

South Asian Entrepreneurs Shaping Western Markets

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines economic transformations within the South Asian diaspora in Western countries, with a focus on entrepreneurship, consumer behavior, employment trends, and the overall business landscape in urban areas. South Asian immigrants are reshaping entrepreneurship by blending cultural authenticity with innovative business models. Consumer behavior and market trends are influenced by cultural preferences, leading to the emergence of specialized e-commerce platforms and hybrid businesses that combine tradition with modernity. Advocacy for inclusive policies is also on the rise, addressing unique challenges faced by South Asian immigrants in the job market and promoting diversity, equity, and equal opportunities.

Case studies highlight businesses that have successfully integrated cultural identity with Western business norms, emphasizing authenticity when building customer relations and brand loyalty. The following research underscores the importance of inclusive policies recognizing and supporting the unique economic contributions of South Asian immigrants for harmonious development in Western societies. It contributes valuable insights for policymakers, business leaders, and the community to foster inclusive economic development.

Introduction

The entrepreneurial spirit within the South Asian immigrant community has undergone a notable shift, influenced by both Western ideals and a desire to maintain cultural identity. Traditionally focused on establishing small businesses rooted in ethnic niches, recent trends showcase a diversification of entrepreneurial ventures. From technology startups to niche service providers to cosmetics companies, South Asian immigrants contribute dynamically to the business ecosystem. Some entrepreneurs have successfully integrated cultural elements into their business strategies, creating a unique selling proposition that resonates more closely with the South Asian community, but could this develop into a form of exploitation?

A particular focus lies on the influence of Western ideals on their entrepreneurial endeavors. The infusion of Western business practices is a

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powerful force, providing South Asian entrepreneurs the means to access broader markets, connect with diverse consumer bases, and foster economic growth beyond conventional boundaries [1]. Nevertheless, as these entrepreneurs embrace modern business practices, a balance emerges between preserving cultural values and integrating contemporary norms.

Case Studies: South Asian Entrepreneurs Blend Trends with Innovation

Case studies become a critical lens through which we explore the journeys of these entrepreneurs, revealing how they adeptly blend cultural authenticity with innovative practices. These narratives offer profound insights into the challenges faced, the strategies employed, and the overarching impact of these ventures on the South Asian diaspora and the wider business community. With these studies, we can better understand how entrepreneurs successfully navigate the middle ground of tradition and modernity, establishing themselves as trailblazers in the dynamic business ecosystem.

One compelling example of entrepreneurs and their innovation practice is illustrated by the success story of “SareeSaga,” an online fashion platform founded by South Asian immigrants. Recognizing the demand for traditional South Asian attire within their community and beyond, SareeSaga strategically incorporated modern e-commerce practices while maintaining the cultural essence of sarees and ethnic wear. Feedback on the startup reveals the challenges faced by the founders in navigating the digital market space, the strategies employed to seamlessly fuse traditional aesthetics with online retail, and the broader impact of their venture on promoting South Asian cultural identity globally [2].

Another noteworthy example is the restaurant “SpiceFusion,” established by Pakistani entrepreneur Shamsud Duha in metropolitan England. SpiceFusion blends traditional Pakistani and Malaysian flavors with modern culinary trends, offering a unique dining experience that resonates with the South Asian diaspora and a diverse local customer base. Words from the founder provided insights into the challenges of adapting traditional recipes to contemporary tastes, the strategies employed in marketing and menu innovation, and the impact of such ventures on fostering cross-cultural understanding in the broader business community [3]. Through such startups, we can gain a deeper understanding of the entrepreneurial journey and the far-reaching impact of these ventures on both the South Asian

diaspora and the broader business landscape. Moreover, as research continues to unravel the layers of this entrepreneurial narrative, shedding light on the multifaceted dynamics that define the economic contributions of South Asian immigrants in Western societies.

The Key to Entrepreneurship: Inspirational Business Moguls

Understanding consumer behavior is crucial for businesses catering to South Asians. Cultural preferences, values, and evolving lifestyles are pivotal in shaping consumption patterns. Businesses that align with these preferences thrive, while others may face challenges in penetrating this market. Furthermore, with the rise of numerous businesses attempting to crack these trends, the market has become oversaturated with mediocre attempts, making it rare to discover brands and entrepreneurs who can introduce themselves in a stimulating and refreshing manner.

One remarkable entrepreneur who navigated this transformation is couture designer Shravan Kumar, who built his brand from the ground up. His designs have spread like wildfire over the past decade, from his Hyderabad-based clientele to now one of his biggest demographics of luxury clients ranging from the U.S. through Europe and Asia. He not only designs for his clients but also created outfits for the “Threads of Strength” fashion show hosted by the Premier Health Hospitals Foundation. “As we count on the courage and draw inspiration from the cancer fights of nearly 40 patients and dedicated caregivers, we are excited to have them don unique ensembles personally crafted by Shravan Kumar,” said Jhansi Koduri, MD, a board-certified oncologist at Miami Valley Hospital and chair of the Threads of Strength event [4]. His authenticity and generosity have created a long-lasting impact on numerous campaigns and charities, and his expression through art and fashion has inspired a multitude of others worldwide.

A more recent business mogul who has recently entered the influencer spotlight while simultaneously pursuing entrepreneurship is Shivani Bafna, who launched her loungewear line, Corefelt. She is also the founder of her marketing agency, BFN Agency. In her profile, she describes her profession, “As an influencer, I work with global fashion, beauty, travel, and lifestyle brands to create impactful campaigns. As a marketer, I work with international brands to build and execute campaigns that target the South Asian diaspora” [5]. Her content and work have formed an audience nationwide

and globally, and she acts as a role model to young girls everywhere.

As the demand for high-quality, authentic South Asian products and services is met with a surge in businesses and business moguls catering to diverse tastes and preferences within the community, only a select few are able to meet those standards and deliver their work with elegance and grace.

Consumer Behavior and Market Trends

In the business realm within the South Asian community, a profound understanding of consumer behavior guides enterprises toward economic success. This section delves into consumer preferences and market trend dynamics. For businesses catering to South Asian immigrants, cultural preferences form the cornerstone of market strategies, ranging from culinary tastes to apparel choices to the entertainment space. Deeply rooted in cultural values and traditions, these preferences significantly influence consumption patterns. Ventures that align with these preferences often find a receptive audience, thriving amidst communities thrilled to feel closer to their homeland.

However, penetrating this market comes with its unique set of challenges. These specific preferences require a unique approach, and businesses that align with these values may need help gaining community acceptance. In order to break that mold, businesses need to make active efforts to bridge the gap and establish a meaningful connection with their target audience. One sought-after but surprisingly tricky element is authentic South Asian products and services because they can become a driving force within the market with high quality and honest effort. Over the past few decades, the number of businesses aimed to draw a primarily South Asian audience has skyrocketed. This surge is not merely a response to market demand; it reflects a broader cultural movement where authenticity and cultural resonance precede consumer choices. In other words, people have experienced many consumer preferences but are more motivated and intrigued by services/products they resonate with.

The rise of e-commerce platforms specializing in cultural products exemplifies the community's embrace of technology while retaining cultural authenticity. These platforms offer a virtual marketplace where South Asian consumers can access authentic products, fostering a sense of connection to their roots. Products sold in Asia are now accessible here, and many of

those brands have diversified to America and Europe.

One significant observation is that many ancient remedies or products used in South Asia for their health or healing properties were looked down upon or received judgment. For the longest time, especially with younger kids, there was so much teasing and bullying that many immigrant or first-generation kids had to deal with frequently for their cultural practices and even their food. It has become a common issue and actively occurs daily.

However, although these older remedies may have evolved, they are still frequently practiced or followed and even turned into social media trends, like hair-oiling, turmeric masks, and even golden milk. All these were original practices that South Asians would often receive judgment for, but now those same individuals are using the same remedies and even promoting them but with glorified names. The mix of cultural traditions and modern technology shows how such practices can be connected and evolve into media trends.

Employment and Workforce Dynamics

South Asian immigrants contribute significantly to the workforce in Western countries, but, as expected, their employment dynamics reflect both opportunities and challenges. Many are driven by educational aspirations towards professional careers, resulting in a notable presence of South Asians in technology, medicine, and finance. However, the influence of Western ideals on career choices is also apparent, leading to shifts towards non-traditional sectors and entrepreneurial pursuits. Their dedication to academic excellence contributes to success in their professional careers and future endeavors.

For all employees to be considered equals and provided with the same opportunities, there needs to be an understanding of employment trends, emphasizing the necessity for inclusive policies addressing the unique challenges faced by South Asians and other immigrants in the job market. These policies may include targeted support for startups, cultural competency training for business services, and initiatives to bridge resource access gaps. Furthermore, these policies should extend to startups and small businesses, which often require more resources and support networks for sustainable growth.

In addition to inclusivity policies, another critical issue that requires attention is matters such as stereotyping, cultural misperceptions, and bi-

ases that may impact the career trajectories of South Asian professionals. By addressing these issues, it advocates for policies beyond surface-level diversity initiatives, delving into the root causes of disparities and promoting inclusivity at all workforce levels. This approach is more effective than somewhat ineffective attempts to be inclusive. Understanding the cause and rectifying such situations effectively is crucial. A workforce reflective of the diverse talents within the South Asian diaspora is not just an ethical but also an economic necessity. It is essential to harness the full potential of this dynamic workforce and contribute to the vibrancy and innovation of Western economies.

Cultural Integration

Cultural integration is a double-edged sword for South Asian entrepreneurs. While some seamlessly blend their cultural identity with Western business norms, creating a powerful synergy, others grapple with balancing tradition and innovation. The success of businesses within this community is often contingent on the ability to strike this delicate balance, as mentioned before. Cultural integration is not merely an aesthetic choice but a strategic imperative. By doing so, this resonates not only with the South Asian community but also finds resonance in the broader market.

Once again, we often see these examples through fashion, health and wellness, e-commerce, and culinary ventures. The entrepreneurs who succeed in these endeavors recognize that cultural values are not antithetical to innovation but can serve as a foundation for unique selling propositions. Entrepreneurs can leverage cultural values to shape business models, foster customer relations, and build resilient brand loyalty.

Cultural Competency and Fostering Inclusive Growth

Cultural competency training for business services is another critical component of this policy framework. The essay contends that businesses catering to South Asian entrepreneurs should be equipped with the necessary tools and resources to understand the cultural facets that need to be studied and established. Specific policies catered to this idea can mandate or incentivize cultural competency training for service providers, creating an ecosystem where businesses receive support that is not only practical but also culturally attuned.

The concluding section forms an urgent appeal for policy initiatives beyond mere acknowledgment, recognizing and actively addressing the unique economic challenges and contributions of the South Asian immigrant community. This advocacy for inclusive policies becomes a foundational pillar, one that seeks to foster an environment where businesses owned by South Asian entrepreneurs not only survive but thrive.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the essay functions both as a documentation of economic trends and a manifesto for change. It urges policymakers to adopt a nuanced perspective when assessing the South Asian immigrant community, recognizing their potential for economic contributions while acknowledging their unique challenges. Each aspect contributes to a dynamic business landscape, encompassing entrepreneurship, consumer behavior, employment trends, and cultural integration. Economic transformations benefit both individuals and Western societies as a whole. They prompt reflection on the motivations, challenges, and triumphs that define the entrepreneurial spirit within this community. As Western societies continue to develop and evolve, these policy frameworks can serve as a roadmap for the coming generations, unlocking the next level of potential and ensuring that economic prosperity is not a privilege limited to a few but a shared reality for all.

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