

The Missing Brand in India's Blue Economy: Why the Ocean's Wealth Needs a Name

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ABSTRACT

India's blue economy is enormous and full of opportunities; however, no strong and unified brand that could present the country's marine wealth to the world. India has a huge seafood production, and the country's fisheries sector is still unrecognised because of poor branding, uncoordinated marketing and little product differentiation. The article discusses the importance of having a national marine brand that communicates India's quality, sustainability, and cultural identity. It presents various options for closing the gap between production and perception based on the government data and industry insights, which would in turn empower coastal communities and strengthen India's hold in the global blue economy.

INTRODUCTION

India, with its extensive coastline, which measures more than 7,500 kilometres, is the home of the natural wonders of rich estuaries and many productive inland waters, as well as a large number of seaside communities that depend on the sea for their

living. Nevertheless, once a global consumer receives a package of shrimp, a can of tuna, or any type of processed seafood, that product does not usually carry a readily visible "Made in India" or "Trusted from Our Coasts" mark (Karnad *et al.*, 2021). Although India is a

major seafood supplier to international processors and retailers and is among the top seafood exporting nations, India's blue economy does not yet have a single consumer-facing brand that would promote quality, sustainability, and authenticity. In reality, this omission should not be perceived as a minor issue, but rather a systemic issue that extracts value out of the ecosystem. While the intermediaries and foreign brands are the ones who reap the profits, the local fishers, small processors, and coastal entrepreneurs are still getting very little for their products that are actually worth much more.

Why a brand matters for the blue economy

The leading seafood brand is not merely a logo; it signifies quality, traceability, origin, and worth (Raikwar *et al.*, 2024). The former product types capture more of the market value than the latter ones, which are merely sold at lower prices. A credible brand provides the consumer with an assurance of all the positive attributes of the product- its quality, transparency, sustainability, and safe handling. A brand also helps to attach a story to the product that gives it a strong connection to a specific place in the world, or a type of fishing activity, or even to a community. This kind of branding creates the culture and loyalty of both domestic and export markets. Unified seafood branding in countries results in better prices and more value retention along the entire supply chain. Although India is a leading global seafood producer, there is currently no comprehensive branding strategy or brand oxymoron from sea to shelf. Developing such a strategy is an important step towards India becoming more competitive in the global seafood sector

The Paradox: Abundance Without Identity.

India's blue economy has remarkably grown to the point of being the second-largest fish producer in the world, contributing nearly 8%

of the total output (Chouhan *et al.*, 2025). In the year 2023-24, the value of marine exports was ₹60,523 crore (≈US\$7.38 billion) with a quantity of 1.78 million MT, which meant an overall growth of more than 30% since the year 2019-20. However, in spite of this strength, India is still missing a definitive seafood brand identity. The industry is still characterised by small-scale fishers and long, disconnected value chains. Most of the fish exported are either raw or only semi-processed, then rebranded in the foreign markets, thus losing their original value. Labelling and traceability of products are weak, the infrastructure is poor, and the domestic branding is limited, all these factors causing a lack of consumer trust. Besides, the absence of a storyline pertaining to the region, species and the culture of Indian seafood makes it plentiful in quantity globally but still lacking a unique identity.

What Makes a Successful Blue Brand?

Globally, leading brands in the seafood industry rely on three distinguishing pillars of value- quality, story, and support (Raikwar *et al.*, 2024). The first pillar of value is demonstrated through assurance of quality and traceability, which creates consumer trust through verified origin, sustainable sourcing, and hygienic handling practices, which can be supported by QR codes and certifications.

The second pillar of value is where provenance and story create a much deeper connection to the seafood through culture and in community, as with Norwegian salmon and Thai shrimp. Knowing about seafood creates pride in the connection of seafood to people, place, and community.

The third pillar is value creation through added value and institutional support to fish and seafood. This support is most apparent when fish is processed, branded, and marketed, with the support of key institutional players such as government agencies, companies'

associations, cooperatives, or non-profit organisations. In the case of India, seafood brands need to be developed as a strategic value-chain upgrade for seafood that brings together producers, a quality hatchery and farm traceability system, and strength of support around coastal heritage, sustainability, and quality for the consumer.

Where Momentum Exists - Startups, Cooperatives & Technology

The seafood industry in India is currently evolving due to startup activity, cooperatives, and new technologies. Traceability firms have increasingly committed to direct connections from consumers to the ponds, emphasizing freshness and consistent product quality through platforms that utilize QR codes and blockchain tracking. One example is Captain Fresh and Fresh to Home, who incorporate cold-chain management to aggregate and brand seafood. AI tools, like Aqua Connect, enhance and promote efficiency and transparency in farm production, while regional clusters promote GI-tagged, value-added products that promote local, regional identity. These changes represent important progress, but still require further scale, coordination, and strong marketing to establish a national seafood brand.

Reviews: What Works and What Doesn't

What's Working:

Government initiatives like PM Matsya Sampada Yojana and FIDF offer a robust structure for infrastructure and export development programs that shall propel the sector ahead. At the same time, digital traceability, AI, and cold-chain systems are enhancing efficacy and accountability. Startups and cooperatives, and Millennial entrepreneurs arriving on the scene, enhance sustainability and branding strategies. The increased consumption of regional and technology-based products (e.g., smoking,

pickling, Parlors of seafood with a Geographical Indication [GI]) reflects the present trend of consumers to demand quality and authenticity even at higher prices.

What's Not Working:

Exports of raw material result in over reliance and do not maximize value addition nor contribute to brand growth. Poor post-harvest handling of seafood, in addition to fragmented supply chains, reduce the worth of products. An ineffectual culture of brand development is preserved and sustained through a focus on short, immediate benefits and not long-term brand identity. Inconsistent standards, poor stakeholder coordination, and inconsistent hygiene practices also contribute to inhibited unified brand development.

A practical roadmap to build "India" into a blue brand

Developing India into a globally recognized blue brand, such as the "Blue India" Mark, requires a coordinated, well-planned policy and program across sectors. Together with its tiered certification, traceability and sustainability are assured. Supporting regional cluster-based branding of products like Kanyakumari Crab, Chilika Prawn, etc., with GI tags will bolster the products' local identity. Prompting value addition through strategies to incentivize quality improvement, upgrading infrastructure (including cold-chain and blockchain traceability) will in turn improve the quality and value in the marketplace. Engaging simple training/certification and lab access initiatives will also support increasing the capacity of small producers. National promotions, chef partnerships, and/or seafood festivals to encourage consuming more seafood will make seafood part of consumer consciousness. Lastly, engaging on a regular basis to post-evaluated facts on value capture, and primary slash value added to grow exports and

normalization will help ensure ongoing successes and global recognition for Indian seafood.

CONCLUSION

India currently supplies the world with seafood, but it does not have the identity that transparent, recognized, trusted origins - and quality - should bring. It would be useful if consumers could feel confident purchasing Indian seafood for those reasons. Building global identity requires much more than just producing fish; it requires technology, infrastructure, finance, and a strong story that incorporates coastal communities and recognizes regional flavours. We're not just looking for more exports - we are looking for inclusive growth, meaning fishers will receive fair value and the blue economy of India will use the appropriate identity to gain world status. The sea has given us abundance - now

it is our turn to give it a name, a brand, and recognize those behind it.

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