BRAND STRATEGY CASE STUDY · INDIA · 2021

TCS — "BUILDING ON BELIEF" HOW WE REPOSITIONED THE WORLD'S LARGEST IT BRAND

TATA

TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES
Experience Certainty

tcs TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES
Building on Belief

Presented by:

Mansi Vadodaria — VP Brand Strategy, TCS
Sanjeev Parashar — Sr. Brand Consultant, ocean multivision
Mumbai Division

CHAPTER 01

The Brief That Was Wrong

When Mansi Vadodaria, VP Brand Strategy at TCS, reached out through a mutual connection at Ogilvy & Mather India, the stated brief was straightforward: **refresh the brand**. Fifteen years had passed since ***Experience Certainty*** — the tagline that had served TCS well through its formative global expansion — and the leadership felt it was time for something new. A new tagline. A new visual language. A renewed sense of energy.

I declined that brief on day one.

Not because the instinct was wrong — the instinct was right. But a refreshed tagline over an unchanged strategic foundation would have been expensive wallpaper. The real problem was not the words TCS was using. The real problem was the gap between what TCS actually was and what the world believed it to be. And that gap was significant.

> ***"TCS was India's most used — and least credited — digital infrastructure. Hundreds of millions of people interacted with TCS-built systems every day. Not one of them knew it."***

Every NEFT and RTGS transaction processed through Indian banking. The e-governance platforms behind passport services, tax filing, and welfare disbursement. Core banking systems for major financial institutions. The technology infrastructure that enabled India's COVID vaccine certificate at national scale. This was TCS's work — silent, invisible, and entirely unattributed.

This was not a tagline problem. This was a fundamentally misaligned identity — a company of nation-building consequence operating under the perception of a reliable IT delivery vendor.

CONTEXT — TCS AT THE TIME OF ENGAGEMENT

$24.9B	15 yrs	600K+
Revenue FY2021	Since last major rebrand	Employees globally
Strong fundamentals — weak narrative	"Experience Certainty" — 2006	Internal alignment equally critical

CHAPTER 02

What The Research Actually Revealed

Mansi and I spent over twelve months in research before we wrote a single word of strategy. One hundred enterprise clients across the US, UK, Europe, and India. Over two hundred internal employees — cross-function, cross-geography, cross-seniority. Deep-dive brand outlook surveys. Structured interviews. What we were looking for was not satisfaction data. We already knew clients were satisfied. We were looking for something harder to find: the emotional architecture of the TCS relationship.

RESEARCH SCOPE

100+	200+	12+ mo.
Enterprise clients interviewed	Internal employees surveyed	Research duration
US, UK, Europe, India	Cross-demographic, cross-level	Before strategy was finalised

One pattern emerged with striking consistency across both cohorts. Clients could articulate, with precision, what TCS delivered. They could describe milestones, SLAs, delivery quality, technical depth. What they could not do — and this was the finding that changed everything — was articulate ***why*** they trusted TCS the way they did. The relationship felt different from a standard vendor relationship. It felt more. But they lacked the language to explain it to their own boards.

> ***"We trust them completely — but I couldn't tell you exactly why in a way that would satisfy our CFO. That sentence, in various forms, appeared across geography, industry, and seniority. It was the single most important data point in twelve months of research."***

The impact was felt. It was simply unnamed. And naming it — giving clients the precise language to articulate what they already knew — was the entire strategic task. That unnamed quality was **Belief**.

CHAPTER 03

Why I Needed A Lens Beyond The Boardroom

I want to be direct about something that is rarely discussed in brand strategy engagements: the consultant's perspective is not neutral. It is shaped by the range of contexts they have worked in. And in this engagement, a purely corporate lens would have produced a fundamentally inferior strategy.

TCS's work was not confined to Fortune 500 boardrooms. It touched farmers receiving government subsidies through digital disbursement. Patients whose hospital records were now instantly accessible. Students sitting in digitised examination systems. Citizens filing taxes without standing in queues. The scale of TCS's societal impact was categorically different from a standard enterprise IT company.

> ***"A corporate-only consultant would have given TCS a premium B2B tagline. What TCS needed — and what the work deserved — was a national narrative."***

My experience across social enterprises, nonprofit organisations, public health, rural development, and government policy was not incidental to this engagement. It was structurally necessary. The ***Desh Ka Namak*** insight — the recognition that TCS's relationship with India was analogous to Tata Salt's transformation from commodity to national institution — came directly from that broader perspective.

CORPORATE-ONLY LENS WOULD HAVE PRODUCED	MULTI-SECTOR LENS PRODUCED
A premium B2B positioning statement. Differentiated from competitors by degree, not by kind. Indistinguishable from Accenture's or IBM's positioning within two years.	A national narrative. A positioning so rooted in TCS's actual societal role that no competitor could credibly claim it — because no competitor had done the equivalent work.

CHAPTER 04

The Internal Resistance — And Why It Had To Be Resolved First

Before I wrote a single line of strategy, I had to resolve something more fundamental: a firmly held belief inside TCS that brand investment was, at best, a marketing indulgence and, at worst, a distraction from the work that actually drove growth.

This is not a TCS-specific problem. It is endemic to large B2B firms where revenue is driven by account relationships and delivery excellence. When the pipeline comes from existing clients and trusted referrals, brand spend appears unnecessary. The logic is seductive — and it is wrong.

> ***"Brand does not serve the clients you already have. Brand serves the clients you haven't met yet — and the markets you haven't entered. Confusing retention with growth is the single most common strategic error in B2B."***

I presented the internal case on three dimensions. **First, new market entry:** in the US and European markets where TCS had the most growth potential, the vendor perception was a ceiling — on deal size, on strategic engagement depth, on pricing. **Second, pricing power:** firms perceived as strategic partners command a measurable premium over firms perceived as vendors. **Third, talent:** the best engineering and management talent in the world chooses employers partly on brand perception.

Once leadership accepted this framing, the engagement moved from brand refresh to **brand transformation**. That shift in scope was a prerequisite for everything that followed.

CHAPTER 05

"Transformation" vs. "Belief" — The Decision That Defined Everything

Mansi and I evaluated over a hundred positioning directions before arriving at **Building on Belief**. The most persistent alternative — and the most dangerous — was some variant of "transformation." Digital transformation. Business transformation. Transformational partner.

I rejected every version of it.

Not because transformation was inaccurate — TCS did transform businesses. But "transformation" had been so thoroughly commoditised by the IT services industry that adopting it would have positioned TCS as a credible peer to Accenture and IBM rather than in a category of its own. Differentiation by degree is not strategic differentiation. It is noise.

> ***"Belief was the only word that satisfied two conditions simultaneously: it was true — rooted in observable client and employee behaviour — and it was inimitable. No competitor could credibly claim it without the underlying work to support it."***

Building on Belief was three words, each load-bearing. **Building** — long-term construction, not short-term delivery. **Belief** — the client's vision as the starting point, not TCS's capability. **On** — co-construction, foundation, partnership. That preposition defined the relationship model more precisely than any paragraph of brand copy could.

DIMENSION	"EXPERIENCE CERTAINTY" PRE-2021	"BUILDING ON BELIEF" POST-2021
Identity	Reliable IT delivery vendor	Purpose-led transformation partner
Value prop	Process predictability, execution certainty	Collaborative innovation, shared progress
Relationship	SLA-driven service provider	Ecosystem co-creator, fellow traveller
Client dynamic	Buyer instructs, vendor executes	Co-authoring outcomes from shared belief
Brand promise	"We deliver what you specify"	"We build what you believe in"

CHAPTER 06

The Four Pillars — Proof, Not Promise

One discipline I imposed throughout this engagement was a simple rule: every brand claim must be traceable to observed behaviour. Not aspiration. Not intention. Behaviour. This rule eliminated approximately half of the pillar candidates we initially considered — they were descriptions of what TCS wanted to be, not what TCS demonstrably was.

The four that survived are below. Each was validated against real client engagements before inclusion.

PILLAR 01

Long-term approach

Shared purpose and sustainable outcomes over transactional contracts. Decade-long client journeys as the operating norm.

PILLAR 02

Contextual knowledge

Deep understanding of the client's industry, legacy systems, and organisational history. Knowing the client's business better than they know it themselves.

PILLAR 03

Research & innovation

Continuous investment in R&D via TRDDC and global hubs. Technology creation, not merely deployment. Innovation as an operating principle.

PILLAR 04

Collective knowledge

600,000+ person global network. Every client engagement draws on cross-industry, cross-geography institutional depth. Scale as a quality multiplier.

The pillars served a function beyond marketing. They became the internal framework through which TCS's sales teams articulated value, account managers structured strategic conversations, and recruiting communicated what it meant to work at TCS. Brand architecture that only lives in a slide deck is decoration. This one lived in the business.

CHAPTER 07

The Geographic Priority — Why The US Was Non-Negotiable

The campaign launched on digital platforms in June 2021 and ran through April 2022, generating millions of views. But reach was never the primary objective. The primary objective was perception shift in specific markets — and the market that mattered most was North America.

REVENUE GEOGRAPHY — TCS AT TIME OF ENGAGEMENT

North America	United Kingdom	Continental Europe	Campaign reach
~48–50%	~16–18%	~14–15%	Millions
Revenue share — primary	Revenue share — key market	Revenue share — growth	Views Jun 2021–Apr 2022
Banks, insurance, retail, healthcare	Financial services dominant	Manufacturing, automotive focus	B2B decision-maker audiences

In North America, the "Indian IT vendor" perception carried a structural ceiling — on the strategic nature of engagements offered, on pricing, and on the seniority of client stakeholders TCS could access. A US bank's CTO engages differently with a strategic partner than with a delivery vendor. The gap between those two categories is not marginal. It is the difference between being in the room when the strategy is set and being called when it is time to execute.

> ***"I wasn't selling a campaign. I was dismantling a ceiling. In the US market, Building on Belief was the argument that TCS belonged at the strategy table — not outside it."***

CHAPTER 08

Inside Out — The Execution Sequence That Cannot Be Reversed

I insisted on one non-negotiable in the execution sequence: **internal before external**. Not as a formality. As a structural requirement.

A brand relaunch where employees learn the new positioning from a press release — rather than from their leadership, before the press release — fails at every client touchpoint it reaches. The brand promise is either confirmed or contradicted by human behaviour in the first conversation after launch.

We built the internal communications programme across multiple months — town halls, leadership messaging, associate-level workshops — before a single external execution ran. The threshold was simple: a meaningful percentage of client-facing employees needed to be able to articulate the new positioning in their own words. When that threshold was met, we launched.

EXECUTION SEQUENCE

PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4
Internal	**Client-facing**	**Digital campaign**	**Public narrative**
Leadership alignment. 600K+ employee communications. Brand readiness threshold before external launch.	Existing relationship deepening. New acquisition narrative. Commercial language updated to partnership model.	Jun 2021–Apr 2022. Multi-platform. Millions of views. US, UK, Europe primary markets.	Media, government, industry bodies. TCS as digital infrastructure partner — nation-building credentials.

CHAPTER 09

What Happened After — The Numbers

I am deliberate about how I present the results of this engagement. Brand strategy is not the sole driver of revenue growth. Market demand, delivery quality, talent, and macroeconomic conditions all contribute. Anyone who tells you otherwise is selling you something.

What I will say is this: the simultaneous achievement of revenue growth, brand value appreciation, and global ranking improvement — sustained over four years in a highly competitive market — is consistent with the compounding effect of brand investment. Co-occurrence across multiple metrics over multiple years has a name: it is called **compounding**.

TCS ANNUAL REVENUE — USD BILLION (POST-REBRAND TRAJECTORY)

BRAND PERFORMANCE

#2	**$21.3B**
Global IT services brand ranking — Brand Finance 2025	Brand valuation — Brand Finance 2025
Consistent upward trajectory post-2021	Among world's most valuable IT brands

CHAPTER 10

What This Means For Your B2B Brand

If you are reading this as a B2B leader who believes that branding is a consumer marketing discipline — that your relationships, your delivery record, and your technical reputation are sufficient — I understand that position. I have heard it in every B2B engagement I have worked on. And I will tell you what I tell every client who begins there.

You are not wrong about your strengths. You are wrong about their reach. Your relationships serve the clients you already have. Your delivery record is known to the people who have experienced it. None of these compound without a brand. **Brand is the infrastructure through which trust scales beyond the room you are currently in.**

> *"Every B2B company of scale has an invisible infrastructure — work it performs that clients rely on, feel the benefit of, and would miss acutely if absent, but cannot fully articulate. That unnamed reliance is the most underutilised brand asset in B2B. The strategic task is not to create brand equity. It is to name the equity that already exists in the work."*

TCS had that equity. It had built it over decades — in banking systems, in government infrastructure, in healthcare technology. **Building on Belief** did not create that equity. It named it. And naming it — precisely, inimitably, and with the full weight of 300+ stakeholder research behind it — converted invisible infrastructure into a brand position that no competitor could occupy.

That is the work. Find what you have built that is felt but unnamed. Name it before someone else names you.

CONSULTANT'S CLOSING NOTE

> **"In B2B, brand does not precede trust. Brand is the infrastructure through which trust scales."**

Three things I carry from thisengagementintoeveryB2Bbrand conversation since.

First. The brief is almost never the real problem. Mansi brought me in with a tagline request. The real problem was a fifteen-year identity gap between what TCS was and what the world believed it to be. Solving the real problem requires the courage to change the brief — and a client willing to hear it.

Second. The hardest sell in a B2B brand transformation is always internal. In firms where delivery drives revenue, brand investment has no obvious P&L owner. Resolving that ambiguity is not a precursor to the strategy. It is the strategy's first chapter.

Third. A diverse lens — one that extends beyond the client's immediate industry and into the broader societal context of their work — is not a luxury in brand strategy. It is what separates a positioning from a tagline.

$30B+ revenue. #2 global IT brand. $21.3B brand valuation. Four years of compounding. That is what naming the truth — precisely and inimitably — looks like over time.