



## **Building Pakistan's Country of Origin Image through the Corporate Image: Exploring Optimal Corporate Brands for the Image Transfer**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Pakistan is facing a multi-dimensional attack on its country image. While it is imperative to triumph over negative factors causing Pakistan's bad country image. This research aims to explore optimal corporate brands of Pakistan to build their country of origin (CoO) image in light of the consumer-related and company-related factors. Exploratory research approach has been deployed to explore potential categories of goods/services containing corporate brands. Subsequently, the explored corporate brands have been assessed in light of factors that persuade image transfer from corporate brands to their country of origin. Findings confirmed that corporate brands, such as National Bank of Pakistan, United Bank, Habib Bank, Bank Alfalah, MCB Bank, Lucky Cement, DG Khan Cement, Fauji Cement, Attock Cement, Bestway Cement have been explored as optimal corporate brands for image transfer to build Pakistan's country of origin image.*

**Keywords:** Country of origin Image; Image Transfer; corporate image; brand management

**JEL Classification:** M3

### **Introduction**

Pakistan is in front of attacks on its country image through different angles. On Corruption Perception Index-2011, Pakistan has been ranked 134<sup>th</sup> out of 182 ranks—one being very clean and 182, highly corrupt. Due to terrorist attacks, a number of countries have issued advices to their citizen against travelling to Pakistan. According to BBC World Service Country Rating Poll conducted in 2011 and 2013, Pakistan was the third most negatively viewed country after Iran and North Korea and Liam Fox, former Defence Secretary, UK is convinced that Pakistan is the most dangerous country in the world (Crilly, 2013). In view of such development, it is necessary to ask ourselves: Should we leave Pakistan's country image to aggravate?

### **Benefit of good country image**

A good country image induces interests of foreign governments, multilateral institutions, business and consumers living in foreign countries. Economic and political benefits of such

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interests are many folds. Tourism, foreign investment and exports of goods/services contribute to improve balance of payments. While political influence generates favorable condition for achievement of economic and other strategic objectives in the world. In view of these benefits, governments around the world are adopting proactive approaches in country branding.

### **An hour of need for improving Pakistan's country image**

While it is imperative to succeed over negative factors causing Pakistan's bad country image, it is also necessary to explore additional images to strengthen favorable associations with Pakistan and support a distinguishing image. To meet this objective, we have to enhance our education and research levels in brand management and come up with a set of solutions for building Pakistan's image in the world.

### **What has been done so far?**

Husain (2004) has stressed the need of collective effort for the expansion of a brand name called Pakistan and the consequent marketing of an optimistic representation for Pakistan. Khan and Imran (2009) concluded the international press did not have soft gesture towards Pakistan. However, no study was found on the topic except of Ghani, Salaria, and Ali (2007) who studied country-of-origin effect on consumer buying decision of long-lasting/durable goods in Pakistan. One can say that there is a serious gap.

### **What is our aim?**

We aim to start bridging this gap. In this article, optimal corporate brands for image transfer have been explored to build Pakistan's country of origin (CoO) image abroad. This would help decision makers in Pakistan to work for improving Pakistan's CoO image.

### **Literature Review**

Building country image is an important task, owning a bad reputation or no reputation is one of the worse situations for a country to remain competitive in the global ring (Ham, 2001).

Image transfer research has found corporate brands important for enhancing their CoO image (Anholt, 2003; Ham, 2001; Anholt, 2005; Olins, 1999). Country of origin via corporate image creates preference and willingness of consumers to buy general goods/services from that country.

### **What are country image, corporate image and image transfer?**

The concepts relating to country image, corporate image and image transfer have attracted a good amount of research interest in marketing. Roth (2009) has estimated number of publications (up to 2008) on matters concerning to CoO and 400 out of 1000 are published in scholastic (peer-reviewed) journals. Roth(2009) argued that this area of research showed that a product's nationalized origin/foundation behaves as an indication of product quality, perceived risk, value and purchase choice. Three different image aspects are classified in respect to facial image object:

- country image
- product – country image
- product image (product image from a country)

The above mentioned aspects are observed in this study. They are not just restricted to generic products but they also stage the political and economic development and maturity, historic issues and associations, traditions and culture and the level of technology and industrialization. Affective component is not to be ignored as it plays an important part in building country's image via feelings and emotions.

Regarding corporate image, an individual having positive feelings, association and evaluation about the company holds positive notions for the company's product as well. The reason is that there is a positive association between the company and the product. Barnett, Jermier, and Lafferty (2006) have studied corporate image in detail and following concepts were the key features:

- Corporate identity,
- Corporate image,
- Corporate reputation and
- Corporate reputation capital.

Organizational processes, public relations and marketing creates the corporate image and the corporate identity that forms an impression to the external environment about the firm.

Barnett, Jermier, and Lafferty (2006) have identified the following three diverse clusters corporate image:

- Reputation as a position of awareness
- Reputation as an estimation and
- Reputation as an assets/benefit

Reputation is taken as an assessment because stakeholders evaluate the status of the firm. Barnett, Jermier, and Lafferty (2006) concluded on the basis of the extant literature that reputation is defined in terms of judgment and estimation. This research has also taken corporate image as an assessment pointer.

Corporate image is important due to the factors including (a) it is difficult to be duplicated by competitors, (b) it provides opportunity to leverage the marketing strategy and (c) it is a basis of sustainable competitive advantage. Further, corporate image is not a property of a company.

The concept of image transfer has been widely used in the marketing literature. The concepts including brand extension, celebrity endorsement and sponsorship are actually based on the concept of image transfer. In fact, memories in our brains are stored in the form of nodes. These nodes are interconnected and these nodes activate the thinking process and connect to the other nodes in the brain (Anderson, 1983). The strength of the association in the consumer's mind connects one node to the other (De Groot, 1989). Therefore, the stronger the linkage between the two nodes in the minds of individuals, the more strongly will be the nodes transfer (Fazio, 1995). In other words, if linkage among country image and corporate image is stronger than there is a greater potential for image transfer from corporate brands to country of origin image.

### **Importance for developing countries**

Anholt (2005) found corporate brands, particularly for developing countries as a key communication tool in the diffusion of a country brand but what factors influence this image transfer?

### **Factors influencing the image transfer**

In a ground-breaking image transfer research, Gotsi, Lopez, and Andriopoulos (2011) has explored the components that persuade the potential transmission of linkages/associations from corporate brands to their CoO. These factors have been classified in consumer- & company-related factors.

Consumer related factors include: (a) Knowledge of the corporate brand's CoO, (b) Influence of the corporate brand image, (c) Strength of the corporate brand-country relationship in consumer's mind, (d) brand image misfit (e), brand image fit, (f) Power of the industry-country relationship in the consumer's mind. Company associated factors include: (a) Act up/down the CoO, (b) Worldwide visibility, (c) Market apparentness and (d) number of corporate brands.

### **Design Methodology**

This research aims to explore optimal corporate brands of Pakistan to build their CoO image in light of the factors identified by (Gotsi, Lopez, & Andriopoulos, 2011). Most difficult challenge to achieve is a fact that Pakistan is large exporter of raw material/commodities; not corporate brands.

To understand the foreign consumers' notions and market, one has to conduct surveys in foreign countries to know what consumers think about Pakistani corporate brands. There will be a possibility then to conclude about optimal corporate brands to build Pakistan's CoO image. Such type of research methodology is costlier both in terms of money and time. More importantly, it requires willingness of Government of Pakistan to facilitate such an extensive research.

Due to importance of the issue and to attract immediate attention of policy makers in Pakistan, we have adopted a different and less expensive research design to achieve the same goal. The research design for this exploratory investigation involves mixed method. This approach has been used because we have two analytic interests in this paper: (a) to identify potential categories of commodities/services, and (b) to assess potential corporate brands in the categories in light of factors that influence image transfer from corporate brands to their CoO. To achieve the first interest, we have used quantitative approach while the second analytic interest is achieved through qualitative & quantitative analyses.

Sampling includes obtaining a sample of categories of commodities/services earning export receipts up to US\$100 million from the census data on Pakistan's exports in 2010. Subsequently, the data are sifted to exclude categories of goods/services of semi-finished nature. As a result, we obtain categories of goods/services with high possibility of having corporate brands. Thereafter, these categories have been grouped into: (a) Textile based products, (b) Agriculture & travelling and (3) Other products/services. Foreign direct investment by corporate sector of Pakistan has also been grouped. These four groups have been discussed further to assess their potential for image transfer, to build Pakistan's country of origin image.

How many products/services in the above groups are marketed as corporate brands in foreign countries? How many of them, in turn, have built some corporate image? And what is the state of awareness of country of origin of those corporate brands which have built some corporate image? Based on these questions, we have assessed potential categories in the four groups; and reduce them to most important categories to consider for evaluation against factors cited by Gotsi, Lopez, and Andriopoulos (2011) in his study.

In order to fulfill our second analytic interest, the most important corporate brands have been assessed in light of factors identified by Gotsi, Lopez, and Andriopoulos (2011) that may influence image transfer from corporate brands to their country of origin.

## **The Result & Discussion**

### **Identification of potential categories of commodities/services**

Commodity-wise exports of goods and services by private sector as contained in Annual Export Receipts-2010 published by State Bank of Pakistan have been obtained. These data are sorted according to their value of commodity-wise export of goods/services from the highest to US\$100.0 million as given in the following table 1.

**Table 1: Goods/Services with export earning up to US\$100 million**

		<b>US\$ in thousand</b>
1	Bed and Table Linen, Toilet and Kitchen Linen	2,295,146
2	Rice	2,151,000
3	Transportation	1,278,724
4	Cotton Yarn not for Sewing Cotton more than 85% Not	1,038,288
5	Oil from Petrol and Bituminous Mineral etc.	954,504
6	Woven Cotton Fabrics, Cotton more than 85% Wt > 200	675,663
7	Garments, Made-ups Kn/Cr etc. of Rubber or Plastic	541,011
8	Portland Cement, Aluminous Cement and Slag Cement	511,054
9	Freight	483,100
10	Gents Shirts, Knitted or Crocheted	454,193
11	Men's or Boys' Suits, Ensembles etc, Not Knitted etc.	440,659
12	Woven Cotton Fabrics, Cotton more than 85% Wt < 200	416,801
13	Leather further prepared after tanning (other animal)	322,461
14	Woven Fabrics of Synthetic Staple Fibres Containing	316,924
15	Articles and Equipments for Sports etc NES	315,272
16	Articles of Apparel and Accessories of Leather	287,290
17	Travel	285,759
18	Medical, Surgical and Dental Instruments etc.	260,235
19	Panty hose, Socks and other Hosiery Kn/Cr	252,859
20	Communication Services	245,796
21	Oils etc from High Temperature Coal Tar	228,092
22	Polyesters, Epoxides and Polyesters, Primary Forms	218,442
23	Woven Cotton Fabrics NES	218,435
24	Cotton, Not Carded Or Combed	209,221
25	Woven Cotton Fabrics, Cotton less than 85% Wt < 200	207,604
26	Woven Cotton Fabrics, Cotton less than 85% Wt > 200	202,147
27	Made-Up Articles of Textile Materials NES	193,606
28	Woven Terry Fabrics and Tufted Textile Fabric NES	192,962
29	Computer & Information Services	188,304
31	Cotton Yarn not for Sewing Retail Packed	186,342
31	Gents Suits, Ensembles, Jackets etc. Kn/Cr	183,126
32	T-Shirts, Singlets and other Vests Kn/Cr	162,929
33	Carpets and other Textile Floor Coverings, Knotted	141,919
34	Women's or Girls' Suits, Ensembles etc. Not Kn/Cr.	141,162
35	Cotton, Carded or Combed	131,889
36	Mattress Supports, Articles of Bedding etc	131,596

		<b>US\$ in thousand</b>
37	Chromium Ores and Concentrates	123,786
38	Garments NES Knitted or Crocheted	107,414
39	Ethyl Alcohol, Strength: more than 80% Alcohol	105,958
40	Dates, Figs, Pineapples, Avocados etc, Fr or Dried	105,372
41	Articles of Jewelry and Parts thereof or Precious Metal	105,024
42	Cotton Sewing Thread, Retail Packed or Not	103,804

The above data have been sifted to exclude categories of goods/services of semi-finished nature. As a result, we obtain the following groups of categories of goods/services with high possibility of having corporate brands therein.

**Table – 2: Goods/Services with high possibility of having corporate brands**

		<b>US\$ in thousand</b>
1	Bed and Table Linen, Toilet and Kitchen Linen	2,295,146
2	Rice	2,151,000
3	Garments, Made-ups Kn/Cr etc. of Rubber or Plastic	541,011
4	Portland Cement, Aluminous Cement and Slag Cement	511,054
5	Gents Shirts, Knitted or Crocheted	454,193
6	Articles and Equipments for Sports etc NES	315,272
7	Articles of Apparel and Accessories of Leather	287,290
8	Travel	285,759
9	Medical, Surgical and Dental Instruments etc.	260,235
10	Panty hose, Socks and other Hosiery Kn/Cr	252,859
11	Made-Up Articles of Textile Materials NES	193,606
12	Computer & Information Services	188,304
13	Cotton Yarn not for Sewing Retail Packed	186,342
14	Gents Suits, Ensembles, Jackets etc. Kn/Cr	183,126
15	T-Shirts, Singlets and other Vests Kn/Cr	162,929
16	Carpets and other Textile Floor Coverings, Knotted	141,919
17	Mattress Supports, Articles of Bedding etc	131,596
18	Dates, Figs, Pineapples, Avocados etc, Fr or Dried	105,372
19	Articles of Jewelry and Parts thereof or Precious Metal	105,024

We are interested in categories of goods/services with high possibility of having corporate brands. Because, the aim of this paper is to explore corporate brands being marketed in foreign countries with maximum potential for image transfer to improve Pakistan's CoO image, goods/services in the above table are grouped into:

- (GROUP-a) Textile Based Products,
- (GROUP-b) Agriculture and Travel, and
- (GROUP-c) Other goods/services

In addition to exports of goods/services, Pakistan's corporate sector has also made foreign direct investment in many countries in Asia, Africa, Europe and North America. Most

significant of them, are Pakistani bank branches in foreign countries, which have been included as:

(GROUP-d) Pakistani bank branches in foreign countries

**Table – 3: Goods/services with high possibility of branding**

**(GROUP-a) Textile based products**

		<b>US\$ in thousand</b>
1	Bed and Table Linen, Toilet and Kitchen Linen	2,295,146
2	Garments, Made-ups Kn/Cr etc. of Rubber or Plastic	541,011
3	Gents Shirts, Knitted or Crocheted	454,193
4	Articles of Apparel and Accessories of Leather	287,290
5	Panty hose, Socks and other Hosiery Kn/Cr	252,859
6	Made-Up Articles of Textile Materials NES	193,606
7	Cotton Yarn not for Sewing Retail Packed	186,342
8	Gents Suits, Ensembles, Jackets etc. Kn/Cr	183,126
9	T-Shirts, Singlets and other Vests Kn/Cr	162,929
10	Carpets and other Textile Floor Coverings, Knotted	141,919
11	Mattress Supports, Articles of Bedding etc	131,596

**(GROUP-b) Agriculture and Travel**

12	Rice	2,151,000
13	Travel	285,759
14	Dates, Figs, Pineapples, Avocados etc, Fresh or Dried	105,372

**(GROUP-c) Largely branded**

15	Portland Cement, Aluminous Cement and Slag Cement	511,054
16	Articles and Equipments for Sports etc NES	315,272
17	Medical, Surgical and Dental Instruments etc.	260,235
18	Articles of Jewelry and Parts thereof or Precious Metal	105,024
19	Computer & Information Services	188,304

**(GROUP-d) Bank branches abroad**

20	Pakistani bank branches	98 bank branches in 27 countries
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The product/services include in GROUP-a have contributed a significant share in Pakistan's exports but they do not contain any significant corporate brands. Manufacturing of textile based products is done as a part of supply chain for the world famous brands. Global brands like Calvin Klein, Boss, Diesel, Gucci, Armani, etc have overshadowed importance of CoO of these products. In such cases, consumers consider Calvin Klein from USA, whether it is made in Pakistan or elsewhere.

In case of rice export, Pakistan is earning around US\$2 billion annually without having any corporate brands. Non-branding of Pakistani basmati rice is done despite a huge potential to brand world famous Basmati rice. As such, it is unlikely that these two groups will contain any corporate brands with which we may influence Pakistan's CoO image. With respect to surgical and sports goods contained in GROUP-c, manufacturing of these products are also done under outsourcing arrangements by world's famous brands, such as, Nike, Puma, Adidas. In some cases, however, CoO of these sports and surgical goods is important and has contributed to improve Pakistan's exports, but factually these products belong to world famous brands.

Pakistan had supplied the official ball to Football World Cup held in the USA in 1994. Its promotion increased Pakistan's exports of football from Rs1.6 billion in 1992-93 to Rs3.2 billion in 1993-94 (Anjum, 2011). Realizing growing exports of football, a soccer-ball stitching plant was in operation by Nike and a Pakistani firm in Pakistan in 1997 but Nike terminated the project in 2006, due to child labour issue which was managed by Sialkot supplier. Further, we also don't have any known corporate brands for jewelry, computer and IT product/services. ??

### **Assessment of corporate brands**

This discussion has led us to corporate brands contained in the remaining Groups, that is, cement and overseas bank branches.

### **Consumer-Related Factors**

#### **Awareness of the corporate brand's CoO**

Awareness of corporate brand's country of origin has been recognized as an important factor for associations to be carried over from the corporate brands to their state of origin. For instance, if MCB Bank customers in Sri Lanka are not aware that their banker is a Pakistani company, how image transfer will take place from MCB Bank to Pakistan in Sri Lanka? Therefore, awareness of CoO is the most important factor without which image transfer process cannot be initiated.

The first condition for awareness of the corporate brand's country of origin is whether the corporate brand is in a position to hide its country of origin or not? If corporate brands cannot hide their country of origin, one can safely assume that consumers of the corporate brands are aware about country of origin. In cases of textile/sports/surgical goods exported from Pakistan, they are made in Pakistan as a part of supply chain of world famous brands. In such cases, consumers are likely to prefer brands, not the countries where these products are made.

Pakistan's cement and bank brands cannot hide their country of origin. Overseas bank branches belong to Habib Bank, National Bank, United Bank, Bank Alfalah, MCB Bank, Bank AL Habib and Askari Bank. These banks have 98 branches in 27 countries. These overseas branches are located in major cities of the world. These banks have been permanent in providing service and retaining their old customers, which are aware of CoO.

Similar is the case with cement. The consumers of cement are well aware of the name of corporate brands and country of origin. Cement export is normally a B2B affair. As such, these businesses are well aware of the cement brands as well as their country of origin. Further, cement is an important ingredient in building of houses/bridges/buildings etc. Therefore, consumers of cement take brand and country of origin seriously in their decision making process. Regarding awareness of consumers, for example, Fauji Cement has even established its dealer's network in various cities of Afghanistan including Jalalbad, Kabul,



Northern Afghanistan (Kunduz-Mazar Sharif and surrounding areas). Similar to banks, their CoO is also strong.

The following are the important cement importing countries from Pakistan

**Table 4: Cement export**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Importing countries (<math>\geq</math>US\$ 10.0 million)</b>
Portland Cement, Aluminous Cement and Slag Cement (cement)	Afghanistan, Dubai, Sudan, Iraq, India, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Tanzania

Pakistani Banks have made foreign direct investment in various countries in the world. The following is the list of Pakistan bank branches operating in the world:-

**Table 5: Bank-wise & country-wise overseas branches of Pakistani banks**

	<b>MCB</b>	<b>NBP</b>	<b>HBL</b>	<b>UBL</b>	<b>Alfalah</b>	<b>Askari</b>	<b>Al-Habib</b>	<b>Total</b>
Afghanistan	0	4	2	0	2	0	0	<b>8</b>
Azerbaijan	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Bahrain	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	<b>10</b>
Bangladesh	0	4	5	0	5	0	0	<b>14</b>
Belgium	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
<b>Qatar</b>	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
France	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
Germany	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Hong Kong	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
Japan	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	<b>2</b>
Kenya	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
Korea	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Kyrgyz Republic	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Lebanon	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Maldives	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Mauritius	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
Netherlands	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Oman	0	0	8	0	0	0	0	<b>8</b>
Seychells	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Singapore	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Sri Lanka	6	0	3	0	0	0	0	<b>9</b>
Turkmenistan	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Turkey	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
UAE	0	0	6	8	0	0	0	<b>14</b>
USA	0	2	1	1	0	0	0	<b>4</b>
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	<b>1</b>
Yemen	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	<b>3</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>98</b>

### **Kingship of the corporate brand image**

Gotsi, Lopez, and Andriopoulos (2011) has identified that image transfer will be stronger when the corporate brand has an influential impact in the mind of the consumers. If the image and associations are stronger, the more stronger will be the CoO. For instance, it is unlikely that Habib Bank will have influence similar to MCB Bank on consumers in Sri Lanka. Therefore, power of the strong brand representation/image is important for influencing image transfer to their country of origin.

However, MCB Bank's corporate image in the world cannot be matched with Sony, Harley Davidson, Samsung or Johnson & Johnson. Pakistan's corporate sector or rather Pakistani bank branches and cement have *at least* not earned any bad name for Pakistan.

### **Strength of the corporate brand-country association in consumer's mind**

The connection between corporate brand and country of origin in the consumer's psyche has been identified to play a moderate role in determining the image transfer. Strength of the link determines likeliness of image transfer. The strength of association between Coca Cola and the USA or between Toyota and Japan cannot be matched with Lucky Cement and Pakistan or United Bank and Pakistan. As such, strength of the link between corporate brand and country association are weak in case of cement and bank branches.

### **Brand image fit/brand image misfit**

The image transmit is however dependent between the corporate image and country image fit. The brand image misfit reflects weakness for any resonance, that is, presence in brands, like Mercedes and Germany, Coca Cola and USA, Sony and Japan.

A consumer in Pakistan will not prefer made-in China car over made-in Japan car. So, it will be difficult for a marketer to introduce a Chinese car in Pakistan but marketing and promotion of made-in Afghanistan car will offend the consumers in Pakistan because the inconsistent country image of Afghanistan. Hence, there is a misfit. Corporate banking brands of Pakistan have very old presence in many countries in Asia and Africa. Further, corporate image of Pakistani bank branches and cement abroad is good compared to their country of origin image.

In case of cement export, it may be noted that even in the presence of bad country image of Pakistan, Lucky Cement's bags with "Made in Pakistan" label are reaching to destinations like Ethiopia and Djibouti in East Africa, Durban in South Africa, Congo in Central Africa and Guinea in West Africa.

### **Strength of the industry-country association in the consumer's mind**

Strength of the industry-country association in the consumer's mind can have consequence on perceptions of the country. Industries relating to textile, sugar, rice, sports goods have good association with Pakistan. These industries are, however lacking corporate brands.

Pakistan's financial system has earned name in branchless banking in many developing countries. High profit margin in banks has attracted a number of foreign banks to initiate/enlarge their branch network in Pakistan. With the growing economy of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh, a number of Pakistani banks have opened their branches in the two countries. These factors reflect strength of association between corporate brands relating to banking and Pakistan in the mind of consumers.

As per global cement report-2010, Pakistan is the 5th largest exporter with 9.7 million MT cement in the list of top 10 exporters of cement in the world. Cement export from

Pakistan is a new phenomenon. But, it has a great potential to contribute to industry-country association.

### **Company Related Factors**

The following are the three company-related factor, which have been identified by Gotsi, Lopez, and Andriopoulos (2011) to influence the image transfer from a corporate brand to its country of origin.

#### **Play up/down the country of origin**

Playing up for the corporate brand for its country of origin likely activates the association from corporate brand to country origin.

If a corporate brand plays up its country of origin, it is likely to trigger a transfer of association from the corporate brand to the country of origin. Gotsi, Lopez, and Andriopoulos (2011) has identified strong evidence of strength of this factor for image transfer. This will cause corporate image to strongly influence country image than in cases where companies place less emphasis on linking their brand to the country of origin. The banking brands and the cement brands are not expected to play down the country of origin. In fact, Pakistani bank branches abroad have interest to play up their country of origin because they are very much involved with Pakistan due to trade link of their customers with Pakistan.

#### **Visibility & number of corporate brands**

Visibility of the corporate brands has been suggested as another key factor in influencing the image transfer from the corporate brand to its country of origin. The more visible, the corporate brand, the more it is likely that corporate image will influence country image.

The visibility has two dimensions: (a) visibility within a specific market and (b) at the international level. Visibility of cement and overseas bank branches from both the dimensions will be discussed here-under:

The visibility factor is better in case of corporate bank brands. Pakistan's seven corporate brands including Habib Bank, United Bank, National Bank, MCB Bank, Bank Alfalah, Askari Bank and Bank AL Habib have established their visibility in 27 countries around the world (see Table 5).

Regarding banks, the following two tables well reflect their visibility both in specific market and at the international height and number of corporate brands:-

**Table 6: Visibility of corporate brands in specific market**

<b>Specific market</b>	<b>Number of corporate brands</b>
Afghanistan	Three
Bahrain	Seven
Bangladesh	Three
France	Two
Sri Lanka	Two
USA	Two
UAE	Two
All other	One

In Bahrain, all the seven corporate brands are present. In most of the countries, at least two corporate brands are present. Every corporate brand has a number of offices in a single country.

**Table 7: Visibility of corporate brands at international level**

Corporate brands	Number of branches	Number of countries
Habib Bank	41	17
MCB Bank	7	2
National Bank of Pakistan	22	12
United Bank Ltd	18	5
Bank Alfalah	8	3
Askari Bank	1	1
Bank AL Habib	1	1

In case of cement, the countries where their aggregate exports was up US\$10 million include Afghanistan, Dubai, Sudan, Iraq, India, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Oman, Qatar, Sri Lanka and Tanzania (see Table-4).

The cement brands have secured wide international visibility. These cement companies have their footprints in around 80 countries in the world. Share of cement export to these countries however, changes as per requirement of cement import by these countries.

The major corporate brand is Lucky Cement having a massive production capacity equivalent to approximately one-fifth of Pakistan's total production capacity and one-third share in Pakistan's exports of cement. Lucky Cement has its own storage capacity of 24000 MT of cement in Karachi Port. The Bestway Cement Ltd (a major exporter to Afghanistan and India), Attock Cement (exporting to Iraq, Sri Lanka and South Africa), Fauji Cement (Afghanistan, Tajikistan and India) and DG Khan Cement (Middle East, East and South Africa).

## Conclusion

Due to huge economic and political benefits of good CoO image and to bring attention of policy makers, this study had explored optimal corporate brands for image transfer to build Pakistan's CoO image overseas.

This study has found Habib Bank, Bank Alfalah, United Bank, National Bank of Pakistan, MCB Bank, Lucky Cement, DG Khan Cement, Fauji Cement, Attock Cement, Bestway Cement as optimal corporate brands for image transfer to build Pakistan's CoO image.

The decision makers in the Government of Pakistan involved in country branding have now to realize that corporate brands, mainly the banks with foreign branches and cement exporting companies, provide a significant opportunity to improve Pakistan's country of origin image in the world.

This study is exploratory and is conducted with the prospects that succeeding research will be required to present such conclusive evidence. Therefore, as a next step, Government of Pakistan should facilitate a subsequent research.

However, it is necessary to note that image transfer process will require different types of approach in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka than in Djibouti, Sudan, Tanzania or Europe/USA, it is mandatory that such approaches should take into account geographic segmentation of consumers as well.

It is clear that customers in foreign countries of these two types of corporate brands are aware of these brands. As such, this association can be carried over to their country of origin image. However, difficulty is faced in transfer of such association because our corporate brands are not as strong as Mercedes, Microsoft, Nokia and Toyota. It is also necessary to improve degree of fit between Pakistan's country image and corporate image with respect to banks & cement in international markets.

### **Limitations**

Due to resource constraint, we could not conduct surveys in foreign countries to know what consumers of Pakistani brands think in terms of consumer-related factors. This study has explored names of corporate brands only. A subsequent detailed study is required to provide conclusive evidence to work on identified corporate brands for improving Pakistan's CoO image.

### **Implications**

It is evident that image transfer from corporate image of cement and bank brands is possible to build Pakistan's country of origin image and that a subsequent research on these lines will provide conclusive evidence for building Pakistan's CoO image through Pakistan's corporate brands being marketed in various countries of the world.

Resultantly, Pakistan can have a good future in terms of larger exports of goods/services to improve balance of payments in the medium term. In a long term, a good country image will be beneficial for creating favorable political condition in the world for achievement of Pakistan's economic & political objectives.

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