

# India as Brand and Indian Branding strategies

**Shweta Singh\***  
**Madhulika Gupta\*\***

Selling India is a pointless business"; "No amount of hard-sell can convince buyers to take a 'Made in India' label at face value" Now India has become a brand after such a phenomenal strides the country has made in the last 50 years in International Market. Over the years, we have witnessed Brand India becoming increasingly distorted in the absence of efforts to manage and develop its associations. The only obvious way out is branding, or rather re-Branding India. This paper focuses on Repositioning India as a brand and Indian Brand Strategies. It analyses the core competencies of Indian Brand Marketing to provide a base for supporting the marketing perspectives. This paper tries to highlight the Marketing Mix to develop Brand India and Role of Marketing Mix in Indian Branding Strategies and suggests strategies for the same. It also focuses on the competitive edge in FMCG sector due to versatile market and Inflow of Technology and Money in Indian market.

## INTRODUCTION

Brands are well-established as assets. However, unlike other company assets, the value of a brand often isn't quantified. At the simplest level, brands serve a functional purpose: They are means of identifying and distinguishing one time or service from the next. This functional benefit has relevance to brand owner and brand purchaser alike. For the consumer or business customer, brands provide important functional and emotional benefits. For centuries, brands have served as guarantees and signals of consistent product quality; the result was that a customer would seek out a particular brand of goods when satisfied with an original purchase. This benefit became increasingly important over time, as companies lost face to face contact with their customers a development brought on most notably in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the advent of railways and mass distribution. The brand name supposedly assures us that features, functions, and characteristics of the offer (i.e. the tangible performance attributes of the product associated with the brand) will not vary from purchase to purchase. However, the value of brand does not end there. The brand also can assure us that the holistic brand experience- the intangible attributes of the brand- will provide a certain level of quality. This brand assurance thus spans from prepurchase to purchase, consumption, post-sales support, and even disposal. In this way, the brand provides a means of creating and delivering lasting values to customer and consumers; the product life cycle is finite, but brands carry the potential to live on forever.

---

\*Asst. Professor, Department of Management Studies, Institute Of Foreign Trade and Management, Moradabad

\*\*Senior Lecturer, Department of Management Studies, Institute of Foreign Trade and Management Moradabad

Today India stands at a great economic opportunity. According to the Goldman Sachs 'BRICs' report, it will be amongst the top five economies in the world by 2050 along with China and Brazil. TATA Group Economic Survey predicted that there will be a total of 75 million households, called 'consuming classes' with an Annual Income Level between \$US1000-4800 by 2005-06. This compared to only 29 million such households in 1994-95. A lot can change in a decade! No marketer can afford to miss out on the India opportunity. This paper will try to understand the minds of the Indian consumers and try to evolve a strategy that will closely resemble the Indian outlook. Indian companies need to fight hard by changing the rules of the game. It would be impossible to challenge the mighty global brands, which have made their way to India, through traditional advertising, market communication and branding.

## Branding – A Different Perspective

Branding can be rational or irrational. Customers buy brand not only for the intrinsic values associated with it but also because the brand has surprised them in the past with newer and more novel experiences. Branding is a promise made to the customer that will deliver values beyond expectation. Branding strategy hence should also involve continuously communicating to the customer of the novel experiences that he/she has had with the brand. We shall attempt to elucidate our proposed brand strategy on the lines of the following framework:

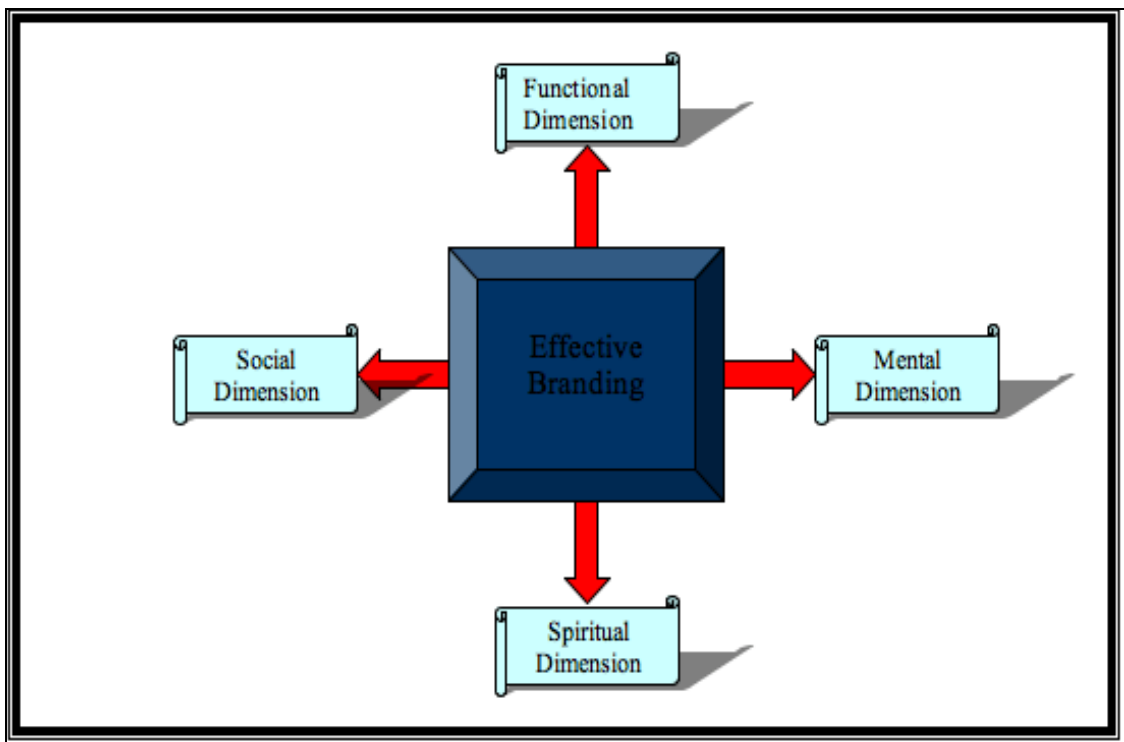


### 1) Experimental Marketing

The customers demand experiences instead of products or services today. This creates a challenge to the organizations to find new ways to involve the customers in the value chain so that they themselves can decide the product features and uniqueness that they expect from the brand. Marketing is going through a paradigm shift. Today's customers are more focused than their predecessors and better informed due to a process accelerated by the internet. They want to know more about the details of the brand. They remove the shells and get into the core of the processes to understand the real value of the brand. They not only want to know the quality of the product but also the policies and practices of the organization. The ethics, production processes and quality are taken for granted by the customers.

## 2) Effective Branding

We believe that effective branding involves working on four important dimensions, namely:



### *The Functional Dimension*

The functional dimension concerns the perception of benefit of the product or service associated with the brand.

### *The Social Dimension*

The Social Dimension concerns the ability to create identification with the group.

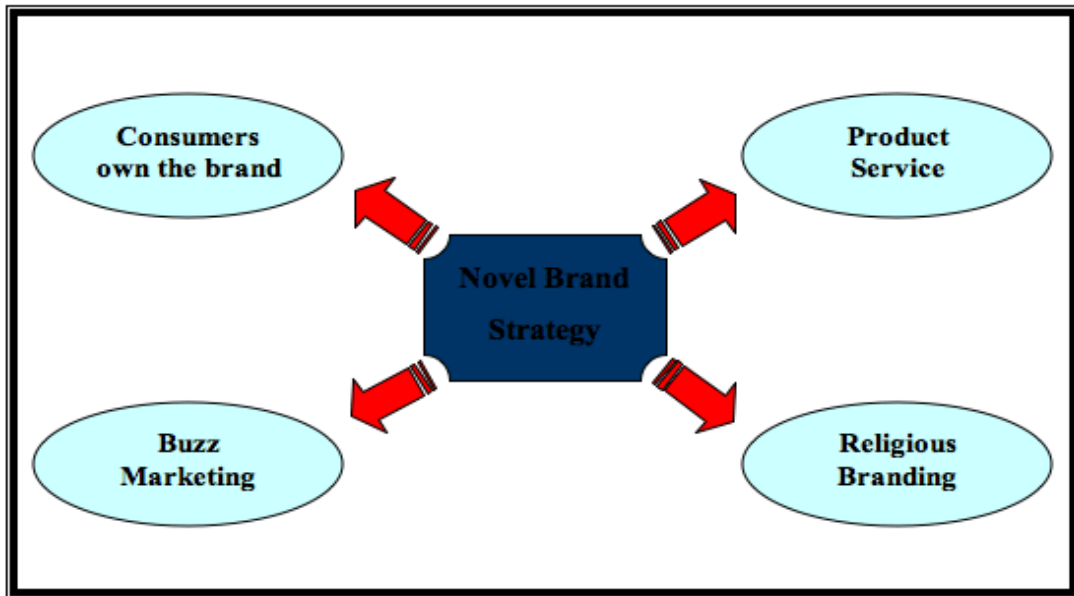
### *The Spiritual Dimension*

The Spiritual Dimension is the perception of global or local responsibility

### *The Mental Dimension*

The Mental Dimension is the ability to support the individual mentally.

### 3) Novel Brand Strategies



#### Customers Own the Brand

It should always be kept in mind that it is the consumers who own the brand. Take the example of **Monsanto**. Monsanto had the resources and the competency to become a successful brand in Europe, but failed to recognize how strongly consumers felt about genetically modified organisms in the agricultural system. No amount of scientific data and evidence could dislodge this negative perception that people had against GM food. This clearly shows that the value perception of consumers sees little logic once established strongly in their minds.

#### Product Service

A sale is never the ending of a transaction but the beginning of a beautiful relationship. Lexus and Disney have become synonymous with loyal customer services. Some customers are treated with breakfast buffets, free lifetime car washes, etc. Lexus was the first company to provide the customer with a replacement car while his/her car was being serviced. These examples go to show that the customers don't like being sold a product but like being serviced. What customer service does is to create a positive effect on the minds of the customer and this positive influence on the mind of the consumer makes them more open to new ideas and reduces their skepticism towards the brand. A new product launch can leverage on the strength and success of the previous product and ensure that the trust that has been created with the customer is carried forward. The future success of a brand lies in the strategy of involving the existing customers and making them brand ambassadors. More specifically this involves making the customer believe that he is getting the best service in the industry.

#### Buzz Marketing

Branding increasingly nowadays is moving into Internet-based applications. Online blogs and forums have reinforced the concept of buzz marketing. The "**Wow Factor**" which was previously associated with the product is increasingly taken over by the

advertisement campaign but engaging in this viral campaign strategy has its drawbacks. The case in point is Ford's viral campaign involving the sport car "**Evil Twin Cat**" in which the car's sun roof decapitates the cat that is featured in the ad. Though it cannot be debated that such a controversial ad has helped raise a lot of brand awareness but this kind of ad can have a negative branding effect in countries like India where animals are worshiped and hold religious significance. Hence it's very important to understand the culture and values that people associate with symbols in order to involve in the right buzz marketing.

## **Religious Branding**

Religion is a way of life in India. Brand management has always exploited the emotional quotient of people and in India people treasure their religion and culture to a great extent. If religion has the power to bind people and unify them under one common ideal then an effective brand strategy must take into account this powerful force which plays on the minds of the Indian consumers. The strategy to build a sustainable Indian brand is to work on the minds of people and help them answer the question "What is there in it for me?" Every time a customer invests in a product he does so hoping that the product will meet his expectation. This investment constitutes a risk. The idea of a value-based brand is to ensure that the brand minimizes the customer's perception of risk. A simple strategy to ensure this is to minimize the expectations created through promising less and delivering more. A more comprehensive way of achieving this is by creating a faith in the brand that is on the same lines as that of social organizations. The goal of a brand should be to build a trust that the customer's satisfaction is the top priority.

## **4) Feedback and Improvements**

It is important to understand the need of participation by the customer. By allowing him at an intermediary stage of developing the product for him, the company is making sure that the product succeeds in the future. The customer is not the receiver of the product but the creator of the product with the company; he is very much involved in the design, development and delivery of the products. The interaction between the consumer and the company is more frequent and intense leading to a better relationship. The traditional method of feedback and subsequent correction can lead to a lot of wastage and losses in terms of time, value of money, the replacement costs and a decreased customer satisfaction and loyalty. A very relevant example is **Apple's iPod**. A set of customers gave the feedback to the company about the bad quality of battery in iPod; this led to damage in the perception of the customer. Apple had no choice but to improve the quality of the product. Apple without any doubt has the ability to correct the quality issues but the question is that at what cost. The damage is already being done by the consumers and the recovery will take time and extra money. The participative approach of feedback would have allowed the company to correct the quality during the development. The customers would have given the feedback at the earlier stages only to improve the quality leading to the improvement during the process.

## **5) Challenges for Indian Organizations**

The delivery of the value and experience that we talked about depends upon the employees and the quality of the delivery of value by them. The management of the company has the responsibility to ensure that the brand becomes the culture of the organization. This is a big change and challenge for the management as the employees are typically associated with the products and delivery of products in the organization. The attitude change to delivering experience will attract a lot of resistance among the

employees. The role of human resources and all managers is to bring about this change smoothly so that the delivery to the customers can be ensured.

The success of the brands and organizations will be determined by their ability to train the employees to ensure that the differentiation is created in the experience provided to the customers.

## CONCLUSION

BRAND is a promise made to the consumers by the company. Brand, not only has Functional and Mental dimensions but also Social and Spiritual dimensions. The challenge in front of Indian organizations today is to first understand and then satisfy the needs of the customers. The needs of the customers today are experiences and not just the products. The Indian Organizations have to concentrate on delivering the experiences to the customers leading to satisfaction and association with all the dimensions of the brand. These experiences can be delivered by involving the customer in the supply chain which demands improvement from the organization in terms of training the employees and aligning the culture to deliver value to the customers. The participation of the customers can be ensured by using novel methods of communication and branding. The Profit and Sustainability of Indian Brands will depend on how efficiently and quickly the organization can adapt to these new demands of the customers.

## REFERENCES

- A.Kirmani, S.Sood, and S.Bridges, "The Ownership Effect in Consumer Responses to Brand Line Stretches." *Journal of Marketing* 63(1999): 88-101
- C.Kholi and D.W. LaBahn, "Creating Effective Brand Names: A study of naming process," *Journal of Advertising Research* (January / February 1997):67-75.
- David A. Aaker "Should you take your brand to where the action is?" *Harvard Business Review* (September-October 1997): 135-43:
- David A. Aaker, *Building Strong Brands* (New York; Free Press, 1995). Kevin Lane Keller, *Strategic Brands Management: Building, Measuring, and Managing Brand Equity* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998); and D.A. Aker and E. Joachimsthaler, *Brand Leadership*(New York, Free Press,2000)
- Duane E. Knapp (2003). "The Brand Mindset". Book, Tata McGraw- Hill.
- Evan Schwartz, "The Brand Man," *Context* (Summer 1998): 54-58; Davis, *Brand Asset Management*
- Gregory S. Carpenter, Rashi Glazer and Kent Nakamoto (1994). "Meaningful Brands from meaningless differentiation." *Journal of Marketing Research*. Vol: 31, pp. 339-350.
- K.L.Keller," *Building Customer-Based Brand Equity: A Blueprint for creating Strong Brands,*" *Marketing Management*, 10 (July/ August 2001):15-19.
- Kim Robertson, "Strategically Desirable Brand Name Characteristics," *Journals of Consumer Marketing* (Fall 1989): 61-70;
- Kotler,Philip.(2003),*Marketing Management*, Pearson Education,11<sup>th</sup> Ed.: 406-40
- T. Scott Gross (1998). "Guilt-free Selling." *Design Forum/Ideations*, Fall. p. 3.
- Thomas Grad (2001). "4D Branding." Book, Pearson Education.