

---

## **Editorial: Corporate insights on architecting consumer behaviour and market competitiveness**

---

### **Arpita Khare**

Indian Institute of Management Rohtak,  
Maharishi Dayanand University,  
Rohtak 124001, Haryana, India  
E-mail: khare.arpita@gmail.com

**Biographical notes:** Arpita Khare is currently an Assistant Professor in Indian Institute Management Rohtak, India. She received her MBA in Marketing and DPhil in International Management. Her research interests span over consumer behaviour, retailing, services marketing and supply chain management. She has authored quite a few research papers in international and national journals and is an Associate Editor of *IJBCG*.

---

Knowledge about customers' requirements is no longer sufficient to build sustainable relationships with them. In a highly competitive environment, traditional marketing tools such as developing powerful brands, advertising, publicity, loyalty programs, quality guarantees, and discounts are no longer successful to sell products. Even an advertisement campaign harping on a product's high quality may be inadequate. Proliferation of mass media and the internet has provided customers with information that helps them to compare different offerings and make informed choices. Newell (2002) suggests that consumers' seek to develop a relationship only with firms they trust. With most companies talking about several product attributes, customers prefer to make comparisons about various brands on a variety of parameters. Therefore, to manage competitiveness it becomes important for firms to manage stakeholders so that competitiveness and productivity can be improved. Customers prefer to build relationships with firms' most likely to understand their needs (Gable et al., 2008). Competitiveness encompasses involving employees, suppliers, and logistics providers in creating products that translate into superior value for customers. The involvement of all stakeholders in the value creation process can enhance productivity and value of the product (Chen, 2009). It helps in improving transactional quality by combining utilitarian and hedonic aspects. Högström (2011) examined a theory of attractive experiences to be offered to customers. The utilitarian and hedonic experiences of a product enhance customers' quality perceptions and product evaluation. The competitive strategy of a company combines product, service, cost, quality, and innovation (Molina et al., 2007). Focusing on continuous innovation and improvements increases costs, but has an impact on performance. This cannot be achieved without understanding capabilities of employees, suppliers, financiers, sales people, and logistic providers. It implies integrating information from all participants in the value chain for improving customer interactions (Chang and Horng, 2010). Engaging stakeholders enables firms to reduce excess expenditures related to product innovations and upgrading their manufacturing process. Today, firms are discussing about involving a customer as a co-producer in the value chain. Wikström (1996) states that customer's involvement in production activities can

improve product design, service and provide valuable insights to a firm that improves quality. Customer's participation in the production process can help in building a long-term relationship and loyalty. Grönroos (1991) discusses relationship marketing as a paradigm that enable firms to establish, maintain, and enhance relationships with customers and stakeholders so that objectives of all are met by mutual exchange. It engages channel members and suppliers in decision making. The nature of the relationship and involvement determines the relationship structure and performance standards (Robicheaux and Coleman, 1994). Neale and Corkindale (1998) take it further by suggesting a need to include customers' in developing new products and firms can incorporate their insights and expectations. Including customers in product development would imply changing the overall business strategy of the firm (Tollin, 2002). Greater customisation would entail involvement of different participants in the value creation process (Lagrosen, 2005).

This issue of the journal presents thoughts of the researchers on varied business dimensions for enhancing competitiveness. It discusses about policies and strategies for improving firms' competitiveness through employee engagement, innovation, corporate social responsibility, and strategic human resource management. These research papers focus on improving organisational performance through knowledge sharing, employee involvement and branding. Involving employees in designing competitive strategies can help in building relationships with the customer and generate more value for business. These theories have been adapted in emerging economies to understand their impact on competitiveness. Tan, Woo and Tan argue that improving 'liveability' of global cities can help in attracting investment from companies and help in talent acquisition. The global cities were assessed according to their strategic initiatives taken by the government to enhance the quality of life. It identified 85 indicators that could be associated with liveability issues. In their article on wine branding in Mexico, Reyes and Rajagopal, discuss the impact of brand attributes on the buying behaviour. They suggest that wine research in Mexico could help in understanding symbolic, hedonic and destination branding concerns. Branding should address both emotional and functional attributes and research can help in deciphering consumer behavioural issues.

Another paper authored by Naidu and Chand examines the impact of human resource bundles on performance in the Pacific Island countries. It draws from arguments of institutional theory frameworks. It categories theories into four modes of theorising drawing from universalistic perspective, contingency perspective, configurational perspective and contextual paradigm, and two integrative perspective models. Furthermore, in another research, Najmaei discusses the importance of individuals' goal achievement. He suggests that their performance is enhanced when their cognitive style fits the information requirement of task environment levels. By analysing data from Australian small manufacturing firms, findings provide valuable insights about cognitive mechanisms involved in the behaviour of strategic leaders.

López-Fernández and Rajagopal in their research explore importance of CSR in improving brand image, stakeholder satisfaction, and loyalty. They suggest firms' involvement in CSR can help in differentiating itself. However, firms are not involved in CSR activities in emerging countries because of poor reporting on CSR, policy measures, and lack of awareness about social issues. In another research, Aghajari and Senin verified the strategic-orientation-competitiveness relationship in manufacturing firms in Malaysia. Strategic orientation-competitiveness was analysed by looking into innovative

operation strategies and its impact on alignment between the firm's operation and strategy.

We hope that the papers in this issue would help in understanding business dimensions in emerging countries. It would help in providing insights about innovative practices followed by firms in emerging markets for improving employee engagement, competitiveness, and branding. These papers throw light on research initiatives taken up in emerging markets and their importance in adding to the existing knowledge domain.

## References

- Chang, T-Y. and Horng, S-C. (2010) 'Conceptualizing and measuring experience quality: the customer's perspective', *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 14, pp.2401–2419.
- Chen, S-H. (2009) 'Establishment of a performance-evaluation model for service quality in the banking industry', *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp.235–247.
- Gable, M., Fiorito, S.S. and Topol, M.T. (2008) 'An empirical analysis of the components of retailer consumer loyalty programs', *International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management*, Vol. 36, No. 1, pp.32–49.
- Grönroos, C. (1991) 'The marketing strategy continuum: toward a marketing concept for the 1990s', *Management Decision*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp.7–13.
- Högström, C. (2011) 'The theory of attractive quality and experience offerings', *The TQM Journal*, Vol. 23, No. 2, pp. 111–127.
- Lagrosen, S. (2005) 'Customer involvement in new product development: a relationship marketing perspective', *European Journal of Innovation Management*, Vol. 8, No. 4, pp.424–436.
- Molina, L.M., Lloréns-Montes, J. and Ruiz-Moreno, A. (2007) 'Relationship between quality management practices and knowledge transfer', *Journal of Operations Management*, Vol. 25, No. 3, pp.682–701.
- Neale, M.R. and Corkindale, D.R. (1998) 'Co-developing products: involving customers earlier and more deeply', *Long Range Planning*, Vol. 31, No. 3, pp.418–425.
- Newell, F. (2002) *Loyalty.com: Consumer Relationship Management in the New Era of Internet Marketing*, p.39, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY.
- Robicheaux, R.A. and Coleman, J.E. (1994) 'The structure of marketing channel relationships', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp.38–51.
- Tollin, K. (2002) 'Customization as a business strategy – a barrier to customer integration in product development?', *Total Quality Management*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp.427–439.
- Wikström, S. (1996) 'The customer as co-producer', *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp.6–19.