

India's Multinationals' Branding and Service Delivery in South Africa: Perceptions from the Groundⁱ

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ABSTRACT This paper is a critique of the apparent stagnancy of some of India's commercial ventures in South Africa, one of Africa's few economic success stories. It argues here that Indian companies' complacency in effectively competing with western business interests in South Africa as well as in the standards and ethical norms by which they function is more retrogressive than promising for a more rewarding stake in the country's economic performance. Case studies from the motor industry, Audiological industry and leather industry are cited here as significant markers of Indian business patterns in South Africa. The paper is based more on empirical and conversational evidence than on an extensive search for literature on the subject. It recommends that India's MNCs need adopt the style and standards of other MNCs in order to make a success of their presence in South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

India's multinationals have been active in India for more than 75 years (Adhikari 2013), and in the world economy since the 1960s but have accelerated their operations globally only over the last 20 years (Pradhan 2008). A recent report has shown that India's top 15 transnational companies earned 75 per cent of their total revenues from international operations. Collectively they held 57 per cent of their total assets overseas, and employed 20 per cent of their overall workforce abroadⁱⁱⁱ. As they surge ahead to compete with other Multinational Corporations (MNCs) their modus operandi and appeal to the people in their foreign locations need greater scrutiny. The role of India's multinationals in Africa is inextricably linked to its historical association with the continent (Nilekani 2008; Biswas 2012), its growing population and its burgeoning economy. While Nilekani's brief mention of Africa-India relations predates colonialism, Biswas's (2012) paper begins with India's association with the continent as an emerging third world economy after independence from colonial rule. Her opening paragraphs however, are followed by an historical reconstruction of India's commercial engagement with East African countries several thousand years before Christ (Biswas 2012: 140). Together with Biswas's paper four other contributions in the same book discussed, with nostalgic reference to In-

dia's past as a major trading nation, ideas on how India is poised to improve upon its prevalent relations with the East African Community (EAC). While the papers focus upon significant trends that are emerging between Indian and the EAC, they lack a more critical appraisal of Indian multinational companies' performances in the region (see for instance Pathak 2012; Ray 2012; Sahu 2012; Sudhakaran 2012). The growing literature base between India and the EAC must serve as instructive outlooks for the way in which South Africa-India relations literature is beginning to emerge.

Since 1991, India's economic growth over the past two decades placed it in the top 10 per cent of the world's major economies, peaking at around 10 per cent in 2010, but being almost halved by the first quarter of 2014. While explanations for this rapid downward slide range from poor global economic performances to poor perceptions of the last Congress led coalition government, current performance estimates in India's economic growth rate are expected to improve through a renewed sense of trust in the recently elected political elite. As India surges ahead into the 21st century with a comparatively stronger economic performance than most countries in the world, its raw material needs and energy requirements is increasing at a concomitant rate. Africa is being increasingly seen as a continent that it has to work with closely enough to build sustainable working relationships over

the next few decades. The continent's vast mineral and energy resources as well as numerous countries economic growth within it are major attractions for India's increasing interest in Africa. Coal, oil and fossil fuel are among their regular requirements and the need for investments through their improved technical and innovative expertise, are creating new niches for the educated middle-classes and nascent transnational entrepreneurs. India's enormous middle class of more than 100 million and the rapid increase of its tertiary educated sector are adding to the need to find employment for them within and outside of the country. The export of professional labour and entrepreneurial investments from India is swiftly becoming a major source of foreign carrings^{iv}. As Indians increasingly go out to work across the globe, their commitments to family and country remains steadfast – especially seen in the regular flows of remittances back home. India topped the remittance amounts among the major migrant populations in the world at US\$70bn, followed by the China (US\$66bn), Mexico and the Philippines (US\$24bn each), and Nigeria (US\$21bn).

Investments in Africa by Indian multinationals and the state have witnessed phenomenal growth rates as well over the last two decades. India's increased interest in trade with Africa became more visible since 2003, which increased 15-fold within a decade. This is attributed to what Indian state refers to as the "adoption of organic growth measures". The Indian government made a commitment to raise the level of trade to US\$70bn by the end of 2014. While India's investments rose significantly and remains impressive, its major Asian competitor viz. China surpasses it by a significant margin of fourteen fold. During the decade from 2003 to 2013, China's trade with Africa rose from US\$15bn in 2003 to US\$200bn focussing heavily on mining and energy requirements. India's focus too will be largely on oil and gas, as well as pharmaceuticals, petrochemicals, IT, fertilisers, and infrastructure development.

Both India and South Africa have their major population segments in the rural areas. This provides fertile ground for India to contribute towards telecommunications and agricultural development. In South Africa, ever since its readmission into the international community diplomatic and trade relations emerged in the friendliest ways possible, with Mahatma Gandhi's role

against British imperialism in the country most often being the justification for friendly relations between the two countries. India, through its subjugation during Moghul rule for more than 700 years, and British rule for almost 250 years, has substantively developed its economy through significant advances in technology, agricultural development and motor manufacturing. Despite doomsday economists of the 1960s and 1970s warning the world that if India's population reaches a billion people, the likelihood of mass starvation and a total breakdown of infrastructural development is a real possibility, India has managed to break any dependence on foreign aid for its survival. Coupled with a population of more than 1.2 billion people, these achievements have earned India a commendable reputation in the global scheme of things. It is not unexpected therefore that the level of trade between the countries is skewed in favour of India. In 2003-4 India's trade with South Africa was at US\$2.5bn. By 2008-9 – it increased to US\$7.5bn and in 2010, during Zuma's visit to India, it was agreed that trade should increase to US\$10bn by 2012;

South Africa's investment in India by 2010 – was US\$109 million. While South Africa has a long way to go before equalising their investment in India, a crucial question does emerge about India's marketing strategy in South Africa: "is it gaining the maximum out of its investment potential". In January 2011, the target was revised by SA's Minister of trade when he visited India – a new target by 2014 was set for US\$14bn. Successful and sustainable trade between South Africa and India depends largely upon the marketing and branding initiatives, quality of service, and the perceptions that prevail on the ground, especially if it is linked directly to a consumerist market.

ADVERTISING, BRANDING AND MINDSETS

The significant differences between advertising and branding lay in the types of impressions that companies wish to instil in the minds of their target groups. One definition of the former concept, almost universally understood as normative practice is: "Advertising is the non-personal communication of information usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature about products, services or ideas by identified spon-

sors through the various media" (Bovee 1992: 7). An equally frequent understanding of advertising's cognate field viz. branding, is defined as: "The process involved in creating a unique name and image for a product in the consumers' mind, mainly through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme. Branding aims to establish a significant and differentiated presence in the market that attracts and retains loyal customers^v. There are at least two issues that are relevant to the respective fields in the process of marketing and consolidation of service providers identities in competitive markets. The first is that of targeting an audience for saleable items that may not be repeated, such as in auctions, or special items that are unlikely to be repeated or continued in a sustained way for a limited period because they are likely to be discontinued within a given time frame. The issue here is one of temporal attraction and impermanence in association with the entrepreneurial provider. The second is the lasting imprint that is intended to be created in the minds of the targeted market. Emblems and acronyms are the characteristic ways in which brand names extoll their marks of service and the status of "excellence" in their products. However distinct branding and advertising are from each other, there is an ever-prevalent mutual dependence between them. While branding is dependent upon advertising to reach the consumer, advertising is equally dependent upon branding for its survival.

Multinationals and localised businesses are dependent upon their visibility that is created through emblems, popularity and frequency among the middle and upper classes, social networking, as well as the media. Association with segments from among these classes is a significant way to raise awareness and durability of products. Approval from such quarters often serves as a subtle though unintended form of consumerist intimidation, almost akin to youthful peer pressure. The power of ownership of a popular branded product depends upon numerous factors that converge towards trust and esteemed value. For the purposes of this paper at least two issues that rank among the most important will be mentioned here. The first is the renowned and somewhat indisputable issue of established reliability – in manufacturing, after sales service, appearance and aesthetic appeal of the product, relevance and the status that it

carries with it in ownership. The second issue is visibility of the product and the class based association that is attached to it. High frequency of ownership is not necessarily associated with the prestige of a product. But the price and the quality of it does have the tendency to attach itself to class based interest.

While such products may need less media coverage over time, their persistent recurrence has the effect of a persuasiveness that eventually becomes wanting. Relative to the circumstances that prevail in nation states, the popularity of products may depend upon at least one of two things. The first is the absence of competition brought about through the monopolies by a few companies. Some of the best known examples in these circumstances are from the motor industry which I use here as classic examples for advertising and branding. The intention here however is not to be restrictive to this industry. For instance, in India the motor industry has for decades been dominated by the Tata group, where purchase of family sedan vehicles was restricted to a choice of either the Fiat or Ambassador. Transport vehicles for both private and public purposes were restricted to the same company. These vehicles acquired an admirable reputation for the strength of the metal that they were made of, their resistance to the hardy road conditions in India and for providing lasting service for up to twenty years or more. In this situation, advertising was hardly needful^{vi}. The second issue is of the fierce competition that Indian companies face in a country such as South Africa, where western norms of intense competition and advertising is ever prevalent. In the motor industry that is dominated by foreign companies, advertising is only a singular aspect of their multi-pronged marketing drives. A crucial element in several of the prominent companies is the inbuilt offer of maintenance plans that extend over three to five year periods. The only exclusions are the tyres, fuel and oil, as well as evidence of personal liability or negligence for damages to the vehicles. While often more expensive than Indian vehicles, brand names such as Mercedes, BMW (German), Chrysler and Ford (American), Peugeot (French), and Hyundai (South Korean), such offers combined with regular advertising have added value to their respective products. While Toyota (Japanese) and VW (German) have avoided incorporating maintenance plans into their pur-

chase prices, their vehicles have acquired a reputation that endured the competitiveness of the market.

Indian products are recent additions to the diversity of vehicles on offer in South Africa, having arrived in the market only after the 1994 dawning of democracy. Their initial entry into the market was marked by shapes that were not aesthetically attractive to the South African eye, and failed to realise the potential that lies in them. The initial entry of Mahindra and Mahindra into the South African market was placed in the hands of a reasonably successful family that ran a panel beating service. Herein they lay a seriously flawed marketing decision that failed almost as soon as they became known for their agency of Mahindra vehicles. Their failure was ensconced in the mistaken belief that their localised success was good to go further and transcend their business successes at home. But their decision was based upon a proper analysis of what resources such a venture required and whether a localised family operated business without large enough venture capital or the experience of business beyond their metropolis were the appropriate candidates for such an institution building task. For Mahindra and Mahindra to succeed in a developing country such as South Africa, it has to develop into a business institution that compares favourably with the already established competitors in their new environment. This opportunity was not convincingly grasped at the point of their initial entry into South Africa. The launch, though not unexpected, was restricted to specially invited guests who were treated to a dramatized release of two models of their vehicles. This created an ideal situation among the generally well-to-do attendees to assess the vehicles worthiness, talk enough about it to spread the word about its worthiness and begin a network that could serve as an informal mechanism to market the vehicle. While the event set the catalyst for the euphoria to begin, it failed to take up the challenge to transcend this singular gathering. The lack of media advertising and absence of a concerted effort to create a brand brought about a virtual collapse of the family's capacity to continue with the initiative.

THE CASE OF VEHICLE SALES

A combination of anecdotal evidence and intentional interviews about the views of Indian

produced vehicles provided resonating responses about the perceptions and real experiences with Indian origin vehicles. My interest in the topic was sparked by a casual conversation among several people of Indian origin (PIOs) when one of them made a positive statement about the presence of Indian vehicle companies in South Africa. An immediate retort by a person who was a mechanic for a Japanese motor vehicle company belittled the remark and commented on the reliability of the after sales service and care for clients of their products. The conversation was a robust discussion about Indian companies' lack of reliability against the learning experiences that they were still undergoing, as well as the environmental conditions in South Africa that are purportedly different in India. It was a conversation that appeared mixed with a sense of nostalgic pride that India has now entered the South African market, against the realism that perceptions of Indian products are generally negative. The negativity however was also rooted in two significant mindsets that are characteristic in South Africa. The first is the issue of alleged entrenched racism, especially by Whites, who are perceived not to be inclined towards either Indian (or Chinese) products, irrespective of their quality or reliability. The second is the issue of negative personal experiences of people related or linked to those who were a part of the conversation. Stories of how dealings with Indian business people must be authenticated prior to finalisation of any deal abounded. But the argument that the major producers of vehicles in India dominate the market and that vehicles' are owned for up to two decades or more appeared to have won the day. However a challenge to do an internet search on the comments by South African owners of Indian produced vehicles added a different dimension to the discussion. A quick internet search on a smartphone revealed some information that necessitates some consideration, however contrived it might be.

In their realisation of their market potential in South Africa, Mahindra and Mahindra sought new avenues to remain and create a sustainable niche for their products in the country. Numerous changes have been effected to meet the design and aesthetic appeals that are relevant to the South African market. A recent marketing campaign by the company produced a convincing design that was sent to random email ad-

dresses by SA Consumer Surveys throughout South Africa^{viii}. In an internet link to the potential clients, personal details that were provided elicited an immediate mobile phone response, with a promise of a consultant's call at the soonest for the XUV500, a seven-seater sedan built in the style of an SUV. However, while other major competitors in the motor industry offered 100 000km service plans over a three to five year period, Mahindra and Mahindra was offering a 60 000 km service plan over a three year period. However, a near equivalent of the XUV500, for instance, the Dodge Journey sold at least at a 25 per cent higher price but with 3 year service plan or 100 000km, dependent upon whichever came first.

Mahindra's bigger Indian competitor, Tata, began their first trading in 1994, after South Africa's first general election. Tata's vehicles were at encouragingly lower prices than most other established motor vehicle companies in the country. While this initially attracted attention, Indian produced vehicles drew an equal amount of scepticism from the public. Much of this appeared to have been confirmed when a website was started in 2005 for disgruntled owners of Tata vehicles. The statements below are an indication of the issues raised by the respective client:

Having had a shocking buyer's experience with my Tata bakkie and the importers, Accordian Investments, I set up this website a few years ago in order that the public can make an informed decision when they buy a Tata. TATA SA (Accordian Investments) tried their utmost (threatening to sue me) to take this site down. But a few thousands of visitors (currently more than 13000 visits) and many, many e-mails from people thanking me, we are still here five years later...

Another complainant contributed with a chronology of 10 events over a two year period since the purchase of his Tata vehicle. Just four incidents are mentioned below:

14/09/2005: vehicle purchased;

30/01/2006: 10 000km service (door sticking, rattling and squeaking – Paid R1118.43

22/02/2006: In workshop for starting problems (was taken to them +- 7 times to sort this problem out);

18/04/2006: Vehicle won't start – taken in a few times to fix...

On the assumption that the list of complaints is true, the end-user of the Tata product experienced problems in less than five months after purchase of the vehicle. He continued to experience problems every few weeks, culminating in him documenting at least 10 major problems over a two year period, the type of which should only arise several years after purchase of such a vehicle. The respective website drew support from a renowned BBC personality, Jeremy Clarkson by reproducing his comment that appeared in the internationally distributed magazine (Top Gear December 2012): "Tata makes horrible cars for people who are tired of falling off their motor scooters". While Jeremy Clarkson has acquired a reputation for making insensitive racialised statements about different ethnic and racial groups, Indian motor vehicle companies have not produced a convincing advertising and branding campaign to match their South African counterparts from Japan, Europe and North America.

THE CASE OF AUDIOLOGICAL IMPORTS

In a country with a population of more than a billion people, it would be economic suicide if the state and the country's private entrepreneurs are unable to provide home-grown solutions to its medical requirements. Importing medical supplies would be an enormous strain on the budgetary requirements. However, India's international reputation in cost-effective pharmaceutical products has acquired an enviable status, especially since its companies are providing cheap and affordable generics to many of the developing countries. The same medication is also distributed within India and has contributed substantially to the medical requirements of its population. However, in the situation of innovativeness in medical equipment and their marketing, has not as yet acquired the international status of its medicines counterpart. A personal awareness of the situation with one of the importers of Audiological products from India for instance, has provided a persistent situation of serious lapses in product design, marketing strategies and reliability of service.

At least two producers of testing equipment Electronystagmography (ENGs – vestibular testing) and hearing aids have established a business link with a South African distribution com-

pany belonging to a PIO. Business relationships began in 2004 with the former and in 2008 with the latter. The first working relationship was terminated in 2009 for several reasons. The equipment that was supplied required constant attention from the supplier's electronic engineer because of different problems experienced since the time of their purchase by the end-users. In each instance the distances travelled to provide after-sales service to clients began adding up to substantial amounts, and large enough to significantly erode the profits that were gained through their sales. The initiation of all new orders had to begin with an upfront payment that guaranteed a 6 to 8 week delivery period. But in each instant the delivery inevitably went beyond the stipulated 8-week period and was seldom made before 10 weeks. The delays within the Customs office and setting aside time for the final delivery to the client added to the time that ensured the client finally received the equipment and was suitably trained in it. Frustrations were exacerbated when equipment had to be resent to India for servicing or repair work, because of its specialised nature. In this after-sales agreement with the manufacturer a maximum 3-week re-delivery period was guaranteed, but not adhered to. These problems came to a final halt after the advancement on the ENG by two manufacturers, an American and a Belgian, off-set interest in the Indian product. Known as the Videonystagmography (VNG), the product was popularised by audiologists and Ear, Nose and Throat (ENT) specialists through their preference for this product over the ENG. The relationship with both the American and Belgian manufacturers was described as "more professional and reliable, and certainly the type of people one wants to work with in times of serious deadlines for the supply of equipment to clients".

The respondent's relationship with the hearing aid supplier began on a positive note, having started with a substantial government order and appreciation of the product by audiologist from a state hospital. There were two factors that brought about this confidence in the Indian hearing aids. It was the comparatively lower price that was the attraction and the low budget that they had the state hospital had that made the difference in the first order. Commendations for the products spread rapidly through several provinces in South Africa. They attracted the attention of both state hospitals and private prac-

tioners, but mainly from the PIO segment of the population. White audiologists often emphasised in straight forward terms their aversion for Indian products, while African audiologists were a mixed lot who either accepted them or rejected them outright because of their origins. The favourable alliance with the hearing aid manufacturer saw a gradual slide when the alleged promises that were made were not kept. For instance, delivery times were not adhered to, prices for specific types of hearing aids were limited to national tenders only, upgrades in presentation of the finished products to match trendy western styles that acquired popularity internationally were not adhered to, credit facilities were given despite the relationship leading to an acceptable level of trust, samples had to be paid for and bank charges for international payments changed from being the manufacturers' responsibility to the distributor's responsibility.

An amplification of each of the issues above outlined a set of reasons why the Indian manufacturer marginalised itself from the South African market. Delivery was inevitably delayed because payment had to be done prior to the order being made up. While this is not necessarily an odd issue, the estrangement came from the fact that the payment was first routed through New York and then to New Delhi. This often created delays of up to two weeks before payment was acknowledged in India. However the problem was not so much in the knowledge of the arduous route that the money allegedly took, but the continuous denial by the manufacturer that it ever went through New York first before acknowledgement of payment by the bank's branch in New Delhi. While the respondent's bank in Durban always showed proof of payment through New York, there was always a denial that any such confirmation could be trusted until the bank in New Delhi confirmed it. The manufacturer continued to adopt an inflexible position with respect to prices for smaller orders of less than 100 units – because it was only restricted bigger orders. While the respondent considered this to be a practice in bad faith, subsequent negotiations with a German and a Spanish supplier of hearing aids matched the prices of their Indian counterpart and reduced the smallest order to 25 units to qualify for special prices. Both the German and the Spanish hearing aids followed the trend of multi-coloured interchangeable outer coverings, because this is

what end-users prefer as a matter of fashion. The Indian manufacturer however had been promising to go deliver on this latest trend for the last three year but had not. This slowed down the demand for Indian hearing aids – although they were technologically comparable with the European products. While the Spanish manufacturer placed a condition of payment upfront, the German company provided a 30 day payment period even though they did not have at the time of research an established trade relationship. But both manufacturers promised delivery within seven of the order being made, relative to their conditions being met. Both manufacturers as well provided samples free of charge, one of them providing them at no cost while the other sent them as a loan for a 30 to 60 day period. The final loss of confidence appeared to have taken place when the company in New Delhi demanded bank charges to be paid before the order could be made up. While this was the first time that this demand was made, the speculations about why it happened were several. Two of the most compelling reasons were that they were either playing for time because they did not have the required stock, or sheer greed had set in because they felt that their South African distributor did not have alternative suppliers with equally competitive prices. This procrastination in delivery added another month to their waiting period and a loss of confidence by the respective hospital in their ability to meet stipulated times.

Both the German and Spanish manufacturers were keen to assist in the company's advertising and branding initiatives, while the Indian company was not prepared to contribute beyond a few audiological charts. While the charts were useful and attractive enough to draw public attention in the universities, hospitals and clinics in which they were placed, they did not add much else to the costs required for more effective advertising and branding campaigns. The distributor's position had reached a point of wanting to rid their Indian suppliers altogether, save for a few models that they still needed from them. But their ultimate goal was to avoid business with them altogether.

THE CASE OF LEATHER IMPORTS

A casual conversation with a director of a shoe manufacturing company at a social event

led to a formalised interview with himself and subsequently with two other PIO competitors in the greater Durban market. Talk about business and the import-export markets in South Africa led to intense warnings about doing business in India. The successes of the shoe manufacturers led to them wanting to increase their profits and performances by sourcing leather at lower prices from India. Their visits to tanneries in India were encouraging and the first shipment served as a boost to the inclination to want to do further business with their Indian suppliers. Three months after the first order a new shipment was ordered and verbal and written guarantees were provided via e-mail as well as in the signed contracts. However, the second shipment was a significant disappointment because more than half of its contents were low quality leather that was inappropriate to the manufacturing they were doing. After several threats of getting the bank to withdraw the payment and to report the tannery to the Indian government, a compromise was reached. The lesson from the latter delivery was that leather suppliers in India can only be trusted if the container is loaded and sealed in the buyer's presence. Despite checking and counter-checking, the volume in a container or more makes it impossible to verify quality in every sheet of leather that is bundled into them. Upon delivery, in every consignment it was discovered that at least a measure of the shipment had some lower quality leather mixed with the quality that was specified. The difference however, was the substantial reduction in the lower quality leather that it had when compared to the second delivery when they were not present to witness the loading of the leather into the containers.

India's leather industry, led by a non-profit organisation, the Council for Leather Exports (CLE) lists Germany, Italy, the UK, the US, Hong Kong, Spain, France, Netherlands, the UAE, Portugal and Belgium as their priority clients (<http://www.ibef.org/exports/leather-industry-india.aspx>). South Africa is notably absent and must therefore be relatively insignificant for them not to be mentioned in their website. Supported by a cattle population of more than 300 000 000, India has one of the largest in the world, followed by Brazil and China. The leather industry in this country has a long history and has adapted to the changing world conditions over time. By the 2012-13 the leather export industry in In-

dia had touched US\$4.86 billion, and is still expected to grow even further.

While business relationships with tanneries have been established, the caution and prevalent suspicions about doing business with suppliers from India have forced them to consider suppliers from other countries. South American countries such as Argentina, Brazil and Chile have become alternative places through which raw leather could be sourced. Their prices were demonstrably competitive and the service was of apparently higher standards. However the lessons learnt from their Indian experiences have forced them not to make long distance orders only since business practices in South American countries too allegedly have reputations for dishonest practice. But their services and the environments from which they operate are allegedly more aesthetically more pleasing than what they generally encounter in India. The dust, pollution and vulnerability towards viruses add to the problems of visiting a country with which they would still want to continue trading.

CONCLUSION

The respondents for this research were mainly PIOs and one person conventionally classified “White” (of European origin) in South Africa. While there was an established sense of appreciation for the country that is India, a range of issues that are tangentially linked to business, such as environmental and ecological conditions, extreme road congestion in the big cities and reliability of their suppliers in doing business. There are signs that India is changing – although a debate is raging about whether it is swift enough or not. Continuous utterances globally that India is a new emerging world power can only be entrenched if positive experiences and perceptions of its infrastructural conditions and reliability of services outweigh the negativities that still prevail. One way of enhancing images of confidence building in their products is to advertise, brand and match their competitors. Not enough of this is being done in a promising economic environment such as South Africa, and coming in cheaply with sedans and service oriented vehicles is not as much in demand as reliability is in South Africa. For instance, Hyundai vehicles did not have acceptable levels of confidence in the South African market until they started matching German and American competitors with five-year service plans to some of the mod-

els in their vehicle range. Although more expensive than the Indian vehicles, Hyundai vehicles enjoy greater visibility in South Africa. Indian producers need to appreciate that after sales services and bonding through reliability of service are crucial to the capturing of markets in emerging African economies. One way of managing these issues, is to begin within India itself through regulatory bodies that guide and enhance their quality of services internationally. Such an approach is significant enough to ensure improved images and confidence in their products. When people set up websites to challenge the notion of vehicle quality, and they are met with supportive responses by others they are likening their reactions to calls of social responsibility. But while the respective firm is the major target, perceptions about them has the tendency to impact even more widely upon other services that emanate from the same country. Even though Indian products have a share in the South African market, their potential remains hampered when examined against the other case studies that this paper discusses. Hearing aids and leather products are items that will have value for a long time into the future. But to lose to competitors in other countries is to retard the process of India becoming a super-power that is taken seriously enough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Indian MNCs need to do more to understand the social environments in South Africa. This will allow them insight into how Eurocentric and Americanised the South African market is to the population’s needs. But for Indian MNCs to operate successfully outside India, it is more than likely that they will have to change their business strategies within India itself. The most significant of these is that they need to accept that advertising creates a bigger appeal to consumers, the spinoffs of which are expansion of their markets into bigger consumer bases. They synchronise marketing strategies within and outside India in order to favourably compete with other international branding methods.

NOTES

- i. This paper was presented at a Conference on “Indo-African Relations: Emerging Dimensions, Opportunities and Challenges in the 21st Century”, in Udaipur, India, on 24-25 March 2014.

- ii. Professor of Anthropology, University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would like to thank my University for funding my participation in the conference.
- iii . <http://www.rediff.com/business/slide-show/slide-show-1-15-special-indian-companies-that-are-most-global/20130717.htm>
- iv (BBC (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-21570622>: 2nd June 2014)
- v. (<http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/branding.html3ixzz31113>)
- vi. In my presentation during the Conference a senior Indian based statistician remarked that Indian motor manufacturing companies were noted for their lack of advertising.
- vii. (feedback@consumersurveys.co.za: 3 March 2014)

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