

# E-Brand Building and Communication Strategies in the Digital Era

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## Abstract

The transformation from the download culture to the upload culture attributed by the rationality in decision making, increased disposable income, social viewing, cyber-hoarding, Z generation dabble compels and allure marketers to clinch and capitalize online. Branding in digitalization aura is as crucial and challenging because of the level playing and zero moment of truth criterion of digital marketing. E-branding as in a nascent stage despite many are novice, the indigenous market gains momentum because of the avalanche use of internet bestowed by the digitalization move of government and trifle charges by the service providers. This paper is originally a conceptual albeit purports to explore and explicit the e-branding strategies that are in prevalence and likely to persuade and woo the marketers and customers.

Key words: Disposable income, Social viewing, cyber-hoarding, Z generation, indigenous market, e-branding.

## Introduction

Brand is per se a name for a product or service but is based on the perceived and felt experience of a customer about a product and service that distinguishes from others. Branding has its emergence in 2700 BCE with Egyptians to avert victims and identify stolen livestock draws distinctive symbols<sup>1</sup> and has been acquainted by marketers. Subsequently because of the advancements in civilization and after effects of industrialization it has been used ubiquitously by individual firms; manufacturing and marketing any types of commodities. Ipso facto Branding is creating a name, symbol or design that could allure the customers and is an easily identifiable parameter amidst the competitors in the market space. Brand poignantly suggests, and discerns values and promises the marketer would offer, and consumers would perceive or receive from a product or service. Branding is a set of marketing and communication methods that facilitate to distinguish a company or products from competitors purported to create a lasting impression in the minds of customers. The key components that form a brand's toolbox include a brand's identity, brand

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<sup>1</sup> Wheeler, Harold (1946). *The Miracle of Man*. Dunedin, New Zealand: Longacre Press. p. 84.  
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communication (such as by logos and trademarks), brand awareness, brand loyalty, and various branding (brand management) strategies.<sup>2</sup>

In the of late, the intrusion of Internet in marketing has made stark changes in branding because of the complexities and perplexing nature of businesses that are made through different formats and to subsist in this competitive trend. Consumers drive and dominate the marketers to their varying needs and aspirations, subsequently befit for attaining the marked objectives of the marketer. The modern day marketing irresistibly uses digital platform and has evolved to become a global conversation with millions of people across the world through social networks, online forums, discussion groups, review websites, and blogs that allow people to leave their own comments about brands.<sup>3</sup>

### **E-Brand Building**

Brand Building is a means of creating awareness, establishing and promoting a product by using strategies that suits to the demeanor of their business. Traditionally marketers use different techniques and strategies to develop brands, subsequently over the years with the changes in business formats and customers, changing fashion and trends pave way for branding classically.

Brands can be categorized into three types such as: Primary brands that are company's core brands which form high percentage of company's sales prospective and affirm close attention. Secondary brands are line extenders for a core brand and are modifiers, strengthening and supporting the core brand. Tertiary brands have insignificant sales potentials amidst contributes to company's overall image.<sup>4</sup>

The advent of web 2.0 technology; an enhanced interactive invention intensifies competition between brands by means of website, internet, social media and apps. Per se brand building enhances brand equity using online and offline advertising campaigns and promotional strategies. Branding is similar as naming a child, hence it is a crucial component of any company because it is the one that gets registered in the minds of the consumers ever.

E-branding points to a number of strategic considerations for building successful e-brands, namely 1) Selection and speed, 2) Customization, 3) Interactivity and 4) Strategic alliances.<sup>5</sup>

Internet branding, popularly known as online branding is one of the brand management techniques that use the World Wide Web (WWW) as a medium for positioning a brand in the marketplace.<sup>6</sup> Branding in the

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<sup>2</sup> Ghodeswar, Bhimrao M (2008). "Building brand identity in competitive markets: A conceptual model". *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. Bingley, West Yorkshire, England: Emerald Publishing. **17**: 4–12.

<sup>3</sup> Clifton, R. (2009). *Brands and branding* (Vol. 43). John Wiley & Sons.

<sup>4</sup> Randall, Geoffrey (1997) *Branding*, London: Kogan Page.

<sup>5</sup> Ries, Al (2000) *The 11 immutable laws of internet branding*, London: HarperCollinsBusiness.

<sup>6</sup>Wallace, Christopher. "[5 Key Strategies To Build Your Brand Online](#)". Search Engine Land. Retrieved 20 February 2014.

digital age wooing through internet has been substantially increasing with the deftly application of internet. Businesses of all kinds and sizes embrace various online channels through search engine, social media, online press releases, online marketplace to establish strong relationships with consumers and to build the brand awareness.<sup>7</sup>

Online branding strives for brand recognition to permeate and instate the brands among the customers and is a deftly task in marketing, because if certain things are registered are ominous and cynic it could never live by new messages. Brand recognition in this digital era could be had basically through website development, hence website development seems to be a radical and pivotal element where the marketers need to be meticulous as it needs to drag the attention and interest of consumers towards the website, subsequently the messages created online should provide information that befits to the needs of the customers. It capitalizes user generated content and blog to provide information for customers and visitors who are interested towards it. Social media platforms play a significant role because of the advent of web 2.0 technology which is featured for interaction.

The key factors that could be considered for online branding are such as; customers, identity – a visual mark, competitor analysis, messaging, location, product and people.

To create brands online, certain components are essentially to be maintained such as; website appearance, location of the brand, navigation on page, personal support, differential reward, and physical delivery and returns (Chernatony L., Christodoulides G., 2004). It is also suggested the critical success factors are such as; through building genuine relationships, enabling greater interactivity and developing customized offerings.<sup>8</sup>

To successfully create brand online there are six crucial drivers such as; Brand Credibility Trust, Authenticity, Transparency, Affirmation, Listening, and Responsiveness.<sup>9</sup> Pete Blackshaw, (2008) points out

### **Importance of branding and e-branding**

Branding is deemed to be the process of creating value through informing and intriguing through offers and provisions which would satisfy expectations and delight them to bridge loyalty. Loyal consumers as do not truncate to another brand at ease they become referrals either through word of mouth communication or

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<sup>7</sup>Shih, Bih-Yaw; Chen, Chen-Yuan; Chen, Zih-Siang (2013-11-01). "Retracted: An Empirical Study of an Internet Marketing Strategy for Search Engine Optimization". *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries*. 23 (6): 528–540.

<sup>8</sup> Chernatony L., Christodoulides G., (January/March 2004), *Taking the brand promise online: Challenges and opportunities*, Interactive Marketing, Vol-5, No-3, pp 238-251, Henry Stewart Publication.

<sup>9</sup> Pete Blackshaw, *Satisfied Customers tell Three Friends, Angry Customers Tell, 3000*. Doubleday Business, 2008, retrieved on December 18, 2012 at 12.15 pm from [http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/CNBC/Sections/News\\_And\\_Analysis/\\_Blogs/Bullish\\_on\\_Books/\\_DAILY%20POSTS/satisfied%20customers%20excerpt.pdf](http://msnbcmedia.msn.com/i/CNBC/Sections/News_And_Analysis/_Blogs/Bullish_on_Books/_DAILY%20POSTS/satisfied%20customers%20excerpt.pdf).

electronic word of mouth communication, thus branding is a core through which corporate leverage their earnings and profits.

As consumers are aware about the market information and choices by means of the culture and technology than ever, befitting to the desire and delighting them has become a doughty and deftly task for the marketers, similarly customers could not be loyal towards a brand because of changing economic structure, lifestyle and rationality. In this context unless companies offer distinct and unique products with parity price to the competitors it shall be difficult. Traditionally advertising and publicity were keys for the success of products, however brands are currently emotionally bounded and suits to the personality of the customer.

Prominent and strong brands as has its presence in the market for several periods enjoy monopoly and could fend off competitors, consequently rivals averse to compete; hence they position themselves differently and try to reach the one who may not be reached.

Strong brands paves way to strategize forming and establishing unique identity for the rivals in this fierce competitive trend. Companies which has a strong brand base employs greater control over the competitors and customers and could enjoy high market share.

E-commerce enhances marketing, communication and branding strategies and thus the overall image of the organization. Customers can find information and purchase products and services online. The Internet enables to engage in virtual one-to-one relationships with their customers. In a nutshell the significance of using internet for branding has been discussed;

**Cost effective** – The stiff competition for products and services in the traditional marketing practices involved huge costs which consequences to hitch profits accrued and business prospects. The advent of web 2.0 technology makes a major change and chance to view products globally with less cost.

**Wider Reach** – Because of the humongous use of internet attributed by search engine, social media platforms and apps the number of viewers and customers are substantially high comparing traditional marketing.

**Identifying Opinion / Influencer Groups** – By using internet inter alia especially through Social media and blogging online comments could be made, acknowledged, discussed which would leverage the businesses by means of online referrals which further accelerates the businesses.

**Interact or share or recommend** – After the advent of web 2.0 technology with the use of interactive web tools like online comments, video, photos and others consumers interact which would accelerate or daunt any business.

**Increase Customer Loyalty** – Because of zero moment of truth, disseminating real time information through two way communication the loyalty of customers could be increased.

**E-branding strategies**

Due to the substantial growth of internet users attributed by the tremendous changes in technology, trifling cost for acquisition of internet facilities and the strategies formulated by the government, buying and commenting online branding has marked its space to benefit to the needs of the users. One cannot keep away (both marketer and customer) from the fast paced and humongous growth of technological advancements to ease their goals and objectives fulfilled. Moreover the drift and change in the transformation of importance to customers has been traced back and witness the words of Gandhiji 'as consumers are the king'. Using internet for branding herald brands across the globe is with ease. Inter alia the number of internet users has been increasing day by day. The total number of internet users constitutes 39 percent of the 7 billion populations. Among the global internet users 77 percent is from the developed countries and the remaining 33 percent from developing countries. Some of the prominent e-branding strategies is as follows;

**Blogging** and podcasting - The word blog has been derived from "weblog," which may be an online script or journal of an individual, a corporation or an organization. A podcast is an online audio file that is compressed into digital format and delivered through an RSS (Really simple syndication) feed. It is used as a means of sharing information, and also a means of interviewing an expert, or creating online audio seminar. Blogging is a practice of actively keeping a blog with latest, relevant and premium quality information. Blogs and podcasts are capitalized to leverage businesses as most of the Y and Z generations are online, hence to fortify the brand of any kinds these are used in great spectrum. Blog advertisement contemporarily supersedes traditional advertising and branding. Bloggers (Marketers) currently with the aid of Blog Search Engines (BSE) boost blogging by establishing own networks over the World Wide Web (WWW). BSE is a certain kind of web directory that categorizes only blog (blogging) websites. Mostly, BSEs are free of charge and are provided by the blog hosts. Every BSE like any other web platform has a dashboard with control and setting options such that one can use to index it. The benefit of indexing blogs is its capability to mark the blog in a public domain eventually listing it on all public blog lists and directories for users to view similarly the podcasters.

**List Building** – It has become a radical component to make one's business to sustain and garner success in this digital trend. Besides, **cold calling** is also an offline technique which too plays a significant role in e-branding. A good list of email address and holders paves spate of significant ways and channels of doing good business. Many marketing and branding experts give utmost importance to the ever growing email list as one of the prospective avenue that focuses on branding.

**Search Engine Optimization** – It is the process of enhancing online visibility of a website or a web page in a search engine's unpaid results (referred to as natural, organic, or earned results). In general, the website

which is frequently searched and accessed by visitor can then be converted into customers.<sup>10</sup> SEO may target different kinds of search, including image search, video search, academic search,<sup>11</sup> news search, and industry-specific vertical search engines. In general SEO focuses on optimizing a business' online presence so that its web pages could be displayed by search engines when a user searches for products or services. Thus how SEO acts as one of the major tools of e-branding.

**Social Media Platform - Social media** are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation and sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks.<sup>12</sup> Nearly 2.1 billion people (just over two thirds of active Internet users) have social media accounts. So business and consumer marketers indisputably believe that social media is crucial to build a brand. There are more than 20 popular social media sites that are quite capitalized by marketers to garner customers and leverage their business.

**Web Banner Advertisement** - Web banner functions same as traditional advertisements, however it notifies consumers of the product or service and presents reasons to why the consumer should choose the product, the results for advertisement campaigns may be monitored real-time and may be targeted to the viewer's interests based on the behavior as tracked through the use of a click tag.<sup>13</sup> A **web banner ad**, an advertising by the World Wide Web through an ad server, embeds an advertisement into a web page purports to attract traffic to a website. Mostly banners are delivered by a central ad server. The advertiser could scan their logfiles and detects the web user who visits the advertiser's site by clicking on the banner ad, consequently advertisers compensate the content provider accordingly.

Pop-up ads appear above the browser window and is comparatively much visible and has high rates of click rates. Pop-Under Ads appear behind the current browsing screen. This is visible only when a user tries to close their browsing screen. This will pop behind the browser and the visibility and click rates are comparatively cheaper.

Hover-ad banners are a brand new type of banners, which also will appear on top of the window you are currently viewing but, unlike the regular pop-up, they will have to be closed, before you can continue browsing. Hover-ad banners represent an integral part of a web page's HTML code and can't be detected by the regular pop-up banner detectors.

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<sup>10</sup> Ortiz-Cordova, A. and Jansen, B. J. (2012) Classifying Web Search Queries in Order to Identify High Revenue Generating Customers. *Journal of the American Society for Information Sciences and Technology*. 63(7), 1426 – 1441.

<sup>11</sup> Beel, Jöran and Gipp, Bela and Wilde, Erik (2010). "Academic Search Engine Optimization (ASEO): Optimizing Scholarly Literature for Google Scholar and Co" (PDF). *Journal of Scholarly Publishing*. pp. 176–190. Retrieved April 18, 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Kietzmann, Jan H.; Kristopher Hermkens (2011). "Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media". *Business Horizons (Submitted manuscript)*. 54 (3): 241–251.

<sup>13</sup> Briggs, Rex; Hollis, Nigel, Advertising on the Web: Is there Response Before Clickthrough? *Journal of Advertising Research*, March–April 1997, pg 33-45.

Animated banners are a very good way of advertising and are better than the regular, still banners. An animated banner will always attract attention to itself, since the human eye is attracted to movement. Banner ads usually are displayed just like the regular, still ads, and have the same content with little animation. They are most often in GIF (Graphics Interchange Format) file format.

**Affiliate Marketing (Referral Schemes)** - a performance based marketing technique in which the affiliate makes use of automated tools and specific software to bring visitors, consumers or sales to business website or a sales page with his/her own marketing endeavors and gets rewarded.<sup>14</sup>

Unattached Affiliate Marketing is Pay Per Click (PPC) AM, where the affiliate/user does not have control. Here the affiliate/user is paid on every click they generate, or a sale they close. Practically, there is no defined link or connection between the marketer and the customer. All what the affiliate/marketer does is works to bring others to see the affiliate link with the help of software such as; Facebook ads, Google Adwords to make users click on the link, view the product and purchase it.

Related Affiliate Marketing requires WWW and its presence shall be from Social Media, Blogs and other online promotion tools where the affiliate/user promotes links to products which he intends to affiliate through his/her personal blogs.

In Involved Affiliate Marketing the affiliate/marketer/user personally use the product or service and recommend it personally to others. The affiliate highlights the product in the main content of the website or the blog which ultimately makes the product a more trusted proposition in front of potential customers.

**Crowdsourcing** - is the process of soliciting and obtaining work, funds, skills, ideas and participation to generate content or help facilitate the creation of content or products from a large chunk of people through online. In another sense it is also a simple and easy method of problem solving as ideas, thoughts and views vary from individuals and capitalise and garner for the growth and prospects of a product, institution and society at large. Classically it would pave a new way for branding online.

User Generated Content (UGC) – a type of content that has been created and uploaded by unpaid contributors which could be pictures, videos, testimonials, tweets, blog posts, and everything. As UGC campaigns are crucial and consistent player in the digital marketing world embrace success because tweets are made on products and services at free of cost, moreover consumers rely on what other consumers say.

## **Conclusion**

Traditionally a brand is purported to evoke customer's mind about personality, presence and product or service and performance. The advent of web 2.0 technology and humongous use of internet users bring stark changes and phenomenal applications to real-time interaction in the market space virtually. Hence online businesses are searching for e-branding strategies to benefit the needs of customers. To enhance their

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<sup>14</sup> Bruce C. Brown 2009. Complete Guide to Affiliate Marketing on the Web: How to Use and Profit from Affiliate Marketing Programs, Atlantic Publishing Co. Pgs. 4 – 75. ISBN 13: 9781601381255 ISBN 10: 1601381255

prospects and achieve success in e-branding companies urge to embrace numerous strategies. That has been presented in the paper, however to the changing needs, fashion and trend yet new strategies could be developed gleamed out of serendipity or need. However the strategies are companies need to analyze the unique selling point (USP) in their products and others and accordingly strategies should be formulated to upright uniqueness. As change is an order of the day the time when new product either launched by a company or rivals need to modify the existing demeanor of market approach. As consumers are quality conscious in deterrence of price and become loyal, compromise should never be made on quality at any cost. The brand personality should befit to the personality of the targeted customers. Customer relationship management should always be a priority for any one to succeed without any disturbance. No matter what the sales quantum and profit is hence brands should position themselves well by being grateful to their valuable customers.

