

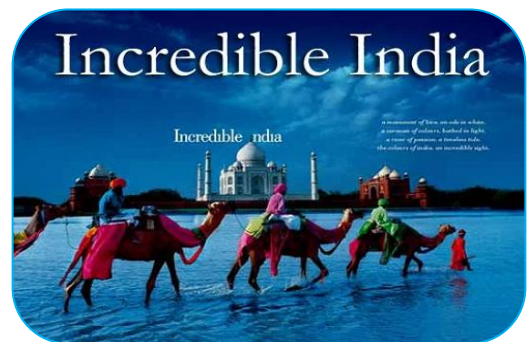


A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF NATION BRANDING: STRENGTHENING INDIA'S GLOBAL TOURISM IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper gives a branding strategy of four tourist nations which are ranked amongst top 32 by United Nations World Tourism Organizations (UNWTO) and ranks amongst top 30 under travel and tourism index by World Economic forum. It delves with branding strategy of these four nations i.e. United Arab Emirates, Singapore, Malaysia and Australia and provides a workable solution for India. The methodology used includes the case study approach. Data has been collected from secondary sources, like, journals, white papers and websites of the above mentioned four nations. This paper is unique as it is for the first time that brand architectural model has been developed for any nation, especially India, using self interpretation. The paper has a limitation as the proposed model is yet to be tested.



This paper revisits the comparative study of nation branding with a focus on India's tourism sector. While earlier studies emphasized traditional campaigns such as 'Incredible India', this paper adopts a modern lens, incorporating digital diplomacy, social media strategies, and post-COVID tourism recovery branding. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining secondary benchmarking with primary survey insights and advanced statistical tools including Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (EFA/CFA), Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and sentiment analysis of social media campaigns. Comparisons are drawn between India, the UAE, Singapore, Malaysia, and Australia. The findings indicate that while India possesses a rich cultural identity, inconsistencies and weak digital integration limit its brand equity. Policy recommendations include adopting a hybrid endorsed brand architecture, embracing AI-driven personalization, and positioning India as a timeless yet future-ready destination.

KEYWORDS : Nation Branding; Tourism; Soft Power; Digital Marketing; Incredible India.

1. INTRODUCTION

Every Country or a place has its own identity. We cannot market a place like a product. As the product is tangible while a place refers to services which are intangible. Therefore, place needs to be branded similar to the products. In this paper authors are proposing a brand model through brand associations to give place, an identity.

Nation branding has emerged as a critical component of international relations, economic strategy, and tourism development. The concept, popularized by Anholt (2007) and Kotler et al. (1999), extends marketing principles beyond products to entire countries, shaping global perceptions through coordinated communication, identity building, and cultural diplomacy. For emerging economies like India, nation branding is not merely a promotional activity but a necessity for attracting investment, tourists, and political influence.

India's nation branding efforts began in earnest with the 'Incredible India' campaign launched in 2002. The campaign successfully highlighted India's diversity, culture, and spirituality, significantly improving inbound tourism. However, in the era of digital globalization, traditional campaigns face new challenges. Competitor countries such as Singapore, UAE, and Australia have successfully leveraged digital platforms, influencer tourism, and global events to strengthen their positioning. India, while culturally rich, often struggles with fragmented brand messages, inconsistent promotion across states, and limited digital innovation.

The COVID-19 pandemic (2020–2022) further reshaped tourism branding. Countries like Vietnam, UAE, and Singapore quickly repositioned themselves with digital-first recovery campaigns. India, despite its vast heritage and modern appeal, lagged behind in global perception indices. This paper re-examines India's nation branding through a comparative lens, identifying gaps and proposing refined strategies that align with 21st-century branding practices.

Today, India is known as the one of the poorest nations in the world as it ranks 135th out of 192 countries of the world only slightly better than African nations (Hu, 2004). India's image to the outside world is that of the most corrupt, dirty, unsystematic and a poor country (through personal interviews with foreign tourists). Also, India is not amongst top five countries of Asia in attracting tourism. Countries like, China, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand are way ahead in tourism as compared to India ("2012 Tourism Highlights". UNWTO). India ranks terrible 42nd in the World tourism ranking (Source: UNWTO Tourism Highlights 2011, India Tourism Statistics). Despite being the seventh largest country and a country with varied landscapes, it ranks so low in the world. Whereas, countries like, Malaysia ranks 9th and Thailand ranks 16th in the World tourism ranking (Source: UNWTO tourism highlights, 2012) which are comparatively so small in area as compared to India. Therefore, in the present scenario, it is very important to have a strong branding for India which can change the India's image to the outside world and encourage more tourists in our country.

This research paper aims at focusing on the brand architecture of India and discusses the ways to improve the branding strategy of India by comparing it with some of the nations which are ranked amongst top 30 in tourism. Brand Architectures of the four nations, i.e. Singapore, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Malaysia and Australia are discussed and compared with the branding strategy of India.

2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of this paper is to propose a brand architectural model for India, looking at the four leading tourist nations in the world. The current model for developing tourism in India- "Incredible India" does not fulfill the requirement of a true brand architecture and is insufficient to achieve its objective of making India, one of the leading tourism destinations in the world.

3. METHODOLOGY

The paper used case based approach. Elucidation of some important topics, like, Destination marketing, destination branding, destination image and brand architecture are gathered through published research papers. Detailed literature review is done to find out the branding strategies of the top tourist destinations. The four nations i.e. Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and Australia have been selected as cases to compare with Indian brand architecture. Their brand architectures are

then conceptualized using the information of their branding strategies from their official websites. This paper draws data to form information from secondary sources.

4. LITERATURE REVIEW

The foundation of nation branding lies in Anholt's (2007) concept of the Nation Brand Hexagon, emphasizing tourism, culture, governance, exports, people, and investment. Kotler and Gertner (2002) highlighted how place marketing strategies influence competitiveness. Recent works, however, focus on digital diplomacy and soft power. Nye (2017) argued that soft power is increasingly mediated by social media. Fan (2020) noted that digital platforms provide both opportunities and vulnerabilities for nation branding.

Tourism-related branding literature stresses differentiation. de Mooij (2019) emphasized the paradox of global brands adopting local identities, while Kavartzis & Hatch (2020) advocated for dynamic brand co-creation with stakeholders. Post-COVID research highlights agility in branding—with case studies from 'Hello Hong Kong' (2023) and 'Live Fully Vietnam' (2022) showcasing quick repositioning strategies.

In India's context, studies by Dinnie (2015) and Kumar & Singh (2021) critique 'Incredible India' for its static nature and lack of personalization. Scholars highlight missed opportunities in leveraging Bollywood, yoga, and wellness tourism as unique differentiators. Emerging studies also stress the role of AI, VR, and influencer-driven tourism campaigns in shaping global perceptions (Chen, 2022; Lee & Park, 2023). Thus, a gap exists in systematically comparing India's efforts against agile competitors using advanced tools of analysis.

4.1. PLACE MARKETING

According to the American Marketing Association (AMA) (2007) Board of Directors, Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large. AMA focuses its definition on value creation and delivery, and the longer-term retained customer. Tuckwell (2002) simplified the definition of marketing as "a process that identifies a need and then offers a means of satisfying it" (Smith, 2010). Marketing requires co-ordination, planning, implementation of campaigns and employees with the appropriate skills to ensure marketing success. During the last three decades, there has also been a growing interest in place marketing within the academia. Since the mid 1980s, a large number of writings have been published and today, there is an extensive literature on place marketing. Place marketing is associated with measures for renewing places and their images and, strengthening their attractiveness and competitiveness. Thus, place marketing is the provision and promotion of amenities with the presumed ability to appeal to external markets (Berglund, 2010). Place Marketing takes up marketing principles and techniques to advance the appeal and viability of a place (town, city, state, region, or nation) to tourists, businesses, investors, and residents (Encyclopedia, Britannica). In other words, Place Marketing (aka Place Branding, Territorial Marketing) is the practice of applying marketing and branding strategies to regions, states, cities and nations as place marketing teams (i.e. city councils, tourism departments) compete to attract residents, tourists, businesses and investors (Guiragossian, 2008).

Since competition is becoming so intense amongst places, therefore places have to take more entrepreneurial stand in order to remain at the top and enhance the attractiveness of the investors, residents and tourists (Metaxas, 2010). According to (Kotler et al. 1993) this present time is a time of 'place wars' in which places are competing for their economic survival with other places and regions not only in their own country but throughout the world. 'All places are in trouble now, or will be in the near future. The globalization of the world's economy and the speeding up pace of technological changes are two forces that require all places to learn how to compete with other cities or regions (Hall, 2004) as place marketing means designing a place to satisfy the needs of its target markets (Kotler,

1993). (Hall, 2004) is of a view that place marketing is all about that how a city should be presented to the consumers. Therefore, the challenge of place marketing is to strengthen the capacity of communities and regions to adapt to the changing marketplace, seize opportunities, and sustain their vitality (Kotler et al. 1993) because destination is one of the most difficult products to manage and market (Fyall, Leask, 2006). The concept of place marketing is very useful for the developing nations which often face a series of economic hurdles to get a developed status. Thus, marketers can use place marketing platform to get developing nations a developed status (Zerrilo, Thomas, 2007). Therefore, place marketing not only promotes or creates an image of a place rather gives unique identity which can be used to compete with other places. Thus, once the unique and differentiating feature of the place is identified then that uniqueness of the place needs to be advertised and promoted. This can be done through the implementation of the brand (Smith, 2010).

4.2. PRODUCT BRAND AND BRANDING

The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of other sellers. Therefore, branding does not only position your product with your target market over competition but also provides your target market a proper clarity about your product. A brand is thus a product or service whose dimensions differentiate it in some way from other products or services designed to satisfy the same need. These differences may be functional, rational, or tangible- related to product performance of the brand (Kotler et al., 2009). According to (Scott et al, 2011) an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant unique added values which match their needs most closely. Brands are the most important asset in any business (Eumont, 2010). Brands act like an image that consumers bear in their minds (Aaker, 1991).

4.3. PLACE BRANDING

The concept of place branding is multifaceted, requiring an in depth analysis of the literature. Many authors use the terms, place and destination interchangeably (Merrilees et. Al., 2007). According to (Anholt Simon, 2009), Place is used mostly in the same way as 'nation' in a holistic way that encompasses a country's, a region's or a city's overall political, cultural and business image. This also includes a tourism dimension. Where ever it is used in this way place is usually associated with the terms place-branding or place-marketing. Otherwise, place is used with its regular, lay meaning to describe somewhere (e.g. a country, region or city) .

Whereas, Destination refers to a country, region or city specifically as a tourism destination – somewhere that wishes to attract visitors for tourism purpose only. It is quite specific and is not used in any other context. *Place* brands cover every economic sector and a wide range of different businesses, whereas a destination brand is largely restricted to travel-related businesses (Anholt, 2009).

This research paper discusses branding of countries for tourism purpose, therefore, term destination branding is used everywhere.

The success of branding products has translated the practice of applying branding principles and techniques to places (Sneed et al, 2011). Destination branding's impact has been widespread and advocates stimulated tourism (Leonardo et al, 2010). Destinations are places that attract tourists or visitors for a temporary stay (Wagner and Peters, 2009). Marketers usually brand a destination to bring maximum tourism. (Hu and Ritchie, 1993) have further defined a tourism destination as – "a package of tourism facilities and services, which, like any other consumer product or service, is composed of a number of multidimensional attributes that together determine its attractiveness to a particular individual in a given choice situation" (Smith, 2010). Branding a nation/place/city is all about identifying the place's true identity. Thus, destination branding is all about combining all the attributes associated with the place under one umbrella that establishes a unique identity of the place and

differentiates from that of the competitor for attracting more and more tourists (Amit, 2010). According to (Jones, 1998) there is a obvious existing trend towards highly branded destinations. This means those people who have to go out on holidays see those places which have a trendy image (Ahmed, 1991). Countries and cities are competing worldwide not only for tourists but also for export markets, business investment, skilled migrants, etc. Now, destination managers are applying branding principles derived from product marketing and branding to establish their destinations to brands (Blackadder, 2006).

Branding of places esp. cities is gaining popularity in recent years (Zenker, 2011). It has become necessary for every place (esp. cities) to brand itself for the precious attention (Giannopoulos et. al., 2011). Like any other brand, places esp. cities have their own individual identities which are unique amongst themselves (Jaworski & Fosher, 2003); no two places are identical. On the basis of those unique identities, many places have been branding themselves systematically. Thus, place branding which is a new concept in Marketing is an important tool in development of a place and creating a strong brand of that place (Maheshwari, 2011). Thus, the idea of brand management for places, i.e. cities or nations has been established as a key tool to compete successfully with other nations (Giannopoulos et al., 2011). In place branding, the role of communications is not primarily a method for telling the world about a place, but a method for making the world aware of the actions a place performs which best exemplifies the kind of place it is (www.placebrands.net/placebranding/placebranding.html).

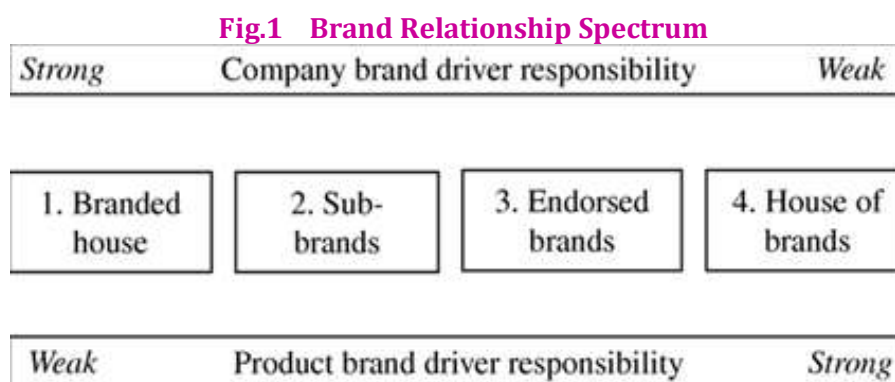
4.4. DESTINATION IMAGE

The study of destination image is a relatively recent in the field of tourism research. Before people go to a destination, they form a certain representation or a set of expectation based on the basis of previous experience, press reports, advertising and some common beliefs in their mind (Marino, 2007). Quite often, we come across about a certain nation suffering from a negative or distorted image or a particular city or state launches a new campaign to attract investment and tourism. When a product does not do well in the market then branding is required to compete for customers and to go successfully in the market. Similar places need branding to get the customers and to compete with competitors (Amit K. Singh, 2010). Therefore, places create their brand identity and reputation in the same way as the Corporate World does for their products. For every place there is a need to discover the real meaning of that place and portray in such a manner that the world perceives their image the way they want them to. A country exerts so much influence over the behaviors and attitudes of that country's target audience, like, foreign investors, tourists, consumers, students, entrepreneurs, governments, media, etc., therefore, it automatically becomes important to keep country's image and reputation good (Anholt, 2009). After all if country's reputation is good then it's ideas become believable and welcomed by other country's citizens. An image is not individual traits or qualities but the total inkling an entity makes on the minds of others (Ditcher, 1985).

4.5 BRAND ARCHITECTURE

Brand architecture deals with structure and designs of brands which are constantly influenced by changing environment (Waddington, 2011). Brand Architecture refers to how a firm structures and organizes it's product in terms of naming, positioning and marketing the product (R. Harish, 2010). Now a days, marketers and managers have to manage a complex structure of brands which is now known as the brand architecture of the organization (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The increasing complexity of the brand portfolio has required firms and organizations to consider a number of ways in which they manage their brands effectively. An organized brand structure would not create any confusion in the minds of the customers and would help in identifying the products and brands easily (Waddington, 2011). Brand architecture acts as a link between an organization and the customer (Strebingner & Treiblmaier, 2006). Thus, brand architecture behaves like a reflection of the market in

which an organization displays its local and global brands (Sanchez & Rajagopal, 2004). Also, according to (Sanchez & Rajagopal, 2004) the brand architecture is the organizing structure of the brand portfolio that specifies brand roles and the nature of relationships between the brands. It also helps in the revival, retention or merger of brands that have low market impact and tend to cause organizational conflicts with the strong brands of the company. Also, it can be used to revive weak or dormant brands and launch new brands. Brand architecture approach is also used for overcoming any conflicts in defining the role and level of brands. These days consumers are bombarded with lots of information and lots of brands globally as well as locally, making the consumers confused and making the job of marketers, managers and brand owners harsh in their attempt to continuously building the brand value (Davis, 2005). Thus, brand architecture is a blueprint to guide brand building, development and marketing. According to Aaker and Joachimsthaler (2000), there are four principal types of brand architecture explained under brand relationship spectrum (Fig.1).



Source: Dooley and Bowie (2005).

This 'brand relationship spectrum' indicates four different types of brand strategy that can be employed to manage a portfolio of brands. This spectrum consists of four strategies: House of brands, endorsed brands, sub brands and branded house.

4.5.1. House of Brands Strategy

When each sub brand has a strong driver role then it results in House of brands architecture which is a set of stand-alone brands. This strategy includes a set of sub brands that act independently of each other and the umbrella brand (Dooley and Bowie, 2005). This way the 'House of Brands' strategy lets the firm to position its brands based on functional benefits and dominate niche segments. Here, each sub brand differentiate itself in a way that attracts a particular niche market. According to Dooley and Bowie, House of Brands architecture is applied in Spain (Fig. 2). Spain is divided into 17 autonomous regions. Each region has its own destination branding strategy where each region is promoting its own brand domestically and globally independently of Tour Spain, the national tourism board.

Fig.2 House of Brands strategy in place branding (Case Spain)*Place brand architecture: Strategic management of the brand portfolio*

Source: Dooley and Bowie, 2005.

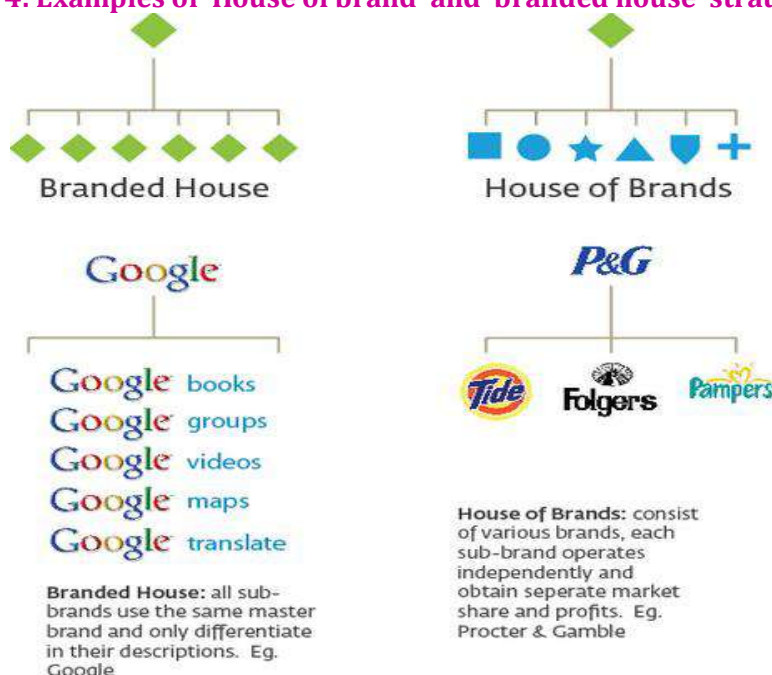
4.5.2. Branded House Strategy

In this strategy, the master brand is used for all the products with only a descriptive name attached for the individual products (R. Harish, 2010). *In a branded house strategy, a master brand moves from being a primary driver to a dominant driver role across a multiple offerings (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Here, master brand gives an umbrella branding under which most of the company's businesses operate. This strategy is like putting lots of eggs in one basket (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). R. Harish(2010) has given New Zealand as an example of Branded House strategy. The 'Silver fern', New Zealand's country-of-origin symbol acts as the master in New Zealand's branding strategy (fig. 3).*

Fig. 3. Branded House strategy in place branding (Case New Zealand)

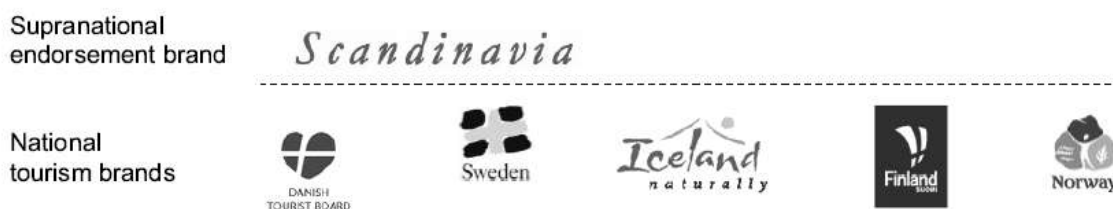
Source: R. Harish, 2010.

An excellent example of 'House of brand' and 'branded house' strategies (fig.4) through a dummy diagram followed by the examples of Google and P&G.

Fig. 4. Examples of 'House of brand' and 'branded house' strategies

4.5.3. Endorsed Brand Strategy

An endorser brand architecture is made up of individual and distinct product brands, which are linked together by an endorsing parent brand. Endorsed brands consist of an endorsed brand and the endorser, E.g. "The lion king" from Disney. The endorsing parent brand plays a supportive and linking role (www.distility.com). Endorsed brands are still independent but are endorsed by another brand. The endorsement provides credibility and usually plays a minor driver role (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). Here, each product has its own independent distinguishing values that differentiate it from the other products. Despite the distinctness of each product brand, the essential ingredient for a successful endorsing brand architecture is that there is a link between (i) the higher-level brand promise of the endorsing parent brand and (ii) the product brand. This link is what provides the assurance to the customer that if they like one product in the family of the endorsing brand, then a sibling brand is also worthy of consideration (www.distility.com). According to Dooley and Bowie (2005), this kind of strategy can be applied in Supranational units, like; Britain, Scandinavia (Fig. 5), and Europe because they are generally considered as umbrellas for the individual countries within them.

Fig. 5 Endorsement Brand Strategy (Case Scandinavia)

Source: Dooley and Bowie, 2005.

4.5.4. Sub-Brand Strategy

In the sub brand strategy, umbrella brand is comparatively a stronger driving force in consumer decision making (R. Harish, 2010). It consists of a master brand and a sub-brand, e.g. Honda Civic. The master brand here is the prominent brand which is stretched out by sub-brands. The master brand plays the primary driver role leading the sub-brands (Waddington, 2011). While, umbrella brand influences consumer decision making, sub-brands provide distinct identities to the individual product (Dooley and Bowie, 2005). There is a close proximity of the master brand with the sub brands.

In tourism sector, example of sub branding is brand Western Australia where a template of brand Western Australia is used for all its sub brands (Fig. 6). Several sub-regions' tourism organizations of Western Australia, like Perth, Northwest, Kimberley, Coral Coast, The Wheat Belt and Pilbara use logos with the same template depicting a brush stroke of the blue sky with a yellow sun and with little bit of their own appropriate versions (R.Harish, 2010).

Fig. 6: Sub-brand strategy (Case Western Australia)

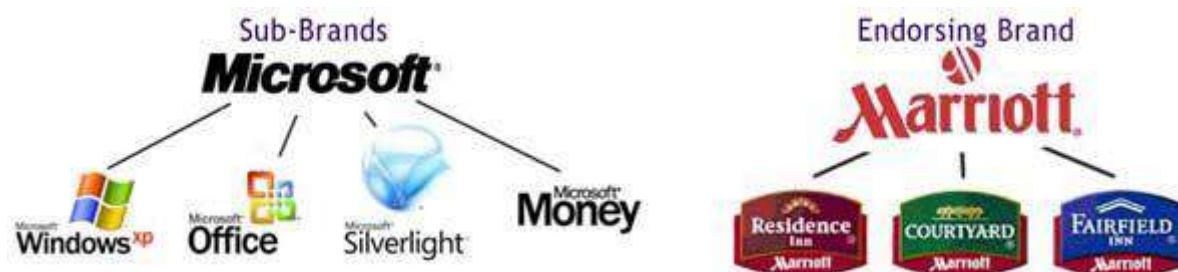
Place brand architecture: Strategic management of the brand portfolio



Source: Crockett and Wood, 1999.

Following is the example of sub-brand and endorsed-brand strategies.

Fig. 7. Examples of Sub brand and endorsed brand strategies



Source: <http://merriamassociates.com/2009/09/approaches-to-brand-architecture/>
(Approaches to brand Architecture, Merriam Associates)

5. BRAND ARCHITECTURE CASES:

5.1. UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The UAE is a federation of seven emirates each governed by a hereditary emir, who choose one of their members to be the president of the federation. The constituent emirates are Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Dubai, Fujairah, Ras al-Khaimah, Sharjah, and Umm al-Quwain. The capital is Abu Dhabi, which is also the state's center of political, industrial, and cultural activities (www.guide2dubai.com). Dubai is the largest city which is also very famous for entertainment and adventures. Islam is the official religion of the UAE, and Arabic is the official language.

The UAE ranks 28th in the Travel and Tourism competitiveness index (Travel and Tourism competitiveness index, 2013). According to the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) the UAE ranked 18th in the world in terms of international tourism competitiveness which is benchmarked against the following criteria: safety and security, health and hygiene, infrastructure, information and communication, technology, price competitiveness, human capital, cultural and natural resources, air and ground transport, preordination of tourism and policy rules and regulations (Source: Ameinfo.com) which is quite a good rank.

Islamic ideals and beliefs provide the groundwork of the country's conservative customs, laws, and practices. The UAE has a modern and well-developed infrastructure, and tourist facilities are widely available (www.travel.state.gov). All the seven emirates are unique amongst themselves and draw several visitors and tourists throughout the year. Abu Dhabi is the most cultural and entertainment hub in the UAE. Dubai is famous for its shopping malls, adventure and entertainment. Sharjah has a rich culture and heritage. It is also very famous for its traditional souqs, mosques, museums, and luxurious hotels. Ras Al Khaimah has a plenty of picturesque desert, ancient sites, local history, nature and culture. It has a spectacular scenery and natural and cultural attractions (www.guide2dubai.com). Ras Al Khaimah has its unique identity and it is branded for its variety of landscapes which makes it an excellent place for leisure, adventure and relaxation. Thus, Ras Al Khaimah is positioned as a luxury destination for leisure, adventure and business travel (www.rasalkhaimahtourism.com). Emirate of Fujairah is totally mountainous, and it is famous for clean beaches, mosques, caves and archeological sites (www.uaetourguide.com). As such, Fujairah does not have any exclusive branding for itself but Fujairah in short is very well-known for its natural beauty, beaches, mountains and rich history. It attracts tourist across the world for its mountain scenery, relaxing beaches and resorts (www.fujairhinfocus.blogspot.in). Emirate of Ajman is famous for its culture and shopping luxuries (www.guide2dubai.com). Emirate of Umm al-Quwain is smaller than other emirates. Its natural and wildlife attractions make it an excellent place for tourists. There are also several land and water sports facilities here (www.guide2dubai.com). As such, Dubai, Sharjah and Abu Dhabi have a powerful place branding whereas other four emirates i.e. Fujairah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah and Umm al Quwain still need to build their strong branding like Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Therefore, brand architecture of UAE is more like "House of Brand" strategy where all the destinations have its unique and distinct branding under it. Following is the case of Dubai, one of the seven emirates which depicts that how Dubai has made its branding so successful.

5.1.1. DUBAI

Dubai is a city-state in the United Arab Emirates, located within the Emirates of the same name. Dubai has tremendously gained popularity in the world with its ambitious projects and unique events. Dubai is a very hot tourist destination presently. Credit for promoting Dubai as a tourism and a commerce hub goes to Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM). DTCM broad objectives are to increase the awareness of Dubai to global audience and to attract tourism and foreign investments into Emirate by ensuring safety and security to the tourists. There are lots of tourist attractions in the World but Dubai offers most safe and comfortable attractions for tourists (Bhat, 2010). Dubai is branding itself for tourism on the basis of duty free and great shopping, great hotels, great sporty and adventurous things to do, fascinating street life and a great cosmopolitan atmosphere. Sheikh Mohammed, the crown Prince of Dubai is the thrust behind many multi million dollar projects and promoting tourism. He created the concept of "Dubai Shopping Festival" and "Destination Dubai". In Dubai Shopping Festival, Dubai shops offer heavy and huge discounts on their merchandise and offers duty free shopping for the visitors. This festival offers discounts on almost everything like, gold and jewellery, perfumes, cars, cosmetics, textiles, handicrafts, etc. All the World's best brands are at the cheapest rates. Dubai is also famous for its gold markets as it offers good quality and duty free gold to the tourists. Along with this, there are so many sports and adventurous activities, like, camel racing,

desert safari, sand skiing, and wadi-bashing, golf in the “The Desert Miracle”. Dubai has most spectacular and luxurious hotels, shopping malls, commercial buildings in the world. Also, ‘Palm Islands’ where roads are built in the shape of a palm tree which is made on three islands together. Those three islands have 60 luxury hotels, thousands of expensive villas and apartments (www.visiting.definitelydubai.com).

Thus, Dubai has its own distinct branding i.e. Dubai brands itself for shopping festival, sports, entertainment, and adventures. Abu Dhabi brands itself for culture and traditions. Sharjah is about history, heritage and culture. Ajman is famous for fishing and dhow building industries. Umm Al Quwain brands itself for sight seeing, infrastructure, markets, natural reserves and clean beaches and lagoons (www.landor.com).

All the emirates of UAE are quite distinct and unique from each other. Here, parent brand which is UAE is quite recessive and product brands i.e. all the seven emirates are quite visible. All the seven emirates together maximize the potential market for UAE portfolio. The role of the parent brand i.e. UAE here is just to strengthen all the individual emirates in terms of cultural, economic and political stability (www.landor.com).

Fig. 8 shows the branding of four out of seven emirates. The rest three emirates do not have a very strong branding till date. Otherwise, all the emirates of UAE have their own individual and distinct branding. All the emirates act as a stand alone brand i.e. all the brands are unique in itself and from its parent brand, UAE. Therefore, it is more like a House of Brands architecture.

Fig. 8. Brand Architecture of UAE



Source: Authors own interpretation, (Meloden Stephens and Kerr Greg, 2013)

5.2. CASE SINGAPORE

Singapore is a Southeast Asian city state. It is an island country made up of 63 islands. Singapore had been a part of various local empires since it was first inhabited in the second century AD. Modern Singapore was founded as a trading post of the East India Company by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819 with permission from the Sultanate of Johor. The British obtained full sovereignty over the island in 1824 and Singapore became one of the British Straits Settlements in 1826. Singapore was occupied by the Japanese in World War II and reverted to British rule after the war. It became internally self-governing in 1959. Singapore united with other former British territories to form Malaysia in 1963 and became a fully independent state two years later after separation from Malaysia. Since then it has had a massive increase in wealth, and is one of the Four Asian Tigers (www.congressmed.com). Singapore ranks 23rd in the global peace index (source: Global Peace Index 2012) and ranks 9th in the Business competitive index (source: World Economic Forum, Global Competitiveness Report 2007-2008). Singapore ranks 10th in travel and tourism index by World Economic Forum (Travel and Tourism index, World Economic Forum). Singapore ranks 22nd in terms of foreign tourists arrivals (Source: UNWTO barometer, September 2012). Singapore is a multicultural country with three main racial groups, Chinese, Malays and Indians. Most residents are multilingual.

The period of 1997-98 was marked by Asian financial crisis and Singapore was affected by the crisis. Singapore had a highly industrialized economy; agriculture and mining were of minimal importance. By, 2004-05, Singapore enjoyed brilliant economic growth. During this time, Government tried to raise the contribution of the services sector to improve economic growth. As part of this strategy, Government continued its efforts to boost tourism. Singapore planned an integrated spaceport in 2009 which was both an educational facility and a tourist attraction (Sonpal, 2006). Singapore faces a stiff competition with its peer Asian countries, like, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangkok. Initiatives and Infrastructure investments in tourism is paying it well.

Singapore has very unique features of its own, which is very warm, enriching and unforgettable. She just have a unique set of offerings like; Cruise, Zoo, Sentosa Island, Singapore bird park, little India, Singapore Night safari, shopping, etc. Therefore Singapore was first branded as "Uniquely Singapore" due to the unique set of offerings that make her very unique from the attractions of other destinations (www.yoursingapore.com).

Today, as a brand, Singapore's success lies in its promise that it is a destination where no two experiences are the same, as well as being a place that no two people will experience in quite the same way. Through a more focused brand and destination communications unit, Singapore Tourism Board will continue to differentiate and market Singapore as a must-visit destination, offering empowering experiences through the "Your Singapore" destination brand, because one would always focus on the personalization of every visit and experience (www.app.stb.gov).

The branding of Singapore is more like a mix of endorsed brand strategy and a sub brand strategy (Fig. 9) because for some departments brand Singapore is acting like a Master brand and for some departments, it is acting like an endorser. Singapore as a nation brand is a major driving force for all the sub brands, like, education, infrastructure and other Government departments. Singapore has a strong nation brand and Singapore's nation brand can be seen as: being a world class city and international hub of high quality, innovation and knowledge intensive output (www.ft.lk). The brand architecture of Singapore is quite similar to the structure of responsibility within government ministries. For example the goal of increasing Singapore's manufactured exports is managed by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and is a tight integration between two of its agencies with the development of internal quality by SPRING and the promotion of that product internationally by IES (www.brandfinance.com).

Fig. 9 Singapore, mix of sub-brand and endorsed brand strategy

Source: Authors own Interpretation

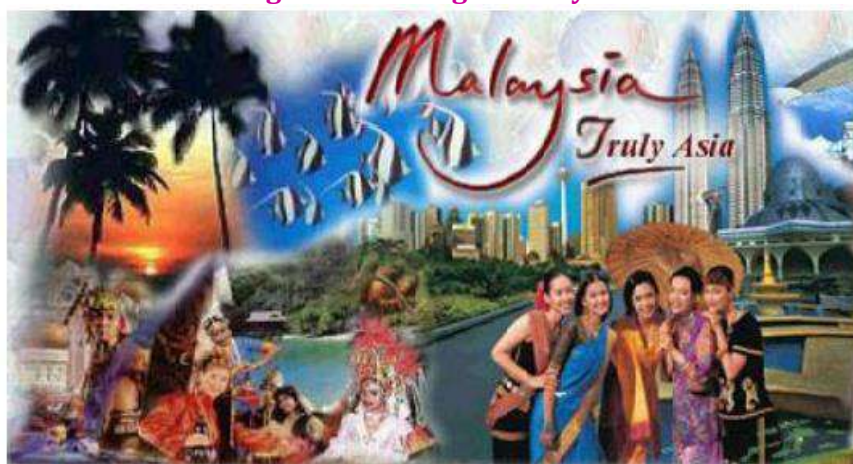
5.3. CASE MALAYSIA

Malaysia is located in the heart of Southeast Asia and is known as a land of immense charm. Malaysia is a treasure home of diverse cultures, hospitable people, exotic cuisines, fascinating festivals, quaint villages and modern skylines. Malaysia is a multicultural society formed from Malaysians (60%), Chinese (25%) and Indians (10%), so that everything, from art, continuing with the architecture, gastronomy and daily life is under the influence of these nationalities (Irina, Andrei, 2011). Malaysia ranks 9th in the world tourism (Source: UNWTO) which is pretty good. Also it ranks 35th out of 139 countries in the World Travel and Tourism competitiveness index (Source: The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report 2013, World Economic Forum) and ranks 9th in the world in Foreign tourist arrivals (Source: UNWTO barometer, September 2012). Malaysia is a colorful amalgam of southeast Asia's major cultures (Malay, Chinese and Indian plus a rich array of other ethnic races). It is a fascinating land of interesting and colorful places, customs, festivals, arts and delicious cuisines. The rich array of local, oriental, as well as western and continental foods is available throughout the country. Eating is favorite pastime of Malaysians. Delicious dishes are served at street stalls to sophisticated restaurants throughout the day (www.asean-tourism.com). The main city to visit in Malaysia is Kaula Lumpur. This city is bustling metropolis and is the federal capital of Malaysia and a prime center of commerce, politics, entertainment, and international activities. Malaysia is sheered with interesting cultural traditions, arts and crafts, dances, food and architecture. Malaysia is bestowed with endless stretches of beaches, lush tropical greenery, mountain ridges, waterfall, rainforests, numerous species of birds and wildlife. Malaysia is an excellent place for adventures and activities, like, trekking, white water rafting, mountain climbing, trekking, camping, underwater adventures; like, diving, snorkeling, swimming, yachting, boating, game fishing, underwater photography, etc. The country offers an exotic blend of old and new. In the country, signs of modernity and technological progress are seen in the skyscrapers, high speed urban transportation, advanced telecommunication, and IT revolution but still there is a rustic and rural sight away from the cities. No other country combines the three major races of Asia (Malay, Chinese and Indian) and other ethnic groups into a single destination except Malaysia. Also, no other country offers so many cultural sites, festivals, customs and traditions of these great Asian civilizations. On this philosophy Malaysian brand was created: "Malaysia: Truly Asia which promises to deliver a unique experience, grouping elements from all across Asia". Also not only diverse culture and racial diversity is found in Malaysia but also a diversity of landscapes is there (Irina, Andrei, 2011). Thus, through multicultural branding, Malaysia increased it's revenues 8 times in sixteen years. Malaysians made hospitality their profession and tourists are welcomed everyday very nicely as

special guests. Today, Malaysia is a very popular tourist destination with a great mix of tourists from all over the world. Malaysia does not have any unique features of its own as it has diversity of nationalities. Malaysia combines three major races of Asia, i.e. Malay, Chinese and Indian. Thus, Malaysia- Truly Asia brand was created. The ad in (Fig. 10) represents five girls representing the nationalities of Malaysia- Malay, Chinese, Indian, Sarawak and Sabahan. The ad represents Malaysia as a land of many cultures and attractions. Also, the ad represents white sandy beaches, lush forests, exotic events, celebrations and festivals of various cultures of Asia.

Thus, Malaysia has Supra- National brand architecture which means that it encompasses the branding of many nationalities, and cultures in one single brand like that of Europe, or South America. There is no individual branding of the cities of Malaysia, i.e. cities like Kuala Lumpur or Langkawi which are very important tourist places of Malaysia have no specific branding of its own. So, Malaysia is branded as a whole.

Fig. 10 Branding of Malaysia



(Source: Irina, Andrei, 2011)



Logo and Slogan of Malaysia

(Source: Irina, Andrei, 2011)

5.4. CASE: AUSTRALIA

The first inhabitants of Australia were the Aborigines, who migrated there at least 50,000 years ago from Southeast Asia. At the time of European discovery and settlement, up to one million Aboriginal people lived across the continent as hunters and gatherers. Australia was then invaded by Britain in 17th Century. Gold was discovered in New South Wales and central Victoria in 1851. The wealth from gold and wool brought immense investment to Melbourne and Sydney and by the 1880s they were stylish modern cities. Australia's six states became a nation under a single constitution on 1 January 1901. Today Australia is a home to people from more than 200 countries (www.australia.com). Australia is the sixth largest country in the world. It is an island, surrounded by water. It is located on the smallest continent in the world. Australia has varied landforms. It has large areas of grasslands,

mountains, plateaus, beautiful coastal beaches, and off the northeast coast of Australia is The Great Barrier Reef. Australia ranks 11th by travel and tourism ranking index and ranks 10th in the world tourism by UNWTO (Source: UNWTO, tourism highlights, 2013). Tourism Australia relies heavily on sites like, Australia.com to promote it's tourism (Hopewell, 2010). Tourism Australia evolved it's tourism campaign as "There's nothing like Australia" in May 2010. This campaign was designed to focus on quality and highlight the very best products and experiences that Australian tourism offers. This branding of Australia is done to show energetic, inspiring and adventurous Australia (www.australia.com). Australia is very unique and brands itself from other destinations in terms of its natural beauty, adventure, coastal lifestyle, aboriginal Australia and food and wine.

In the case of Australia a formal agreement exists between brand actors at the state level, the tourism organizations of the state governments which manage state destination brands, and the Australian Commonwealth government which is responsible for national destination branding (Hall, 2007). Australia is an excellent example where there is a horizontal coordination between state wise branding and country's national destination branding strategy. There is a perfect coordination between the Australian government and state branding actors (Hall, 2010). Government of Australia positions it as a high spirited place, down to earth and irreverent. This place gives unique experiences, and people around here are full of life, energetic and welcoming. Australia also offers stunning natural landscapes and varied forms of wildlife. Australia tourism branding says that by visiting Australia, one becomes relaxed and forgets all his worries and tensions. Thus, it embodies lifestyle, adventure, relaxation, and nature. Australia's national branding as well as all the states branding is based on the above mentioned attributes. All the six states of Australia, Western Australia, Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria brand themselves on the similar attributes in which Australia's national branding is done. New South Wales brand itself on the basis of nature, national parks, beaches, food and wine, culture, and activities. Western Australia brands itself as an extraordinary holiday destination due to it's extraordinary beaches, forests, vineyards, activities, landscapes and the most importantly an extraordinary experience (http://www.tourism.wa.gov.au/marketing/Tourism_WA_brands/Pages/Tourism_WA_brands.aspx).

Similarly, South Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland, and Victoria have branded their destinations on the basis of the same attributes i.e. wine and food, events, river based experiences, natural environment, adventure and aboriginal culture, which are also used to brand Australia as a tourist destination. Fig. 11 shows the national branding of Australia. Whereas, Fig. 12. depicts the umbrella branding of Australia where all it's states have a different branding but under the same theme in which national branding of Australia is done. This strategy is more like that of sub branding strategy as all the states have distinct branding strategy from each other under the common parent brand where all the states have taken up almost same attributes for branding.

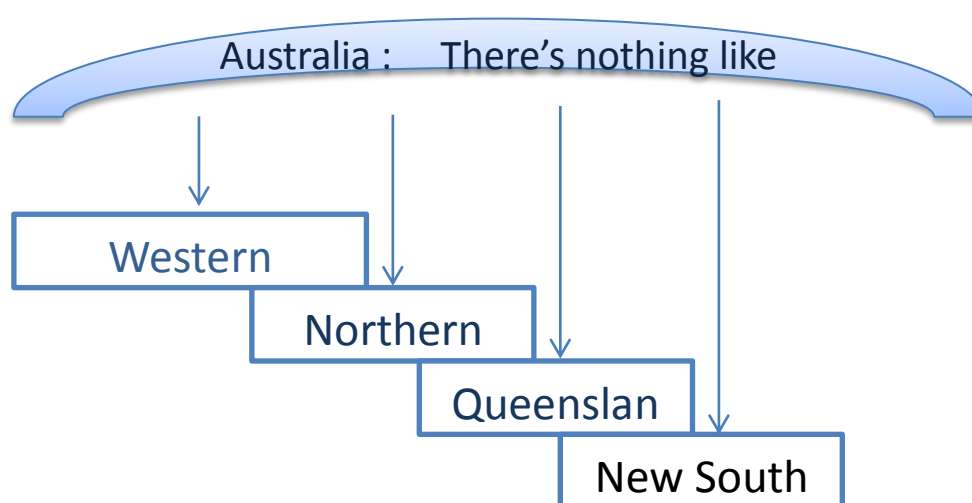
Fig. 11 Nation Branding of Australia.





Source; www.tourism.australia.com

Fig. 12: Brand Architecture of Australia (Sub brand strategy)



Source: Author's own representation

6. INDIA'S CURRENT TOURISM/PLACE BRANDING STRATEGY

India is a country in south Asia with seventh largest area, second most populated country and with the largest democracy in the world (www.saarc-sadkn.org). India was once known as the Golden Bird as it was the richest country in the world both in terms of money and culture. There was a point of time in history when India itself was a brand name and it didn't require any branding. Presently, our Central Government has so far carried on a tourism campaign, "Incredible India". Although, Incredible India started in 2002 and Government claims that it is a very successful campaign but through primary survey and secondary information and tourism rankings of India, it is found that foreign tourists are not very happy with this campaign and they don't use "Incredible India" website at all to plan their trip to India (Singh, Ahuja, 2012). This may be because, India's branding is very confusing and unsystematic (R. Harish, 2010).

Presently, India's brand architecture is that of a "branded house" strategy where there are descriptors along with main brand: Here, main brand is India and it has many descriptors in it. Descriptors are like; beaches, forests, rivers, etc. So, branding of India is done like; India's beaches, India's forests, India's mountains. Presently, the branding strategy of India, "Incredible India" is branded house which is not properly done. All the states of India have distinct branding of themselves

but under the same parent brand “Incredible India” (Fig. 13). Such a branding is very confusing for foreign tourists as whole India is branded under one roof in a very unsystematic manner (R. Harish, 2010).

Fig. 13: Incredible India Campaign (Branded House strategy)

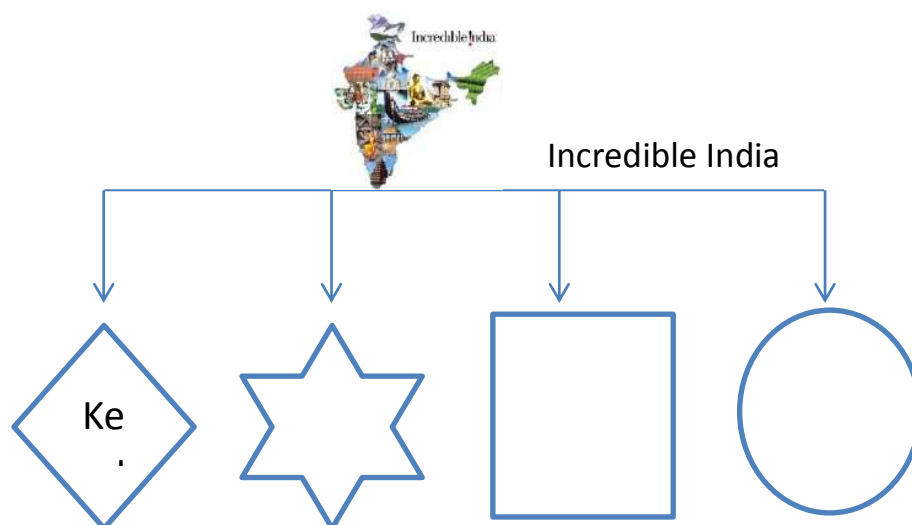


7. DISCUSSIONS: PROPOSED BRAND ARCHITECTURAL MODEL FOR INDIA

The following discussion is to compare India's current branding strategy with the leading tourist destinations and suggests some of the reasons to improve the brand architecture of India, giving two feasible models for its branding strategy – “House of brands” and “Endorsed brand”.

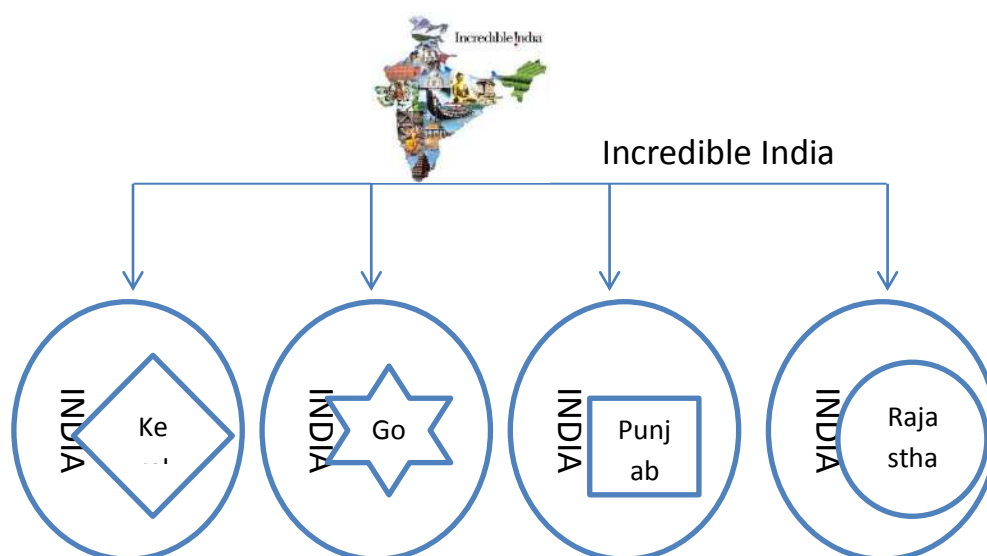
7.1. Unlike Malaysia, India is very large geographically, therefore, it can not have a common theme or a brand for all its states as all the states are very diverse in terms of landscapes, cultures, climates, people, wildlife, etc. Due to this huge uniqueness it is not possible to have the same common theme or branding. In the case of Australia, Australia is geographically large like India but at the same time, all of its states have some common attributes in them as discussed above. Whereas, all the states of India are so much different from each other that they do not share anything common amongst themselves, thereby making branded house approach weak.

7.2. Another problem in the branded house approach is that central government is not in a proper coordination with the states' governments for branding India whereas, there is a strong coordination between central government and states governments for branding in the case of Australia. Therefore, India shouldn't be having a common umbrella branding like that of Malaysia and Australia. Rather it can have “House of brands” strategy like that of UAE where nation branding is different from all the states. In UAE, all the states have their own distinct branding independent of Nation branding, it is also big and diverse like, India. Therefore, all the states of India can also have their own individual branding independent of the parent brand and other state's brand. Fig. 14. shows a proposed idea of “House of brands” strategy for India.

Fig. 14: Proposed strategy: India's campaign through "House of brands".

'House of brands' strategy has several benefits. With having a unique brand independent of the parent company marketer gets a greater freedom in positioning their offering rather than being locked into the messaging style, values and other attributes of the larger brand. Great differentiation of the products possible. Multibrand strategy enhances market share. The limitation of this strategy is that it requires a huge amount of resources for brand maintenance.

7.3. Like, Singapore, India can also have an endorsed brand strategy. This is because, India is famous. Foreign tourists know more about India than the individual states of India. India which is the main brand has some key values which are endorsed to the states of India. States individually can lose tourists because people know India rather than individual states. Therefore, another proposed branding strategy for India is Endorsed brand strategy. Fig. 15 shows the proposed idea of "Endorsed brand" strategy for India. According to this strategy, the key values of India stays and all the states do their own individual branding inside brand India in an organized and systematic manner. Again, states ought to have a strong coordination with center. This way foreign tourists would not get confused and would be clear to them about the various states which are so diverse amongst themselves.

Fig. 15: Proposed strategy: India's campaign through "Endorsed brand strategy".

7.4 Incredible India is not giving complete and relevant information to the foreign tourists which is actually needed to plan a trip to India. Also, information is not properly categorized. For example, if a tourist has to plan a trip to Australia, then a tourist would visit Australia's official website, www.australia.com. In that site, information is given in a very user friendly and systematic manner that everything about Australia becomes so clear in the mind of a traveler that he can easily plan his trip by getting all the basic and vital information, say, from visa to customs, to health and safety, and information about flights, accommodation, food, etc. and thereby, a traveler doesn't have to look for any other source of information for planning his trip. As discussed above in the case of United Arab Emirates, all the seven emirates have their different campaigns and each emirate has been described in their respective campaigns very systematically. Whereas, a traveler to India never gets satisfactory and complete information through India's tourism official website, i.e. www.incredibleindia.org. Presently, a traveler does not even come to know about the various states of India and the cities within it.

This is primarily because presently, India lacks a proper brand architecture at nation level. The branding campaign is more of confusing rather than being attractive to plan a trip. It is not at all user friendly. The sooner we develop a robust brand architecture as mentioned above, the information through the website will become more organized, user friendly and systematic. Thus, it is important to develop a strong positioning of India through a strong brand architecture.

CONCLUSION:

This study discusses the case studies of four nations, Malaysia, Singapore, UAE and Australia. It discusses the brand architectures of these nations. Then it discusses the brand architecture of India and the reasons for its weakness by comparing its brand architecture with the branding structures of above mentioned four nations. It is found that "House of brand" strategy and "Endorsed brand" strategy will be more feasible. The study concludes that while India possesses immense brand capital, its global perception is constrained by inconsistent messaging and limited digital integration. Comparative insights show that agile branding practices in Singapore, UAE, and Malaysia provide valuable lessons for India. To remain competitive, India must evolve its branding strategy from a static 'Incredible India' to a dynamic, inclusive, and digitally empowered narrative. Recommendations include embracing hybrid brand architecture, leveraging AI and VR technologies, integrating sustainability, and co-creating branding initiatives with citizens and stakeholders.

Future research should incorporate cross-national longitudinal data and deeper sentiment analysis to track brand evolution over time.

Limitation of the study is that these models need to be tested, which is possible only by implementation of these models by the tourism department of India.

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