckmeier&Neuman (2005) asserts that the Swedish fisheries are not ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable and there is a movement towards making them so. KRAV is at the forefront of this movement by providing the Swedish population with the environmental awareness and by implementing ever so strict ecological or organic certification standards for the fisheries.

KRAV may have scored unsatisfactorily in a global assessment report by the WWF, but it firmly believes that it was done in by its lack of English standard documents. In other words, KRAV got lost in translation!

Since the publication of that WWF report, KRAV has made sure that all its documents are available online as well as in print in both Swedish and in English. The KRAV webpage (www.krav.se) today contains detailed standard policies, definitions, rules and regulations, and even public awareness materials regarding organic lifestyle in both the languages. In the words of Mr. Hällbom, "The next WWF report would definitely see KRAV among the top two, I promise you!"

FINAL WORDS

The phrase 'lost in translation' used above, may be appropriate to describe the KRAV fiasco simply for the reason that despite having the strictest standards regarding seafood certification among the seven agencies evaluated, KRAV was ranked as only the fourth best organic seafood certifying body. This statement can be supported with the fact that while certifying organic seafood, even today, KRAV remains the only certification agency (among the 7 inspected by the WWF) to monitor not only the fish stock and the fishing process but also the CO₂ and other emissions and fuel and other chemical usage by the fishing vessels in use. So, the core message is that even if an organization has the best industry practice, it may very well be insufficient to succeed beyond the organization's comfort zone if not communicated properly and effectively.

While the setting of this article is organic certification agencies, from a management perspective, this issue is relevant for almost all the business organizations that want to explore beyond their native boundaries. However, this lesson would be particularly useful for documentation intensive organizations such as law firms, banking and financial institutions, certification bodies, insurance companies.

KRAV's actions following the publication of the WWF report may be seen as a 'Proactive Management' (Griffin, 2012) decision but in all fairness KRAV only certified products in the Swedish market and therefore did not feel a true need to have the standards documents in English. The WWF report served as a reminder and enabled KRAV to take the steps necessary to establish itself on the global stage and reiterating the age-old adage - "Better late than never".

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