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GeNext Triggers Usha Martin's 1st Branding Move

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Usha Martin, the world's second largest wire rope maker, has hired top brand consultancy Landor Associates to take up its first branding exercise in more than five decades of existence, as the third generation enters the family business.

Twenty-two-year-old Stuti Jhavar, the eldest daughter of Rajiv Jhavar, MD at the \$1-billion (₹5,500 crore) Kolkata-based group, is spearheading this move. An advertising major from Boston University, Stuti joined Usha Martin earlier this year as branding executive. "We have tied up with Landor Associates as our consultants for the branding initiative for Usha Martin and all sister companies under it," she told ET.

Besides wire ropes, the 51-year-old business group has interests in specialty automotive steels, education, telecom software, regional media and rural development.

Usha Martin is also party to the ongoing coal scandal and is among the coal block holders who have been called by an inter-ministerial group to explain the delay in developing mining blocks.

Usha Martin has been supplying wire ropes to oil and gas, mining and elevator companies as an original equipment manufacturer (OEM) and has distribution bases in the Middle East, Europe and



Stuti Jhavar, the third generation member of the Jhavar of Usha Martin Group. Subhajt Pal

the US. But so far, there has been little effort at brand building. Stuti, the eldest in the new generation of Jhavar, hopes to change all that.

She is keen to team up with her sisters, Shreya and Amisha, and cousins, Apurv and Anupriya — son and daughter of Usha Martin Chairman Prashant Jhavar — to take the family business forward. "I will be looking after the business even after I get married and settle down," Stuti says.

Kavil Ramachandran, Thomas Schmidheiny chair professor of family business at ISB, Hyderabad, says: "It is good that the new generation is keen to join the business and is bringing in fresh ideas. But it has to be seen whether these ideas are in sync with the group's growth objectives."

According to Mita Dixit, a family business advisor at Mumbai-based consultancy

Equations, the new generation is changing the DNA of family businesses in India.

"These youngsters have overseas exposure and are more competent. They look at the business as a professionally managed enterprise. But compared to the founders, they tend to be emotionally less attached to the business," she says.

Dixit also notes that gender inequality is reducing in family businesses. "However, women need to prove themselves for employees to take them seriously."

Ronita Mukherjee, client manager at Landor, whose clients include Jet Airways and Café Coffee Day, says Stuti has the right mix of family heritage and new-age skills to take Usha Martin to the next level of growth.

"She is a collaborative worker and is always willing to learn," she says.

Stuti has already visited the group's various facilities and taken part in different activities.

"My exposure to the business will hopefully help me figure out my post-graduation specialisation when I return to Boston next year." What she enjoyed the most was taking part in activities of Krishi Gram Vikas Kendra, the group's rural development arm, which runs a school at Rukka. She says she would love to teach English to tribal kids.