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# Strategic Brand Management

THIRD EDITION



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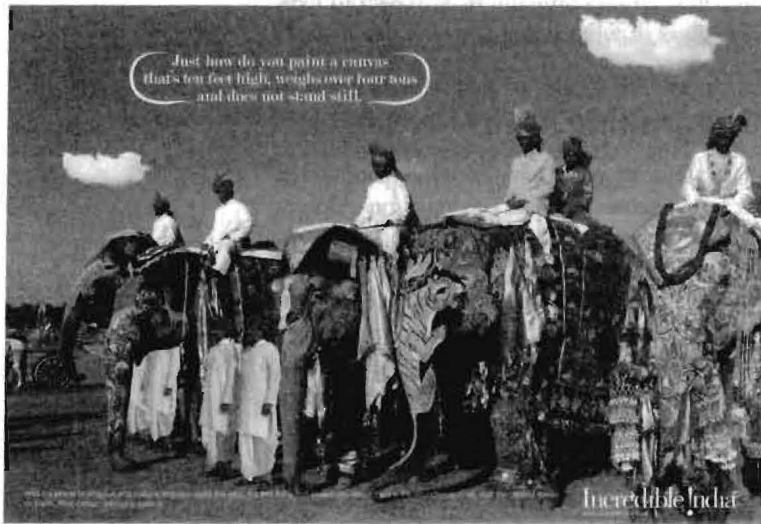
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BRANDING BRIEF 7-2

**Incredible India: Branding India to the World**



In the global tourism industry, India had often been referred to as a “sleeping giant” or a sleeping elephant. The country’s many assets had been eulogized at every international trade platform, and its prospects and potential were deliberated at every global tourism meet, yet India’s performance was far from laudable. Until 2002, India had 18 tourism offices abroad. There was no positioning, common branding, or a clear and precise message. The clichéd visuals reinforced the traditional image of India rather than giving the contemporary feel of a young nation.

In 2002, the government of India defined its vision for the development of the tourism sector. The vision was to produce a clear identity, a unique brand, which would drive all marketing strategies. It would pervade all forms of communications and stimulate the travel consumer’s behavior to competitively position India in the global market place. Research formed an integral component of the campaign. On the basis of analysis, Indian tourism clustered a list of 15 countries into three groups—markets that needed to be defended, those that needed aggressive investment, and yet others that needed to be seeded before they could be invested in.

While it is easy to position and brand single-product destinations such as the Maldives and Mauritius or a wildlife destination such as South Africa, it is extremely difficult and complex to establish a clear and precise identity for a multiproduct destination such as India. India is bigger than the 23 countries of Europe put together and every single state of India has its own unique attractions.

The initial phase of the exercise was to create a distinct image for India and an effective style of communication. This style was created with the logo “Incredible India,” where the exclamation mark forming the ‘I’ of India was used innovatively. It was an integrated 360-degree campaign, encompassing not only print, electronic communication, and the internet, but also public

Thus, a number of brands are able to create a strong point of difference, in part because of consumers’ identification of and beliefs about the country of origin. For example, consider the following strongly linked brands and countries:

- |                            |                              |
|----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Levi’s jeans—United States | Dewar’s whiskey—Scotland     |
| Chanel perfume—France      | Kikkoman soy sauce—Japan     |
| Foster’s beer—Australia    | Bertolli olive oil—Italy     |
| Barilla pasta—Italy        | Gucci shoes and purses—Italy |
| BMW—Germany                | Mont Blanc pens—Switzerland  |

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relations, outdoor hoardings, and in-flight television advertising. In reality, the "Incredible India" campaign was more than just mere advertising. The brand-building process comprised personal relationships with international tour operators and journalists, partnerships, promotions, contests, use of interactive and social media, and an aggressive communication strategy. At the International Tourism Bourse (ITB), Berlin—the world's largest travel and tourism show—India participated as a partner country. It used the entire Berlin city as a canvas, decorating it with 3D installations, large billboards, and Incredible India taxis and buses. At Incredible India @ 60 in New York, it unleashed its culture, tourism wealth, and vibrant colors.

Developing a strong and distinctive image called for creativity, brilliant execution, and constant innovation, which became the hallmark of the campaign. As Indian tourism worked with some of the finest creative minds in the advertising world to create a strong destination image, the brand had to be constantly kept alive and fresh. Every year, a new creative campaign was unleashed in the global markets.

A marketing-led strategy had created the necessary demand and it was imperative that infrastructure at tourism sites as well as hotel accommodation kept pace, so that Indian tourism constantly evolved to higher levels of growth. Visitors' experience was enhanced at major tourism sites, Indian skies were radically opened up, and airport infrastructure was improved. The campaign started with a meager outlay of ₹15.71 crores in 2002–2003. The aim was to outthink rather than outspend its competitors. The impact and delivery of the campaign led to increased outlays and by 2008–2009, the outlay had increased to ₹220 crores. During this period, India's arrival grew from a mere 2.2 million to 5.6 million and more critically its foreign exchange earnings rose from US\$3.1 billion to US\$11.8 billion. Domestic tourism witnessed a huge upsurge from 168 million to 536 million domestic tourists.

The entire travel and tourism canvas was held together with one powerful branding idea that helped achieve the vision of unifying India as an aspirational destination. During the course of this journey, India metamorphosed into one of the top destinations of the world. (Condé Nast Traveller Readers Award ranked India as World's No. 1 preferred holiday destination in 2007 and India won the PATA Grand Award for Best Destination Marketing Campaign worldwide.)

Sources: Amitabh Kant, "Branding India: Incredible Story," 2009; "Incredible India Campaign's Success Raises Tourism Hopes," *Deccan Herald*, 17 November 2009; PTI, "Incredible India's Campaign Wins World Travel Award," *Times of India*, 10 November 2009; Arcopol Chaudhuri, "Incredible India: When Public Sector Advertising Turned Savvy," *DNA*, 2 June 2009; [www.incredibleindia.org](http://www.incredibleindia.org); "Incredible India Campaign Promoting Growth of Tourism," [www.eturbonews.com](http://www.eturbonews.com), 28 February 2008.

Other geographic associations besides country of origin are possible, such as states, regions, and cities. Marketers can establish a geographic or country-of-origin association in different ways. They can embed the location in the brand name, such as Idaho potatoes, Irish Spring soap, or South African Airways, or combine it with a brand name in some way as in Bailey's Irish Cream. Or they can make the location the dominant theme in brand advertising, as has Foster's and Coors beer. Some countries have even created advertising campaigns to promote their products. For example, "Rums of Puerto Rico" advertise that they are the finest quality rums, leading to a 70 percent share of U.S. brand sales. Other countries have developed and advertised labels or seals for their products.<sup>4</sup> Branding Brief 7-2 describes India's attempt to create a brand through the "Incredible India" Campaign.