

DIGITAL BRANDING AND ITS FACTORS AFFECTING CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

Brands have always been the symbolic bearer of quality and differentiation for any products or services. Brands carry a very important position not in its names, signs and symbols but also are bearers of meaning, emotions, history and culture. Through this capacity of brands they are easily followed by people as they create personal identities and social relationships. Advancement in the technology has brought a major change in branding. The availability of products and services digitally has made it important for the companies to establish their brand digitally also. This concept of digital branding does not reduce the power of brands instead elevates it to a much higher level. It varies from digital marketing in the fact that it aims to create connection between the customer and the product. Digital Branding helps to provide support in acquiring customers, maintaining and retaining them and also build a good reputation among various digital venues in the market. It plays a major role in the brand building and consumer buying behavior. Consumer buying behavior is an important factor in marketing and it is very much necessary that the company is able to retain the customer and generate repurchase intention. In the present digital world where everything is purchased and even sold digitally consumers can be retained if companies are able to digitally brand their products or services. This paper aims at studying about what digital branding is, what are the effective ways of digital branding and which are the antecedents of digital branding affecting consumer buying behavior.

Keywords: Digital Branding, Consumer buying behavior, factors, aspects

Introduction

The digital branding practices help to provide vital support in customer acquisition, maintain them and retaining them and build a good reputation. For any online shopping portal, digital branding is of most importance and is a cost effective marketing initiative. In this age of information where information is overloaded, it is necessary to save customer time and also reduce the search cost. Building brand digitally has become of prior importance to every online shopping portal to create an image and brand loyalty in the minds of the customer. With reference to the importance of digital branding, this study highlights the factors of digital branding influencing consumer buying behavior.

Meaning

Digital branding is brand management technique that uses a combination of internet branding and digital marketing to develop a brand over a range of digital venues, including internet-based relationships, device-based applications or media content. It has emerged strongly over the last decade along with its roots from direct marketing. Branding, aims to create connections between consumers and the product or service being delivered so that brand recognition is established in the digital world. In short, the goal of digital branding is not necessarily driving the sales today, but to enhance the awareness, image and style of the brand, in turn driving long term customer loyalty. There has been a prolonged chaos for information available about companies and consumers for ages. This increased limitations as access to information, geographical separation and interaction between customers. But now the existence of internet and websites which collect data and present us with comprehensive information has facilitated more interaction between brands and customers. The companies now have a powerful means to showcase the brand identity and value in innovative and efficient forms. The digitalization has provided the brands to come up with novel ways of customer engagement and manage the consistency of their brand empowerment. It has heightened the connectivity between brands and customers that was lacking earlier.

Difference between Digital Marketing and Digital Branding

We often hear the use of digital marketing and digital branding interchangeably, but they are quite different from each other. While digital marketing is more about pushing a product or service on how good it is, digital branding is about highlighting the underlying values of the company. Where digital branding helps to remain in the minds of customer even after the product has been replaced or discontinued, digital marketing is good at getting one-time buyers as opposed to digital branding which builds lifelong relationship with the customer. Digital Marketing helps in creating interest to the product or service thereby creating demand and thus helps in promotion. Digital Branding aims at brand equity through brand awareness, quality services etc.

Therefore digital branding is long term strategy which is about building up a brand identity by using digital brand strategy and planning.

Changes Brought In By Digital Branding

1. **New Technologies:** Digital branding utilizes platforms like World Wide Web and mobile devices. The technologies for creating, distributing and receiving brand stories are easily accessible at low cost on objects like text, video or audio.
2. **New Behavior:** The majority of digital communication is pull communication because information is actively searched for. Unlike classical brand management, with digital branding, the user decides on what he/she wants to see, what to follow and how long he/she should stay.
3. **New Interactions:** The intimate exchanges of digital branding encourage communication among people. They get to know one another, learn to be creative together and develop stories together.

Unique Aspects of Digital Branding: “The Big Four”

1. **INTEGRATION:** Digital Branding is different from other by exercising the integration of following building blocks;
 - Devices like laptops, cellphones etc are various platforms that can be networked and also integrate various services.
 - Utilities and Technologies have a major role because technology like machine learning and artificial intelligence has taken branding to next level.
 - Media Objects: These are like a webpage, a tweet or a youtube video.
 - Multimedia: photos, graphics, a timeline and interactive informational graphics can all be used to illustrate a company history.
 - Topic Platforms: The main idea is to make the customer and their wishes the focus instead of the products
 - Brand Platform: The company’s brand must fit into the needs of the customer. It must be such that what all, customers look for must be found on your site.
2. **ACCESSIBILITY:** Brands have become accessible these days constantly. Globally and in unlimited quantity. This happens because of:
 - Time Independence
 - Space i.e. are available anywhere in the world if required technology is available
 - Storage i.e. anything can be made available and also can be downloaded by users and so brand stories can be told in as much breadth and depth as desired.
3. **CONNECTIVITY:** It means that the devices, technologies, applications, media assets etc. are connected with each other and communicate. Digital branding rules over media because of networked devices, applications and content. It can therefore be independent of platform and be highly connected. Since every part is interconnected digital media and technologies is thus a supersystem of systems.

4. **INTERACTIVITY:** Interactivity lets branding consider personal wishes. It can be distinguished in two forms:
 - **Person to Machine Interaction:** Users determine their type, content, time, progression, length and frequency of searches themselves. They fit into the digital world according to their interests, wishes and needs. And so digital branding calls for an active user. He/ she does not have to wait for anything, they can look for their interest any time
 - **Person to Person Interaction:** It includes interaction between people. It let build personal relationship with the users, which is essential to create brand trust and fuels the brand emotionally. Word of Mouth always plays a major role in building brand trust. Contented customers are one important requirement of long standing brand relationships and so their problems must be found and solved immediately. Also, necessary advices must be given to avoid the fear of risk in online shopping. Brand Communities also allow interaction which can be useful in digital branding, since it allows learning more about your customers, get new product ideas, and encourage bonding and trust among everyone.

Effective Ways of Digital Branding

With the technological innovation and cut throat competition the concept of branding has moved to a higher level. It includes a whole new combination of elements like- social consciousness, community building, use of artificial intelligence etc.

1. **Personalization:** Customers now relate to people and not the product. If they are able to relate to your brand they possibly trust the brand. It is necessary that you build relationship with customer than just aim at selling your product. This is possible through story telling where the message to be delivered to the customer is portrayed through a story and make people feel the connection through it. For example, “Samsung India Service - We’ll take care of you, wherever you are” which tells a story about how a young Samsung Engineer attends to a customer complaint in a remote hilly area.
2. **Chatbots:** New technologies like chatbots are paving way for the companies to interact with customers. This new wave in Artificial Intelligence is helpful in interacting with customers and also guides the user while their buyer journey. Using a chatbot, users can interact with their brand and receive necessary information as per need. Ask Disha, a chatbot of IRCTC is an example for chatbot.
3. **Brand Communities:** It is forum where consumers can talk about brand related topics and get advice and tips on the same and so companies can easily identify the needs of the customer. MI community is an example to it.
4. **Influencer Marketing:** It has become popular over recent time. Finding an influencer whom your audience can relate to will help to make your brand visible. Influencers on social media who are followed by millions of people promote brands through their stories and experiences.

5. **Create valuable Content:** Good educational content has importance than creating a poor to medium content. Creating a valuable content rarely will be beneficial than creating a poor content regularly. People appreciate topics that generate interest and also educate them.

Factors Influencing Consumer Buying Behaviour

1. **WEBSITE CONTENT:** The look of the website is very much important to attract a customer. The website of any online portal must be attractive enough to catch the attention of the customer. The website must have the following features to look pleasing:
 - a) Website Color must be pleasing to the eyes of the consumer; it must not be too harsh that it disturbs the view of the customer.
 - b) Website Presentation is also important because the consumer should be able to find their products easily without taking much time and lag.
 - c) The website must provide useful information about the products in possibly less words so that the customers understand them as soon as they read them.
 - d) Easy payment gateway is also important because the customer would feel boredom or get pissed if it takes time to get into payment process.
2. **ONLINE ADVERTISING:**
 - a) Advertising on social media is one of the major means of advertising on digital media. These days not only youngsters but also elders use social media to a greater extent which has become an excellent opportunity for the sellers to catch the attention of customers economically. Advertising can be made on facebook, youtube etc.
 - b) Mobile Applications: Advertising through mobile applications is also means to achieve digital brand because we can find everyone using smartphone. It is a form of business promotion on internet-enabled devices to deliver marketing advertisers.
 - c) Emails: Advertising through emails is where the recipient has been consented to receive promotional messages from brands.
3. **ONLINE GRIEVANCE HANDLING:** Any Online portal must be capable of handling their customer grievances. Consumers satisfaction can be measured not only during the purchase of the product but also on the basis of the after sales services provided. Hence it is important for the company to handle customer grievances with due care in order to retain the customer or to create a repurchase intention.
4. **PERSONALIZATION:** Personalization is an important factor to maintain the customers. It is the process of keeping in mind the needs and preferences of the customers so that the company is able to market the right product and experience to the right person at right time which would make the customers feel heard and that their choices and feelings are considered. Personalization can be made through allowing the customers to personalize their account as per their wish. That is giving options to filter

according to their requirement, giving their wish list etc. Also giving them daily offers, personalized discounts, messages, providing offers on occasions like birthdays etc.

5. **REWARDS AND INCENTIVES:** Customers get super excited when they find that they are rewarded for their activity. To attract the customers it is necessary that the online portals give the customers rewards and incentives so that they are encouraged to purchase again and again. These can be any form like online offers, online rewards, login rewards, online recommendation rewards etc.
6. **SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE:** The use of social media has increased to a greater extent because of increase in use of mobile phones. Not only youngsters but also the elder generations are actively present on social media. Hence company's presence on social media is very essential and is beneficial to attract large number of people.

Conclusion

Consumers are now increasingly spending more time on online services to browse, store, play, email, access Facebook, Twitter and other social apps through connected devices i.e., tablets, Smartphone, laptops and in this way the use of internet is being transformed. Mobile internet and social media have created new technology based channels or routes for organizations to communicate with their customers, called as "digital channels", leading to digital transformation. And so this transformation has made it easier for the companies to attract the customers, maintain them and retain them by creating a brand loyalty, engaging them with brand most of the time. The frequent updates through digital branding and various activities performed can create a connection between the brand and the consumer which would have a great impact on the business. The paper also specifies about the factors of digital branding that influences the consumer buying behavior. Thus digital branding is a modern means to develop the brand and make it visible among various digital venues. Also keep the customers loyal and engaged with your brand.

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