



# **Legend of Entrepreneurial Business Model: A Case of Lanka Harness Co. (Pvt) Ltd**

**Staff Development Unit  
Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies  
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*Legend of Entrepreneurial Business Model:  
A Case Study of  
Lanka Harness Co. (Pvt) Ltd*

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A publication of a book has been a major aim of me ever since I was a kid. I remember once in my school a student has published a book with poems and it was appreciated in the assembly of a one fine Monday morning at the school which had hit hard in my mind. For many years I was searching for an opportunity to write something which would be useful for people in Sri Lanka. I take this opportunity to thank Mr. D.M.R. Dissanayake, Senior Lecturer and the Coordinator of the Staff Development Unit of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies for giving me the opportunity to write this case study and instructing & supervising continuously for fine tuning the content. The case study wouldn't be a reality without the guidance, advice, support and facilitation extended by Dr. D.M.Semasinghe, Dean, Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies. Thus, I convey my sincere gratitude to the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce and Management Studies for his utmost support, guidance and kindness in completion of the case study.

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## **1. COMPANY BACKGROUND**

Lanka Harness Co. (Pvt) Ltd is established in 2002 and involved in assembling automobile seat belt sensor switches, airbag sensor switches, and sun visors. The assembling plant is situated in the block B of the Biyagama export processing zone. The company currently possesses 460,000 pieces capacity per month with 230 well trained labor force by the mother company. Impact sensors for automobile airbags and seat belts are the key products of the company. The products are exported to Japan, Indonesia, Romania, Thailand and India and would be assembled in famous automobile brands such as Toyota, Nissan, Honda, Mitsubishi & Mazda of Japan, Ford, General Motors and Chrysler of USA, Volvo, SAAB, BMW, Aston Martin, Opel and Renault of Europe.

The company is maintaining a proper quality management system within its productions and operations which is proved by possessing ISO 9001:2008 certification. Moreover, as per the Managing Director, “the customers are concerned on 100% assurance on our products since even 1% failure would result in losing the life of the users of cars and we would lose the business. Thus, we are concerned on keeping the quality level with 1 parts per million (1 PPM).

## 1.1. INDUSTRY/SECTOR OVERVIEW

The company is operated as a supplier to automobile manufacturing companies around the world. Thus, the competitors would include all suppliers and manufacturers of automobiles. The current production capacity of the world automobile industries includes 65.44 million cars and 21.86 million commercial vehicles by the year 2013 (Exhibit 01). Further the number of passenger cars and commercial vehicles in use is around 833 million and 309 million respectively by the year 2012 (Exhibit 02).

The following tables present the world's largest manufacturers of automobiles in order of the turnover earned and the market shares of top automobile brands up to August 2013.

**Table 01: Largest Automobiles Manufacturers**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Company</b>	<b>Sales</b> (in millions of units)
<b>1</b>	General Motors	9.72
<b>2</b>	Volkswagen	9.51
<b>3</b>	Toyota	9.03
<b>4</b>	Ford	6.33
<b>5</b>	Nissan	5.1
<b>6</b>	Hyundai	4.72
<b>7</b>	Honda	4.28
<b>8</b>	KIA	2.83
<b>9</b>	Peugeot	2.82
<b>10</b>	Suzuki	2.69

*Source: <http://www.statista.com>*

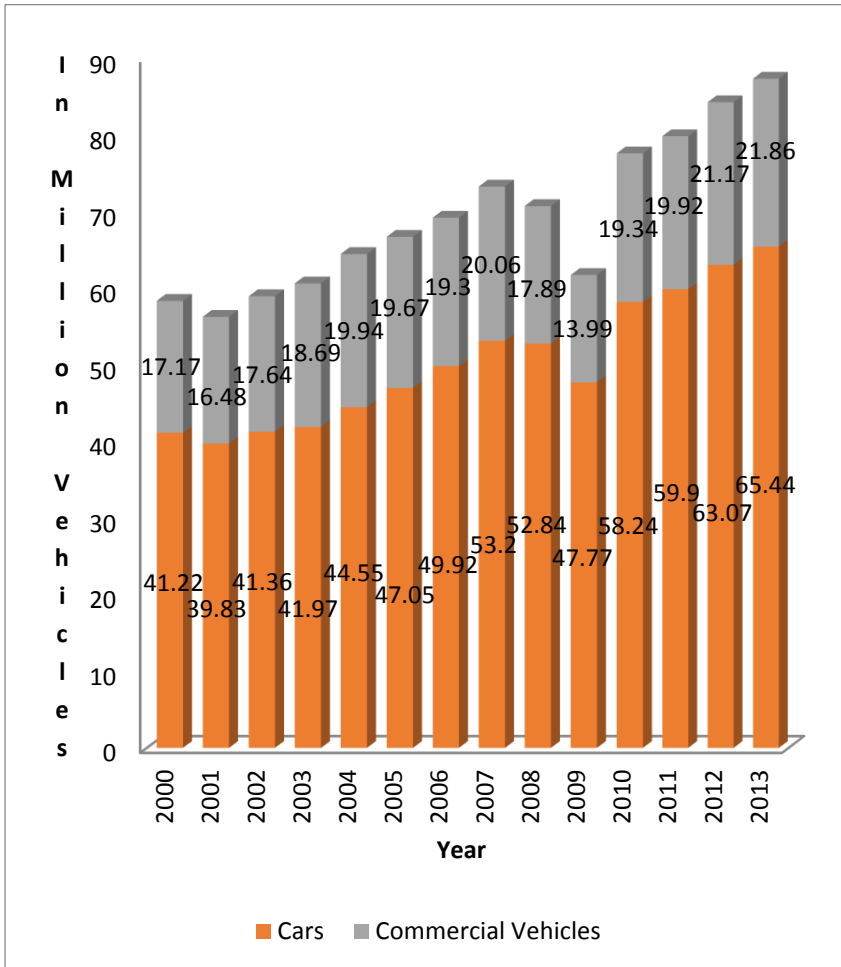


**Table 02: The Top Automobiles Brands**

<b>Ranking</b>	<b>Brand</b>	<b>Market Share (By August 2013)</b>
<b>1</b>	Toyota	10.3%
<b>2</b>	Volkswagen	8.0%
<b>3</b>	Ford	7.3%
<b>4</b>	Chevrolet	6.3%
<b>5</b>	Nissan	5.6%
<b>6</b>	Hyundai	5.6%
<b>7</b>	Honda	5.0%
<b>8</b>	KIA	3.3%
<b>9</b>	Renault	2.4%
<b>10</b>	Fiat	2.3%
<b>11</b>	BMW	2.0%
<b>12</b>	Audi	2.0%

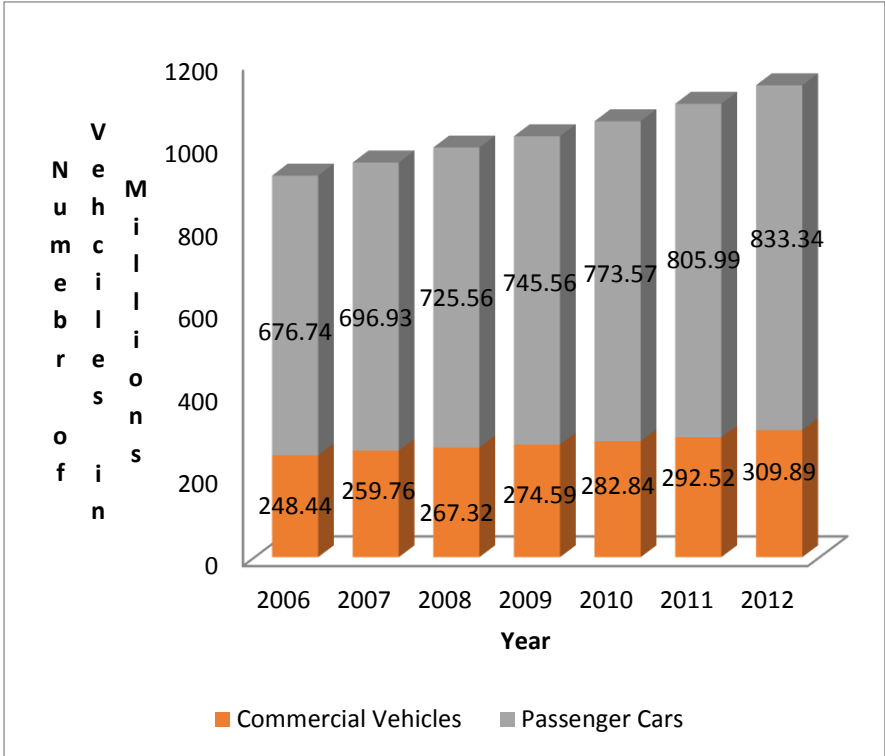
*Source:<http://focus2move.com/world-car-market-top-50-brands-ranking-in-august-2013-fords-breath-on-volkswagen-shoulders/>*

**Exhibit 01: Worldwide Automobile Production from 2000 to 2013 (in million vehicles)**



Source: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)

**Exhibit 02: Number of Passenger Cars and Commercial Vehicles in Use Worldwide from 2006 to 2012 (in millions)**



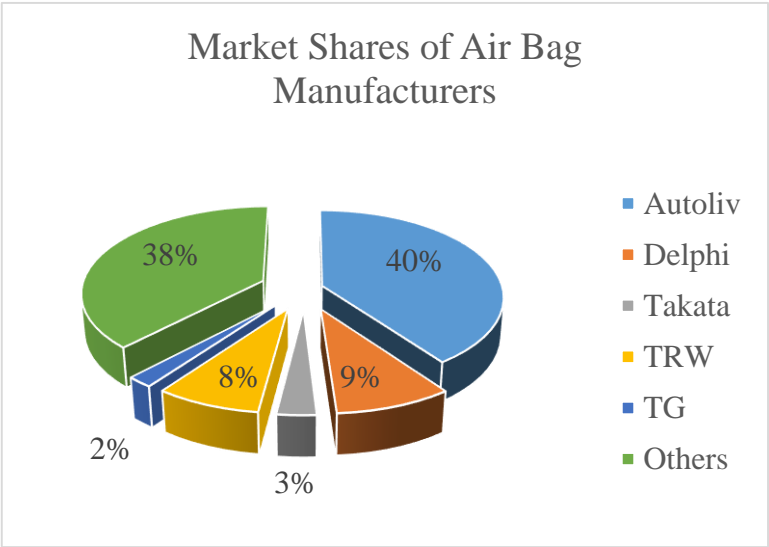
Source: [www.statista.com](http://www.statista.com)

Similarly to the rate of increase of the automobile manufacturing in the world the number of deaths and road fatalities has also been increasing at rapid rate. According to the road safety annual report 2014, except few countries road traffic deaths have been increasing for many other member countries. Some countries have reported more than 10% increase of road fatalities. As a safety option the seat belts were introduced in 1950 and

introduced the Rambler, Nash-Kelvinator model. However in the contemporary automobile world, the seat belt is a mandatory requirement imposed by law. Another innovation to the automobile industry is air bags which was proved to reduce the negative impact of an accident by 35% according to a study conducted by State Farm Insurance Company.

The objective of the case study is to analyze the quality maintenance system adapted by the Lanka Harness Company Pvt Ltd. Before explaining about the company it is indeed important analyzing the air bags market of the world since the Lanka Harness Co. limited is supplying its products to the most famous automobile brands around the world. The air bag industry is driven by the regulations imposed by the governments and rapid increase of road fatalities around the world.

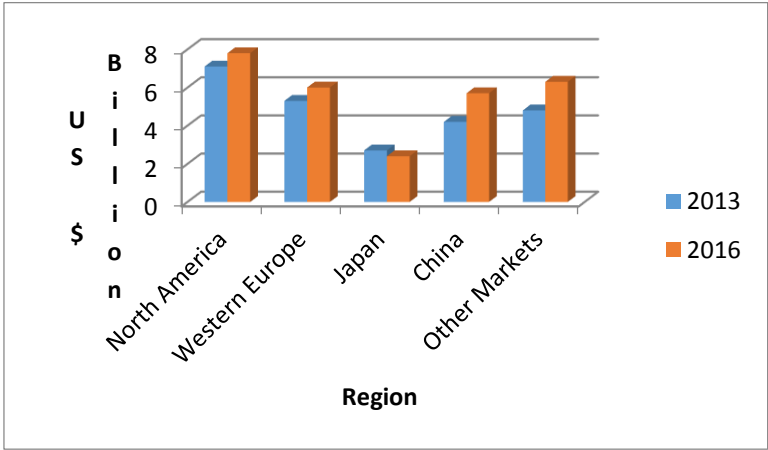
**Exhibit 03: Market Shares of Air Bag Manufacturers**



Source: [www.outsource2india.com](http://www.outsource2india.com)

The above pie chart reflects the market shares of the world air bag manufacturers. As per the statistics Autoliv is maintaining the largest share of market out of the air bags market. Autoliv is established by Lennart Lindblad in 1953 as a car and a tractor repair shop under the name “Lindblads Auto service AB”. The company has introduced first seat belt in 1956 and introduced first inflatable curtain airbag in 1998. The company is currently 12.5% return on equity and 22.1% return on capital employed. The company has forecasted its annual market growth rate as 5% per annum.

**Exhibit 04: Autoliv Growth by Regio**



Source: <http://www.autoliv.com>

## **1.2.SWOT ANALYSIS FOR AIRBAGS INDUSTRY**

### **1.2.1. Strengths**

- **High market growth rate**  
The world air bag and seat belt market has grown rapidly and it has been forecasted that the air bags demand would double by 2019. Particularly the high market growth rate is attributed to,
  - Increased regulatory requirements for seat belts and air bags,
  - Performance evaluation of cars and other vehicles by institutes(Rohan, 2014)

### **1.2.2. Weaknesses**

- The airbags industry is dependent upon the automobile industry
- High exit barriers
- High cost which should be borne by the consumers for replacing the air bags
- Intensive rivalry

### **1.2.3. Opportunities**

- Opportunity to introduce air bags to two wheelers
- Low cost of production in developing countries

### **1.2.4. Threats**

- The negative impression created by air bags recall of Takata
- Innovations that could replace air bags industry

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Entrepreneurs are the blood of the economy which takes different forms starting as a small business to the point of being a multimillionaire. With the changes of the demographic factors and the culture of the society focus on being an entrepreneur has been changing. The young crowd in Sri Lanka does consider finding an employment opportunity. This is reflected through the unemployment of Sri Lanka where higher the educational level higher the unemployment is. Thus academics and professionals passing out from public and private higher educational institutes enter in to the jobs seeking queue without paying any attention on starting up a business. According to doing business rankings as per the Central Bank Reports Sri Lanka has got the 89<sup>th</sup> position of starting up a business. As per the statistics of Central Bank 2012 the highest unemployment is among the 20-24 age group and the trend from 2002 to 2010 is a decreasing trend and it is seen that grade 5-10 educated are the highly unemployed.

It is quite important to understand who an entrepreneur is. Histrich et al explains that the entrepreneur is one who brings in resources in terms of assets (money and fixed assets) and invests in the business finally adding more value through innovation, creativity and change. According to Prof. Harvard Stevenson entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled. Eisenmann 2013 explains that Entrepreneur always faces a risk in terms of acquiring new customers, employing novel technology for operations, attracting employees and partners who care capable of drive to the expectation and finding capital investments reasonably.

As per the literature it is often argued that entrepreneurs are not born but could be made through formal education and training.

Bricklin 2001 explains that even though talent, training and good timing is needed it is true passion that is most required to be an entrepreneur. Bricklin advises the entrepreneurs to know the true talent and values pursued in order to thrive in the business ideas. An entrepreneur needs the talents and skills of others when he steps into further and growing because the entrepreneur lacks in the talents demanding, explains further by Bricklin.

As per Drucker, one should find out what he/she loves to do and so called passion will improve the performance. Having the passion one should start the battle right after without waiting till the ideas come in because everything is not taken for granted. Further pensionable entrepreneur knows the purpose of the business and put it into work than just putting it into a statement. The entrepreneur should know the customer since the success finally depends on making the customer delighted. Without limiting the studies into market research the smart researcher tests and experiments the reality in order to keep up with the changing pace of the environment. Further Drucker said that testing is important but measuring the test is equally important. Moreover Drucker specified that management and innovation is the key for organisational success. Entrepreneur needs to change the plan according to the responses from the market without falling. A culture and system should be created by the entrepreneur to lead the success.

Corporate entrepreneurship is one of the concepts that explain creating innovation throughout the organisation and the following model is one of the models that comes under particular arena.

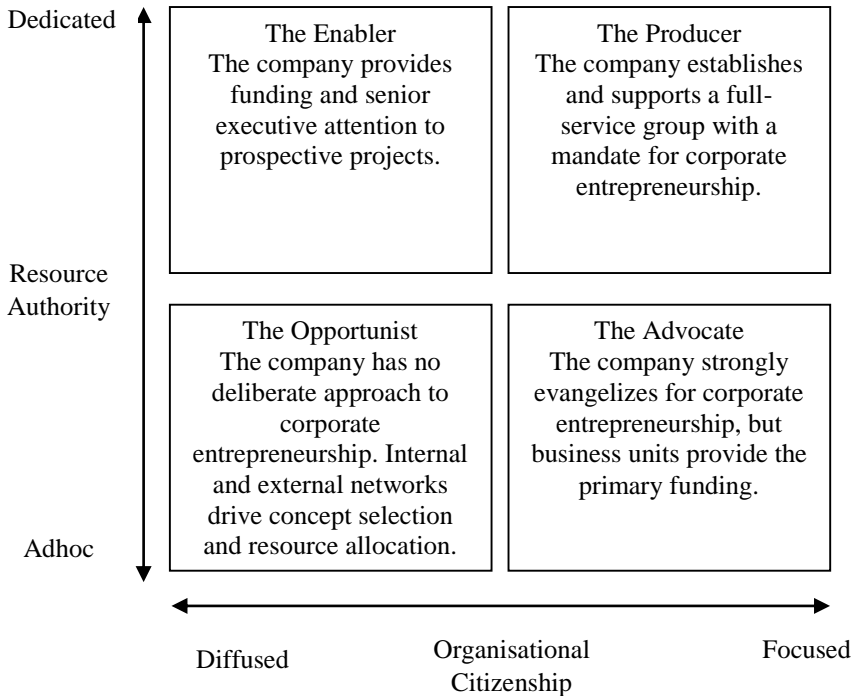


## 2.1. CORPORATE ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL

### *The Opportunist model*

Robert et al 2007 specifies that the opportunist model works well only when the organisation has a culture for experimentation and consists of social networks beyond the hierarchy. However the companies recognised that there are things beyond the ad hoc and diffused approaches when considering organic growth.

### *The Enabler Model*



Robert et al 2007

Robert et al 2007 specifies that the enabler model built on the concept that if the employees are given with the adequate support by the organisation in terms of resources and processes. The organisation will support the employees by guiding through the opportunities to pursue, funding, and much transparency in the making of decisions, proper selection and the selection of employees finally the senior management support.

#### *The Advocate Model*

Robert et al 2007 specifies that the funding is not the only issue therefore the company intentionally assigns ownership of the creation whilst allocating a modest budget.

#### *The Producer Model*

Robert et al 2007 specifies that some organisations executes formal organisations and funding for actively investing in business units through protecting emerging projects, cross unit collaboration, building troublemaking businesses and allowing executives to develop careers outside the business units.

Many scholars have identified the skills pertaining to successful entrepreneurs which are needed to be examined in order to research an entrepreneur.

## 2.2. SKILLS OF SUCCESSFUL ENTREPRENEURS

Self Employed Mind Set	
The Managerial Perspective	
The Attitude of Owner/Leader	
The Entrepreneurial Investor	
The True Entrepreneur	
Confident	
Feels of Sense of Ownership	
Able to Communicate	
Passionate of Learning	
Team Player	
System-Oriented	
System Oriented	
Dedicated	
Grateful	
Optimistic	
Gregarious	
A Leader by example	
Not Affraid of Risk or Success	

Throughout the case study an attempt is made to analyse critically the selected entrepreneur's socio economic, demographic, entrepreneurial career, intentions, attitudes, skills and talents which will be a need in the contemporary business world.

### **3. FAILURE TO SUCCESS**

Winston Churchill once coined that, “success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm. It sounds amazing to see that failure leads success. Well let’s prove the fact with evidence not from a big industrialized country but from Sri Lanka itself. The story belongs to Sri Lankan business tycoon Mr. Rohan Pallewatta who is the Managing Director/Executive CEO of the Lanka Harness Corporate Pvt. Ltd. The uniqueness of this story is it would teach a fine lesson to those who give up the hope and effort when failure starts overtaking the life.

#### **3.1. EARLY LIFE**

Mr. Rohan Pallewaththa has studied at the St. Anthony’s College, Katugasthota. He had received a scholarship which was offered by the American Field Service to visit USA, Australia, New Zealand, England and Japan. This is the turning point of his life since the present business idea was conceived in his mind during his visit to Japan. He selected Japan for two reasons; first he was interested in marshal arts and second unlike visiting to a western country would expose to sharpen English which could be done by even staying at Sri Lanka, visiting Japan would help him in picking up another language.

The cultural exchange programme has lasted for one year where Mr. Rohan started schooling. Moreover it was part of the programme that he was given a chance to visit the largest business conglomerates in Japan such as, Toyota, Honda, Mitsubishi, Minolta, Matzisha which is known as National Panasonic in this part of the world. Out of all Toyota amazed him.

*“The Toyota production line ran into kilometers. The person who was explaining the process to me was taking me in a factory operated silent car, a kind of a car that you see in an airport which is operated through battery. I was seated in the side of the car and he was explaining the process to me. It was a huge factory. If I see that kind of factory in my own country I would have seen more than 3000 or 4000 people by then. But I hardly saw any people. So I wanted to know from the person who explained the process is it a holiday at Toyota. He said it is not a holiday we have automated all the processes”.* (Pallewatta, 2014)

At the end of the year he came back to Sri Lanka and sat for Advanced Level Examination in arts stream and took on subjects including Sinhala, Political Science, Economics and Logic. Until the results were released Mr. Rohan went back to Japan and started working at NHK as English to Japanese and Japanese to English translator. However it was a bad news for him when the farther called and said that the first attempt was not succeeded. However a decision was taken to go for the second attempt with a slight change. i.e. instead of Sinhala which has given only “F” at the exam he decided to take Japanese which brought him success at the end. Finally he was selected to the University to persuse higher studies, however due to the fact that the universities had been closed he decided to sit for the Law entrance exams. After a tremendous effort he could get the approval of the Legal Council to sit the Law entrance exam even with Japanese subject.

*“When I went to get the application for Law College they wanted to know the subjects that I have done for A/L. The moment I said I have done Japanese they said ‘oya sangeethe natum karala awith me degree eka karanda ba’ [you can’t do Llaw after doing all singing and dancing].*

*I said Japanese is no sangeethaya or natum. So why can't you allow me. Then he told me there are subjects that are approved by the Legal Council and unless you sat A/L exams from those subjects you cannot do the Law entrance exam. Then I asked him what about the other subjects, Political Science, Logic and Economics have some nexus to Law so why can't you permit me to peruse Law. I am not the person to decide it. You have to write to the Legal Counsel which I did. I was lucky few months prior to the exam Council of law approved few more subjects including Law accepting it as a criterion to sit for the Law entrance exam. May be my appeal was also worked. When the results are out I was placed 6<sup>th</sup> of the island and I had a seat at the Law College. That is how by accident I became a lawyer. It was not in my original agenda".*

(Pallewatta, 2014)

### **3.2. THE BUSINESS IDEA**

During the visit to Toyota Mr. Rohan noticed that even though the whole process of the company was automated once process was done only by the labour. He didn't hesitate to question the gentleman who was taking him through the factory what was those laborers were doing. The gentleman said that, it is impact sense to the air bag. The answer made him think twice about the fact that that could be quite good business in countries where labor is more cheap and abandoned. Answering to his question the gentleman stressed that fact the component would never be imparted to another company or a country since the component is so sensitive on the brand name of the company. Clarifying it further he was told that, a standard vehicle comprises of about 17000 components and if it were a luxury vehicle there would be around 34000 components. Even though certain parts are

outsourced more sensitive parts are not outsourced. Being a young boy he was so confident that it was possible to do it in Sri Lanka. Mr. Rohan thought to request for few samples of that component to inquire later. The company gave him the samples because of the single reason that, Mr. Rohan was on scholarship and was invited by the Japanese government. This made his entire life changed which you would encounter soon.

### 3.3. UNTIRING EFFORTS

Mr. Rohan was surprised to see the take home salary of an average Toyota employee which comes to around Rs. 200000 to Rs. 300000 in rupee terms. One day Mr. Rohan thought to dismantle the component he took to Sri Lanka. He made a list of components with the serial number. After that he procured the items from Singapore and dispatched the amalgamated component to the gentleman who took him around Toyota. But yet he didn't get any reply. After three months' time again a sample was sent to Toyota, and yet he didn't get any reply but the process continued for another year. After a year Mr. Rohan wanted to know what's happening to the samples he sent to Toyota. He phoned the personnel to whom the sample was sent to ask the question had in his mind. The answer was discouraging.

*“I told you the very first day don't try this. This is a vain effort. We will never ever impart these components to another country. So don't ever try this'. When you heard the words of negativity you get discouraged”.*

(Pallewatta, 2014)

However Mr. Rohan had the courage to send another sample to the same person after another three months period of time. Answering to the call made by Mr. Rohan, the Toyota personnel had said that,

*“You are the craziest person I have ever come across in my life. I told you not to do this. And you have to understand that Toyota will never talk business to a virtual non entity like you who is hardly known. Your country is hardly known to that matter’. This is what he exactly told me”.*

(Pallewatta, 2014)

Explaining the matter further the Toyota personnel had said that, Toyota being an assembling plant has thousands of licensed suppliers who supply components. But the critical parts would never be imparted to another country. However he had mentioned that if Mr. Rohan would prefer to try out luck, he should reach one of those licensed suppliers to get the task done which he has done. He continuously supplied samples to 10 companies whose contacts given by Toyota. Even after a year no positive reply was received.

### **3.4. SILVER RAY IN DARK CLOUDS**

It was overwhelming feeling for Mr. Rohan when one of the companies has responded to the samples that he had sent. The detailed fax which consisted of thirty two pages had analyzed the eight defect products of the sample. The encouraged young man had assembled another 10 items and sent to the company. Another positive reply came saying out of 10 eight were good but two were defects. After another three months’ time the first order was received from the company asking him to produce 100 items which he had done.



The order increased up to 10000 units which made him difficult to manage with in the home. However Mr. Rohan did not want to bear the risk of opening a factory and then losing the business which made him to search for a company which will carry the component in their production line. Then SJ Electronics after the discussion held agreed to carry out the production of the components and two parties agreed to share the profits if the production was successful. This agreement was due to the fact that, SJ Electronics had idle labor after the failure of several shipments to America. However it was a company which had received presidential awards three consecutive times.

### **3.5. IN THE COMFORT ZONE**

The orders had increased upto 300000 components which gave Mr. Rohan 10% of the invoiced value. This was a huge amount at that period. Moreover he was graduated and took oath as an Attorney at the courts which made him comfortable with a solid profession. However Mr. Rohan stresses the fact that comfort zone is the most dangerous zone since you do nothing to improve.

### **3.6. THE RISK**

Mr. Rohan was concerned on the fact that, in order to stop the production within Sri Lanka the only thing to be done was stop the materials sent. In a visit to Japan to keep up with the relationship, which is vital for the Japanese unlike in western countries, Mr. Rohan saw the products he had sent to Japan was inspected entirely. There he made a suggestion to the Japanese company to start a factory in Sri Lanka which would cost very less comparatively to the money spent on inspecting the items. Starting a factory would cost at least 8 million US dollars.

*“I will tell you had I had 8 million US dollars at that time I wouldn't have started any business”.*

(Pallewatta, 2014)

### **3.7. THE CHALLENGE**

Mr. Pallewatta has invited the mother company of Japan to start a factory in Sri Lanka with considering the money spent on inspecting the each and every item. The mother company refused his invitation at the initial stage saying that they are happy with the ongoing business model. Mr. Pallewatta used to visit Japan at least six times a year and a representative from the mother company visited him at least twice a year. In one of the visits of the representative to Sri Lanka which ended up in facing a big trouble since the Katunayake Air Port was attacked by the terrorists. The issue was the representative was scheduled to leave the same day and the direct flight to Japan was on the same day. Somehow managing the situation Mr. Pallewatta blocked the representative from watching news in the hotel and took him to the airport which was under high security condition at that moment. He could safely send the representative from Sri Lanka since the direct flight to Japan was on schedule due to the reason that a VVIP was travelling Japan on the day. Even though the representative knew the facts afterwards but the impact was not that sensitive.

However few months later the insurance underwriters like Lloyds imposed heavy levy for the imported vessels to Sri Lanka which could not be afforded by any business. The mother company summoned Mr. Pallewatta following the tradition of Japanese which is to reason out the break the business partnerships. Having noted the reason for the meeting Mr. Pallewatta visited Japan and on 11<sup>th</sup> September news telecast showed that the World Trade

Center of USA was attacked by a terrorist which was very sad news. The news has solved the issue of Mr. Pallewatta and the next day meeting held as scheduled but the agenda was not discussed due to the news that has been popped up as headlines of all the newspapers of Japan. However the company personnel at the meeting without discussing the agenda let Mr. Pallewatta to express his ideas. Mr. Pallewatta could convince at the meeting to continue his business with the mother company. After few months from this incident Mr. Itho (the representative from Japan) agreed to invest in Sri Lanka.

*“It was not overnight success..... It was sheer determination. There is nothing called overnight success.....You have to hang on longer than you think....”*

(Mr.Rohan Pallewatta, 2014)

#### **4. STRATEGIC INSIGHT**

It is known that the success and failure is part of the life which is same to entrepreneurs. Yet it would be a life time lesson for all who read the case study of the Sri Lankan entrepreneur that nothing is impossible if you have the will power and the patience. Being in a smaller country like Sri Lanka which has very less focus on automotive industry investments specially to be a part of a supplier of the most critical safety materials of the top automobile brands of the world is merely a big challenge one might have. The journey of Mr. Pallewatta was not laid through a flowery laid path and it consists of many obstacles. The learning points for the future Sri Lankan entrepreneurs from his story include many points.

## **4.1. FACTORS OF SUCCESS**

### **4.1.1. Entrepreneurial investor**

*“Tapping untouched market which is challenging”*

Sri Lanka was not considered by the world as a suitable location for supplying materials for the world’s top automobile brands. Mr. Rohan had that creativity and intuition to recognize the untapped market of Sri Lanka which was quite challenging at that time period and later on developed up to the point of carrying out full product line for producing safety bags and sensory devices. The learning point from the story is, “nothing is impossible if one possess a strong will”.

### **4.1.2. Confidence**

*“Believing Sri Lankans can perform any skilled tasks”*

The confidence of Mr. Rohan in terms of initiating and being successful entrepreneur in Air Bags Industry has two folds. One; the confidence of being part of the high tech industry is not an impossible task. Sensory devices and the air bags are the crucial part of a vehicle and a single failure will be resulting in losing a valuable life. There should be a pretty much confidence to execute a business idea in an era with in which the country was not involved in the production of safety devices and even did not possess the technology to involve in such production. Second; the confidence that the Sri Lankan possess the skills for advanced high tech production and proving the fact with the evidence later on. At present around 230

employees are working at the Lanka Harness Co. Pvt Ltd who are the living evidence of the Mr. Rohan's confidence.

#### **4.1.3. Optimistic**

*“Not giving up even when failures start waving its hand”*

The success is not lead through a flowery road. There will be ups and downs and even obstacles. Mr. Rohan also faced similar obstacles in his path to success. The major obstacle was the situation where the tax levy on imports increased at rapid rate soon after the attack of LTTE to the Katunayake Air Port. The situation was handled in such a way the negative impact that would have been imposed on the business was reduced.

#### **4.1.4. Dedicated**

*“Determination to reach the success and working hand in hand with the Japanese”*

Success will not come to your doorstep over night. The climax comes after many suns and moons. The secret behind the success does flow from utmost effort and dedication. Mr. Rohan had the mere determination to work in hand in hand with the Japanese who are a nation of determined and hardworking people whom prime motto is quality.

#### **4.1.5. Passionate of Learning**

*“Multiple talents that paved the path to success”*

Mr. Rohan is a multi-qualified individual in different disciplines. He started the business which is completely different from the graduation and self-learned the production of safety equipment which is executed as the business idea later on.

#### **Dear Reader,**

*People learn through experience faced by self or someone else. Thus, don't give up. Face the challenges and never give up till you reach the success. Assist the country in turning a new chapter with your story. Then, on one day the future generation will record your story in golden words for reference similar to the story that you have just read.*

#### **5. Teaching Note**

Entrepreneurship is a subject arena which has to be taught with empirical insight. The case study highlights the Sri Lankan entrepreneur Mr. Rohan Pallewatta's story of success. The student's attention should be brought to the success factors of the entrepreneur and evaluation with sound theoretical framework.

It is advisable that the student should be given an opportunity to creatively analyze the scenario and come up with factors that would create the life of the entrepreneur discussed throughout the case study, challenging with in the contemporary environmental conditions. Further final point to thought is, the suggestions compiled based on the challenges highlighted.

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