

Guest editorial

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Branding of emerging nations: a multidisciplinary perspective

It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the readers of *Journal of Asia Business Studies* this special issue, which contains some of the best papers presented in the First International Marketing Conference organized by the Indian Institute of Management Kashipur during 2015 and held at the India Habitat Center, Delhi. The theme of the Conference was “Globalizing Brand India: Opportunities and Challenges”.

The Conference witnessed participation of more than 60 presenters from IIM's, IIT's, NIT's, FMS, IMT, ISB, IMI and LBSIM, to name a few, with more than 100 papers received. A number of papers were received under various tracks including Interface of International marketing, Economics, Public Policy and Strategy, Understanding the transformation of Consumer India, Demographic Trends in India and Rural Marketing Strategies, Services Marketing Strategies, Digital India, Brand Co-Creation, Opportunities pertaining to Infrastructure for “Transformational India”. Original papers of high quality were accepted for presentation.

Although the special issue is primarily based on the Conference, it also includes several papers from other authors. The theme of the special issue is *Branding of Emerging Nations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Branding of a nation is normally done to kindle investment, to attract tourists' inflows and boost exports (Dinnie, 2008). To enhance their international competitiveness among investors, governments focus on a variety of approaches including improvements in actual marketplace conditions and trying to market the investment business more systematically than before through nation branding and other promotional approaches (Young, 2005). Thus, while places have been promoting themselves for various purposes, the practice that has come to be known as “nation branding” reflects a far more systematic set of activities than in earlier times. Coupled with national campaigns to promote exports, attract tourists and generally present places to a variety of target markets, activities aimed at attracting FDI gave rise to Branding of Emerging Nations. All of these facilitate globalization. Interestingly, Anholt (2005) argues that emerging nations have no other option but to use soft power of national branding to communicate about their nation's policies and culture to an international audience (Anholt, 2005) to encourage globalization.

Taking cue from the above, it becomes imperative for an emerging and developing nation such as India to visit and identify the potential opportunities and challenges that lie ahead in the process of “Globalizing Brand India”. Hence, we take into account the significance of the phenomenon of globalization, with the said Special Issue destined to be based on the theme of *Branding of Emerging Nations: A Multidisciplinary Perspective*. Through this issue, we first wished to encourage scholars from business, economics and other social science disciplines to submit their relevant work. Thus, one aim is to present alternative viewpoints on the branding of emerging nations and the phenomenon and work toward a more holistic understanding of the same. Second, we wanted to disseminate alternative metrics and methodologies scholars have advanced for quantifying branding of emerging nations. Finally, we hoped to publish empirical evidence on such presumed consequences (i.e.

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emerging nations by using soft power of national branding can communicate about their nation's policies and culture to an international audience and boost bilateral trade). We hope the readers will find the articles selected for this issue to be insightful and a source of inspiration for future work.

In this special issue, we have six wonderful research papers.

In the first paper, "Understanding consumer behavior regarding luxury fashion goods in India based on the theory of planned behavior", author, Sheetal Jain *et al.* applies the theory of planned behavior to understand Indian consumers purchase of luxury fashion goods. The author found subjective norm to be one of the major determinants of luxury fashion buying in India. The study provides important insight to luxury companies about luxury buying behavior in emerging nations in general and India in particular. This paper provides useful insights about consumer transformation in India. Indian consumers, because of demographic dividend and other such factors mentioned in the paper, are now open to luxury buying. A ray of hope for luxury products marketers. The paper further provides empirical evidence on the need to focus on subjective norms while positioning luxury products for emerging nations like India.

Reinforcing the same view as above in the second paper, "Factors impacting the adoption of m-banking: understanding brand India's potential for financial inclusion", authors Madhurima Deb and Aarti Agrawal examined Indian consumers' intention to adopt m-banking. This paper provides another interesting manifestation of Indian consumers' readiness to move toward digitalization. The authors found that subjective norm is an important factor impacting intention to adopt m-banking. Insights from this paper could be crucial for policymakers for promoting the nation as a "digital nation". It will also be useful for marketers in the e-Commerce business to enter India and explore the nation's digital commerce potential. To do so successfully, the paper suggests providing importance to subjective norms while positioning Brand India as a "digital nation".

In another interesting manifestation of Indian consumers' transformation and their move toward materialism, the third paper, "Predisposition towards foreign brands and materialism: a quantitative assessment", by Garima Gupta and Aastha Vohra, examined various dimensions of predisposition toward foreign brands and materialism. The paper provides useful insight for marketers of foreign brands in developing more segment-orientated brand strategy for Indian consumers by understanding factors that determine materialism. Reputation, country of origin (COO) and quality were found to be important determinants of materialism in India. It implies that if the above factors are properly used while crafting positioning strategies for foreign brands in India, it can help the brands enhance their selling proposition.

In another study on examination of rural consumers in India using their demographic and loyalty factors, the fourth paper, *Cultural influence on brand loyalty of rural consumers in the Indian context*, by Rashmi Ranjan Parida and Sangeeta Sahney developed a scale to capture the impact of culture and brand loyalty among rural consumers. Their study makes significant contribution in understanding the various trends among rural consumers. They found that virtuousness, religion, sociability and ethnocentrism are four important factors that together determine the cultural and loyalty trend of rural consumers in India. They further suggested that the rural market in India has unlimited potential and by focusing on the above cultural dimensions, marketers can develop their marketing strategies and explore the vast potential of Indian rural economy.

Focusing on loyalty again, the fifth paper, "Patient satisfaction and brand loyalty in healthcare organizations in India: a case based approach", by Vinay Sharma investigated the factors that affect patient satisfaction in India which ultimately impacts their brand loyalty toward the healthcare organization. This paper focuses on marketing strategies to be developed in emerging nations like India by the healthcare organizations which are part

of the services sector. Brand India is known worldwide for its cost-effective healthcare services, and the present study highlighted the factors that affect patient satisfaction and determine their loyalty. While devising positioning strategies, service organizations like the healthcare sector should focus on quality of object, process, infrastructure and interaction, as these factors determine satisfaction and loyalty.

In an empirical examination of Thai luxury consumers, the sixth paper, "The influence of country image on luxury value perception and purchase intention", by Ketsuree Vijaranakorn and Randall Shannon explored the influence of country image on luxury purchase intention. This paper provides useful insight about consumers' transformation and its implications for marketers. They found utilitarian value, hedonic value, symbolic value and economic value to be important determinants of country image perception. Their study has implications for companies planning to invest in emerging markets.

Overall, the six papers address some of the multidisciplinary issues in the domains of branding of emerging nations. I thank all the authors of the special issue for their hard work and for helping us have this special issue. I also thank all our esteemed reviewers as without their cooperation, it would have been difficult to maintain the quality. Last but not the least, I would like to thank the Editor, Prof Hemant Merchant for his guidance and support at all stages, conference patron and Director IIM Kashipur Prof Gautam Sinha for his kind valuable time and support and conference chair Prof S. Chakrabarti for his cooperation. Finally, I hope the readers of this journal will enjoy reading this special issue.

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