

## Preface

It is indeed a pleasure for me to announce the publication of the book titled, *Contemporary Research in E-Branding*. In recent years, many online brands or e-brands have emerged. Also, most traditional brands or brick and mortar brands have introduced corresponding e-brands. These e-brands, however, have met with varying levels of success. In order to ensure continued success of their e-brands, brand managers must appreciate the strengths and weaknesses of the online environment. It is also important for them to explore relevant theories and study cases of companies that are successful in developing e-brands. This book contains a set of excellent chapters that offer a smorgasbord of research findings on e-branding. These chapters encompass research undertaken in many countries thereby providing a wide coverage of how e-branding is practiced across the world. In order to offer readers with a wide variety of scholarly work on e-branding in one book, we have included five articles published earlier in other IGI publications. At the end, we include five more papers in the “Selected Readings”. These papers are not necessarily on e-branding, but offers the readers a set of valuable reference on related topics such as online consumer behavior, online customer behavior, online shopping experience, and eCRM.

The first chapter by Subir Bandyopadhyay and Rosemary Serjak titled, “Key Success Requirements for Online Brand Management” outlines the difference between traditional branding and e-branding. For example, the control of communication for e-brands rest with both the brand manager and the consumer, whereas for online branding, the control of communication rests largely with the brand manager. Authors go on to outline the critical success factors for an e-brand. According to them, the most critical steps to developing an e-brand is (1) creating name recognition, (2) providing a unique product and/or exceptional customer service, and (3) advertising through a variety of media.

The second chapter discusses an interesting application of virtual communities, particularly blogs, in political branding. In this chapter titled, “The Role of Blogs on a Successful Political Branding Strategy”, Luis Casaló, Carlos Flavián and Miguel Guinalíu describe the use that some political leaders have made of blogs. They outline the electoral campaigns of Howard Dean and Wesley Clark in the Democratic Primaries in 2003-2004. It is interesting to note here that almost all candidates in the 2007-2008 campaign have extensively used the blogs to communicate with citizens, provide a forum to supporters to network with one another, and even raise funds for their electoral campaigns.

The next chapter deals with brand personality – a critical property of a brand. In their chapter titled, “Brand Personality of Web Search Engines: Who is the Conqueror of the Digital Age?”, Aslihan Nasir and Suphan Nasir compare the brand personality profiles of three major search engines (MSN, Yahoo, and Google) on five dimensions of brand personality: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness. These comparisons reveal an interesting differentiation between the three major search engines.

The importance of corporate e-branding is highlighted in the next chapter titled, “The Naming of Corporate eBrands.” Tobias Kollmann and Christina Suckow emphasize that an online company should

specify the objectives for the brand name first before prioritizing the brand name criteria. Based on a survey of more than one hundred e-entrepreneurs in Germany, they rank-order a set of brand name criteria in terms of their importance to brand management.

For any off-line brand to venture into e-brand extension, it is important to understand how to leverage brand equity of core off-line products to introduce e-brands. The next chapter titled, “Returns on e-Branding Investment: Linking Pre-Acquisition Marketing Activity to Customer Profitability”, the author Patrali Chatterjee addresses the issue. She empirically demonstrates that investment on e-branding relationships with existing users generates higher returns for e-brand extensions that have close fit with the core off-line products.

The next chapter titled, “Consumers’ Optimal Experience on Commercial Web Sites: A Congruency Effect of Web Atmospheric Design and Consumers’ Surfing Goal” investigates if consumer attitude toward an e-brand is influenced by consumers’ online experience. According to the authors Fang Wan, Ning Nan and Malcolm Smith, consumers’ optimal online experience depends on the congruence or synergy between Web design features (such as static vs. dynamic navigation design) and Web users’ surfing goals (such as information seeking vs. fun seeking). They empirically show that the pairing of a dynamic navigation design with a fun-seeking goal produces a more optimal online experience than the incongruent pairings of dynamic designs with an information-seeking goal, or a static navigation system with a fun-seeking goal.

The success and longevity of e-brands depend largely on their ability to generate sustained revenue. Successful e-brands such as eBay and Amazon achieve this objective through innovative product and pricing strategies. In the next chapter titled, “Nonlinear Pricing in E-Commerce”, José Canals-Cerdá outlines one such innovative pricing strategy called “Featured Plus” (FP) pricing developed by eBay. Here, the company (e.g., eBay) offers the sellers the option of having their items listed first, if they pay an extra fee, when buyers search for specific items. Results indicate that the FP policy has an important positive effect on revenues for eBay and for the sellers in the market for arts sold by self representing artists.

Brand positioning is a critical strategy to any branding strategy. In the next chapter titled, “The E-Mode of Brand Positioning: The Need for an Online Positioning Interface”, the author S. Ramesh Kumar deals with the brand positioning of e-brands. Based on in-depth study of several examples of successful international as well as Indian e-brands, he outlines a set of implementable positioning strategies for e-brands.

The next chapter comes to us from India. In his paper titled, “Job Search at Naukri.com: Case Study of a Successful Dot-Com Venture in India”, Sanjeev Swami outlines how an Indian company has successfully developed an online portal for job seekers in direct competition with the powerful *monster.com* in India.

The following chapter titled, “Trademark Infringement in Pay-Per-Click Advertising” deals with a critical issue faced any brand – how to protect its brand name or the trade mark. This is even more challenging in the online environment because of the practice of paid placement offered by many paid search networks. Here a company can bid for third party trade names as keywords with the hope of reaching highly targeted prospects. Trade name holders claim that such practices divert business from their sites, thereby damaging their brand developed in the off-line world. The author, Peter O’Connor, cites several landmark cases both in the US and Europe, and highlight the contrasting positions taken by the US and European courts in this matter.

In the next chapter titled, “E-Branding the Consumer for Cultural Presence in Virtual Communities”, the author Robert Pennington explores the relationship between a company, a brand, a consumer, and the consumer’s social environment (e.g., a virtual community). In the acquisition process, brands

often mean the relationship between the consumer and the branded product. They can also signify the relationship between the consumer and the producer who “brands” the product. But in the consumption process, the relationship is somewhat different. Once a consumer acquires the brand, the producer is no longer part of the relationship between the brand and the consumer. Rather, a third element—the social environment (e.g., a virtual community)—replaces the producer in this triadic relationship.

The next chapter titled, “Impact of Internet Self-Efficacy on E-Service Brands”, Terry Daugherty, Harsha Gangadharbatla, and Matthew S. Eastin explore the influence, if any, of consumer self-confidence in using the Internet (they call it “Internet self-efficacy”) on their attitude towards e-service brands and their intention to use e-service brands. They demonstrate empirically that individuals who are experts at using the Internet are more likely to have favorable attitudes toward e-services, and hence more likely to adopt such services with ease.

Because of the global reach of e-brands, companies have to decide between globalized and localized strategies. Shintaro Okazaki and Radoslav Škapa shed light into this strategic decision in their paper titled, “Understanding Brand Website Positioning in the New EU Member States: The Case of the Czech Republic.” They examine the Web site communication strategies of American MNCs in the Czech Republic and compared with those in the US, the UK, France and Germany. They found that American MNCS tend to standardize their Czech sites. They believe that the same strategy is applied to other new EU member states. They attribute this strategy to the relatively recent market entry into, and relatively small size of these markets.

In the chapter titled, “Online Consumers’ Switching Behavior: A Buyer-Seller Relationship Perspective”, authors Dahui Li, Glen J. Browne, and James C. Wetherbe investigate online consumers’ switching behavior among different Web sites. According to them, this switching behavior depends on commitment, satisfaction, trust, comparison level of the alternatives, and the extent of non-retrievable investment.

In the chapter titled, “Understanding Consumer Reactions to Offshore Outsourcing of Customer Services”, Piyush Kumar, Rajiv Mathur, and Avinabh Dhawan deal with the controversial topic of offshore outsourcing. Experts are sharply divided on the impact of offshore outsourcing of services on western economies. While industries generally favor it because of its cost advantage, labor organizations oppose it for the loss of well paying jobs in the domestic market. Despite its growing importance in the World Economy, very few studies have so far investigated how offshore outsourcing influences individual consumers, their perceptions, attitudes and behaviors. In this chapter, the authors demonstrate how offshore outsourcing of customer services can influence not only consumer perceptions about service quality and brand image, but also impact customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, complaint behavior and repurchase intentions.

In Chapter XVI titled, “An Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation-Based Model for Measuring Consumer Shopping Oriented Web Site Success”, Edward Garrity, Joseph O’Donnell, Young Jin Kim, and G. Lawrence Sanders develop a motivation-based model to measure the success of consumer shopping web sites. In particular, they explore the influence of two factors, Decision Support Satisfaction and Interface Satisfaction, on perceived usefulness (or Task Support Satisfaction) of an online shopping site.

The next chapter comes to us from Hong Kong. In this chapter titled, “A Critical Review of Online Consumer Behavior”, Christy Cheung, Gloria Chan, and Moez Limayem provide an integrative model to study online consumer behavior. Their findings indicate that the literature on online consumer behavior is rather fragmented. For example, most studies focused on the intention and adoption of online shopping while few studies investigated the repurchase behavior of online shoppers.

Because of the popularity of online shopping among various consumers segments, many traditional retailers have tapped into the new channel. These multi-channel retailers, however, must understand what factors influence consumers’ decision to shop in one retail channel or another. In the chapter

titled, “Multi-Channel Retailing and Customer Satisfaction: Implications for eCRM”, authors Patricia Warrington, Elizabeth Gangstad, Richard Feinberg, and Ko de Ruyter investigate, based on survey data collected in the US and Europe, the influence, if any, of shopping experience on a consumer’s future intention to buy. They found that shopping intentions tend to vary based on the shopping channel as well as cultural differences.

The last chapter titled, “The Effect of Information Satisfaction and Relational Benefit on Consumer’s On-line Shopping Site Commitment” investigates the potential determinants of online consumers’ commitment to a shopping site. Using on-line survey data collected in Korea, Chung-Hoon Park and Young-Gul Kim empirically demonstrate that two potential determinants, information satisfaction and relational benefits, are highly predictable of consumers’ commitment to an online shopping site. In particular, they found that information satisfaction is influenced mostly product informational quality while relational benefit is affected mostly by service information quality.

It is my sincere hope that this collection of articles on e-branding will offer the reader a broad perspective on research and application in this emerging field.

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