

“Brand India” in Korea: A Case Study and Review of Nation Branding Research

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Abstract

The purpose of the study is to present a literature review on the nation brand concept and to examine “Brand-India” - its image, associations, and the effect of age and education on brand salience of Korean consumers. 100 respondents were interviewed about their association with India, Indian firms, and 'Made in India' products they wished to buy. ANOVA of the number of responses was done to analyze the effect of age and education of the respondents contributing to the brand awareness of India. It was observed that Indians were perceived to be friendly, kind, and good in maths by the Korean respondents. A majority of the respondents expressed a desire to purchase clothes that are 'Made-in-India,' followed by Food and IT products. The Tata Group was the most well known Indian firm in Korea, and the study found a significant effect of age and education in brand awareness of Indian companies. This case study adds to the study of 'Brand India' as well as to the study of nation branding and country image.

Keywords: nation branding, brand India, Korea, made in India, country image

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Wherever you go in the world, the most desirable brands in the shops nearly always come from - or appear to come from the same places: America, England, France, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, Scotland, Switzerland, or South Korea. These places are the top ten as far as brand image is concerned (Anholt, 2003). Tell someone that a brand is from one of these countries, and they would immediately visualize a certain kind of brand image, expect a certain level of quality, and will be prepared to pay a price for it. Places have always been brands in the truest sense of the word. The reputation of a place has always been managed and occasionally invented by its leaders, who often have borrowed from others to augment their political skills: poets, orators, philosophers, film-makers, artists, and writers (Anholt, 2003). The country images often guide our buying decisions, almost becoming a judgement heuristic for certain products along with the qualities which we believe they endow to their products and services.

Many countries are associated with their own special products: Italy has pizzas and shoes; Switzerland has chocolates, cheese, watches and so on. There is no reason as to why developing nations should not benefit from the synergy of a strong nation brand. As mentioned by Anholt (2004), “Developing countries could especially benefit from a movement towards global brand export : It is a part of a sustainable wealth creation behaviour that could ultimately help them escape from the poverty cycle” (p.29).

India, the second most populous nation with around 1.24 billion people (World Bank, 2012) is endowed with a lot of resources: Natural, economic, cultural, and human. There are many things that are unique to India. The Bangalore technology cluster, spearheaded by companies like Wipro and Infosys is rapidly updating the image of India as modern, innovative, entrepreneurial, and global, just as the emergence of consumer brands like Samsung, Daewoo, and LG have done in recent years for South Korea and Sony, and Toyota did for Japan in the earlier decades. “Brand India” is clearly capable of embracing other values too, as several emerging Indian brands are beginning to demonstrate their export success (Anholt, 2003).

There are many benefits of a positive country image. As mentioned by Yasin, Noor, & Mohamad (2007), countries with a positive image usually find their brands to be accepted faster than the brands from countries with a more negative image. A positive place image makes it easier for producers to export and attract (Anholt, 2010a).

Objectives of the Study

This study is an exploratory attempt to look into the Korean perception of “Brand India,” and what characteristics and factors they (the Koreans) associated with it along with their buying intentions of “Made in India” products.

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Literature Review

↳ **Nation Branding** : Although the concept of nation branding is relatively new, the origin of nation branding studies can be traced to four different sources, country of origin (Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Papadopoulos, 2004), place or destination branding (Anholt, 2003; Kotler, Haider, & Rein, 1993; Kotler & Gertner, 2002), public diplomacy (Fan, 2008 ; Ham, 2001) and national identity (Bond, McCrone, & Brown, 2003 ; Smith, 1991).

According to Anholt,

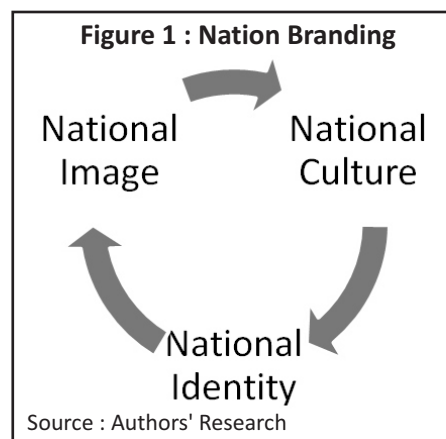
Nation Branding, whether we like it or not, is a necessity; and countries which want to compete effectively in a globalized world must do battle with the constant urge of the market place to see the world in terms of simple national stereotypes. (2005, pp. 224-225)

Anholt asserted,

There is no question that the concept of brand is relevant and useful to places, both at the sectoral level and their roles as 'umbrella brands' providing reassurance, glamour or status to the products and services that are marketed under the aegis. (2010a, p.4)

Szondi (2007) described nation branding as “the strategic self-presentation of a country with the aim of creating reputational capital through economic, political, and social interest promotion at home and abroad”. The nation brand is a very broad, constantly changing construct. As noted by Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002), " the cultural image of a country, unlike a brand or corporate image, is not directly under the marketer's control; as a result , place branding poses complex challenges in terms of strategy development and implementation (cited in Fan, 2010 ; O'Shaughnessy, J., & O'Shaughnessy, 2000). As asserted by Govers and Go (2009), “ One cannot build a separate brand for tourists, investors, or migrants, as we always deal with totality of brand associations in the minds of people” (pp. 229-230).

Fan (2010) made the distinction between a nation brand and a national brand. "In contrast with a global brand, a national brand is still confined to the country; while the global brand is recognized in the world market place (p. 3). According to Anholt (2010b), place brands are like norms sharing the same basic characteristics - "clarity, simplicity, memorability, distinctiveness and having the quality of being emblematic of a wide variety of different possible behaviors (p. 178). Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) emphasized place identity, and hence place branding is a dynamic, constantly evolving process. Kalandides (2011) also argued that, "place identity is a process, never immobile or fixed". Drawing upon Hatch and Schultz's (2002) work in relation to an organization's identity , Kavaratzis and Hatch (2013) created a model of place branding. Interplay between the three elements of place culture, place identity, and place image lies at the heart of this model. Place branding theory emphasizes on analyzing and integrating external views in the branding process According to Kavaratzis & Hatch (2013), “It is arguably the analytical part of the branding process that plays the greatest role here as it should pick up changes in external views and work them into the other parts of the branding process” (pp.80-81) . According to place branding theory, national culture, national identity, and national image interact with each other to create a unique nation brand ecosystem where everyone from local stakeholders to international consumers play their part of defining and re-defining it (Figure 1).



↳ **Country Image** : Shimp, Samiee, & Madden (2003) applied the term 'country equity,' referring to the emotional

value that results from consumers' association of a brand with a country. "Country names amount to brands and help consumers to evaluate products and make purchasing decisions. They are responsible for associations that may add to or subtract from the perceived value of a product" (Kotler & Gertner, 2004, p. 41).

Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff (1983) identified place identity as a sub-structure of self-identity, which consists of cognitions about the physical world. They asserted that these cognitions evolve through engagement with environment and that "other people are important in shaping the place identity" (p. 62). Dichter (1962) was the first to put forward that a product's country of origin may have a "tremendous influence on the acceptance and success of products". Country of origin is a cognitive cue, that is, an informational stimulus about or relating to a product that is used by consumers to infer beliefs regarding product attributes such as quality (Bilkey & Nes, 1982; Steenkamp, 1990). Since the country of origin can be manipulated without changing the physical construct, it is regarded as an extrinsic cue. A large number of studies have shown that such cues act as "signals" for product quality (Steenkamp, 1990). Dawar and Parker (1994) provided the basic criteria for cue selection, like vividness, clarity and intensity are met, the use of a cue is determined by consumers' perception of its predictive value, which refers to the perceived strength of the relationship between a cue and the attribute that is to be judged (Olson & Jacoby, 1972; Steenkamp J.-B., 1989). In the case of country of origin, the theoretical relationship between the "ecological" or "observed" co-variation between the cue and attribute is largely shaped by product-country images, which are mental representations of a country's people, products, culture, and national symbols (Askegaard & Ger, 1996; Askegaard & Ger, 1998; Ger, 1991). Product country images contain widely shared cultural stereotypes. Even though the country consciously does not manage its name as a brand, people still have images of countries by simply voicing the name. Country images are likely to influence decisions related to purchasing, investing, residence, or traveling (Kotler & Gertner, 2004). According to Kotler, Haider, and Rein, country image processing can be understood as,

the sum of beliefs and impressions people hold on about places. Images represent a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place. They are a product of the mind trying to process and pick out essential information from huge amounts of data about a place. (1993)

Consumers have well developed beliefs about products originating from other countries (Hong & Wyer Jr., 1989). While stereotypical knowledge structures are most often biased, they can play a constructive role of providing coherence, simplicity, and predictability in complex decision settings (Taylor, 1981).

↳ **Brand Awareness and Brand Image :** Brand images consist of networks of associations about places, products, objects or other people, referred to in psychology as schemata. For instance, Govers and Go (2009) asked 1100 respondents about their brand image of seven places they had not visited before. For example, Singapore is perceived as a modern city, Wales is partly about sheep. Neither of these associations can be directly linked to relevant tourism nor export products, but will come up when potential consumers think about traveling to these places or buying products from there. Keller (2003) referred to brand awareness as the ease with which a consumer remembers a brand and defines brand awareness as "strong, favorable, and unique brand associations in memory," while (Aaker, 1991) defined it as "the ability of a potential buyer to recognize or recall that a brand is a member of a certain product category" (as cited in Pappu, Quester, & Cooksey, 2005).

Aaker (1991) explained three levels of brand awareness: brand recognition, brand recall, and top-of-mind. Brand recognition is the lowest level of awareness and is related to the consumers' ability to confirm previous exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue (Keller, 2003). Brand recognition is based upon an aided recall test, which finds the respondents' ability to identify brands in a certain product class, when being provided with the names. The first brand a person names in an unaided recall test has achieved top-of-mind awareness. This is a special position, and the highest level of awareness, since it means that the brand is ahead of others brands in the mind of the person (Aaker, 1991).

Brand India

Gone are the days of yore when India was known as the land of snakes and snake charmers, of tigers and elephants, of ancient tribes and even more ancient customs. The world sees India today as a fast growing nation that has made quantum leaps in the fields of science and technology. Morgan and Pritchard wrote about Brand India as a destination:

One destination that has transcended the commodity nature of the product and promised a unique (yet credible) experience is India. There are many exotic countries that a tourist could visit and most have breath-taking scenery and fascinating heritage, yet such is the emotional power of the subcontinent with its poignant history and diverse cultures that its promise to the consumer-that a visit to India can actually change you-is sustainable. (2004, p. 65)

Vernekar and Wadhwa (2009) documented the characteristics of Brand India, which is multi-layered by caste, religion, and income. Brand India is a brand in transition, which has a lot of untapped potential. They described the 4Ps and the 4As of Brand India, which shows that the nation's brand has some distinct advantages, giving Brand India a distinct image. India is a popular tourist destination for Koreans as shown by Srivastava (2009). Koreans were the second largest tourist group in his study. The research found that the mean satisfaction level for tourists in India was around 57%. Furthermore, there was no major difference in satisfaction among the male and female tourists.

↳ **The Setting :** As the ambassador to Korea from India , Mr. Vishnu Prakash said in a recent interview : "Our (India-Korea) cultural ties go back two millennia to the visit of Indian Princess Suriratna from Ayodhya, who came to Korea in A.D. 48, married King Kim Suro and became Queen Heo Hwang-ok. Some 5 million Kims, including the wife of President Lee Myung-bak, in this country of 50 million, trace their ancestry to the royal couple." (Ambassador, n.d.). The great Indian Poet and Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in his poem 'Lamp of the East' celebrated the indomitable spirit of Korea. According to the Indian Embassy in Korea, the bilateral trade between the two countries surged to \$20.5 billion by the end of 2011. The Indian embassy in Korea issued 79,000 visas in 2012.

The Study

The paper presents a report about what educated Koreans perceive about India. Its focus is on Brand India, and what exactly do the Koreans visualize when they hear India, the brands/companies of India, the characteristics of the country, people, and products. The study also aimed to ascertain whether India has identifiable, quintessentially Indian products, which if properly promoted in Korea, could help improve trade relations as well as enhance the national image of India in Korea. The paper investigated the effect of age and education of the respondents on cognitive responses to questions of brand salience of India.

A nation brand is the sum total of all the perceptions of a nation in the minds of international stakeholders, which may contain some of the following elements : people, place, culture /language, history, food, fashion, celebrities (Fan, 2010). A nation's brand exists, with or without any conscious efforts in nation branding, as each country has a current image to its international audience, be it strong or weak, clear or vague (Fan, 2006).

Based on this conceptualization, the research set out to determine the image of "Brand India" for Korean consumers.

Research Methodology

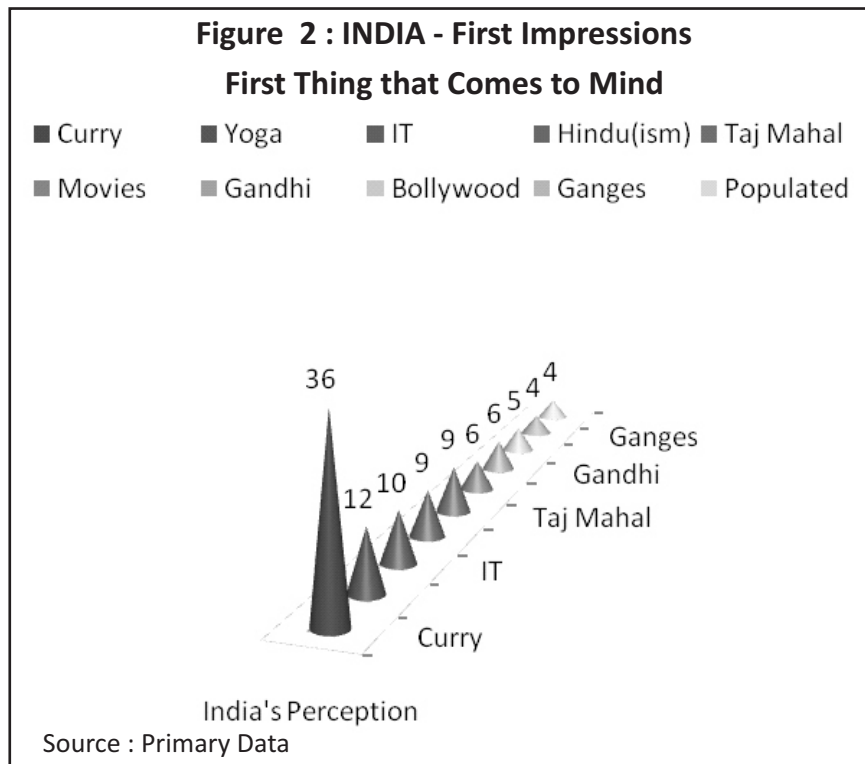
The research methodology employed was simply interviewing the selected respondents using the single cue design, in which the only information offered is the nation, and the respondents were asked about their thoughts and associations with India. The interviews were conducted around campuses, primarily near Kaist College of Business, Kyunghee University, Korea University, and Ewha Women's University located in Seoul. Seoul, being the capital of Korea and a metropolitan city, is a melting pot of various cultures, which exposes the residents to international cuisine, festivals, and cultures of various nations.

The interview method was chosen as this gave me an opportunity to directly interact with the respondents and get their opinions. Hence, a questionnaire consisting of six open ended questions was given to the respondents. It was based on their associations with India, Indian products, things that India is famous for according to their perception, character traits associated with India and Indians. The questionnaire included both English and Korean translations of questions. The results were back translated into English with the assistance of bilingual Koreans.

↳ **Participants :** 103 completed questionnaires were received, including three questionnaires which could not be deciphered due to bad handwriting. Hence, these three questionnaires were not considered for the analysis. As shown in the Table 1, the respondents were between 18- 50 years of age. Out of the 100 interviewees, 62 respondents were women and 38 respondents were men. In terms of education, 55 respondents were either pursuing or had completed their masters degree and 42 respondents had or were about to complete their bachelors degree , with three interviewees

Gender	Male	Female		
	62%	38%		
Education	Masters	Bachelor	High School	
	55%	42%	3%	
Age	Young (18-25 yrs)	Middle Aged (25-40 yrs)	Old (Above 40 years)	
	46%	45%	9%	

Source: Primary Data

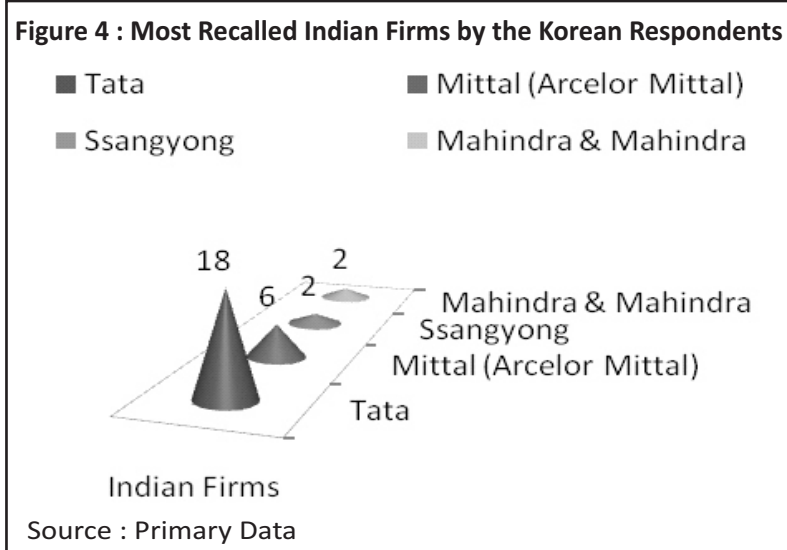
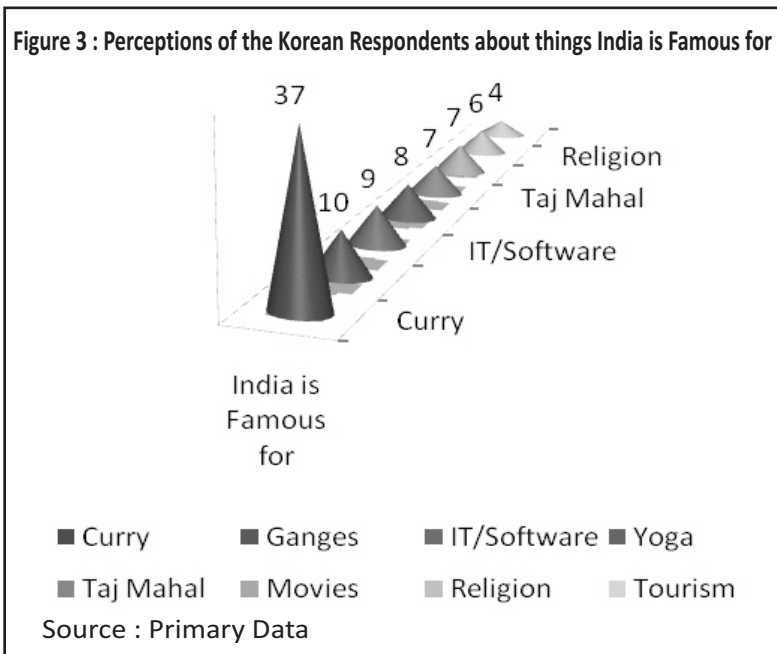


being high school students. 46 % of the respondents were less than or equal to 25 years of age .The sample represented the urban consumer base of foreign branded products and was, to this extent, considered to be a representative subset of the population under investigation . Only five interviewees had ever been to India before. The study was conducted during October - November 2012.

Findings and Analysis

The study showed that the first thing that came to the respondents' mind when they heard 'India' was Curry (36%) and second behind Curry was Yoga (12%) and then IT (Information Technology). Other responses were Hindu/Hinduism and the Taj Mahal. The Figure 2 shows the top 10 associations for India that were found during the study. The respondents had quite diverse answers to this question ranging from *Slumdog Millionaire* to Mystery , Cow, Bindi , and Emerging Economy. This question primarily looked into the unaided recall and the top of the mind answers that respondents could come up with about India.

Manipulation Checks (Cognitive Responses) : 46 respondents belonged to the Young age group (18-25 years) and 45 respondents belonged to the Middle age group (25-40 years). The mean number of responses of the young group was 1.61, whereas the mean number of responses of the middle aged group was 1.67. Since the responses were not normally distributed, as a result, they were log transformed after adding 1 to each response to include 0 values (no response). An ANOVA on age index , Young (v.) Middle aged (25-40 years) did not show any significant difference



($F(1,89) = 0.116, p = 0.734$). According to the respondents, India is famous for Curry (37%) followed by the Ganges (10%) and then IT/ Software (9%). The Figure 3 shows the top 8 responses of the respondents about what - according to them - is India famous for. This question was also an unaided recall test .

Manipulation Checks (Cognitive Responses) : Since the responses were not normally distributed, as a result, they were log transformed, after adding 1 to each response to include 0 values (no response). An ANOVA on the age did not reveal any significant difference ($F(1,89) = 0.107, p = 0.745$), although the Middle aged (vs. Young) subjects gave slightly more responses ($M_s = 0.545$ v. 0.286 , respectively). Similarly, no significant effect of education (masters v. others) was seen in the number of cognitive responses.

When questioned about Indian brands/companies that they were aware of, surprisingly, 60% of the respondents had no idea and said 'Don't know'. Among the remaining 40% respondents, 18% said Tata, followed quite surprisingly by 'Mittal,' by which they meant ArcelorMittal . The next was Ssangyong and Mahindra & Mahindra. Ssangyong Motor Company was acquired by Mahindra & Mahindra in 2011 (Figure 4). From this question, I attempted to find out the unaided brand recall of Indian companies.

Manipulation Checks (Cognitive Responses)

↳ **Age** : Since the responses were not normally distributed; as a result, they were log transformed, after adding 1 to each response to include 0 values (no response). An ANOVA on the age index revealed a significant effect of age ($F(1,89) = 19.402, p = 0.000$). Middle aged respondents recalled greater number of Indian brands and companies vis-à-vis the respondents in the 18-25 years age bracket ($M_s = 0.961$ v. 0.99 , respectively).

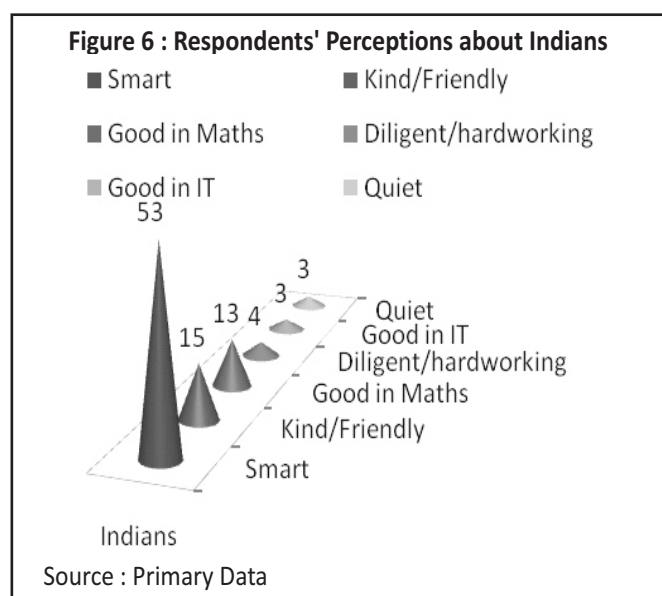
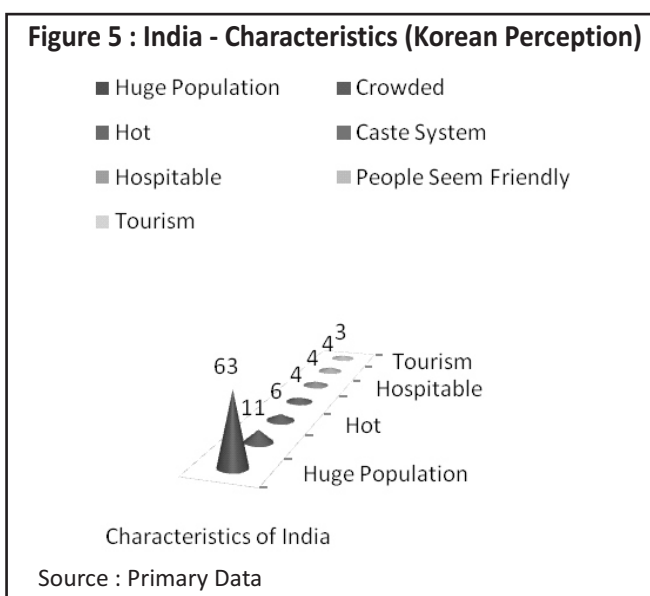
↳ **Education** : The respondents were divided into two broad groups based on the education index - respondents pursuing their masters degree or currently enrolled in one (55 respondents) comprised of the first group, and those with bachelors and high school students (45 respondents) comprised of the second group. An ANOVA of the education index (after adding 1 and log transformation to take into account 0 values) revealed a significant effect of education ($F(1,98) = 19.198, p = 0.000$), with respondents with a post graduate degree giving higher number of responses to the questions regarding Indian brands and companies as compared to others with bachelors degree or high school students ($M_s = 1.174$ v. 0.101 , respectively). Thus, the results show that educated respondents and those in the middle aged category had higher brand awareness.

About the factors they associated with India, about 63% of the respondents said Huge Population, Crowded/Congested (11%) followed by Hot (weather). Caste system (4%), Hospitable (4%), Friendly people (4%), and Tourism (3%) were some of the other common responses given by the respondents (Figure 5). This was more like an aided recall, as some examples were given to help the respondents think.

Manipulation Checks (Cognitive Responses) : Since the responses were not normally distributed; as a result, they were log transformed after adding 1 to each response to include 0 values (no response). An ANOVA on the age ($F(1,89) = 1.552, p = 0.216$) and education index (masters v. others) did not show any significant difference between the groups.

Indians, by most respondents, were described to be Smart/Intelligent by 53% of the respondents, followed by Friendly/Kind by 15% of the respondents, and the third most common response was that Indians are 'Good in Maths/numbers/calculations' (according to 13% of the respondents). The Figure 6 shows other common responses about Indians as perceived by the respondents. This question was like an aided brand recall test.

Manipulation Checks (Cognitive Responses) : 46 respondents in the younger age group gave an average of 1.32 responses as compared to an average of 1.44 by the middle aged group subjects. Since the responses were not normally distributed; they were log transformed after adding 1 to each response to include 0 values (no response). The ANOVA on the age ($F(1,89) = 0.627, p = 0.43$) and education index ($F(1,98) = 1.576, p = 0.212$) did not reveal any significant differences.



The first choice of the respondents in response to buying intentions (Figure 7) of 'Made-in-India' products were Clothes (35%) (this included fabrics, textiles, silk and saris, scarfs, jackets, mufflers, skirts, and Cashmere shawls) , and then Curry/Food (18%) followed by IT products and Software (10%). The Figure 7 shows the top 9 products rated to be bought by the respondents, if they were 'Made in India'. The products included Cars (as rated by 3% of the respondents, where onerespondent said 'Nano'). The products also mentioned by the interviewees, but not coming in the top 9 ranks were Jewellery (2 %), Elephant Ivory products (2%) , and Carpets (2%).

Manipulation Checks (Cognitive Responses) : Since the responses were not normally distributed; as a result, they were log transformed after adding 1 to each response to include 0 values (no response). An ANOVA of the age ($F(1,89)=1.915, p=0.170$) and education index ($F(1,89)=0.486, p=0.487$) did not reveal any significant differences in the groups in terms of the number of responses to the question. Finally, the Table 2 presents the mean and standard deviation of the responses given by the subjects to each question.

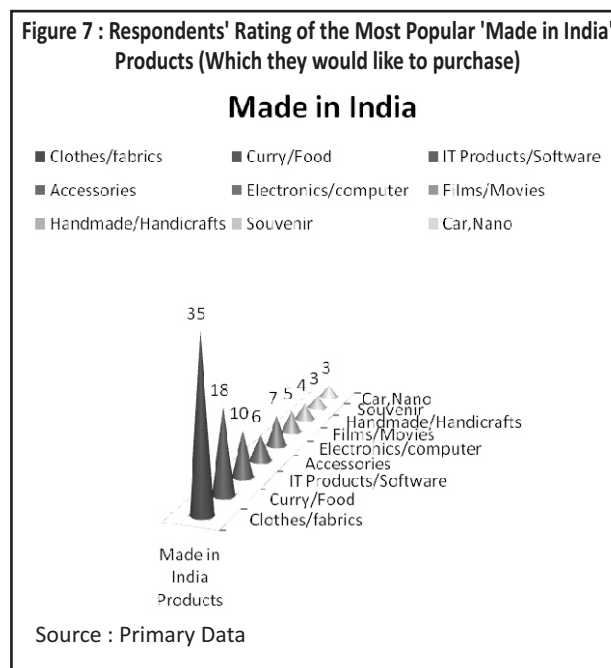


Table 2 : Number of Responses for the Entire Study

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Analysis N
Image	1.6100	.95235	100
Famous	1.2900	.64031	100
Companies	.4800	.89307	100
Define_india	1.5600	.76963	100
Define_indians	1.4200	.74101	100
Made_in_india	1.1900	.72048	100

Source : Primary Data

Research Implications

The research explored the brand awareness of India, and it revealed that Curry has a strong association with India among Koreans. They identified Curry as quintessentially Indian, along with Yoga and Information Technology (IT). India, according to the perception of the Korean respondents, is famous for Curry, Ganges, and IT/Software. The most recognizable Indian company is Tata; the study showed a significant impact of age and education on the number of

Indian brands the respondents were aware of. Clothes were the number-one 'Made-in-India' product that Korean consumers wanted to purchase. Hence, local Indian textiles and clothing sector should be involved for branding and communicating this aspect of Brand India, integrating it with the whole communication strategy as suggested by Kavartzis and Hatch (2013) and Kavartzis (2009).

Korean consumers are exposed to information about India through a wide array of media sources from movies, music, news and current affairs, to their friends and acquaintances who have been to India or are Indian. Indian immigrants in Korea are highly educated like the Indian immigrants in the U.S. (Nasser, 2012). Clothing companies can take advantage of the positive purchase intentions of the Koreans. As mentioned by Anholt (2010a), this could possibly give a boost to Indian textile exports to Korea. Also, from the perspective of Indians who are working or wish to work in Korea, the perception of being 'good in maths' could assist them in getting favourable opportunities in teaching, research, and so forth. Also, HR managers would be willing to hire Indians for professions related to maths proficiency like Actuarial Sciences, Accounting, and so forth. For Indian or India based IT companies, Korea is a great market for the latest technology products and softwares. As showed by the present research, Koreans perceived Indian IT and software products to be quite desirable. On the whole, as explained earlier by Kavartzis and Hatch (2013) and Kalandides and Kavartzis (2009), nation branding theory involves constant interaction between the internal (government, business, local stakeholders) and external (international consumers, media) factors. For Brand India to get its message across, they will have to take this external input and integrate it with the internal resources and feedback to create a successful nation branding strategy.

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

↳ **Limitations :** The study looked at the number of cognitive responses and not at their valence. Another limitation of this study is the sample size being skewed towards the female gender.

↳ **Scope for Further Research :** For future studies, data should be taken from across different cities taking into account the socioeconomic status of the respondents. Also, a more detailed investigation should be done into how consumers form images and associations about a particular nation, and which media channels influence them to a great extent.

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