

# Empowering TIMES



May 2011

## Editor's DESK

Dear Reader,

If I were to ask you to draw a list of all products that you use in a single day, I am confident that you will enlist at least 25 items in as many seconds. But if I add a twist, that I want the name of the actual product and not its brand, the average time per response will certainly increase. It is very easy for us to say a 'Colgate', 'Dettol', 'Lux', 'Kurl On' etc, but the actual product name may or may not occur to us instantly. Over the years, brand names have become common parlance and we have come to live with these names and a life without them seems impossible. We often generalize the brand name for the product itself. Very often we say 'Bisleri Dena' (Give me Bisleri) for packaged drinking water or say the clothes are kept in the 'Godrej' for a steel cupboard. This shows the success of the brands to be associated so strongly with the product they stand for and the indelible space they occupy in the customer's mind. This month's Empowering Times is woven around the concept of 'Branding'; I hope you take pleasure in our 'brandishing' of branding!

In today's world, as businesses try to out-compete each other to grab the customer's attention, Branding or the Brand has come to assume a very large role in product success. Would it be any different if Romeo & Juliet would have been named any different? Isn't that 'Brand' the epitome of what it stands for? In **Thinking Aloud**, JP Singh brings out the 'Brand' story and tells us that the 'Brand' is not only a name, but it connotes much more than that.

## In this Issue:

Thinking Aloud: The Branding Kaleidoscope - JP Singh

Podium: Interview with Bhawani Singh Shekhawat, Marketing, Strategy, Insights and Management expert

Between the Lines: Big Brands Big Trouble - Jack Trout

Standing Ovation: Beyond Sight Foundation – Changing Lives with Photography

## Figures of Speech

By Vikram Nandwani



In **Podium** this month, Bhawani Singh Shekhawat; marketing, strategy, insights and management expert; helps us identify challenges faced by brands in India. He says that in order for organizations to provide an enhanced brand experience it is very essential to live up to the promises made to the customer and to understand what it takes to convert a potential into an actual customer.

**Between the Lines** this month features the review of the book 'Big Brands Big Trouble' by Jack Trout. The book takes an anecdotal view on lessons learnt by many large corporations and lays down some rules on do's and don'ts while handling brands.

**Standing Ovation** this month features 'Blind With Camera', an initiative of the Beyond Sight Foundation, which promotes the art of photography in people with visual impairment and capacity building around the "Non-Retinal" art culture in India.

In **Figures of Speech** Vikram shows how the brand commands a higher premium than the product itself!

As always, we value your opinion, so do let us know about how you liked this issue. To visit our previous issues you can visit the Media & Archives section on the website or simply [Click Here](#). You can also follow us on [Facebook](#).



## The Branding Kaleidoscope - JP Singh

What's in a name? Nothing... Or is it everything? Shakespeare captures a perspective, so beautifully reflected in the following exchange between Romeo and Juliet:

“Juliet: O Romeo, Romeo! wherefore art thou Romeo Deny thy father and refuse thy name; Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, And I'll no longer be a Capulet. 'Tis but thy name that is my enemy; Thou art thyself, though not a Montague. What's Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot, nor arm, nor face, nor any other part belonging to a man. O, be some other name! What's in a name? that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet; So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd, Retain that dear perfection which he owes

Romeo: I take thee at thy word: Call me but love, and I'll be new baptiz'd; Henceforth I never will be Romeo. By a name”

Juliet tries to tell Romeo that a name is a meaningless formality (for the sake of identity?) and that she loves the person who is called "Montague", not the Montague name and the Montague family. Romeo, out of his love for Juliet, rejects his family name and vows to be instead "new baptized" as Juliet's lover.

Juliet meant that she loved Romeo the person, his attitude, his spirit, his nature, his soul and not the name per se... little did she realize that the very same name, along with her own, would become a strong brand name, which, over the next few centuries, would epitomize love and romance!! So even if Romeo Montague's name was changed to 'Tom, Dick or Harry', it didn't really matter to Juliet. No one will ever know, however, whether instead of Romeo, if any one of 'Tom, Dick or Harry' were used, would they have still evoked the same feelings and emotions that 'Romeo' evokes or capture the same nuances... but that is what brand Juliet, in love with brand Romeo thought!!

What a great 'value add' an experience, feelings and emotions can do to a name!! Even X, Y, Z and alpha, beta, gamma can start to stand for anything, depending on the 'surround' sound created by a brand experience, performance and interaction (referred to variously as brand

positioning, personality, personification, style, tonality, image etc). But whatever it be, it should be genuine; as they say, the consumer could be your wife or mother as well.

The word used for 'identification' of any product or service, whether having a dictionary meaning or not, starts acquiring a new meaning, properties and characteristics of its own, sometimes very different from the original meaning (if any), depending on the interactions and experiences... and when that happens, that word 'grows up' to be 'A Brand Name'.

A classic case in brand experience is the iconic 'Ambassador' car seen on Indian roads for many decades now. Dictionary meanings of names, obviously cannot, on their own, rub off qualities on the product or services that use the name (as also, words with no meaning at all, acquire distinct properties based on the experience that the products/services using them create). Ambassador has not been able to 'encash' on the 'class' that the dictionary meaning of its name brings... no Ambassador would have ever taken the Ambassador car as a Brand Ambassador or vice versa, been one for the car!! But ever seen a white Ambassador car with a red light on top (and maybe a few stars and a flag also), moving on the roads in India... this new 'look and feel' now acquires very different brand characteristics of 'political power'.

The concept of branding, initially originated to 'brand' cattle for the purpose of identification, has now evolved into an art form working together with the discipline of scientific approach and evokes so many feelings, emotions and thoughts. Brands are valuable assets that need nurturing, protection and maintenance, to be handled very carefully like crystals or to be polished like brass. A little slip and we have examples of how brand equity risks getting shaken up, requiring monumental subsequent efforts to salvage/build it again. How much the 'feel' of a brand can be stretched to brand extensions is also another area of debate and study. A Fanta always meant an orange drink to me; I could never 'digest' an apple Fanta. Examples and learning abound for both positive and negative handlings of brand equity... the Nimesulide controversy, the Tiger Woods scandal, the Satyam case, the Tylenol crisis etc, each of which is a case study which cannot be detailed out here.

Who would have thought that a very unconventional name like 'Amitabh Bachchan', carried by a thin, skinny, lanky figure, whose owner's deep baritone voice was rejected by All India Radio and whose initial attempts in Bollywood were hardly worth talking about, would one day become a 'Big Brand' with probably the largest fan following on this planet. The story of the effort that he genuinely put into his work and the experience, delight and enjoyment this brand name subsequently brought to the world is what legends are made of; as if resonating a dialogue from one of his blockbuster movies, in the same deep baritone voice saying "Aaj khush to bahut hoge tum" (Today, you must be feeling very happy)... A brand tagline of sorts!!

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Bhawani Singh Shekhawat - Marketing,  
Strategy, Insights and Management  
expert

Empowering  
TIMES



Bhawani Singh Shekhawat is a seasoned Marketing, Strategy, Insights and Management professional with rich international experience. For over two decades, he has worked in Asia, Middle East, Africa, North-America and Europe in key roles with top F-500 companies. He has held regional General Management positions with Nielsen in emerging markets and also led the Consumer business in Central, South and Western Europe. Subsequently, he led the Global Marketing Science/ Best Practices for Reckitt Benckiser and the Strategy Planning function at Coca-Cola during his stint with these companies in Europe and London. In doing so, he oversaw change management initiatives, strategy

formulation and rollout with matrix global teams. In his General Management roles, Bhawani has led large, multi-cultural and multidisciplinary teams towards new growth horizons. He has a BA (Honors) in Economics and a Masters from the Bombay School of Economics.

Currently residing in Bangalore, India, Bhawani divides his time between teaching at leading business schools and consulting, advising as well as mentoring business leaders and entrepreneurs. His passion is consumer marketing, change, diversity and the ever-evolving world of consumers, shoppers and brands and he has written columns in leading dailies around the world and has been quoted in The Times and the International Herald Tribune. He has been on the advisory board of the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute of Marketing Sciences as well as a panel and jury member of SuperBrands. He was also a member of the Global Consumer Board of The Nielsen Company.

ET: What are the challenges a marketer today faces in India to create, sustain and strengthen a 'brand'? How have branding challenges and opportunities changed in the last decade in consumer marketing?

BS: Clearly, the biggest challenge is managing a sustained growth agenda. which mires you in a QSQT (Quarter se Quarter tak) syndrome. To grow and sustain it in a way that is not only commercially viable but also strengthens the business and brands is the challenge. I suppose not enough attention is being paid to building and leveraging brand equity and there is tremendous evidence of me too/me better short-termism.

In the last decade, we have been bombarded with a spurt in consumer demand, more options in the way marketers can reach consumers, and more evolved retail formats. This plethora of choice for marketers represents greater challenges than ever before while at the same time presenting greater opportunities of making and keeping promises made to consumers. I suppose the latter is where there is a bigger shortfall today than ever before. Marketers have found newer promises to make but surely there is enough evidence of them not being kept.

ET: Can you distil out the key principles and approaches towards building of the unique and exploitable values that successful brands have followed across time and markets?

BS: A company can build enduring brand values only by really connecting in a real, meaningful and genuinely inspiring manner with consumers, shoppers and the trade. Traditional modes of consumer understanding are at best defunct and insight a much abused term. Businesses need 'foresight' not hindsight masquerading as insight. Around the world, brands that have forged this connection well, and have done it in a way that is genuine and meaningful to the consumer have won.

Secondly, successful brands have paid attention to their shoppers. That is a different mindset than simple consumer or trade marketing silos

provide for.

ET: How important is visual appeal in consumer or shoppers behavior in India?

BS: As an economy evolves and consumer experience gets more and more diverse, consumers connect with brands at more than just a rational level. Visual appeal and aesthetics, just like integrity and honesty are playing a bigger role today in the consumer mindset and their relationship with brands. Design, ergonomics, visual appeal will become even bigger differentiators and carriers of brand equity in the near future.

ET: What are the 'Shopper Marketing' trends that are emerging in international markets in India? How are they following and deviating from developed market behavior?

BS: 'Shopper Marketing' in India is at a very early stage of evolution, albeit like I said, there is a greater recognition of the challenges it represents. Developed markets have retail formats which are different in size and trade shares compared to India and hence here we will have to find unique solutions. The principles on which 'Shopper Marketing' approaches are built- like visual merchandising, range, assortment and shelf management will be common but the scale and execution will be very different. That said, the biggest gap in India is in determining what clicks with shoppers in the nano-second of purchase. In the west there are very detailed, composite and tested databases which allow marketers to look at basket size, eye tracking, heuristics, route map, shopping missions etc. almost on a real time basis. In India perhaps we are only beginning to be prepared to do that. The opportunity is that we can set the right foundations and benefit from a much shorter learning curve.

The complexity of India mandates that we need much better quality of inputs guiding our decision making. It is in traditional trade where I see the biggest change and challenge.

ET: What future challenges and opportunities do you perceive from Social Marketing in consumer marketing?

BS: The challenges and opportunities in this space are conjoint. Marketers will have to become more ethical and responsible in the promises they make and the manner in which they execute them. The widening, and worrying, rich poor gap in India will mean more pressure on marketers to pay much more than lip service to ethical and responsible marketing. I do see more charters of this kind being adopted by brands and a rigorous execution of such charters will become a key priority.

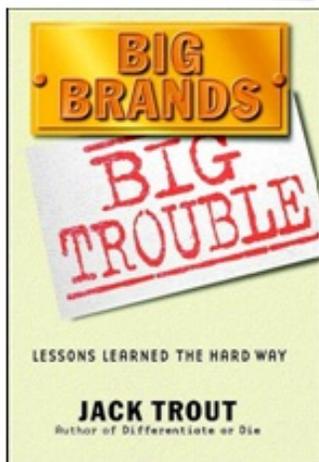
ET: Which are some of your favorite brands in industry? Why?

BS: 'Dove' and 'Parachute' remain firm favorites for the way they have connected with consumers. 'Coca-Cola' has stayed relevant for more than a century and to me is perhaps one of the few truly global brands. I am also a big fan of brands like 'LG' for their sustained attempt at bringing newness in a very crisp and holistic manner to their consumers. The 'Mahindra' group is a remarkable corporate brand. Globally, it is 'Tesco' and the 'Tata' group for what they stand for, how they execute and the spirit with which they serve.

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## Big Brands Big Trouble – Lessons Learned the Hard Way



As the name suggests, “Big Brands Big Trouble – Lessons Learned the Hard Way”, authored by brand positioning and marketing guru, Jack Trout and first published by John Wiley & Sons Inc in 2001, looks at errors made by great corporations and presents the lessons to be learnt from them. The book is a mix of theory and anecdotes which makes it an interesting read for managers, marketing consultants and the general reader.

The book begins with a chapter on summarized descriptions of the most popular mistakes companies committed and the high costs associated with those mistakes. According to Trout, mistakes have assumed prime importance because a single mistake could give your competitor a much stronger advantage than you could think of. Some common mistakes that corporations make are the ‘me-too mistake’, ‘what are you selling mistake’, ‘truth will out mistake’, ‘other guy’s idea mistake’, ‘we’re very successful mistake’, ‘everything for everybody mistake’, ‘live by the numbers mistake’, ‘not attacking yourself mistake’ and the ‘not being in change mistake’.

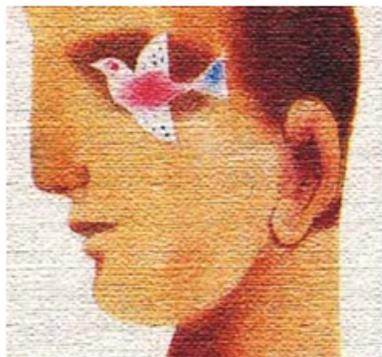
After introducing the common mistakes, the book takes you on a journey wading through anecdotes of various companies which have committed one or more of the above mentioned mistakes. The book looks at General Motors and how they forgot what made them successful, Xerox and its mistaken predictions about the future and Levi Strauss which learnt its lesson by ignoring competition, among others.

Later, Trout identifies some brands such as Kellogg’s, Volvo and Kodak which according to him were sailing in rough weathers from the signs that they were displaying. He goes on to say that it is very important for an organization to know its competition, its markets and its customers as no amount of consultancy services and experience-years of the Board of Directors can compensate for a lack of knowledge on that front. He also provides a thumb rule for staying out of trouble, i.e. to know who is or who could be your enemy, and provides some ideas on how to counter-attack competition.

In the last two chapters he tells us about the problems of managing big brands and that all the trouble starts and ends with the CEO. According to him the problem of ‘big’ arises from some issues such as – ‘big isn’t more efficient’, ‘big doesn’t attack itself’, ‘big doesn’t organize well’ and ‘big by merger can be trouble’. He says that the CEO is solely responsible for either doing things that lead to problems or not doing things that could have avoided the problems, and suggests that every CEO’s office should have a plaque which reads ‘Remember the Titanic!’

# STANDING OVATION

## Blind With Camera – Changing Lives With Photography



'Blind With Camera' is an initiative of the Beyond Sight Foundation, a not-for-profit organization prompting the art of photography in people with visual impairment and building capacity around the "Non-Retinal" Art culture in India. It provides a unique platform for the visually impaired to share their "Inner Gallery" of assets/images - their imagination and point-of-view of the visual world, and speak out about their unique experience, feelings, challenges, hopes and advocate for their equality.

**Beyond Sight  
Foundation**

The 'Blind With Camera' project was started by Partho Bhowmick in Mumbai in early 2006. After starting with a single student workshop in January 2006, today over hundred visually impaired people are trained in photography and the project has spread to other cities of India. Photographs taken by the visually impaired have been exhibited at the best known art galleries across India and abroad, and viewed by over 30,000 sighted people. The making of the project is presented and discussed at several national and international social and cultural conferences.

The "Beyond Sight" exhibition was made "inclusive" by offering touch and feel raised pictures, Braille footnotes, large text prints and live audio description for the visually impaired visitors to access and enjoy the photographs. Photographs by the visually impaired, helps to empower them by providing them with earning opportunities and facilitate their social inclusion. It demystifies the polarity between blindness and visual expression, helps to sensitize people, spread awareness and correct public perception of visual impairment. The foundation's "Seeing Beyond Sight" program offers blindfold photo and multi sensory workshop for the sighted. This program is targeted for corporates as part of employee engagement and human development initiative, and for educational institutes.

The Beyond Sight Foundation founded by Partho and Kanchan Pamnani in 2009, has a team of people from different cultural environments and disciplinary backgrounds: Dr. Simon Hayhoe a researcher, educator and writer; Astad Deboo - a pioneer of modern dance in India, Arundhati Ghosh - a domain expert on art philanthropy and non-profit, and Giri Giridhar - an experienced finance professional.

For the exemplary work that the Beyond Sight Foundation (Blind With Camera) does for the differently abled, they deserve a standing ovation!

If you want to get more information and support Beyond Sight Foundation (Blind With Camera), please visit [www.blindwithcamera.org](http://www.blindwithcamera.org) and e-school [www.blindwithcameraschool.org](http://www.blindwithcameraschool.org).

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