JULY 2025 ISSUE 2

MANAGEMENT MANUSCRIPT

TO SEEK KNOWLEDGE IS TO INVEST IN A FUTURE THAT NEVER FADES

MANAGEMENT MANUSCRIPT

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The Dynamics of Global Business:
Innovation, Integration & Impact

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JNU

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NAVIGATING A WORLD OF PARADOXES

From the Chief Editor's Desk

By Dr. Priya Gupta

Welcome to the July 2025 issue of Management Manuscript. This edition arrives at a fascinating crossroads, a moment defined by both blistering pace and profound reflection. As we turn these pages, we find ourselves standing at the intersection of powerful global forces and deeply personal narratives, a paradox that challenges every one of us, from the corner office to the everyday investor.

We open with a look at India's mergers and acquisitions scene, a journey from domestic consolidation to what one writer calls a high stakes drama "fueled by ambition, risk, and an unrelenting drive for transformation". We see how a nation once shackled by protectionist policies has now burst onto the global stage, with deals that announce to the world that India is ready to play. This momentum, we learn, is about more than growth; it is a mindset shift from insularity to ambition. In this ever changing financial landscape, a senior J.P. Morgan banker's words resonate, describing India, "not just a growth story, but a platform for global capital and innovation."

Yet, with this ambition comes a natural caution, as explored in the following article on the Indian stock market. We are asked to consider whether our collective enthusiasm for growth has led to a potential bubble. It's a question that forces us to look beyond the euphoria of rising indices and into the fundamentals that truly sustain a market. This is a powerful reminder that while the markets can soar, "a prudent approach is recommended".

Our magazine also ventures beyond the balance sheet to explore the human side of management. An enlightening piece on gender bias in the workplace reminds us that while we celebrate progress, systematic issues persist, creating what one author calls a sense of "perceived marginalized". This powerful insight calls on corporations to promote healthy value systems that are independent of gender constructs. Similarly, our piece on human capital challenges us to see people not as a cost, but as a driving force behind productivity and innovation.

Finally, we confront our digital lives and environmental responsibilities. We question if the "LinkedIn Bubble" of self-branding and curated connections has begun to outweigh real, tangible skills. This is a reflection on the value of authenticity in a world of algorithms. We are also reminded of the profound ethical and ecological impact of our choices, from the staggering waste of food that could feed millions to the microplastic crisis choking our oceans. This is a call to action for businesses and consumers alike to collaborate on solutions for a cleaner, healthier future. Ultimately, this issue is a testament to the fact that business today is not just about numbers, but about interconnected stories of ambition, humanity, and sustainability. The most successful ventures will be those that embrace these paradoxes, not as obstacles, but as opportunities to lead with resilience and a sense of purpose. As you read on, I hope you feel inspired to join this vital conversation.

THE EVOLUTION OF M&A IN INDIA

From Liberalisation to Unicorn Takeovers

From the Editor's Desk

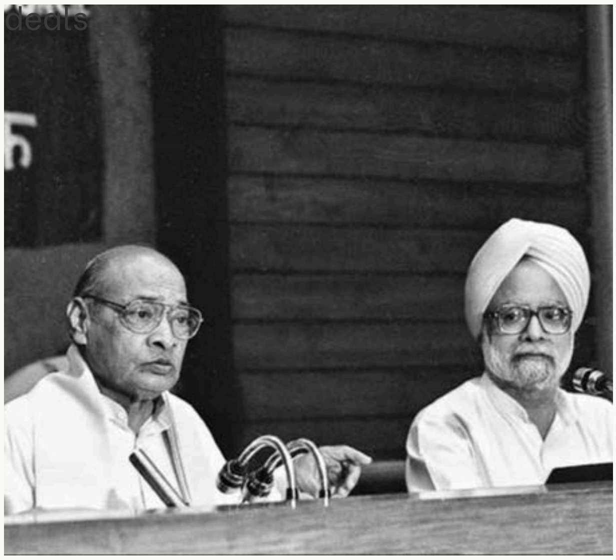
By Hester J M

Introduction:

If we assume M&A is confined to boardroom negotiations, we need to think again, In India today it's a high stakes drama, fuelled by ambition, risk, and an unrelenting drive for transformation. In the first half of 2025 alone, Indian enterprises signed deals worth a record breaking $61.3 billion(₹52,83,31,82,70,000) across 1,614 transactions , a rhythm that speaks to a new generation of corporate leaders who see M&A not as a side act, but as centre stage for growth.Global investment banks such as JPMorgan, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley have become central to this momentum, advising on some of the biggest transactions. These global giants now work closely with Indian firms, both legacy conglomerates and agile start-ups, bridging capital, compliance, and global deal-making practices.

Era 1: Liberalisation & Domestic Consolidation (1991–2004)

Rewind to the early 1990s, the Indian economy, long shackled by protectionist policies, began a historic liberalisation. Family-owned firms, once insular, suddenly faced the world and each other as competitors. For them, scaling up, seeking international partnerships, or even merging with rivals became urgent imperatives in this race for survival and success. Tata Tea's $430 million acquisition of Tetley in 2000 wasn't just about going global , it announced to the world that India was ready to play. Around the same period, Hindalco's bold move for Indal showed that consolidation wasn't limited to outbound ambition. Still, every triumph was hard fought against the backdrop of regulatory uncertainty and financial markets that were just beginning to trust bold, transformative deals



Era 2: Global Aspirations & Mega Deals (2005–2015)

By the mid-2000s, Indian corporates had acquired a newfound confidence. Their ambitions leapt geographical borders, encouraged by reforms such as SEBI's updated Takeover Code and the Reserve Bank's support for outbound investments.

The echoes of Tata Steel's $12 billion Corus takeover in 2007, with advice from banks like Goldman Sachs and J.P. Morgan, resonated from London to Mumbai's Dalal Street, turning Indian boardrooms into regular fixtures in global financial headlines. Bharti Airtel's $10.7 billion acquisition of Zain Africa was enabled by a consortium of international financial advisors, with institutions such as Standard Chartered, Barclays, and J.P. Morgan delivering strategic guidance, financing, and execution muscle. Daiichi Sankyo's $4.6 billion buyout of Ranbaxy leveraged cross border expertise from global IBs to steer complex negotiations and regulatory processes. Yet, integration challenges from cultural gaps to legal complexities reminded dealmakers that buying is only half the battle, a lesson keenly navigated with advisory help from banks familiar with international integration.

Era 3: IBC Era & Distressed Asset Gold Rush (2016–2020)

As India grappled with a banking crisis and rising non-performing assets, the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (2016)transformed the M&A ecosystem. Suddenly, the action shifted from boardrooms to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), where distressed assets became hot property.

By this time, J.P. Morgan, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley became regular advisors in landmark insolvency proceedings, helping global funds and Indian corporates navigate the regulatory maze. The high stakes JSW Steel–Bhushan Power & Steel acquisition, concluded at $2.7 billion, and ArcelorMittal's $5.7 billion acquisition of Essar Steel, stood out not only for their value but for the legal complexity and endurance they required. By 2020, over 5,000 insolvency cases per year were being processed, reshaping the landscape of corporate rescue and strategic takeover.

Era 4: Digital Consolidation & the Tech Tsunami (2020–Present)

The pandemic served as a digital accelerant, pushing Indian tech, consumer brands, and digital infrastructure to the forefront of dealmaking

Walmart's $16 billion acquisition of Flipkart in 2018 ,a transaction arranged with significant input from Morgan Stanley and Goldman Sachs, set the tone, and the years since have sustained that momentum.

Brookfield Asset Management's $2 billion acquisition of ATC India Tower Corporation in 2024, brokered primarily by J.P. Morgan. The transaction wasn't just an asset transfer, it was a bold statement of faith in India's infrastructure and digital connectivity future. Navigating cross border regulatory complexity, the deal showcased J.P. Morgan's ability to craft a winning consortium, manage competitive bids from sovereign funds, and secure timely clearances under new Competition Commission thresholds. As a senior J.P. Morgan banker said, India today is not just a growth story, but a platform for global capital and innovation. This transaction demonstrates the depth, maturity, and international integration of India's real assets market. Not only did the deal accelerate consolidation in India's tower sector and provide a sizeable capital inflow, but it set a new reference for structuring and executing large-scale infrastructure deals under India's evolving rules. For global investment banks, this validated both the maturity of India's markets and the rising sophistication of Indian M&A.

Highlights from 2025 :

• Bajaj Group's $2.7 billion insurance consolidation with Goldman Sachs providing financial advisory and capital markets support.

• Wilmar International's $1.4 billion acquisition of Adani Wilmar's staples division facilitated in part by J.P. Morgan for optimal structuring.

• Brookfield's $2 billion acquisition of ATC India Tower Corporation, led by J.P. Morgan as principal advisor, which became a watershed for the digital infrastructure sector and a new benchmark for cross-border execution.

• Hindustan Unilever's $342 million buyout of Minimalist, citing expertise from both Indian and global banks for speedy deal closure.

• Star India–Viacom18–Reliance $4.53 billion media spin off with financial strategy and diligence coordinated by a syndicate including Goldman Sachs, reflecting the convergence of media, tech, and telecom.

Large scale infrastructure and media deals such as Brookfield's $2 billion tower asset purchase and the Star India–Viacom18–Reliance $4.53 billion spin off reflect the broadening scope of M&A across sectors.

The boldest move in recent memory came in with Perplexity's

Perplexity AI, SoftBank and Nvidia backed startup offered $34.5 billion cash for Google Chrome, outstripping its own $18 billion valuation. With multiple major funds expressing full support for the deal, Perplexity's bid was both a signal of intent and a testimony to the shifting power in global tech where India's experience

with bold acquisitions inspires new challengers to reset boundaries. Their offer promised to keep Chrome's open source code, commit $3 billion of investment, and maintain Google as the default search engine. Analysts from BCG, Bain, and Wedbush questioned the deal's feasibility, but acknowledged its significance as regulatory scrutiny forces even tech giants to reconsider divestiture under antitrust pressure an environment documented in Deloitte's and McKinsey's global M&A reviews.

Sectoral and Thematic Trends

• Domestic deals now comprise about 74% of all Indian M&A in 2025, reflecting an upswing in homegrown consolidation.

• Private equity is resurgent, comprising $5.3 billion in Q1 2025 M&A, a 228% YoY jump.

• Green energy and renewables lead with $7.3 billion in Q1 2025.

• Financial services, technology, and consumer sectors round out the deal volume and innovation, as confirmed by McKinsey, BCG, and J.P. Morgan's sector watchlists.

Regulation The Engine of India's M&A Transformation

India's regulatory landscape has shifted from a hurdle to a catalyst. Since September 2024, deals over ₹2,000 crore with consumer impact face tougher Competition Commission scrutiny, especially in fast-growing sectors like digital payments and pharma. Reforms like the "reverse flip" encourage Indian-born unicorns to return home, boosting capital access and brand strength. Rather than restraining dealmakers, today's legal framework fuels transparency, innovation, and confidence With $61.3 billion in deal value and 1,614 deals in six months, 2025 is setting a blistering pace. Green energy led with $7.3 billion in Q1, alongside intense activity in digital infrastructure, healthcare, consumer brands, and insurance. Private equity, once cautious, surged 228% year-on-year to $5.3 billion, powered by IPO momentum and renewed risk appetite.

India's M&A is about more than growth—it's a mindset shift from insularity to ambition, from family-run empires to founder-led agility. Today's deal tables mix young entrepreneurs, global investors, and regulators who demand speed with substance.

"The Indian market is unique—not just in size, but for its adaptability and openness to reinvention. Today's deals are about future proofing Indian enterprise for the global stage."
— Senior advisor, J.P. Morgan
These words resonate wherever India's next big merger or acquisition is being shaped.

Conclusion:
India's M&A journey is no longer about catching up it's about leading the way. From the early days of liberalisation to today's fast growing unicorns and booming clean energy sector, each phase has sharpened India's competitive edge, Today the mergers and acquisitions are a powerful engine driving the country's growth. With strong regulations, a surge in private equity, and visionary digital innovators, Indian businesses are shaping the future, not just reacting to it.
Whether large established firms are adapting to stay ahead, distressed companies are finding new life, or nimble startups are scaling globally, Indian M&A stands for resilience, innovation, and bold leadership. As capital flows deepen and industries diversify, India's dealmakers are rewriting the rules making the next chapter bigger, faster, smarter, and truly global.

WEAVING THE INDIAN INVESTING STORY

Is Dalal Street sitting on a bubble?

By Chinmay Sood

The Indian stock market, centred on Dalal Street, has shown remarkable growth, prompting the question of whether this reflects a strong economy or a financial bubble. This article critically analyses the current state of the Indian stock market by examining bubble characteristics, market performance, valuations, economic fundamentals, investor behavior, global influences, and expert opinions.

Defining the Anatomy of a Financial Bubble

A financial bubble involves a rapid, unsustainable increase in asset prices, detached from intrinsic worth and driven by speculation.[1] Key features include rapid asset price inflation, speculative trading, and a disconnect from economic fundamentals like GDP and corporate earnings.[2] Irrational exuberance, herd mentality, and the fear of missing out (FOMO) amplify this, often fueled by easy credit and leverage.[3]

Bubbles typically progress through stages: displacement, boom, euphoria, profit-taking, and panic.[2] Historical examples like Tulip Mania, the South Sea Bubble, the Dot-com Bubble, and the U.S. Housing Bubble illustrate the dangers of speculative frenzies and the painful consequences of their burst.[2]

Dalal Street's Recent Performance: A Deep Dive into the Data

The Nifty 50 and Sensex have shown strong upward trends in recent years, with the Nifty 50 gaining over 150% in the last five years.[11] In April 2025, both indices saw significant single-day gains.[13] However, there have also been corrections, highlighting market volatility.[11]

Index	Year	Start Value	End Value	Percentage Change
Nifty 50	2021	13,981.75	17,354.05	24.12%
Nifty 50	2022	17,354.05	18,105.30	4.32%
Nifty 50	2023	18,105.30	21,731.40	19.42%
Nifty 50	2024	21,731.40	23,644.80	8.75%
Sensex	2021	49,509.15	58,568.51	18.30%
Sensex	2022	58,568.51	61,350.26	4.75%
Sensex	2023	61,350.26	73,017.19	19.02%
Sensex	2024	73,017.19	75,157.26	2.93%

Valuation Metrics Under the Microscope: Assessing Dalal Street's Price Tags

Key valuation ratios like the Price-to-Earnings (P/E) ratio, Price-to-Book (P/B) ratio, and Market Capitalization to GDP ratio are crucial for assessing potential overvaluation.[5] The Nifty 50's current P/E ratio is around 20.88, above its historical average.[41] The P/B ratio is approximately 3.60, also above its historical norm.[41] India's Market Cap to GDP ratio reached 133.5% in December 2024, significantly higher than its long-term average.[42] Compared to historical data and international benchmarks, India's valuation metrics suggest a premium.[6]

The Bedrock: Examining India's Economic Fundamentals

India's economic fundamentals, including GDP growth, corporate earnings, inflation, interest rates, and foreign investment flows, are vital for sustaining market performance.[6] India's GDP growth was 7.58% in 2023, with a projected 6.5% in 2025.[81] Corporate earnings show a mixed picture, with some reports indicating strong growth while others point to a recent slowdown.[85] Inflation eased to 3.61% in February 2025.[83] The RBI's policy repo rate is at 6.00%.[13] Foreign investment inflows have been volatile, with significant FPI outflows in early 2025.[99]

The Valuation-Fundamental Nexus: Identifying Potential Disconnects

While India's GDP growth is strong, elevated valuation metrics suggest a potential disconnect.[6] Some sectors, like technology and healthcare, show stretched valuations.[48] Rapid stock price increases not fully supported by earnings or economic output are also a concern.

The Human Factor: Investor Sentiment and Behavioral Patterns

Increased retail investor participation and trading volumes in equity derivatives indicate rising speculative activity [81, 87, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 157, 158, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164]. India accounted for a significant portion of global options trading in 2024.[119] Market mood indicators can offer insights into investor sentiment.[121]

Indicator	Latest Value	Previous Value	Year-ago Value	Source
GDP Growth Rate (FY25)	6.5%	9.2%	8.2%	Trading Economics/MOSPI 117
Corporate Earnings Growth (Q3FY25 YoY)	11%	12%	-	SBI 85
Inflation Rate (CPI, Feb 2025 YoY)	3.61%	4.31%	-	ET 95
Policy Repo Rate (Apr 2025)	6.00%	6.25%	-	RBI 13
FDI Inflows (Feb 2025 USD Billion)	4.39	4.90	-	CEIC 47

Global Interplay: External Economic Forces Shaping the Indian Market

Global liquidity, US interest rate policies, geopolitical events, and foreign capital flows significantly influence the Indian stock market Recent FPI outflows are a key concern.[6]

Identifying Potential Triggers: The Catalysts for a Market Correction

Triggers for a correction include an unexpected economic slowdown, policy changes, disappointing corporate earnings, reversal of foreign capital flows, global economic shocks, and geopolitical tensions.

Expert Opinions and Analysis: Weighing the Evidence

Experts hold differing views on the possibility of a bubble. Some cite high valuations and speculative activity as concerns.[58] Others argue that India's growth potential and fundamentals justify current valuations.[6]

Conclusion: Navigating the Indian Investment Landscape – A Critical and Engaging Outlook

The Indian stock market's growth presents both opportunities and risks. While strong economic fundamentals exist, elevated valuations and speculative activity warrant caution. Investors should adopt a prudent approach, focusing on diversification, long-term investments in fundamentally strong companies, and careful monitoring of global and domestic factors.

For investors navigating the Indian investment landscape, a prudent approach is recommended. Diversification across asset classes and sectors remains crucial to mitigate risk. A long-term investment horizon, focused on fundamentally strong companies with sustainable earnings growth, is advisable. Investors should exercise caution regarding excessive speculation and the use of leverage. It is also essential to closely monitor global economic developments, policy changes, and potential triggers for market correction.

Ultimately, while the Indian stock market exhibits some characteristics that raise concerns about a potential bubble, the strong growth story and underlying fundamentals provide a counterargument. Navigating this environment requires a balanced perspective, a focus on value, and a preparedness for potential volatility.

About the Author

Chinmay Sood is a finance professional with expertise in equity analysis and financial modelling. Perusing an MBA in Finance from SIBM, Noida and a Lean Six Sigma Green Belt, he excels in optimizing capital allocation and delivering risk-adjusted returns. His experience includes internships in corporate finance, equity analysis, and financial analysis. Chinmay is proficient in tools like Power BI and SQL, and is skilled in financial analysis and project management. He has achieved top percentile rankings in national case competitions, demonstrating strong analytical capabilities. Chinmay is committed to applying his skills to roles in investment banking or private equity. He also holds certifications from Bloomberg and Wharton.

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CHANGING TRENDS OF M&AS IN INDIA

A structural analysis

By Aditya Narayan

Changing trends of M&As in India – A structural analysis

The Indian M&A sphere is one of the most influential around the globe considering the nation's sustained growth in the past few decades. A growing economy stimulates investment in the private sector, eventually paving the way for business expansion. Though one might say a growing economy ensures a promising future for the sub sectors, this is not the case for M&A.

In a report published by BCG, Indian deal value in the first nine months of 2024, with respect to mergers and acquisitions, soared by almost 66% when compared to the same period in 2023. At first, it might seem that the sector saw consecutive growth in 2024; however, when viewed from a wider perspective the deal values in 2023 and 2022 were record high, reaching almost $186 billion and $136 billion, respectively, thus contrasting the notion of linear growth. His contrast arises due to a great many underlying factors, such as economic policies vis-a-vis monetary or fiscal operations, boom or bearish business cycles or global pandemics such as the Covid-19.

Considering economic notions play a crucial role in the landscape of *mergers and acquisitions, P. L. Beena's Mergers and Acquisitions; India under globalization* illustrates the trends of how the sector was before liberalization came into effect.

The Industrial Development and Regulation Act, 1951 and the Industrial Policy Resolution, 1956 were both adopted with the goal of curbing the private sector in India whether it was through investments or economic power. While the former adopted the path of industrial licensing the latter pushed the public sector as a countermeasure to the big businesses. The result being, negligible growth in the M&A before

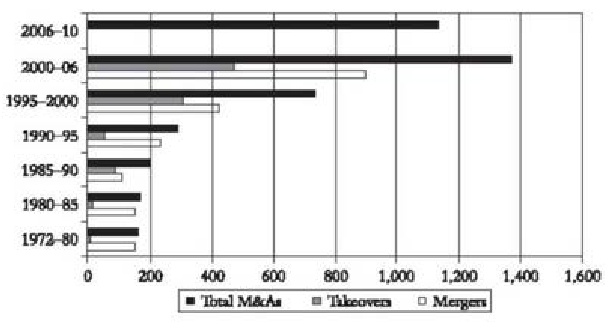


Figure 3.1 Trends of Mergers and Acquisitions during 1972–2010. Source: Beena, P.L. (2008). Mergers and Acquisitions India under globalization

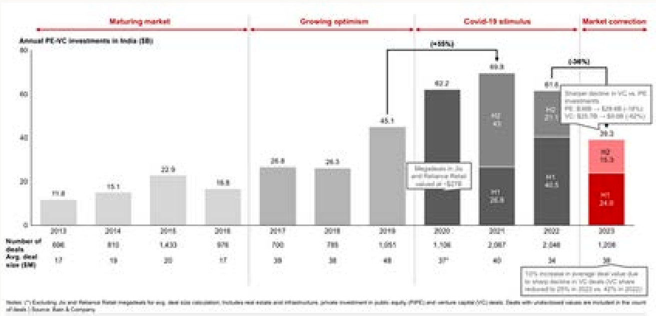
the period of liberalization considering corporate restructuring remained a long standing but unrealized aspiration.

The development in M&A post liberalization marked a notable shift allowing India becoming a global competitor in the sector through a global competitor in the sector through the flexibility attached to the policies, less administrative barriers and the boom in capital inflows. The evolution in India's M&A landscape was not just limited to the rise in the deal size and volume—it brought a change in the valuation methodologies as well, taking into account the regulated environment businesses had to operate in, certain financial ratios were taken help of. Price to earning ratio, profitability ratio and price to book ratio were amongst a few. Post liberalization valuation methodologies needed to be aligned with the international practices marking the entry of techniques such as discounted cash flow method (first estimates and then discounts cash flows, adopting the concept of present value) and comparable company analysis (company is compared with others using financial elements).

Though valuation methodologies help in assessing the viability of a plausible merger or acquisition, a factor influencing the M&A sector looms in the distance; Private equity.

Private equity; An imprint on the world of M&A

The epitome of the global private equity realm that includes Blackstone and KKR, has been a contributor in the Indian M&A sector ever since the former's investment in Emcure Pharmaceuticals (2006) and the latter's acquisition of Flextronics International. Lately, KKR announced its acquisition of a 54% stake in Healthcare Global Enterprises (an oncology hospital chain) while Blackstone executed a purchase of a 40% stake in Kolke-Patil developers (an indian real estate venture), or as supported in a report by Grant Thornton Bharat, February 2025 witnessed close to 226 deals collectively amounting to $7.2 billion dollars. Out of this, 141



Source: Bain and Company: India Private Equity Report 2023, Deal values from 2013-2023 with respect to PE-VC.

deals worth $2.4 billion were of Private equity indicating the growing role of PE in shaping the sector of M&A in India.

However, this poses a dichotomy. While corporates follow a purposeful path aimed to expand their business and fulfill their goals of long term growth by entering new supply chains through acquisitions, PE firms adopt an investment generating approach. To put into perspective, initially PE firms identify undervalued business ventures. Afterwards, acquisition of the business takes place. Subsequently, when the business starts to perform well due to the firm's effort, the firm exits the investment by selling it at a high ROI.

This implies that although many analysts support the involvement of private equity in shaping the M&A sector taking into account the perks associated with them, including their infusion of capital that is needed for growth, help in improving the operational efficiency, and providing a behavioural boost to the other corporates vis-a-vis investments. The example of KKR acquiring Max Healthcare in 2018 is an instance where cost cutting and supply chain efficiencies were achieved, eventually increasing the EBITDA from 9.7% in 2019 to 27.2% in 2022.

However, the involvement of PE firms sometimes also invites trouble leading to gaps in financial outlays such as unprecedented valuations. This case becomes clear with the example of KKR's acquisition of Avendus Capital (India's prominent investment bank). Though in 2015, the firm acquired a 58% stake in the investment bank, many reports suggest the firm's inclination towards selling their stake around a valuation of $500-$800 million dollars. Surprisingly, the high valuation explains the PE firm's difficulty in attracting a buyer.

At long last, the inclusion of private equity firms houses two extremes, while one provides business the space to grow, the other hampers their position of surviving in the long term.

Conclusion

The growth of the Indian M&A sector post liberalization has witnessed immense changes whether it is with respect to the valuation methodologies or the increasing role of private 10 equity. Though advancements in the valuation techniques provide a stronger foundation for the sector to work upon, the role of private equity although from the financial lens could be projected as an enterprising enterprising endeavor in the M&A sector. However, the pressure to exit the investments questions their ability to enhance the prospects in the long term or as David Rubenstein (Founder, Carlyle Group) mentions, "People used to think that private equity was basically just a compensation scheme, but it is much more about making companies more efficient." While private equity is a fraction of the Indian M&A today, the day when it could account for the majority stake in the sector is not far.

About the Author

Aditya Narayan has completed schooling from St. Columba's School, New Delhi in Commerce with Math, he has an inclination towards business studies and economics which led him to pursue a major in economics from Ambedkar University. His greater interests lie in the areas of business and investment, his side hobbies include writing about the financial and the economic sphere from time to time.

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INCENTIVIZING INDEPENDENT IDENTITIES

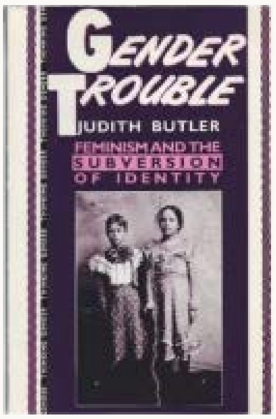
Deconstructing Gender Bias and its influence on Performance Reviews

By Kushagra Khare

While defining the **ontological nature of gender**, do we assess the subject as a **socially constructed** gendered identity or simply as a **biological** entity?

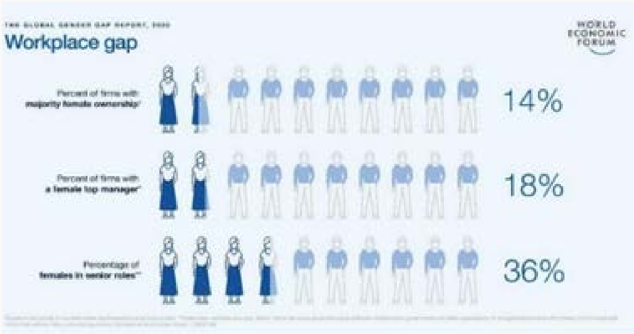
According to Professor **Judith Butler**, there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results (Butler, 1990). In **"Gender Trouble"** she articulates that the roles a gender performs are deeply rooted in the culturally sanctioned norms, which overtime, have been normalized by the very culture **(Performativity)**

Prof. Judith Butler



Book - Gender Trouble

Gender biases can be defined as **systematic favoritism** towards one gender relative to another. These differences are nurtured by historical stereotypes and institutional practices, (Ridgeway, 2004). As per reports, only 1 in 4 C-suite leaders is a woman and women are twice as likely as men to be mistaken for someone more junior (McKinsey., 2023).



Source - Global Gender Gap Report 2020, World Economic Forum

Where do gender biases stem from? **Post-structuralists** argue that these biases arise from social constructions reinforced by cultural narrative. Scholars like **Judith Butler** argue gender to be an identity tenuously constituted in time—an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts (Butler, 1988). In contrast, Psychologists like Prof **Steve Pinker** articulates the role of evolutionary and genetic factors in shaping human nature (Pinker, 2002). Furthermore, women's careers are often compromised due to maternal duties. Prof. **Claudia Goldin**'s research shows that women **Labor Force Participation Rate** followed a **U shape trajectory** in the 20th century with a decline initially due to industrialization and then a gradual increase due to the introduction of the contraceptive pill and flexible work hours among many others (Goldin, 2006).

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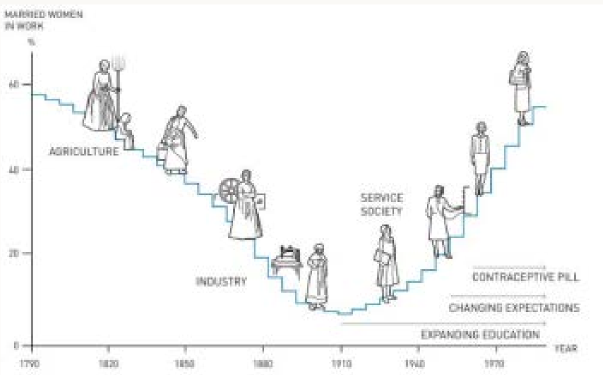
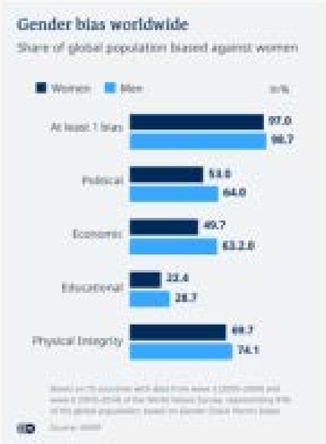


Source: The Swedish Academy of Sciences

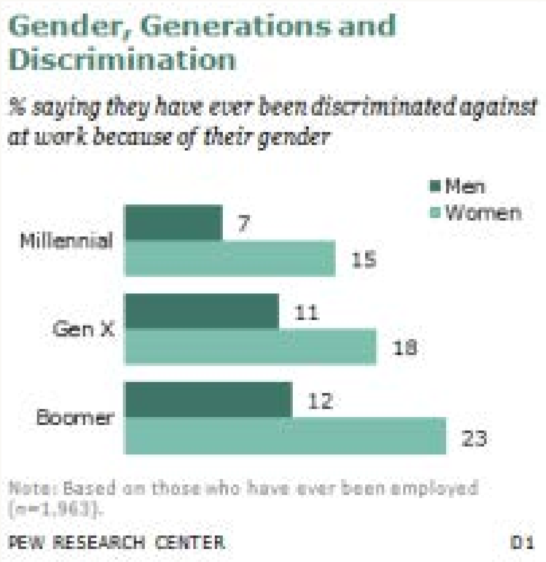
Existentialists like Simone de Beauvoir argues that women are not born as women rather made into a woman through societal constructs (de Beauvoir, 1949). In her book "The Second Sex", said articulates that women are considered as "others" through her famous statement, "He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other." Another driver of the bias is Internalized Prejudice, which Pierre Bourdieu calls "Habitus". According to him, patriarchal values are so deep rooted in our collective conscious that we don't even see it and further it leads to what he calls "Symbolic Violence" (Bourdieu, 2001).

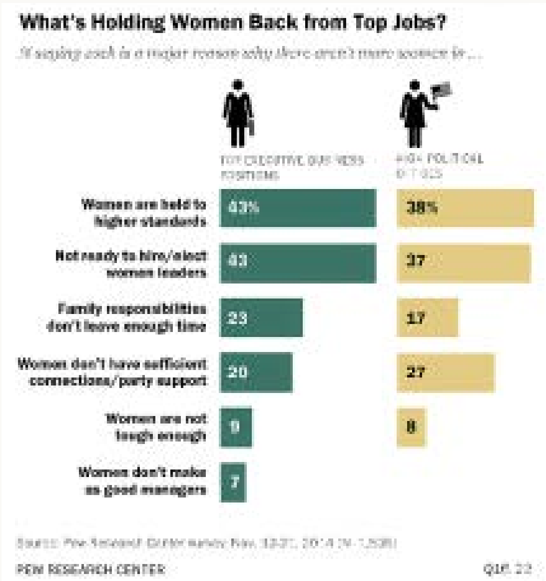


Source: UNDP *Simone de Beauvoir*

While women are often at the receiving end of Gender Bias, Men too, have gained very little form the prejudices around "Performativity". While rewarding attributes of domination and punishing them for practicing tenderness and empathy, society deters men from exercising their "soft side" (Hooks, 2004), for example, the "Nice Guy Syndrome". Likewise, Sociologists like Micheal Kimmel argues that men not conforming to "Hegemonic Masculinity" are often at harm as compared to those who create rigid norms (Kimmel, 2000). Another important extension of gender bias (amongst youth) can be "Perceived Superiority", which leads to the creation of hierarchal structures within genders based on conditioned aspects like beauty and muscularity.

Gender biases have a major role to play in Performance Reviews - which

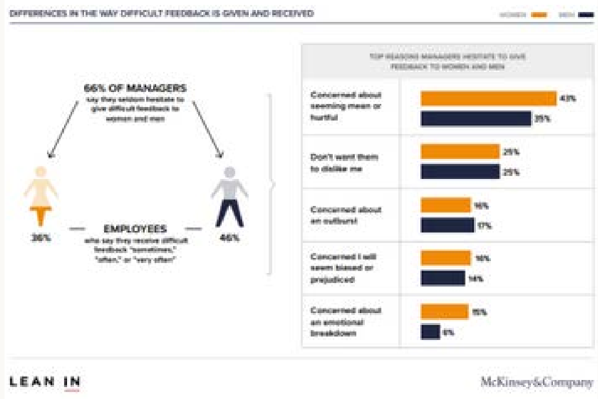




Source: Pew Research Centre

refers to a formal assessment of an employee's job performance in terms of quality, quantity, cost, and time, usually by their direct manager or supervisor (Aguinis, 2013). Women are often given vague feedbacks based on their personality traits rather their technical competence which hinders their ability to improve work performance (Smith, 2018).

While analysing the impact of Gender Bias on performance Review, it is profound to keep in mind that the biases in the mind of an evaluator might be socially constructed or can be highly individualistic in nature.



Source: Women in the workplace, 2016

For example, an evaluator might associate with patriarchal notions and as a result might let his prejudices manifest themselves on the review. On the other hand, reviewers might try to consolidate power by viewing his subordinates as competition and thereby manipulating the reviews. Similarly, an evaluator might be driven towards a certain value system which might lead her to evaluate candidates based on that.

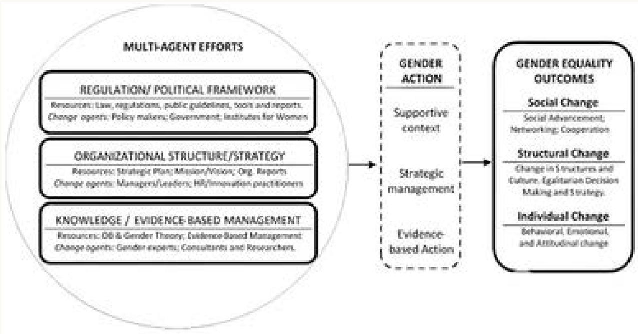
While the aforementioned can be categorized as a post-modernist view on the issue, systematic gender biases like associating men with leadership roles (Hewlett, 2008), have acted as an impediment for women not occupying C-suite positions. On a global level, women occupy only 32% of senior leadership roles, and just 28% of C-suite positions (WEF, 2023). From a critical theory lens, 'conditioned communication channels' within organizations might be used to reinforce gender biases and maintain hierarchical power, rather than challenging them–what Jürgen Habermas refers to as “systematically distorted communication” (Habermas, 1984).

Source: *Profit.co*

While it is established that women are majorly at a disadvantage from the biases while men too bear the ancillary damage, adopting strategies like a standardized evaluation criteria to increase fairness in promotions (Bohnet, 2016), putting blind reviews to practice wherever possible to deter unconscious gender bias (Rivera, 2012) and even introducing multi-source feedback systems to dilute individual bias (London, 1995) can help mitigate gender biases.

While Organizations are faced with the dual challenge of balancing workforce both, at Horizontal (Gender) and Vertical (multigenerational) level, it becomes paramount that regressive practices like that of gender bias should not become an impediment to a ‘merit based hierarchical structure’.

With gender biases creating a sense of “Perceived Marginalized“ within organizations, dominant discourses around biases might deter those affected by such power structures to realize their full potential, something which Prof Gaytri Spivak argues in her concept of Epistemic Violence (Spivak, 1988). Promoting healthy value systems independent of gendered constructs will surely help corporations use the best of both worlds and steer clear of the global uncertainties for in the end, gender biases negatively impact the equitable development of employees thus deterring the human capital’s path to “self-actualization”.



Source: *Gartzia, 2021*

About the Author

Kushagra Khare is a hospitality graduate and former student of JNU, the author has held editorial roles across various collegiate publications and considers writing a medium through which individual intellect finds its most authentic voice. With features in magazines of premier institutions like IIM Rohtak, the author’s interests lie in themes of Philosophy, Cognitive Psychology, Ethics, and Management Practices.

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HUMAN CAPITAL OR HUMAN COST?

Catapulting a Welfare-First Approach for India Inc Amid Deregulation

By Jayaditya Makkar

As India Inc. marches toward economic liberalization and global competitiveness, the tension between deregulation and worker welfare is becoming more than just a policy debate—it's shaping the future of work itself. The country stands at a strategic crossroads: should it prioritize corporate freedom and operational efficiency, or double down on a welfare-first human capital agenda that treats employees as long-term assets? The key question is not just "Is deregulation the way forward?", but rather: "Can deregulation coexist with a welfare-first model—or will it reduce human capital to human cost?"

Deregulation: A Double-Edged Sword

India's recent labor reforms—consolidating 44 laws into four labor codes—are aimed at creating a more flexible, business-friendly environment. The intent is clear: unlock investment, streamline hiring, and make it easier for companies to operate, especially MSMEs and startups.

Yet, this push for deregulation has sparked concern. In the absence of strict oversight, companies may sideline employee welfare to cut costs, avoiding permanent hires, scaling back benefits, and even neglecting safety and upskilling responsibilities. While deregulation is intended to reduce inefficiencies, it risks legitimizing "efficiency over empathy" as a new norm.

In a country where over 90% of the workforce operates in the informal sector, and gig work is surging, that risk becomes even more pressing. Without strong incentives or safeguards, India could be moving toward a future where labor is cheap, expendable, and invisible— undermining its greatest asset: people.

Human Capital or Human Cost?

The term "human capital" suggests investment, growth, and long-term value creation. But when deregulation weakens worker protections and companies pursue short-term gains, that capital is at risk of becoming a human cost—just another line item to be minimized.

This shift is not just unethical; it's economically unsound. Studies across the globe show that organizations investing in welfare, well-being, learning, and inclusivity enjoy higher retention, greater innovation, and stronger reputations. Treating people well isn't charity— it's strategy.

India cannot afford to let the pendulum swing too far in favor of deregulation without asking: what kind of economy are we building? One that burns out its workers, or one that brings them along for the ride?

The Case for a Welfare-First Framework

A welfare-first human capital approach goes beyond salary. It includes health and mental wellness support, gender equity, fair performance reviews, paid leaves, learning opportunities, and social security nets. These aren't luxuries—they're enablers of resilient and adaptive workforces.

Even in deregulated markets, leading companies like Tata Group, Infosys, and ITC have embedded welfare into their strategy. Why? Because they understand that employee experience drives customer satisfaction, brand trust, and ultimately profitability.

Welfare need not mean regulatory bloat. It can be digital-first, data-driven, and outcomes-oriented. Think: mental health apps, AI-based employee sentiment trackers, or mobile-first learning portals.

Deregulation With Accountability: A "Third Way"

It's time India embraced a hybrid model—one that doesn't pit deregulation against welfare, but rather uses freedom to foster innovation in workforce care. Here's what that could look like:

- Voluntary ESG metrics for workforce welfare: Employee development, inclusivity, and well-being as part of ESG reporting. Let investors vote with their money.
- Public welfare indexes: A star-rating system for companies based on how they treat workers—transparency drives accountability.
- Tax benefits for companies with skilling, insurance, and diversity programs: Make it profitable to be ethical.
- Technology for scalable welfare: Encourage adoption of AI-driven upskilling, employee feedback systems, and low-cost digital benefits platforms.

By moving away from rigid, one-size-fits-all regulation toward incentivized welfare, we let the best ideas flourish—without compromising the dignity of workers.

Learning From the World, Shaping Our Own Model

India must not import Western deregulation blindly. The U.S. model, which emphasizes flexibility, has led to high worker turnover and burnout. Conversely, Nordic countries showcase how strong welfare systems can go hand-in-hand with high productivity.

Singapore offers perhaps the most relevant playbook: a deregulated, pro-business economy with state-enabled skilling, housing, and health care. India must develop its own blueprint—contextualized to its massive informal workforce, regional diversity, and aspirational youth population.

From Human Cost to Human Investment

The language of growth must shift. A

company's true value is no longer measured just in quarterly profits, but in how it builds talent, nurtures leadership, and fosters inclusivity. India Inc must ask itself:

- Are we building companies for the next quarter or for the next generation?
- Are we optimizing operations or elevating people?
- Are we deregulating to liberate or to exploit?

Because the companies that treat people as co-creators, not commodities, will be the ones that thrive not just in India, but across the global stage.

Conclusion: Coexisting Agendas, Collective Progress

The real challenge isn't choosing between deregulation and welfare. It's about aligning them toward a shared goal: an empowered, future-ready workforce that drives sustainable growth. India's demographic dividend will only pay off if the labor behind the numbers is valued, respected, and nurtured. By catapulting a welfare-first human capital approach—not in opposition to deregulation but in partnership with it—India Inc can ensure that its rise is not just rapid, but responsible.

About the Author

Jayaditya Makkar is a human capital strategist driven by a vision of welfare-first workplaces. He writes on the evolving role of HR in shaping ethical, inclusive, and future-ready organizations.

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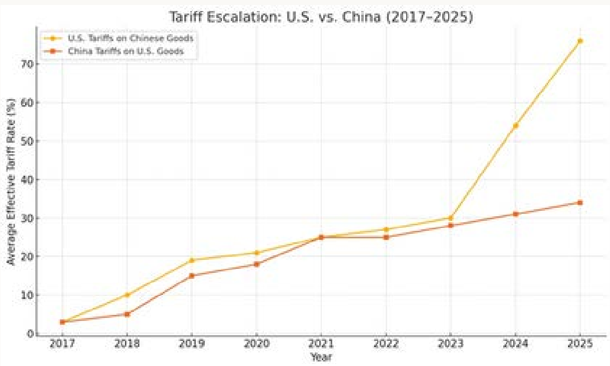
THE IMPACT OF TRADE WARS AND TARIFFS (2024-2025) ON THE GLOBAL SUPPLY CHAIN

By Akshay Misra

In the last two years, global trade tensions have reached new heights. A surge in trade wars and retaliatory tariffs has reshaped sourcing strategies, exposed new vulnerabilities and spurred the fragmentation of global supply chains. The renewed U.S.-China trade war, growing U.S.-EU frictions and the China-EU EV dispute are all shifting the global trade order. Meanwhile, India's cautious decoupling from China, alongside new multilateral trade alignments is contributing to a major recalibration of the global economy.

U.S.-China Trade War: Tech, Tariffs and Realignment

The U.S. and China remain the epicenter of trade conflict. In 2024–25, the U.S. raised tariffs on Chinese goods to an average of 76%, citing national security.

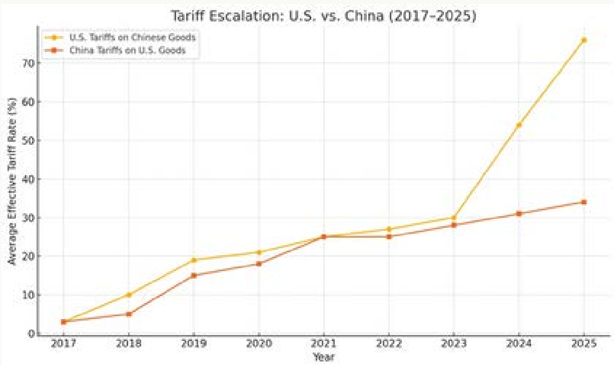


China retaliated with matching duties and export controls on critical minerals like gallium, germanium and graphite–vital for chips and EVs. These moves crippled downstream industries, spiked prices and forced U.S. manufacturers to seek alternatives.

Apple, for instance, accelerated its China+1 strategy, aiming to shift 25% of iPhone production to India. But China disrupted this shift by restricting key equipment exports and blocking Chinese engineers from working in India. Multinationals now balance cost and political risk, with many expanding in Vietnam, India and Mexico. Still, indirect reliance on China persists, as Chinese-owned factories in Southeast Asia export goods to the U.S.

Agriculture and Trade Weaponization

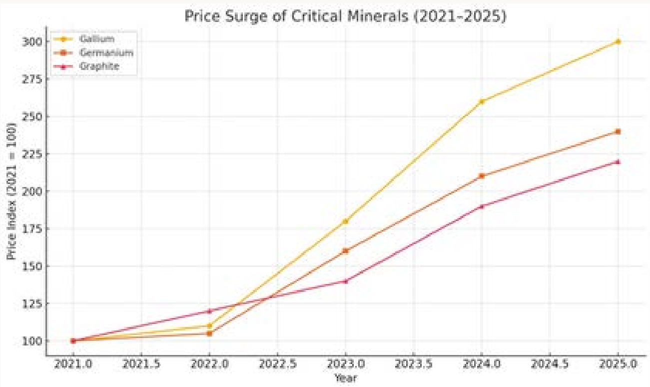
China targeted U.S. farmers with new tariffs, slapping a 34% duty on American agricultural goods. Soybean exports collapsed and Brazil stepped in as the primary supplier. This rerouting of agricultural flows shows how tariffs not only raise costs but permanently



rewire global supply chains.

Tech Decoupling and Strategic Minerals

Semiconductors are ground zero for tech decoupling. The U.S. has banned exports of advanced chips and equipment to China, prompting Beijing to block critical minerals in return. American investment is now flowing into domestic fabs and rare mineral projects, but these will take years to materialize. Meanwhile, prices of niche metals have surged due to supply uncertainty.



U.S.-EU Trade Tensions: Quotas, Cars and Uncertainty

Although less volatile than U.S.-China relations, the U.S.-EU trade dynamic is under strain. The U.S. reinstated 25% tariffs on foreign steel and aluminum in 2025, targeting even allies. The EU protested and readied retaliatory tariffs on American goods.

Auto trade is another pressure point. The EU's 10% import duty on U.S. cars and the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which favors American-made EVs, have spurred complaints from both sides. EU automakers like BMW and VW are expanding U.S. production to qualify for subsidies, effectively localizing supply chains.

China-EU EV Dispute: Cars and Countermeasures

China's growing EV exports to Europe led the EU to impose tariffs of up to 45% on Chinese electric cars, citing unfair subsidies. China retaliated with curbs on EU pork and dairy imports and hinted at WTO action. While both sides want to avoid escalation, supply chains are shifting. EU firms are diversifying battery and mineral sourcing to reduce dependency on China.

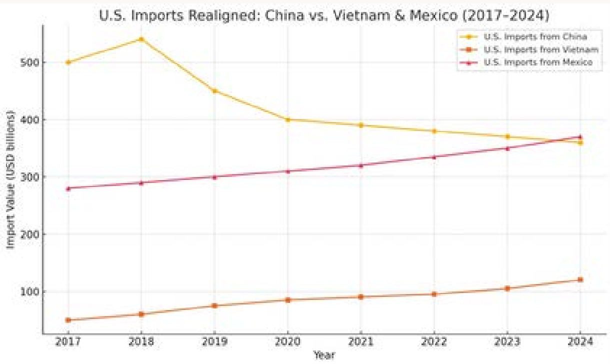
India-China Trade: Decoupling with Depth

Despite border tensions and anti-China sentiment, India-China trade hit a record $118.4 billion in FY2023-24. However, India is actively decoupling in sensitive sectors like telecom, electronics and pharmaceuticals. Through high tariffs and Production-Linked Incentives (PLI), India aims to reduce its reliance on Chinese imports and attract global manufacturing. Still, India depends on China for critical components. The decoupling is selective and strategic. Apple's India expansion is a showcase, but Chinese influence persists through indirect routes and third-country subsidiaries.

Multi-Front Trade Conflicts and Realignments

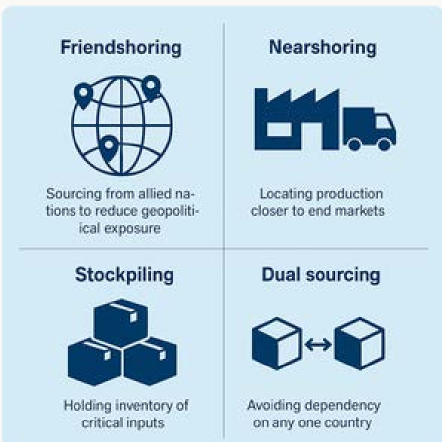
In a dramatic move, the U.S. imposed a blanket 10% tariff on all imports in April 2025, straining relations with allies. Meanwhile, sanctions on Russia have split global energy and grain supply chains. New trade alliances like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), RCEP and the EU's Green Deal Industrial Plan reflect a shift from globalization to bloc-based trade.

Vietnam and Mexico have gained from this fragmentation. Vietnam's exports to the U.S. surged 20% in 2024, while Mexico expanded as a nearshoring hub under USMCA.



Strategic Responses and New Norms
Firms are now redesigning supply chains for resilience:

- *Friendshoring*: Sourcing from allied nations to reduce geopolitical exposure.
- *Nearshoring*: Locating production closer to end markets.
- *Stockpiling*: Holding inventory of critical inputs.
- *Dual sourcing*: Avoiding dependency on any one country.



Governments are underwriting these shifts. The U.S. CHIPS Act and IRA, EU's Critical Raw Materials Act and India's PLI schemes are incentivizing domestic production in semiconductors, EVs and renewables.

Conclusion: A Fragmented Future?
The trade wars of 2024–25 have catalyzed a structural realignment of the global supply chain. Efficiency is giving way to resilience. Political alignment now shapes sourcing as much as price and quality. This realignment may increase costs and duplication, but it also reduces single points of failure.

In short, the world is not deglobalizing –it is re-globalizing along political lines. Trade continues, but within fortified networks. The true long-term winners will be countries and companies agile enough to navigate this high-friction, high-stakes new normal.

About the Author

Akshay Misra is a high school student who completed his 12th grade exams in March 2025. With a keen interest in Economics which will be his undergraduate major in university starting September 2025, he likes to explore and understand the subject better through the means of research, internships and other projects.

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STORYTELLING IN BRANDING

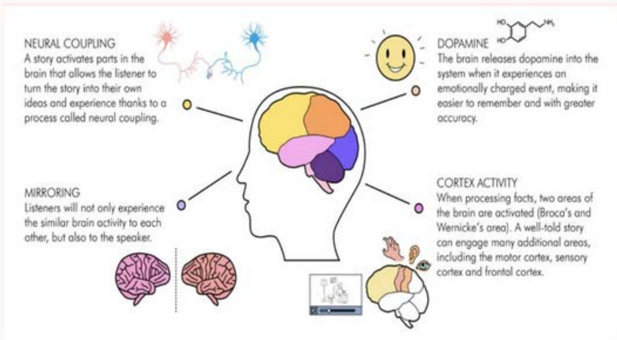
Why emotions sell more than facts

By Sagnik Chowdhury

In an era dominated by data, it is almost paradoxical that the most successful brands prioritize emotional resonance over factual information. Yet, this phenomenon is not just a marketing fad—it's also an inherent part of human cognition and decision-making. Storytelling, which dates back to when early humans gathered around campfires, agape at ancient hieroglyphics or listened to the village shaman, has become the foundation of contemporary branding. This article examines the reasons why stories, as emotional conduits, are more convincing than facts from research in neuroscience, psychology, and the world at large. From this perspective, we learn how brands use stories to create personality, build character, and in the end influence buyer decisions.

The Neurological Basis: Stories as Cognitive Catalysts

Storytelling works because of its unique ability to engage the brain. While data activates specific parts of the brain that handle language, sensation and action, a story lights up the entirety of the brain, demonstrating just how powerful storytelling really is. As the story plays out – such as a phone slipping down an elevator shaft, say – your brain's sensory and emotional centers become active, as if you, not the teller, were the one who experienced the event. This, known as 'neural coupling', sets up a mirrored response between teller and listener that builds empathy and connection.



What's more, stories cause the brain to release oxytocin, a neurochemical that fosters trust and bonding. This biochemical reaction increases not just the sense of trustworthiness of a speaker, but also emotional connection. On the other hand, for all its value, a number doesn't trigger our gut in the same way. It is rapidly forgotten, studies suggest that 50% of factual information is forgotten immediately after exposure. Thus, the brain's preference for stories is not merely a quirk of evolution; it is a survival mechanism that underpins the detection of change, the navigation of uncertainty and a plot's capacity to beguile and bind a human group.

Emotions as Decision-Making Drivers

The very dominance of emotions in branding is emphasized by their role in decision-making. What we know from neuroscientific research is that

that emotions do not stand apart from reason when we make decisions; they constitute our reason. A seminal study involving patients with damaged amygdalas (the brain's emotional epicenter) found that these individuals were incapable of making even simple decisions, such as choosing between two paths. Deprived of emotional input, they were paralyzed by indecision, despite retaining full cognitive function. This discovery teaches us a fundamental truth: humans decide with emotions first and rationalize with facts later.

Brands that understand this dynamic craft narratives that speak to us on an emotional level. Consider Apple's unforgettable "Think Different" campaign, proclaiming that the brand was a shining light for innovators, creatives, and those who want to disrupt. Scans of the brain demonstrate that being exposed to the Apple logo can boost creative performance, proof of its brand narrative being firmly entrenched in stories of individualism and innovation. Variant of the same – Nike's "Just Do It" slogan transcends product features, tapping into universal themes of perseverance and triumph. These brands do not merely sell products; they sell identities, inviting consumers to see themselves as part of a larger story.

Storytelling as Identity and Loyalty Builder

The emotional power of narratives reaches farther too – this power isn't only concerned with emotional engagement, but with loyalty, aligning the brand with a consumer's deeper sense of identity. It is when a brand's story resonates that it becomes a part of the identity of the consumer. This is demonstrated by both the frenzied brand loyalty of Apple users and the (appropriate) way their brains react to that brand's wins and losses as their own. By comparison, followers of rival brands, say Samsung, often experience only reactive emotions, like schadenfreude when the competitor stumbles. It's this imbalance of generation vs. consumption that leads to an important revelation: Those brands that tell great stories do not end up with a bunch of customers – they acquire advocates.

And then there is the use of the story as "tribal propaganda," normalizing and promoting shared behaviours and values. The "Dumb Ways to Die" campaign by Metro Trains Melbourne is a case in point. Instead of lecturing about safety, the brand developed a darkly comical song that details idiotic ways in which you could die, culminating in a train-related mishap. The story-driven approach transformed a mundane message into a viral sensation, reducing accidents by 21%. In the same way, Volvo's sublime decision to have a hamster drive a truck up a quarry-tower made a functional feature into a story of victory. These cases illustrate how, unlike facts, stories have the potential to change behavior by infiltrating the audience's psyche with messages.

The Synergy of Data and Narrative

While emotions are in the driver's seat, data is not entirely useless, it just needs a story to be compelling. Consider the example of mapping fire hydrants in New York City, where confusing bike lane markings resulted in $55,000 in parking tickets every year. Because they had told a story about a quirk in our urban life and bureaucracy, the data, itself inert, was able to provoke the Department of Transportation into taking corrective action. Similarly a college counselor used her daughter's experience coping with autism to personalize graduation rates, turning abstract figures into a persuasive case for change. In each case, information only became convincingly complete when cast in a story of empathy and moral urgency.

This synergy is not accidental. Stories provide context, conflict, and resolution—the three pillars of engagement. They build tension, release it with unexpected insights, and leave the audience changed. Data, when embedded in this structure, transcends its static nature and becomes a tool for transformation.

Emotions are the bedrock of Branding

The message is stark: emotions, not facts, are the currency of successful branding. Stories themselves, as repositories of these emotions, hijack the brain's most deep-seated circuits for attention, trust and decision-making. They turn names of brands into identity markers and engender loyalty that facts alone cannot explain.

Data plays a role, but it is only in the form of a story that information sticks and can be acted upon. In an age of information overload, the brands that thrive are those that understand this truth. They do not merely inform; they inspire. They do not just sell; they connect. And in doing so, they harness the most potent force in human behavior: the need for stories that make sense of our lives and the world around us.

About the Author

Sagnik Chowdhury is a B.Com (Hons.) graduate with a specialization in Finance from the University of Calcutta. A versatile content writer, he has authored several sports articles for the popular platform Khel Now and has a growing portfolio in brand marketing and consumer psychology. His work has been featured in the annual magazines of several renowned institutions across India, reflecting his ability to engage readers across diverse domains. Sagnik's recent accomplishments include winning the marketing article writing competition organized by IIM Ranchi, with his piece featured in Marques, the institute's annual marketing magazine. He also secured the runners-up and second runners-up positions in article writing competitions held by IIM Udaipur and IIM Lucknow, respectively, with his work recognized in both finance and marketing categories. Passionate about storytelling and emotional branding, Sagnik aims to bridge the gap between analytical insights and compelling narratives through his writing

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YOUR BRAIN BUYS IT FOR YOU

The Know-How's of Neuromarketing and Its Role in Augmenting Contemporary Marketing Practices.

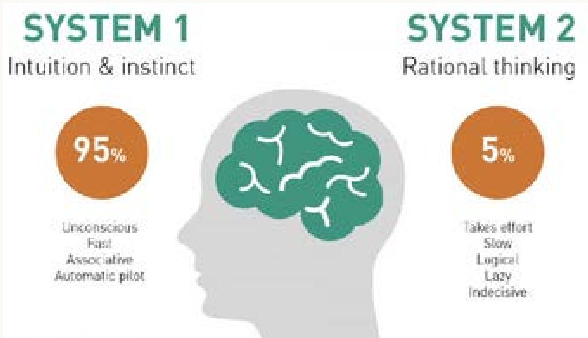
By Kushagra Khare

We often believe our choices are sculpted by our rational thinking—but what if it's our intuition, not our intellect, that is the de facto demand driver of "We, the consumers of the market"?

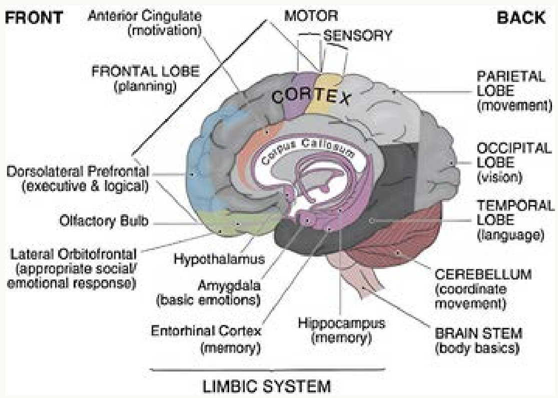
"Neuromarketing can be defined as the application of neuroscientific methods to analyze and understand human behaviour in relation to markets and marketing exchanges" (Plassmann H. R., 2012). Coined by Professor Ale Smidts in 2002 in his seminal paper titled 'Kijken in het brein' where he advocated using neuroscience tools (like fMRI and EEG) to investigate subconscious consumer responses beyond what traditional surveys and focus groups could reveal (Smidts, 2002). The psychological groundwork was laid by Professor Gerald Zaltman in the late 1990's wherein he, by using tools like Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique articulated the role of subconscious in marketing decisions (Zaltman, 1995)

(From the left) Prof. Ale Smidts, Prof. Gerald Zaltan and Prof . Daniel Kahneman

Professor Daniel Kahneman categorized human brain functions into two systems – System 1 that deals with fast and emotional thinking while System 2 handling the slow and analytical thought process (Kahneman, 2011). The brain is divided into three major regions: Forebrain – which contains the cerebrum that includes within itself the cerebral cortex containing 4 major lobes and the limbic system, the Midbrain - including areas like Tectum and Substantia Nigra and the Hindbrain – which includes areas like cerebellum (Bear, 2020).

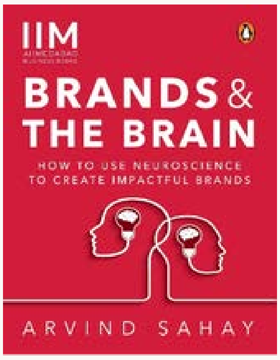


Source: Daniel Kahneman



Source - (Rajapakse, 2019)

Furthermore, a seemingly trivial but profound clarification is between the terms - consumer neuroscience and neuromarketing. While the former seeks to understand the neural mechanisms underlying consumer behaviour, the latter focuses on the commercial use of these insights (Plassmann H. V., 2015).
In India, Neuromarketing is still in its nascent stage but is gaining traction through the academic discourse (Shende, 2018). Academicians like Professor Arvind Sahay have contributed significantly towards the development of the discipline by playing a key role in establishing the NSE centre for Behaviorual Science at IIMA in 2020 and authoring the book “Brands and the Brain”.



Prof. Arvind Sahay *Book: Brands and the Brain*

Neuromarketing methods include Functional MRI or fMRI, Electroencephalogram or EEG and eye tracking that monitors various brain areas associated with specific functions (see diagram below). For example, eye tracking uses the prefrontal cortex of the brain to track eye movements and gaze fixation (Morin, 2011)

A 2015 study by Temple University concluded that neuromarketing metrics (like EEG and biometrics) were better

Tool	Purpose	Brain Area Targeted	Use in Marketing
fMRI (Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging)	Measures blood to to detect brain activity	Prefrontal cortex, amygdala, nucleus accumbens, insula	Identifies emotional responses, reward anticipation, decision-making, and brand preference
EEG (Electroencephalography)	Records electrical activity via scalp sensors	Frontal lobes (attention and engagement), parietal lobes (sensory processing)	Tracks engagement, attention, and emional arousal to ads and media con
Eye Tracking	Tracks eye movements and visual attention	Indirectly targets visual cortex (related attention networks	Identifiy visual attention, product placement, and packaging effectiveness
Galvanic Skin Response/ EDA	Measures physiological ardusal via skin conductivity	Inferior temporal cortex (face perception), motor cortex (facial expressions)	Detect facial expressions to infer emotions like happiness, disgust, surprise
MEG (Magnetoencephalography)	Records magnetic fields produced by neural activity	Temporal and parietal lobes, superior temporal gyrus	Experimental use to modulate decision making and preference
TMS (Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation)	Modulates neural activity using magnetic pulses	Prefronttal cortex (modulation motor, visual cortices	Experimental use to modulate decision-making mainly academic

Neuromarketing tools at a glance

A 2015 study by Temple University concluded that neuromarketing metrics (like EEG and biometrics) were better predictors of actual purchase behaviour and memory retention than self-reports. Specifically, ads that scored high in neuro engagement led to a 23% increase in purchase intent (Venkatraman, 2015). Neuromarketing leverages psychology to make use of the unconscious processes such as emotional responses and memory to influence consumer behaviour. To take an example, emotional appeals in ad campaigns activate the limbic system which governs feelings and memory, thereby creating stronger brand associations (Plassmann H. R., 2012). Without going into the academic nuances of cognitive neuroscience, there have been numerous instances where companies have successfully demonstrated use of neuromarketing as a key marketing tool.

First, the foundational Pepsi vs Coca Cola case wherein by applying the principles of cognitive bias theory and role of perception, the role of brand identity was identified as a key element in enhancing consumer experience. In blind taste tests, people preferred Pepsi. However, when told they were drinking Coca-Cola, brain scans showed increased activity in the medial prefrontal cortex—associated with memory and brand identity. It thereby demonstrated that brand awareness significantly alters taste preference by activating memory and reward circuits, even when the physical stimulus remains constant (Montague, 2004).

Source: *Quartr*

Second, the Frito-Lay Packaging redesign. In 2009 research by NeuroFocus indicated that shiny chip bags triggered activity in brain regions associated with guilt, influencing Frito-Lay's decision to switch to matte packaging. Tools like EEG and Eye tracking were used for the same.

Third, Nike's emotional campaign. "Just do it" and "Dream Crazy" became one of the most famous brand slogans of all time. From a neuroscience perspective, it appealed to the emotional consciousness of the people by stimulating areas of the brain such as Amygdala and Hippocampus, fostering long term brand loyalty. Nike's storytelling strategy activates empathy and motivation networks, leveraging the mirror neuron systems and emotional reward (Ramsoy, 2014). ,

Source: *Seeklogo*

Indian companies too, have undertaken campaigns based on neuromarketing. First, Tata Tea's "Jaago Re" campaign. Not only did it enshrine a sense of civic responsibility on the viewer, it also created sense of moral elevation which, neurologically speaking, gets enhanced when parts of brain such as ventromedial prefrontal cortex (linked with empathy) are activated. Second, Cadbury's "Kuch Meetha Ho Jaye" campaign which relied heavily on the emotional conditioning through smell, taste and sound yielded substantial post campaign results (Sharma, 2017).

Source: *Mint*

Moving further on, HUL, one of world's largest conglomerates, partnered with Nielsen Consumer Neuroscience to optimize their TVC's. By using EEG and Facial Coding, they identified which scenes in their detergent commercials triggered attention, emotional engagement, and memory encoding, consequentially leading to a 20% increase in ad-recall (Nielsen, 2017).

Since Neuromarketing does not solely rely on the use of neuroscience tools but applies the insights from neuroscience (Plassmann H. R., 2012), a classic example of applied neuroscience was seen in the Pulse Candy campaign during the Mahakumbha of 2025. From branded Kalasha and boats to Gen AI videos narrating the significance of Kumbha, not only the brand garnered 89 million views across platform, the campaign thrived by using fundamental neuroscience principles like sensory activation (branded boats) to Memory cues (kalasha) among many others.

Source: DS World YouTube channel

Concluding, neuromarketing has taken "product contextualization" to a whole new dimension, one that is contemporary in a traditional manner. As technology continues to lure consumers into a spiral of "perceived scarcity", thereby inducing impulse purchases or as Christophe Morin would say "emotions are the currency of the brain". Despite the lack of globally accepted ethical frameworks for conducting studies especially in developing countries (Fisher, 2010), concerns of potential manipulation, data breach and need for a global consensus on its effective use (Stanton, 2017), Neuromarketing has given a new lens to the ever-expanding field of consumer behaviour, one which the orthodox practices couldn't optimally focus upon – How does a consumer think?

About the Author

Kushagra Khare is a hospitality graduate and former student of JNU, the author has held editorial roles across various collegiate publications and considers writing a medium through which individual intellect finds its most authentic voice. With features in magazines of premier institutions like IIM Rohtak, the author's interests lie in themes of Philosophy, Cognitive Psychology, Ethics, and Management Practices.

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DELIVERY IN 10 MINUTES

The race to make everything available instantly

By Ashok Singh Solanki

It's a quiet Thursday night. You're binge-watching a new series. Out of nowhere, you start craving chocolate ice cream. In the past this would mean stopping your show, tying your shoes, and walking to the nearest store. But now, with a few taps, it will be at your doorstep in ten minutes—cold, sealed, and ready to scoop. Welcome to the age of instant everything.

In this time of ultra-convenience, 10-minute delivery service is not just a service – it represents a change in human behavior, a technological miracle, and a hotly contested market. It is called "quick commerce" – or Q-commerce – the model offers to deliver not just groceries but satisfaction – quickly! From Paris and Pune to Seoul and São Paulo, we are in some sort of logistics arms race where every millisecond counts, and the "last mile" of delivery is the most competitive it's ever been.

The pandemic served as the Trojan Horse for quick commerce. With parks emptying and the traditional delivery system overwhelmed by lockdowns, quick commerce startups with electric scooters, dark stores, and promises of speed rushed in. A lifeline soon became established habit. Buldeo Rai et al. (2023) found that consumer expectations changed dramatically in the post-COVID world, especially in high-density urban centers where availability of near instant access to products supplanted consumer weekend grocery lists. Urban centers like Berlin and Amsterdam went from traditional grocery/convenience markets to playgrounds for Gorillas, Getir, and new product introductions at the local level, and the skylines of Indian metros brightened with delivery riders from Zepto, Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart and other delivery services.

In India, the stakes are HUGE. The combination of a young population, growing smartphone ownership, and hunger for the new has created a perfect storm for hyper-fast commerce. As Ranjekar and Roy (2023) discuss, Indian q-commerce builds leveraged local supply chains, small delivery zones, and predictive algorithms that know what you want before you do so. These dark stores are highly data-optimized micro-warehouses, operating with an efficiency reminiscent of an ant colony. The market is growing at nearly 28% annually until 2027, and it is not strictly about just speed, but rather, obtaining the new pulse of another billion consumers.

Nonetheless, with the convenience comes a cost. A system that can achieve a 10-minute delivery time needs an infrastructure to support it, from fleet management to live inventory and route-planning to navigate around traffic. A big portion of that infrastructure is being able to concentrate on higher capacity in lower inventory conditions than it is in residential zoning. Respective cities, like Paris, began cracking down on dark stores for violating residential codes. Others are starting to wonder if we are looking at a future of convenience at the expense of exhausted gig workers?

Consumer psychology in this space is paradoxical. Harter et al. (2024) indicate that the timing of delivery can influence repurchase behavior, but often not in obvious ways. A 10-minute delivery might impress a new user, but a 12-minute delivery can lead to a full-on meltdown. Customers adapt quickly to speedom, and speed has now become the baseline expectation, not a bonus. Early delivery doesn't always produce rapture; sometimes it disrupts the routine or goes unnoticed. The margin of error for repurchase behavior is much smaller in a world of immediacy.

So why does the 10-minute race keep going? Because, at this point, it's not about grocery. It's about mindshare. The faster a company can get there when a customer thinks about snacks, soap or soda, the more likely the customer is to think of that brand again. Same-day delivery becomes a branding initiative, much like owning the top shelf- like a virtual supermarket. That's why VCs continue to pour cash into Q-commerce platforms, despite thin margins and operational problems. The return is not just repeat orders; it is data, increased loyalty and behavior insights.

Technology is behind the chaos. AI and machine learning create models of what products will sell in which neighborhoods and on which days and during which weather. Autonomous delivery or delivery via drones, robots or AI-guided carts are no longer science fiction. Startups are testing everything from robotic cold boxes to drone drops to deliver food or groceries to people in high-rise apartments. But with all of the zeal for innovation comes questions of ethics as evidenced in recent news stories: Who owns the data? Who owns the workers? What happens when algorithms make mistakes in real-life environments?

However, there is a darker side to the dopamine high we get from immediate delivery. Criticisms of instant delivery services have included feeding overconsumption and contributing to our digital addictions. Do we truly need a pack of chips at 11:47 p.m., or have we crossed the line from convenience to necessity? The stresses on gig workers—many of whom are paid per delivery and penalized if they don't arrive on time—can lead to dangerous

driving, stress, and a hostile work experience overall. In Berlin, there have been protests against Q-commerce companies, and calls to better regulate and protect workers.
But those fears haven't slowed a trend that seems to be unstoppable. In fact, it's evolving. Platforms are introducing value services: prepared meals, fresh flowers, medicines, electronics, everything, and fast. Urban policy is slowly keeping pace, with some cities trying Q-commerce neighborhoods, green delivery corridors, and integrated mobility plans.

The difficulty is to find balance. Companies need to ask themselves: Is it possible to deliver quicker without burning people out? Is it possible to grow without hogging all the resources? Is it possible to build loyalty without invading privacy? The answers to these questions will define not just the victors of the 10-minute war but also the ethics of the digital economy.

The race to delivery in 10 minutes is not only about what is delivered, it is also about what it exposes—about us. Our habits. Our priorities. Our patience—or lack thereof. It epitomizes a society that does not only want more, but wants more now. As we race toward a future where delivery is in 10 minutes or less, we must consider the questions: is the finish line satisfaction, or are we still chasing it?

Either way, your ice cream will be there in 10 minutes—or less.

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Ashok Singh Solanki is an MBA student specializing in Operations and Supply Chain Management at Symbiosis Institute of Management Studies (SIMS), Pune. His interests lie at the intersection of emerging technology, logistics, and data analysis of Supply chain and operations related data.

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FROM FIELD TO GARBAGE

Why 40% of crops never make it to your plate

By Piya Rani Talukdar

Around the world, farmers harvest tons of crops every day in the hopes that their produce will support communities, power economies, and nourish families. However, a starting fact still exists that almost 40% of these crops never make it to our plates. A tremendous amount of food is lost for a variety of reasons from the time a seed is sown until it reaches the dinner table. In addition to harming the world's food security, this systematic waste represents a huge waste of money, labor, and natural resources. The first step in addressing one of the most preventable goal catastrophes is to comprehend why so much food is lost in transit.

The farm is where the initial phase of loss starts. Overproduction is one of the main offenders in this case. In order to protect themselves from low yields or market swings, farmers frequently cultivate more than is necessary. However, excess harvests are frequently allowed to perish since they cannot be sold quickly enough due to market saturation. Significant field losses can also result from unpredictability in the weather, inadequate harvesting techniques, and limited access to contemporary equipment.

Crops continue to incur losses during the post-harvest. Fresh product, such as fruits and vegetables, spoils quickly due to inadequate transportation infrastructure, such as uneven roads and lengthy travel periods without refrigeration. In nations with inadequate supply chain management, perishable goods frequently fail to make it from rural fields to urban marketplaces. Even with sophisticated procedures, food can be harmed by cleaning, peeling, or cutting equipment, rendering it unfit for sale or packaging. Tight quality standards and aesthetic demands also lead to the disposal of "ugly" but edible food.

Supermarkets and retail establishments are major contributors to food waste, especially in cities. Stores frequently reject perfectly edible food that doesn't look good, such as lettuce with uneven coloring, tomatoes with spots, or bananas that are too curved. Supermarkets also overstock shelves to give the appearance of abundance, which results in unsold goods. Despite their usefulness, expiration dates are frequently misinterpreted. Even if "best before" doesn't indicate that a product is dangerous, many are thrown out nevertheless. Bulk purchasing is often encouraged by promotional deals like "Buy One Get One Free," which results in waste in the home.

The last phase of food loss occurs in our homes, where it matters most. One of the largest sources of food waste is households. A lot of people cook too much, forget to put things in the refrigerator, or purchase more than they need. Due to its accessibility and affordability, food is frequently wasted in affluent countries, which diminishes its perceived value. Another factor is cultural attitudes; some households throw out food that is a little past its expiration date or refuse to eat leftovers. Even though this stage is arguably the most preventable, it is nonetheless incredibly prevalent. The effect of such extensive food loss on ecology is astounding. The production of wasted crops still uses energy, fertilizer, water, and land. If food wasted were a nation, it would rank third in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, behind China and the United States, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). As a result, minimizing food loss becomes both an environmental and a moral necessity.

Around the world, efforts are being made to address this problem. Better packing, enhanced cold chain systems, and farmer education in developing nations are all showing promise. Redirecting excess food to those in need is facilitated by food recovery initiatives and collaborations between food banks and retailers. Supermarkets are legally obligated in certain nations to give unsold food instead of discarding it. Equally crucial is educating customers about meal planning, wise purchasing, and appropriate storage. Hope is another benefit of technology. These days, mobile apps notify users before expiration or link consumers to excess food at a discount. Blockchain is being investigated for more accurate food supply chain tracking. Artificial intelligence advancements lessen overproduction and overstocking by predicting demand.

Consider India, one of the biggest producers of agricultural products worldwide. Despite producing an abundance of food, improper cold chain logistics and storage cause it to lose the worth of crops annually. These losses increase the gap between the supply and accessibility of food and negatively impact farmers' revenue. However, nations like France have made significant progress by enacting legislation that forbids retailers from discarding edible food. Rather, these shops have to give it to food banks and charitable organizations. Community-led solutions are having an impact at the local level. Citizens are able to contribute to the issue through local farmers' markets, composting programs, and food-sharing websites. Younger generations are being taught the value of not wasting food through educational programs in schools and colleges, creating behaviours that can affect entire households. People are becoming more respectful of their food by reestablishing a connection with its source through urban farming and farm-to-table initiatives.

There are many obstacles to overcome on the path from field to plate, but there are also many possibilities. We can protect our planet's valuable resources and guarantee food security by tracking the issues that lead to 40% of crops never reaching our plates. The decisions we make on a daily basis as consumers, businesses, and citizens have the potential to decrease food loss. Let's decide to value more and waste less.

Causes of crop Loss
- Overproduction
- Poor Harvesting
- Strict product standards
- Consumer behavior

About the Author:

Piya Rani Talukdar is a postgraduate in Physics from NEHU, Shillong, Meghalaya. She is deeply interested in science and enjoy writing about how technology affects our lives. To learn more about the world around her, she think it's important to combine creativity and curiosity.

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THE OCEANS IN PERIL

How Businesses Are Fueling the Microplastic Crisis

By Karthik R

"The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it."
– Robert Swan

Introduction: The Invisible Crisis

In recent decades, microplastics have emerged as a global environmental crisis, quietly infiltrating our oceans, ecosystems, and even our own bodies. These tiny plastic particles, measuring less than 5 millimeters in diameter, are the result of plastic degradation. What once started as a material intended to simplify life has now become one of the most significant pollutants of the modern age. However, businesses play a crucial role in both contributing to and addressing this pressing issue.

Sources of Microplastics

Microplastics come from various sources, both direct and indirect. Primarily, they result from the degradation of larger plastic debris, such as bottles, bags, and fishing nets. The ocean, which absorbs a significant amount of human activity, acts as a sink for these pollutants. Microbeads, once commonly found in personal care products like exfoliants and toothpaste, have also contributed to the spread of microplastics.

However, businesses in industries such as fashion, food packaging, and electronics are directly responsible for creating much of the plastic waste. For instance, the fast fashion industry has been linked to shedding microfibers from synthetic fabrics, which often end up in the water supply. These industries not only contribute to the problem but also continue to produce plastic products that end up in oceans.

Business Responsibility in the Crisis

While it may seem easy to blame consumers for the microplastic issue, businesses are the driving force behind plastic production and consumption. Every stage of the product life cycle, from manufacturing to packaging and even disposal, contributes to plastic waste. Large corporations are responsible for producing billions of plastic products every year. Many of these products are non-biodegradable and eventually degrade into microplastics, contributing to ocean pollution.

Companies across various sectors must take ownership of their environmental footprint. They need to embrace sustainable practices and shift towards circular economies where materials are reused, recycled, and repurposed rather than disposed of. Yet, many businesses fail to prioritize sustainability due to the higher costs and logistical challenges involved in transitioning to eco-friendly alternatives.

Sustainable Practices and Innovations

Despite the grim reality, businesses around the world are waking up to the crisis and adopting innovative solutions to combat microplastic pollution. The fashion industry, notorious for shedding microfibers, has been exploring alternatives such as biodegradable fabrics, sustainable fibers, and water filtration systems to capture microfibers during laundry.

In the packaging industry, companies are increasingly turning to biodegradable materials and innovative packaging solutions that do not rely on plastic. For example, some food manufacturers are opting for compostable containers, while others are experimenting with seaweed-based packaging as an alternative to plastic.

One of the most promising initiatives is the development of biodegradable plastics derived from renewable sources like cornstarch and sugarcane These materials decompose quickly and pose less risk of contributing to the microplastic crisis. While such alternatives are not yet widespread, their development signals a positive shift in corporate responsibility and innovation.

Regulatory Measures and Business Pressure

Governments worldwide are also taking action by introducing regulations to curb plastic waste. The European Union has implemented measures such as banning single-use plastic products, while countries like Kenya and Rwanda have outright banned plastic bags. However, legislation alone is not enough.

Businesses must be held accountable not only by governments but also by consumers, investors, and other stakeholders. Consumer demand for sustainable products has grown significantly, and investors are increasingly prioritizing environmentally conscious companies. The shift towards sustainability is no longer optional; it is becoming a fundamental requirement for long-term profitability.

Corporations must commit to transparency by reporting their plastic waste and sustainability initiatives. Public pressure can often drive faster change than legislation alone, and the business world must recognize the importance of tackling the microplastic crisis as part of their corporate responsibility.

The Role of Consumer Behavior

Consumers also have an essential role to play in reducing microplastic pollution. By choosing products made from sustainable materials, individuals can send a strong message to businesses about the demand for eco-friendly alternatives. Moreover, consumers can reduce their contribution to the problem by avoiding plastic products when possible and opting for alternatives such as reusable bags, containers, and bottles.

While businesses must take the lead, consumer behavior remains an influential factor in shaping corporate decisions. As more consumers adopt sustainable habits, businesses will face growing pressure to develop solutions that align with these values.

Conclusion: A Call to Action

The microplastic crisis is one of the most significant environmental challenges of our time, and businesses are at the heart of both the problem and the solution. It is essential for businesses to adopt sustainable practices that minimize plastic waste and invest in innovative solutions that prevent microplastics from entering our oceans.

However, businesses cannot solve this crisis alone. Governments, NGOs, and consumers must collaborate to create an ecosystem of accountability, innovation, and action. By holding businesses accountable and demanding better practices, we can make a significant dent in the plastic waste problem and pave the way for a cleaner, healthier future for our oceans and planet.

About the Author

Karthik R is a third-year Computer Science Engineering student at Panimalar Engineering College. He serves as the Student Coordinator for the Entrepreneurship Development Cell. Karthik is passionate about technology, sustainability, and raising awareness on environmental issues such as microplastics. His previous work includes research on the presence of microplastics in human blood, which he shared on LinkedIn.

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THE LINKEDIN BUBBLE

Networking vs. Skills in a Digital Age

By Aakash Jha

In today's hyper-connected job market, platforms like LinkedIn have become the holy grail for students, professionals, and entrepreneurs alike. A decade ago, a resume was a single-page summary; today, it's an entire digital ecosystem—made up of endorsements, content, and curated connections.

But this evolution begs a question: Has networking on LinkedIn begun to outweigh real, tangible skills? Or are we inflating a LinkedIn bubble that might quietly deflate?

The Rise of the Professional Social Network

With over 1 billion users globally, and India as its second-largest market, LinkedIn has redefined how professionals connect and communicate (LinkedIn, 2023). From "Open to Work" banners to "I'm Hiring" frames, it offers a platform where users can showcase achievements and reach across geographies. But amidst this sea of updates and self-promotion, a concerning trend has emerged: the perception of skill is often valued more than actual competence.

Visibility Over Verifiability

Most of us have seen profiles filled with motivational posts, productivity tips, and endorsements, yet lacking in tangible output. A 2022 survey by ResumeBuilder found that nearly 30% of hiring managers admitted to being influenced more by online presence than actual resumes (ResumeBuilder, 2022).

The metrics are misleading. A user with 30,000 followers may get attention, but that doesn't mean they can write optimized code or manage product pipelines.

The LinkedIn Illusion

A 2023 Harvard Business Review study revealed that recruiters spend less than 60 seconds on an average LinkedIn profile, often skimming for visual appeal and credentials rather than deep experience (HBR, 2023).

This fosters a "marketplace of self-branding," where presentation often trumps performance. While personal branding is valuable, it becomes problematic when it outweighs actual merit.

The Algorithmic Echo Chamber

LinkedIn's engagement-driven algorithm prioritizes viral content—feel-good stories, dramatic job switches, and success narratives. According to a study by MIT Technology Review, this has created an algorithmic feedback loop where users post what gets likes rather than what adds value (MIT Tech Review, 2021).

Professionals feel pressured to appear "always successful," discouraging authentic discussions around failure, learning curves, and slow progress. This contributes to rising levels of impostor syndrome among freshers and early-career professionals (Psychology Today, 2022).

Are Skills Being Ignored?

Not entirely. Many companies still use skill-based hiring platforms like HackerRank, Codility, and GitHub contributions as part of their evaluation process (LinkedIn Talent Blog, 2022). These platforms test real ability rather than self-branding.

But we can't deny that candidates with stronger personal branding often get noticed sooner, especially when hiring managers are inundated with applications.

Reimagining Professional Networking

LinkedIn has democratized opportunity. A student from a Tier-3 college can directly message recruiters from Google or Microsoft. A solo developer can find clients worldwide. But we must use LinkedIn to showcase substance—not just polish. Instead of mimicking Instagram with hustle culture and filtered success, professionals should: - Share real-world code, designs, or case studies - Write about failed startups and lessons learned - Contribute open-source work or tutorials - Engage in thoughtful discussions—not just "Congrats!" replies. Skills and networking should work together—not compete.

The Bubble?

Will the bubble burst? Probably not with a bang—but it may slowly deflate. With the rise of AI-driven recruitment tools and automated skill assessment platforms, recruiters are beginning to value actual performance over online presence (Forbes, 2024).

Portfolios, practical tests, and case studies may become primary evaluation tools, with LinkedIn serving more as a bridge than a benchmark.

Conclusion

LinkedIn has reshaped the landscape of professional networking. But visibility must not replace value. Skills that aren't marketed may be missed—but marketing without skill won't last long. Our goal as professionals should be to develop genuine capabilities—and reflect them honestly. In the long run, what you can do will always matter more than what you appear to do.

About the Author

Aakash Jha is a Computer Science undergraduate at ADGIPS, GGSIPU, with a keen interest in emerging tech, digital

ecosystems, and human-tech interaction. He is passionate about app development and digital communication trends.

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THE INTERNET BLACKOUT

By Elena A. Kurian

What would happen if the entire digital world shut down for a day?

There's a very easy, almost cliché answer here, for starters—you've got buzzwords like *peace, calm, social media detox* that come to mind almost at once. It doesn't bear much thinking about, this Internet-free day: it's all about going back to nature, embracing your roots, being more connected to each other in the real world. It's families coming together to play catch in the yard; it's rebellious teenagers finally looking up from their phones to realize how beautiful life really is. It's what happens when the bright glares of our phone screens finally turn off, and we're left in the darkness.

Now, let's take a step back. Picture, if you will, a blackout.

Not an Internet blackout, a regular blackout. You're walking the streets at night in a fairly ordinary part of town: not too bad, not too posh. Suddenly, the lamplights shut off and the steady buzz and hum of machinery falls silent. For a moment, there's peace, there's quietude– and then, the screaming starts. It's been widely observed that crime rates often go up during blackouts, due to reduced visibility and potential changes in the distribution of crime opportunities. It's not always the case, but it happens frequently enough that you're able to identify patterns and and predict the possibility of a threat. There's a sense of danger in the air, a lingering question in the minds of pedestrians as they hurry back to the safety of their homes: *what happens when the lights go out?*

The same question applies here; what happens in the darkness wrought by a digital shutdown? For all we disparage the ever-bright glow of our phone screens, we cannot deny that it illuminates a vast myriad of truths that would've otherwise remained hidden. Think of every major catastrophe that happened in recent times, since the advent of social media and its ever-increasing ubiquity; every war, every misfortune, every atrocity—the world would have perhaps remained blind to it all, had it not been for those in those regions who took out their phones and filmed bombs falling in real time. Watching their pain and suffering on such a visceral, visual level is really what called people to rise. The Internet connects us in a way nothing else really can– it's difficult to stay silent when you see the blood on the ground and hear their screams ringing in your ears.

Think of Ukraine, or Gaza– it's true that there's a lot of propaganda and misinformation spreading online. But live news reports, speaking out on social media: it has made a real change in the lives of the innocent people living there; many have even been able to escape, and be reunited with their families. On a larger scale, it's sparked massive protests around the world– voices and banners raised across borders in support of a cause that's bigger than each one of us alone.

And yes, it's true that there are significant disadvantages to the pervasiveness of the digital world: the rise of AI, particularly, raises some fairly serious concerns– not just about originality and creativity, but about the very concept of human identity. A break from it could be deeply beneficial to us all. No matter how cliché the notion of a 'detox' seems, A break from it could be deeply beneficial to us all. No matter how cliché the notion of a 'detox' seems, there's no denying that the peace that comes from a complete renunciation of social media and all things digital is deeply comforting and healing. There is something different in the way the birds sing when you don't have your headphones in–-something set aflame in the stars when all the Earth is shrouded in the pure darkness that comes from the absence of artificial light.

But things aren't quite so simple anymore. We no longer live in a time where the digital can be divorced from the human world with any degree of surgical precision. Both are now so deeply intertwined with each other, to the extent that a separation could prove potentially disastrous in the grand scheme of things. The Internet is what connects us all; from a poor farmer toiling away in the muddy fields of his hometown to the most powerful billionaire in the global market– our fates are all bound together by the intricate web of digitization. It is an indispensable, inextricable part of our lives, so much so that a digital blackout, even if only for a day, would force us to reconcile with the very idea of who we are now, in the absence of the crutch we call technology.

So, to return to the question: what would happen if the entire digital world shut down for a day?

There are some who might find solace and comfort in the absence of the Internet; freed from the constant chatter and cacophony of the digital world, they might go on to find happiness, and perhaps even enlightenment, as they reconnect with nature. But what about the others? What about the man whose entire career rests on online communication? What about the parents whose children have immigrated abroad to pursue their dream of a better life? What about the refugees whose only hope of salvation was the eyes of the world upon them? Who will hear them, who will see them –who will help them now?

In a blackout, the only remedy is to light a candle and wait it out– together, as a family, and as a community. My hope for the world in the event of a digital blackout is that it will inspire us to come together, connect with each other, and bridge the gaps between us in a way the

Internet never could.

About the Author

Elena A. Kurian studies Political Science and Economics at St. Stephen's College, and is deeply passionate about reading and writing. She believes fiercely in the power of words, in the dream of a better world, and in the hope that change begins with us.

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HARIYALI'S GREEN INITIATIVE

Our Commitment to a Sustainable Future

On World Environment Day 2025, our Environment and Sustainability Club, Hariyali, led a tree plantation drive. We planted Neem and Gulmohar trees, recognizing them as nature's allies in combating air pollution, absorbing carbon emissions, and enhancing campus biodiversity. This initiative was led by our Club Convener, Dr. Priya Gupta.

This year's global theme, "Beat Plastic Pollution," highlights the urgent need to eliminate single-use plastics and move toward a circular, regenerative economy. As management students, we recognize that solving the plastic crisis is not just an environmental need; it's a strategic business challenge demanding innovation, accountability, and leadership. Our actions align with key United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, demonstrating our commitment to a sustainable future by supporting Climate Action, Life on Land, Sustainable Cities and Communities, and Responsible Consumption and Production.

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