

Jagdish Sheth: Heart of Marketing

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How many marketing academics have been influenced by Dr Jagdish Sheth? No one can say, but my guess is that almost all of us—around the world—have been touched by his efforts to develop marketing scholars and scholarship. Jag’s contributions to marketing science and practice are prodigious and well known. Hence, in this paper, I will share what I know about his decades of philanthropic work advancing marketing scholarship.

In 1991, Jag and his wife created the Madhuri and Jagdish N. Sheth Foundation with the mission of advancing marketing scholarship. Thanks to their generosity and foresight, the Sheth Foundation has fulfilled its mission for 27 years—and their financial gifts ensure it will continue to do so in the years ahead. Since the Sheth Foundation works through grants to different non-profit associations—not directly to individuals—most marketing academics cannot directly observe its work. Hence, I take this opportunity to recognize its important work and pay tribute to Jag’s inspiring leadership.

I have known Jag for many years due to our shared research interests. However, my knowledge of the Sheth Foundation comes from serving on its board of directors from 2005 to 2007 and from 2012 to the present. When I first joined the board, I was amazed at the diversity of its initiatives and the geographic range of its activities. For example, Jag and I participated in the 2005 China Marketing Forum held in Shanghai which brought together marketing academics from all over China. Not long after, the Sheth Foundation board approved funding of a 2006

Relationship Marketing Summit in Argentina. The Foundation's work truly spans the globe!

The Sheth Foundation's primary focus is the development and support of young marketing scholars and new marketing topics around the world. In developing young scholars, it has supported a portfolio of scholarly programmes to ensure diversity in gender, race and ethnicity worldwide. For example, in recent years, it has partnered with the American Marketing Association (AMA) to support the Emerging Women in Marketing Leadership Workshop and Valuing Diversity New Faculty Research Grant, as well as partnering with the Academy of International Business (AIB) to support the Journal of International Business Studies Paper Development Workshops held in countries around the world.

Beyond financial support of young marketing scholars everywhere, Sheth Foundation board members have travelled to many countries to collaborate with marketing leaders. For example, this year, Naresh Malhotra and I (as board members) participated in the 2018 Annual Conference and Doctoral Consortium of the Emerging Markets Conference Board at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa. Naresh has consistently participated in this biannual event that takes place in different countries. Each board member reflects Jag's values and ethos in such activities.

With respect to funding new research topics, the Sheth Foundation typically supports new scholarly initiatives for about five years—after which they are expected to become self-sustaining. For example, it partnered with the Association for Consumer Research (ACR) to fund the highly successful initiative focused on Transformative Consumer Research. More recently, the topic of emerging markets and 'marketing for a better world' has been important. Hence, the Sheth Foundation has partnered with the INFORMS Society for Marketing Science (ISMS) to support the ISMS Doctoral Dissertation Grant Competition on Emerging Markets funded by the Sheth Foundation and with the Academy of Indian Marketing (AIM) to support the AIM/Sheth Doctoral Dissertation Grants and the annual AIM/AMA Sheth Foundation Doctoral Consortium.

The board of the Sheth Foundation thinks broadly about the development of scholarly work and how best to support it. For example, there has been considerable concern in the marketing academia about the paucity of indigenous marketing theory. Hence, the Foundation partnered with the Academy of Marketing Science (AMS) to sponsor the highly successful AMS Review–Sheth Foundation Doctoral Competition for Conceptual Articles. In addition to a monetary award and an opportunity to present

their work before an expert panel, the award recipients received expert feedback and the opportunity to develop their papers for review and potential publication by AMS.

Jag was very astute in the creation of the Sheth Foundation. It has a unique business model, whereby it financially supports non-profit organizations in marketing academia rather than individuals. In looking over records from my tenure on the board, the Sheth Foundation has supported: AIB, AIM, AMS, AMA, ACR, the European Marketing Academy (EMAC), Indiana University's Haring Symposium, ISMS, the Institute for the Study of Business Markets (ISBM), the Society of Consumer Psychology (SCP), the University of Illinois Foundation and the University of Pittsburgh Marketing Research Camp. Usually, the Sheth Foundation requires matching funds from the recipient organization, thereby heavily leveraging its donation. For example, when sponsoring an overseas conference, Foundation's support often doubles the number of marketing academics who are able to attend.

The Sheth Foundation does more than managing and distributing millions of dollars. Jag takes a personal interest in the success of each initiative. He travels the world and many people have a special memory of meeting with him. Moreover, his wealth of experience and expertise has been invaluable to the leaders of the recipient organizations. Invariably, the Sheth Foundation board members have held multiple leadership positions in one or more recipient organizations. Hence, they are equipped to follow his example and offer advice and counsel as needed.

In this brief tribute, I can only mention a few examples of the many initiatives that Jag has inspired and the Sheth Foundation has supported. However, I would be remiss if I did not mention two early projects that are important to our field. First, the Foundation paid for marketing journal subscriptions (to *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Consumer Research*, etc.) for universities around the world until electronic distribution became widespread. This knowledge dissemination effort advanced marketing science and practice in many countries. Second, the Foundation supported multiple projects that conducted video interviews of luminaries who contributed to the founding of the marketing discipline. This effort captured invaluable material from marketers before they passed away. Today, these initiatives have continued in a new form with the Sheth AMA Legends History Project.

Like many young academics, my first encounter with Jag's philanthropic work was through the AMA-Sheth Foundation's Doctoral

Consortium. It has provided the platform for my introduction to the marketing community and, more importantly, for more than 4,000 students who have attended the Consortium over five decades. It is (perhaps) easy to take its existence and excellence for granted. However, the AMA needed a partner to ensure the Consortium's continued viability—and Jag's leadership and donation of \$600,000 played a crucial role in sustaining it. This endowment, I later learned, did not come from the Sheth Foundation. Jag had personally donated the funds. This gift is just one concrete example of his generosity and support. However, beyond the monetary gifts, his passion for supporting young marketing scholars is evident by his attendance at almost every Consortium, thereby inspiring each new cohort of fellows.

There is an old proverb: 'If you give a man a fish, he will be hungry tomorrow. If you teach a man to fish, he will be richer forever'. Jag's many contributions have enriched the entire marketing community in many ways—and will continue to do so. Thank you on behalf of us all!