I wish you success and joy in 2016! The year has started off with lots of optimism and promises from the government as well as the businesses. The bustling ecosystem for start-ups promises to be one of the most exciting spaces to watch for during this year. Young entrepreneurs are tapping into the rapidly evolving mobile and digital technologies encompassing social media, analytics and cloud to creatively disrupt existing industries ranging from retailing, health care and financial services. Indian consumers are lapping up the convenience, access and discounts. The e-commerce space is potentially a treasure trove for research in consumer behavior too. I am happy to present an eclectic mix of research from financial services, retailing and digital marketing in the *Journal of Indian Business Research*’s (JIBR) inaugural issue of volume 8.

Banking in India is dominated by the government owned, public sector banks. However, private and foreign banks are rapidly growing, especially in the urban centers. The Reserve Bank of India has started giving out licenses to new banks to meet the government’s mission for universal financial inclusion. New entrants are increasing the choice for consumers. As the market turns more competitive, branding will play an important role in determining consumer preference and intentions to buy. So our first article, “Brand Analysis of Global and Local Banks in India: A Study of Young Consumers [...]” focuses on young consumers’ perceptions on brand specific associations of the different types of banks. Consumer perceptions about bank brands are analyzed using a three component model covering brand-specific associations, general brand impressions and brand credibility. Results indicate significant differences in consumers’ perceptions between public, private and foreign banks on all dimensions of brand-specific associations, i.e. perceived quality, perceived price, perceived brand social value and perceived brand emotional value. This research will guide brand managers in designing strategies to target and position their offerings.

The second article “Determinants of Investment Behaviour of Investors towards Mutual Funds” focuses on another financial service. Retail participation in India’s booming capital markets continues to be uncharacteristically low. Retail penetration of mutual funds is small, as indicated by the 7-8 per cent ratio of total assets under management by all mutual funds to gross domestic product in India compared to over 35 per cent in most Western markets. The low penetration also presents an opportunity for the marketers. This research aims to understand the investment behavior of investors toward mutual funds. Building on the theory of planned behavior, the authors examined the effect of awareness, attitudes and socioeconomic conditions of retail investors on their investment behavior toward mutual funds.

The third article focuses on a subset of consumers known as outshoppers, who shop outside their local shopping area. Outshopping considers frequency of shopping, proportion of expenditure spent on outshopping and distance traveled. Based on a consumer study conducted in India’s western state of Gujarat, Jayesh’s research “Consumer shopping orientation: Identification and characterization of outshoppers” aims to segment shoppers based on their shopping orientations and profile each segment using their demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. The results revealed three distinct segments of shoppers who were classified as “out-shoppers”, “community oriented in-shoppers” and “time effective in-shoppers”. Retailers can profile
consumers, based on their shopping orientation, while devising marketing strategy for targeting and positioning.

The final paper of this issue titled “Adoption of sensor based communication for mobile marketing in India” is a viewpoint article. The authors list the different ways in which sensor-based communication can be used to build and sustain customer engagement. Rising adoption of sensor based communication in mobile marketing has resulted in varied applications ranging from health care, fitness, entertainment, retail to mobile ticketing. Technologies including near field communication (NFC) and Bluetooth low energy drive sensor based communication in mobile marketing. Marketers can communicate product information, offer consumer promotions, enable issue and redemption of coupons and permit contactless payments. NFC can improve customer loyalty programs, as it allows instantaneous feedback and streamlined data collection and entry. As India joins the Billion Club of mobile phone connections along with China, the relevance of sensor based communication will only increase for marketers.

I am confident you will find the articles insightful. I look forward to your feedback and continued support for *JIBR*.

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