

ONLINE BRAND BUILDING: LESSONS FROM TOP BRANDS

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The purpose of the present conceptual paper is to identify the elements of online brand building, based on a literature review and mini case studies of successful brands. It is based on a thorough analytical review of literature and an extensive web-based search. The available literature on online brand building presents many different ideas about the domain. The study aims at delineating the concept of online brand building. It finds that brand-building efforts need to be aligned with the changing technology and provides a basis for the formulation and implementation of online branding strategies.

Keywords: *Online Brand Building, Internet*

JEL classification: M3

1. Introduction

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word 'brand' originates from the German word 'brandr' which refers to the mark made by a hot iron. Usage of the word was first noted in 1552 (Jevons, 2005). Brands serve various functions. Besides helping customers make purchase decisions, brands help marketers in measuring the effectiveness of the marketing efforts. According to the American Marketing Association (1960) brand is 'a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competitors'.

Brand plays the role of an endorser by providing a credibility that can reassure the new buyer, especially if a new technology is involved. It also works on an emotional level by providing a valued relationship with an organization (Aaker, 2004).

Since time immemorial firms have been using brand building efforts such as positioning the brand in the minds of the consumers, communicating the brand message (via traditional channels like television and print advertising, event sponsorship, public relations campaigns, cause related marketing), delivering performance and bonding with the customers via traditional modes. Ghodeswar (2008) proposes model of brand building which has four elements namely positioning the brand, communicating the brand message,

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delivering the brand performance, and leveraging the brand equity – PCDL model.

The brand concept is based on the fact that the user's brand image is formed not only by the product attributes but also by the complete experience that they associate with the brand (Rowley, 2004a and 2004b). If a brand is able to sustain these added values in the face of competition, it leads to the success of the brand (De Chematony and Mc Donald, 1992).

The identity of a brand is shaped as a result of on-going interaction between the identity of the firm and the customer. The requirement of brand building, is giving rise to a 'brand driven culture' and 'a lifelong commitment' (Knapp, 1999). Brands should be managed in the form of long-term assets (Wood, 2000).

The introduction of Web 2.0 technology, followed by Web 3.0 technology and different social media platforms have contributed to dramatic changes in the marketplace today. Because of the social nature of the internet and mobile technologies, customers are increasingly integrating these technologies and platforms into their day-to-day businesses. These technologies in turn enable customers to interconnect worldwide and share and exchange product related knowledge with great speed and ease. The impact of consumer to consumer communications has been greatly magnified in the marketplace. This has snatched the power away from the hands of the marketers and given control to customers, leading to the dawn of a new era of consumer empowerment.

The 21st century is witnessing an explosion of internet-based messages transmitted through different media. These messages have become a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behaviour including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behaviour, post-purchase communication and evaluation. As a result, they can prove to be major tools of brand building by the marketers.

On one hand, these online platforms provide an opportunity to marketers to build the brand by providing for massive exposure in the most affordable way possible. On the other hand, consumer empowerment coupled with increased global competition render the traditional strategies of brand building obsolete.

Firms need to revise their strategies of 'brand building' in order to match up with these developments. Though some brands are making use of social media platforms to build brands, many marketers are still not aware of the potential of online brand building. Several strategies are adopted by firms to build and strengthen their brands online, these include-SEO strategy, online marketing strategy ,e-mail marketing strategy, e-WOM, viral and buzz marketing strategy and content marketing strategy to name a few.

A number a firms who could recognize the potential of online platforms in advance, in such a

changing scenario are enjoying the first mover advantage. According to senior analyst Williamson (2011), worldwide marketing spending by companies on social networking sites is about \$4.3 billion. Hence, companies are turning towards online brand building efforts. Managers invest in social media to foster relationships and interact with customers.

With this background in mind, the present study analyses the concept of online brand building. Section 2 discusses the distinction between online and offline branding; and identifies the elements of online brand building. Section 3 gives a list of questions that marketer can ponder upon and answer before initiating the online brand building efforts. In Section 4 six elements of online brand building are delineated. It also provides a study of ten case studies reinforcing the proposed model and demonstrating the use of the six elements of online brand building. Section 5 gives conclusions.

2. Online Branding and Offline Branding

Since time immemorial, offline efforts have been used towards building brand. It is only recently that the technological revolution coerced the marketers to restructure their brand building efforts and direct them through the online avenues.

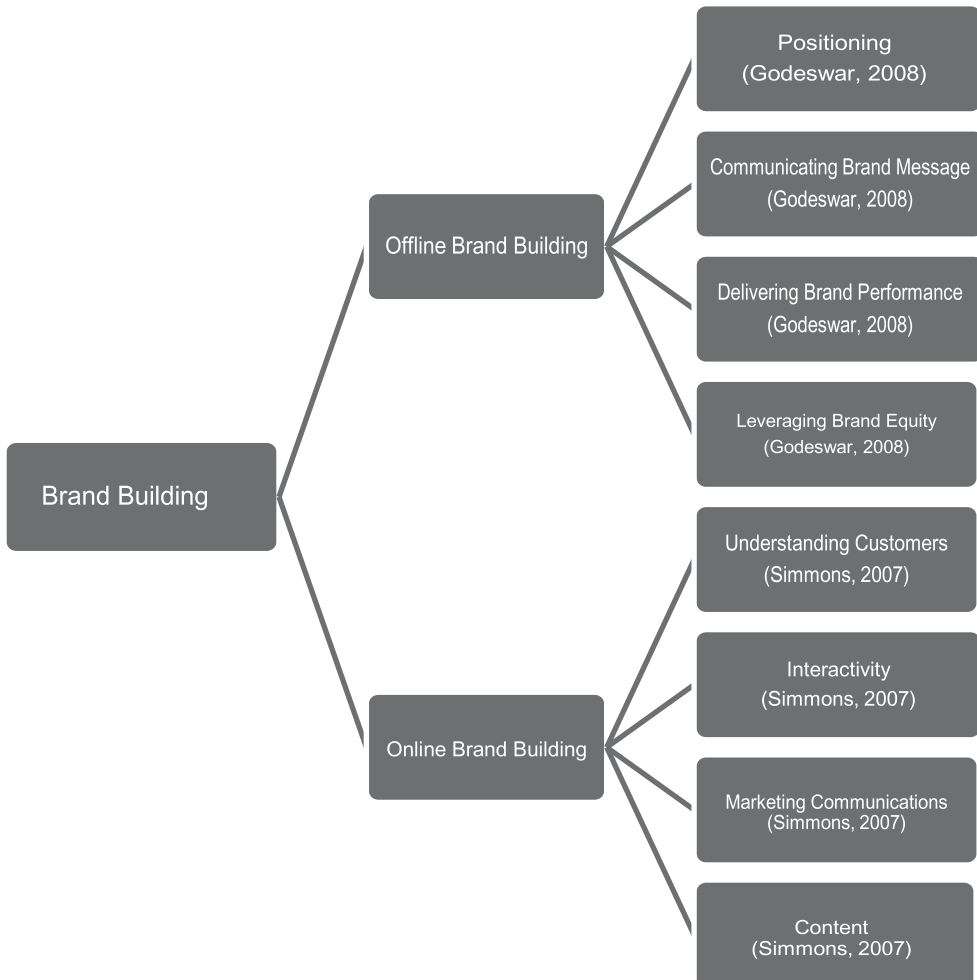
Online brand building is different from offline brand building in many ways. According to Ghodeswar (2008), in the physical world, companies need to position their brands in the minds of consumers. Alongside the traditional media channels like newspapers, magazines, television, hoardings, public relations, media vehicles such as outdoor communications and sponsoring events are used. Monitoring the progress of brands in terms of purchasing, consumption, brand recognition, brand recall, advertising awareness, etc. helps the managers to adjust their strategies of marketing to achieve the desired performance of their brands.

While online brand building efforts mainly focus on interactivity and content on the online platforms besides understanding customers and marketing communications (Simmons, 2007). Simmons (2007) in his seminal work on i-branding or internet based branding delineates four aspects of a successful brand: understanding the customers; interactivity; marketing communications and content. Buzz or viral marketing plays a more important role in online brand building than offline brand building. The influence and range of social activities of virtual communities of consumption add to the marketer's understandings of consumer behavior and marketing (Kozinets, 1999). The online customer advocacy increases the rate of dissemination of the marketing message manifold. The monitoring of the online campaigns is mainly carried out in the form of listening. Firms are equipped with social media analytics and the right listening tools to measure the success of online branding

campaigns.

In the traditional brand relationship, communication flows between the vendor and the consumer. The web, however, has led to dialogue flowing between consumers via synchronous 'chat' taking place in 'chat rooms' and asynchronous discussions in discussion forums or bulletin boards. The popularity of interactive communication, besides giving the brand an abundance of user generated content, also gives an opportunity for consumers to form genuine relationships with like-minded people talking about the product online. Both the content and possibility of forming relationships render online brand building as a very powerful process (McWilliam, 2000).

Figure 1: Online Branding and Offline Branding



3. Questions Preceding the Online Branding Process

The brand management decisions require a lot of research and planning on the part of the marketers. The brand building decisions, just like other forms of decisions, are based on information analysis. The marketers, therefore, need to conduct appropriate research before taking up the online brand building efforts.

Based on the literature reviewed, authors delineate a list of questions that marketers can ponder upon and answer before initiating the online brand building efforts.

Figure 2: Brand Building Questions to be Answered by the Marketers

Brand Building Questions needed to be answered by Marketers	What does my brand stand for ?
	What elements does my brand's website have?
	What options/platforms does the brand provide for the customers to engage?
	What does the brand do to allow the consumers to amplify/spread the message?
	What feelings does the brands' consumption create?
	How are the brand building efforts captured and measured?

Brand building is a complex process and while on the one hand, the advent of the internet has opened up new avenues, on the other hand, it has made branding an even more complex challenge for the marketers. The creation of trust through the development of strong internet brands has become a point of concern for marketers. Many businesses are therefore, searching for new strategies that might assist them in creating some distinctiveness online (Kenney and Curry, 1999).

4. Six Elements of Brand Building and Case Studies

4.1 Six Elements of Online Brand Building

In this section, the authors, based on a thorough analytical and critical review of literature, delineate six elements of online brand building. In the subsequent sections, mini case studies of ten successful brands are presented to exhibit that these popular brands use these six elements in their brand building efforts.

Branding in the online environments poses a number of challenges and opportunities and it is, therefore, important to review the varying ideas on branding in digital environments and to delineate the elements, which form the basics of online branding.

(i) *Defining Brand Essence*: The first element is defining the brand essence. The brand

essence (Ahn, 1998) is the soul of the brand. It represents what the brand is most fundamentally supposed to represent to the consumers. According to Ahn (1998), the essence of concepts (e.g. brands) consists of those features perceived to cause most other features of the brand. Usually stated in two to three words, brand essence is the one constant across product categories and throughout the world (VanAuken, 2014).

People use 'naive theories' to make sense of concepts (Murphy and Medin, 1985). These theories provide causal links between the different features of a concept. The causal relations among different features of a concept combine to form an associative network. A brand essence works in the same way. It acts as a guide that provides a consistency of purpose and execution for every customer. Brand essence provides a base for and gives meaning to a brand.

'Brand Essence' is a term used for the core value or set of values that the brand stands for (Michel and Ambler, 1998). Brand essence is its DNA (Kelly, 2016). The product itself, the packaging, price, positioning, advertising and public relations all reinforce the brand's standing in the mind of the consumer. These values change little over years but are interpreted for the new generations (Michel and Ambler, 1998).

Managerial awareness of brand essence is essential for the brand building. To maintain the meaning of a brand, and avoid alienation of customers, adjustments in brand positioning should not affect the essence of a brand. Ideally, such adjustments should reinforce the meaning of a brand (Keller, 1993). Brand managers are, therefore, constantly facing the challenge of adapting their brands without diluting its essence.

The brand essence communicated offline is echoed in online channels as well. It is the core of the brand and it captures and communicates the conceptual subtleties and message of the brand. This is even more important in the digital world where brands need to be crystal clear in the expression of their essence, reinforcing consistently across time in order to establish it in the consumer's mind.

(ii) Website Development: The second element is website development. A website is something which remains important for a business. It serves two main purposes of usability and communication. The addition of an online presence accelerates the branding efforts. Not harnessing the web as a business tool is risky, even for businesses that may consider themselves as primarily offline, mainly because the customers today are spending more and more of their time online. The success of business depends to greater extent on being relevant, consistent and accessible online (Shoosmith, 2012).

A website consists of several elements like design (logo, font(s), white space,

theme/template, layout and colours), content and navigation. The different elements of a website are:

- *Visual Design* that deals with the balance, appeal, aesthetics and uniformity of overall website graphical look. This includes colours, photographs, shapes, font types and animations (Cyr and Bonanni, 2005).
- *Navigation Design* used to help or hinder users as they access different sections and pages of the site.
- *Content* comprising of those elements of the site that convey information to a user.

Cyr and Bonanni (2005) reported three aspects related to a website: website trust, website satisfaction and e-loyalty. Website trust focuses on consumer confidence in the website as part of a buyer-seller transactional exchange. Website satisfaction refers to a positive navigation experience and perception of a well-designed website. E-loyalty represents online repeat purchase intention or return visits to a website (Cyr and Bonanni, 2005).

Connecting the brand website to the social aptitude of community participants creates a new marketing tool that can be used for the brand building process (McWilliam, 2000).

(iii) Providing for Customer Participation in Brand Voice: Brand voice is an authentic and consistent voice for the brand allowing to explain the business convincingly and to live the business values and culture. According to Keller (2006), "Marketing communications represent the voice of a brand and the means by which companies can establish a dialogue with consumers concerning their product offerings". Brand voice is composed of four components: persona, tone, language and purpose Schwab (2011).

Marketers use various marketing channels to represent the brand voice. There are various channels that attempt to communicate a distinctive 'voice' for brands (Griffin and Hauser, 1993). Different marketing communication channels are available to represent the voice of a brand. Earlier traditional marketing channels such as advertising and print media were used by firms to represent the brand's voice. Now with the advent of social media, the degree of consumer's participation in bringing the message across has increased manifold and the consumers are acting as marketing salespersons spreading and amplifying the brand's voice.

By providing platforms for communication and online communities, a brand can help customers participate in brand voice. Virtual communities provide platforms for customers to participate in brand voice. According to Rheingold (1993), virtual communities are 'social aggregations that emerge from the internet when enough people carry on public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in the

cyberspace'. By treating community members as special members of an insider's club with special benefits, online consumers bond into long term relationships with marketing organizations. These benefits might include timely sharing of meaningful and valuable information (Kozinets, 1999). These consumers, in turn, act as advocates spreading the brand voice.

(iv) Buzz Creation: The fourth element is buzz creation (Levinson, 1984). Buzz marketing is one of the five guerrilla marketing instruments. By getting consumers talking about their products and services, companies employ buzz marketing to grow their awareness through the growth of online traffic and increase sales and profits. Buzz marketing is the promotion of a company or its products and services through initiatives conceived and designed to get people and the media talking positively about that company, product or service (Kirby and Marsden, 2006).

Ahuja et.al (2007) defined buzz as "a multidimensional communication process that involves sending persuasive messages out via buzz agents to buzz targets in the form of word of mouth conversations and retrieving market research information from buzz agents on the particulars of these buzz marketing experiences". Buzz marketing stimulates the diffusion of brand message via consumer-to-consumer interactions. It is possible to sell a concept before the product is launched (Hutter and Hoffman, 2011). Empowered customers can sell the product and shape the business if given vested interest (Mulhall, 2006).

Buzz marketing involves using a special 'hook' to get consumers and the media talking about a campaign. It is possible to sell a concept before the launch of the product. People buy on emotion and justify with logic. Buzz marketing creates a base on which special marketing bursts can be done. Marketers make use of the referencing behaviour of the buzz agents by providing them with product samples, insider information and other incentives (Hutter and Hoffman, 2011).

Buzz marketing works on the principle of Hawthorne Effect. This Effect, harnessed by seeding trials, transforms opinion leaders into loyal adopters and powerful word of mouth advocates. By turning opinion-leading target buyers into product or service evangelists using the Hawthorne Effect, a brand can create a powerful sales force (Kirby and Marsden, 2006).

(v) Brand Experience: The fifth element is brand experience (De Chernatony et al. 2006). Brand experience is conceptualized as sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments (Brakus, et al. 2009).

Experiencing the brand through a variety of situations creates in the mind of a potential consumer, a kind of profile full of feelings, emotions and attitudes about the brand, helping the consumer to psychologically predict what items associated with it are likely to be liked. By manipulating that experience, firms can make higher profits.

Brakus et al. (2009) construct a brand experience scale that includes four dimensions: sensory, affective, intellectual and behavioural. In six studies, the authors show that the scale is reliable, valid, and distinct from other brand measures, including brand evaluations, brand involvement, brand attachment, customer delight and brand personality. Moreover, brand experience directly affects consumer satisfaction and loyalty; and indirectly through brand personality associations.

The role of experience lies at the core in the creation of consumer value. According to Baron et al. (2009), the significance of the five human senses in creating the multi-sensory brand-experience is related to customer value and the overall brand image.

Consumer influence generated by brand experience creates 'pull' which brings people into the brand through advocacy. Digital media has amplified and accelerated its reach and together they are perfect partners.

The 'experiential' form of brand consumption is emerging as an important means towards better brand management and marketing. As a result, the co-construction of the brand experience and the direction that offers for effective brand management begins to emerge (Schembri, 2009).

(vi) Branding Campaign Monitoring: The final element is branding campaign monitoring. By measuring and analysing the results of the branding campaign by efficient means and social media analytics, a firm monitors its campaign effectively. Branding campaign monitoring involves the direct measures of success and wider proxies, having the right analysis tools, listening tools, qualitative data and the impact on reputation/brand if this is measurable.

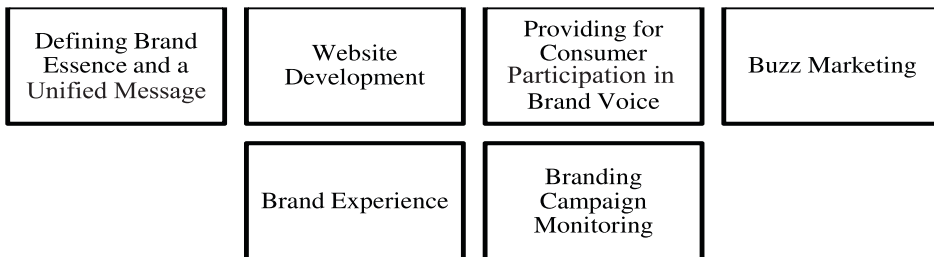
Marketers evaluate web chatter in real time to create dynamic and timely social media content. Frequent monitoring of campaign results is carried out using a number of social media analytics like Crowd Analyzer, 76insights, Reputology and RepLab to name a few. In the context of online campaign monitoring, natural language processing plays a key role. There is an unprecedented demand for text mining software for object-relational mapping (ORM).

Online branding campaign mainly requires three steps to be undertaken on the part of the marketer. The first step is to clarify what is being measured, then, determine the

measurement techniques and finally, identifying the schedule and budget (The Huffington Post, 2011).

In today's world of technology, where the control of information has moved to users and consumers, every move of a firm is subject to the keen observation of a powerful global audience. Online monitoring tools allow marketers to process, understand and aggregate large streams of opinions about the firm (Amigo et. al, 2013).

Figure 3: Proposed Six Elements of Online Brand Building



By approaching online branding in a structured manner, marketers ensure that their internet campaigns support their general branding strategy, rather than detracting from it. Organized and integrated efforts towards online branding can deliver the real value to customers, beyond revenue generation (Simmons, 2007).

4.2 Case Studies

Case studies of ten popular brands are studied to delineate the approach for brand building adopted by them. These case studies reinforce the proposed model for online brand building.

4.2.1 Amazon.com

Amazon.com was launched In July 1995 by Jeff Bezos in the form of an online book-selling site, which offered books at low prices. Amazon.com has since then evolved from being just an online bookseller into a one-stop shop with 'Earth's Biggest Selection'.

The Brand name 'Amazon' is short, memorable, captures the spirit of the site and conveys its vast size and offering. It also begins with an 'A' so that it would appear at the top of search engine lists (Cleland, 2000).

The vision statement of Amazon is in harmony with the choice of the brand name 'Amazon': "To be the earth's most customer centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online."

Amazon's innovative online brand building strategies keep it a step ahead of the competitors.

Its online advertising techniques include paid search marketing, interactive ads on portals, e-mail campaigns and search engine optimisation (SEO).

Besides SEO, another online brand building tool used by Amazon is user-generated content and consumer reviews. Amazon provides content on several levels, including expert reviews, customer testimonials, recommendations, interviews with authors, discussion boards, and customer purchase circles (Cleland, 2000). Amazon works towards developing tightly knit online communities (newsgroups and chat rooms) to create a 'buzz'.

Yet another online tool used by Amazon is e-mailing. Amazon maintains close communication with customers. Once orders are placed, they are subsequently confirmed by e-mail, and customers are also e-mailed when the items are shipped from the warehouse. In addition, two personalised services, Eyes and Editors, help maintain contact and build traffic by e-mailing customers when desired products or books become available.

Amazon believes in acquiring a huge amount of data and then using it. Every purchase, every page viewed and every search is recorded. This enables Amazon to provide certain additional information to the customer, hence acting as marketing tool.

Amazon's Associates program was an online communication strategy, which proved to be very profitable. In Amazon's Associates program, other websites display the Amazon.com hot-link and offer specific books of interest to their visitors. This directs customers to Amazon.com. Amazon offers everyday free shipping options worldwide, which, in turn prove to be effective marketing baits.

Other online brand building techniques by Amazon.com include viral marketing techniques like free gift certificates (which customers send to friends, thereby, promoting Amazon.com). In famous viral campaigns such as Amazon.com Refer-A-Friend - customers are encouraged to provide e-mail addresses of friends in return for free gift certificate and Amazon.com About Me – customers create a personal profile (with pictures) on the site. People are intended to tell their friends about the profile, spreading the word for Amazon.com. The culture of matrix that Amazon practices helps in keeping an eye over the efforts of the advertising campaigns (Chaffey, 2014).

4.2.2 Brand Obama

Barack Obama began his career in grassroots organizing while he was pursuing his studies from Occidental College in Los Angeles (Balz and Johnson, 2010).

Obama built his platform as a community organizer on the need for 'change', which was very similar to his brand in the 2008 election (Obama, 2007). The Obama campaign used positive

visual designs to convince young people that he was inspiring, moderate and unifying (Seidman, 2010). The visual images Obama used during the campaign, specifically the symbolic logo of the campaign, the blue 'O' which stood for 'Obama', and the red-and-white stripes which stood for flag and country, became a part of this brand and were used on the campaign's official Facebook page (Seidman, 2010).

The design of Obama's website was simple but quite painstakingly done. The website had plenty of white space and soft blue palate which was easy on the eyes symbolizing 'harmony' (Cohen, 2008).

The 2008 presidential elections was the first time social media was used to such a great extent in the branding process of a presidential candidate. The Obama campaign understood beforehand that people communicate through both word-of-mouth and social media. Obama's online presence was there to garner supporters, raise excitement and provide information in a viral fashion (Sonies, 2011)

Even though the Obama campaign managers exerted little control over the message, they built Obama's brand using the power of social media and the 'Obama brand evangelists'. Two main features of the Obama campaign that caught the attention of the target audience of young voters was that it was free of control and technologically advanced.

The Obama campaign also had to face a lot of troubles. One such barrier was The 'Celebrity' advertisement from the McCain campaign, which showed Obama being branded as a celebrity in the pejorative sense. Due to proper monitoring and reviewing by the Obama campaign the McCain advertisement had little effect on the Obama brand (Sonies, 2011).

Obama's brand was genuine and appealed to the public because the Obama campaign understood American culture; especially how the youth culture consumes messages (Lieb and Shah, 2010).

4.2.3 McDonald's

McDonald's is one of the largest global brands and it made use of the internet to strengthen its brand. McDonald's is the world's leading food service retailer with more than 30,000 local McDonald's restaurants serving 46 million customers each day in more than 100 countries (Rowley, 2004a; 2004b).

The year 2003's new campaign called 'I'm loving it' seeks to reinforce the traditional brand values of McDonald's such as fun, family, community and social responsibility.

The website communicates the overall brand message of a fun experience though the use of elements which reflect a unified message. These elements include logo, graphics, text and

copy, type face, currency and news, colour, shapes, layout and combination of images, wallpapers and screen savers. Globalization effect can also be seen on the websites. For instance, on the Australian site, football is replaced with images of boarders on their way to the beach.

McDonald's has been known over the years for its creative marketing campaigns. McDonald's launched the 'Cool Train' campaign in 2003, designed to communicate the New Tastes Menu range in a way that was engaging and encouraged viewers to actively interact with the brand. The TV campaign was later supported by Nova FM, who actively promoted 'Cool Train' on air. This combination of channels including television, radio, SMS and the web created a new type of brand interaction opportunity.

www.rockybeach.com was created as an online supplement to the new Big Mac television promotion. Television viewers were driven to the website. To develop a strong online community, the site provided a real time community channel to the Big Mac television commercial characters, Josh, Dave, Jesse, Buzz, and Sandy. The content of the site was constructed to appear alive and provide real-time community features. It also incorporated a weekly newsletter, and an interactive online game based on the site characters where registered users could play for a range of prizes such as mobile phones, CDs, movie passes, clothes and body boards (Rowley, 2004a and 2004b).

'Where is Bob?' campaign also made effective use of integrated channels to build brand engagement, and online community. The campaign was designed to drive awareness and sales. Television advertisements, featuring the URL, introduced the Bob character getting lost on a beach with a Beach Burger.

By going online and finding Bob on a virtual beach, viewers/players were entitled to a free desert voucher for each beach burger meal purchased. Tactically the game had to be easy enough to allow users to find Bob without losing interest, but sticky enough to reinforce the brand message. The target market, 16-24 year olds, are the heaviest users of the internet.

All these campaigns strengthened McDonald's brand among the youth.

4.2.4 Oreo

Oreo had its beginnings in a Nabisco bakery in New York City and celebrated its 100th birthday in 2012. Oreo was launched in India in March 2011. It entered the market as Cadbury Oreo because in India, Cadbury is a stronger brand name than Kraft, and Oreo was launched with an initial focus on generating awareness. The product was sweetened to suit the taste of the Indian population and Kraft exploited Cadbury's network of 1.2 million stores. The website of Oreo has plenty of white space and sky blue colour with animated

version of the dark chocolate Oreo cookies hanging here and there.

Oreo keeps itself up to date in terms of marketing and branding strategies and is known for its creative and clever marketing campaigns.

Oreo has a huge fan base on Social Media like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram. One of Oreo India's branding strategies is Oreo India's Facebook page. Oreo India's Facebook page is one of the fastest growing in the world. Each day from June 25 to October 2, 2012, Oreo released a playful image of the cookie redesigned to commemorate something that had happened on that date.

Oreo plays by simple rules and deceptively simple advertisements - the cookie is always the hero, the colour elements are consistent and the graphics are bold - to create a brand identity that can readily be extended across multiple channels.

Oreo always looks for ways to exploit digital channels, including making Vine movies (although as with other messages, the distinctive Oreo cookie is always the star) (Southgate, 2014). Oreo's 'Cookie vs. Cream' videos are a clever campaign housed on their YouTube account. Other branding campaigns include many like its 'Daily dunks' initiative to the community by launching 'Dunkathon'. Dunkathon is a brand building campaign with the power of fan-sourced content.

Oreo understands that consumer behaviour has changed in a way that requires them to redefine how they communicate. Beyond TV, far more screen time is being spent with laptops, smartphones and tablets than ever before. Oreo maintains the same overall aesthetic and approach across different online media. Further, Oreo believes in practicing an agile form of marketing and to monitor the results, the firm listens to what the consumers have to say.

4.2.5 Apple

Apple was born in 1976 with the aim of developing and selling desktop computers. Apple later also started selling laptops in the 1990s. The brand went for a dramatic rebranding when it first launched the iPod in 2001, followed by iPhone in 2007, iPad in 2010, and Apple Pay and Apple Watch in 2014.

The Apple brand essence can be summed up by lifestyle; imagination, innovation, passion, hopes and power-to-the-people through technology. The apple website showcases Apple's various products. The text layout, visual images, use of whites, greys and blacks all correspond to the brand message of power to the people through technology.

Apple has created a passionate brand community of fans who identify with Apple's brand.

Apple advocates represent a distinct subculture with their own rituals, traditions and mind-sets. Besides offering a variety of products, Apple has established itself as a brand to which consumers relate deeply.

Apple consumers enjoy the unity and harmony, a brand community brings and appreciate the emotional reward they experience when sharing excitement and buzz around the brand. The sense of excitement that precedes the introduction of new product launches often contribute towards the consumers' heightened sense of emotions. Apple users are known to stand in line for hours outside Apple stores waiting for new product launches (Machado et al. 2014).

To create the buzz, Apple makes use of clever teaser marketing campaigns, dragging on the suspense for as long as possible. For a long duration, before the release of every iPhone, the media conversation builds to high levels. Apple stokes the buzz by providing virtually no information.

Apple fully understands that all aspects of the customer experience are important and that all brand touch-points must reinforce the Apple brand. It delivers innovative, beautifully designed, highly ergonomic, and technology-leading products. Not only does Apple have a history of product innovations, they package their products in an excellent manner. Apple delivers product experience.

4.2.6 Netflix

Netflix began as a DVD rental company but has now become one of the most popular streaming websites in the world. The slogan 'Netflix and Chill' is used all over by youngsters. Not only has Netflix dominated homes and the industry, it has also dominated the internet.

Netflix Inc. is an international provider of on-demand internet streaming media available to viewers in all of North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, and parts of Europe, and of flat rate DVD-by-mail in the United States, where mailed DVDs and Blu-ray are sent via Permit Reply Mail.

The company founded in 1997, is headquartered in California. Netflix differentiated itself from its competitors through the company's commitment to producing quality original content and activating its satisfied subscribers to become brand evangelists.

The online brand building efforts of Netflix can be viewed in numerous clever campaigns utilizing the digital marketing strategy with an emphasis in interactive content marketing.

By giving viewers something they were excited to talk about and a venue to talk at (through viewer reviews and branded social platforms), Netflix created a hotbed for attracting new customers through user-generated electronic word-of-mouth.

Netflix also coordinated an 'Orange is the New Black' twitter chat, which allowed viewers and actors to engage while watching the show. From these efforts the show generated more viewers and hours viewed in its first week than any previous original series.

In addition to Twitter, Netflix interacts with viewers on Facebook fan pages for each of their original series, sharing exclusive previews, behind the scenes shots and inside jokes to engage their audience. Fans love the attention and the extra content, and in return the fan pages of Netflix's shows receive thousands of likes, comments and shares per post, leading to more engagement, more satisfied customers, and new subscribers. To monitor or test the results of the online branding campaigns, what Netflix does is the monitoring of subscriber acquisition and retention.

4.2.7 Tinder

Tinder was launched in 2012 as a location based dating app. IAC is the parent company that owns a major portion of Tinder. Since the launch, the Tinder app has become a phenomenon. By January 2014, the app boasted more than 10 million users. The marketing strategy that tinder used initially was supply seeding. Tinder went from college to college asking female students to try tinder. As more women joined the platform, men were eager to download it and see who was available nearby for dates. Tinder then used consumer word of mouth to reinforce the brand. The combination of supply seeding and word of mouth was like a spark on dry kindling. Word of mouth continues to be an important growth factor for Tinder.

Over the course of time, the dating app made use of several online branding methods:

- An attractive website that showcases dreamy pictures of couples which met each other on tinder.
- Creating an addictive app through a novel and gamified user experience that capitalized on new social norms toward casual dating.
- The company reaches out to power users (celebrities and influencers) on social networks to get them on their site and promoting their presence on it.

The consumption experience that Tinder provides is different from other dating service brands. The major difference between Tinder and other mobile apps is how the user navigates through potential matches.

Matches are presented like a virtual deck of cards that the user 'swipes' through. It's easy to do with one hand, making it perfect for moving quickly through a large 'deck' of potential matches. Besides the ease of use, other features that make the tinder brand experience better than the competitors are softening the blow of rejection, gamification, variable rewards, ego

boost, a painless sign up and on boarding process and maximum matches with minimum effort (Brown, 2015).

4.2.8 Evian

Evian, a part of Danone Waters' brand portfolio, is French mineral water sourced from the Evian-Les-Bains spring in the Alps. In 2012, Evian changed its brand essence to 'live young'. Evian has been urging consumers to rediscover their 'inner baby', making use of the baby theme like 'Rollerbabies' and 'Baby Inside'.

The Website of Evian, which uses an ample amount of baby pink colour, is in unification with this brand message. Evian's first YouTube-exclusive campaign with the famous ad clip showcasing kids got a spot in the Guinness World Records as the most viewed online ad ever.

YouTube also provided a platform for customers to engage in brand voice and to amplify it. Evian's YouTube channel provides a platform to the masses for the generation of a user-generated video. The goal is to create the world's longest user-generated video. They do this by allowing users to create short video clips that tie into the theme.

Evian is also on Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest providing users a platform to amplify and spread the electronic word. It also introduced a Baby & Me mobile app that enables iOS and Android users to 'baby-fy' their photos, revealing their inner child, and share the results across Facebook, Instagram and Twitter using the global hashtag #evianbabyandme.

Evian's online brand building activities aim at positioning the brand as a leader having a vision of youth. Evian babies are an expression of the brand's values and image. The baby ad campaigns of Evian are not one-and-done sensations, but an ongoing series. In 2008, Evian 'rollerbabies' generated nearly 250 million views online, entering the Guinness World Records as the most viewed online ad ever at the time. The 2013 'Baby and me' Evian babies generated even more views (Evian Launches Global Baby & Me Campaign, 2013).

Evian's Live Young campaign was an all-pervasive campaign. All of their images and products reinforced the motif of 'live young' through the idea of fueling the Evian baby inside.

Evian moved from its core product i.e. packaged drinking water to create an entirely new product, which is more about living young, that enhances the brand experience. As Evian is more expensive than other mineral water brands, it is the emotional ties between the brand and the consumers that eventually become the reason for consumers to consume the product.

4.2.9 Third Season of Mad Men

Mad Men is a period drama TV series which revolves around the post-WWII advertising

industry and Don Draper, the series' primary ad man. Mad Men's opening sequence is a 36-second long dream sequence of a silhouetted man lost and trapped in the American dream.

AMC networks also has web presence in the form of a website. The official site for AMC's award winning Mad Men showcases games, making of videos, episodes and character guides to attract and engage the audience. The use of dramatic colours and action packed images and graphics are in harmony with the essence of the 'period drama' TV series, which is 'a show that is sensational, thrilling, hair raising and action packed'.

The third season of the American television drama series Mad Men premiered on August 16, 2009 and concluded on November 8, 2009. To promote the season before its launch Mad Men, AMC and Banana Republic partnered and launched clever marketing and branding campaigns.

Prior to launch of the season, a marketing campaign called 'Mad Men Yourself!' was launched. AMC launched an avatar creator to create a '60s version of oneself'. Once created, the avatar could be shared through Twitter or Facebook.

News of the application travelled fast and the app was praised by top magazines and blogs. It is mainly because many of the Mad Men audience work in the advertising industry themselves. People in marketing and advertising love talking to each other about advertising which worked in favour of the Mad Men campaign. The application soon moved beyond the realm of advertising professionals, into a circle of journalists, and then into the mainstream.

These marketing campaigns for AMC's third season of Mad Men are a notable example of online brand building. The result of these online marketing campaigns was that the drama show received some of the highest viewership and ratings seen up to that time.

4.2.10 Christina Aguilera

RCA records (a unit of Germany's Bertelsmann AG) launched Christina Aguilera in 1999. They picked a team of young internet surfers to create a buzz by starting chatting about the then 18-year-old Christina Aguilera on popular teen internet sites such as www.alloy.com, www.bolt.com and www.gurl.com. Both overt and covert form of advocacy was used (White, 1999).

RCA's aim was to build Christina Aguilera's web presence even before her first single album was available in stores. For that purpose, it hired a small New York internet marketing firm, Electric Artists Inc., to handle a six-month campaign to put Cristina Aguilera's single on top of the charts.

Electric Artists started by surfing the web to see what people already were saying about

Cristina Aguilera. Then, the firm began generating online discussion among fans, fed fans more information about her via the web and encouraged them to request 'Genie' on radio stations and MTV. The company also listed a web link where fans could find phone numbers of radio stations playing the song.

The marketing firm also continued to send out web updates on Christina Aguilera related news and encouraged teens to visit the several official internet sites operated by her management and RCA records.

In the last days before the album's debut, RCA also hired a direct-marketing company to make an electronic postcard filled with song bits and pieces and biographical information. The postcard was e-mailed out to 50,000 web addresses extracted from a database of people considered prospective buyers based partly on their previous album purchases (White, 1999).

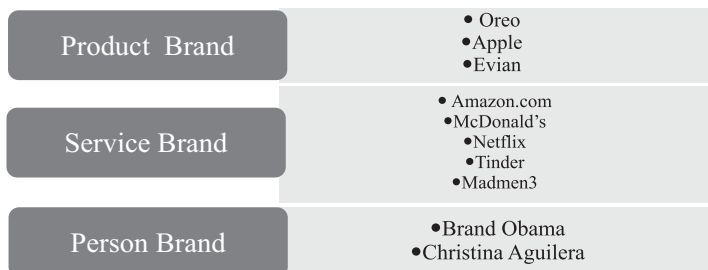
Another tactic which was used by RCA was persuading the big music retailers into posting the album's cover on their web pages. The result was that the album debuted at No. 1 on the charts with sales topping 951,000 copies (White, 1999).

4.3 Case Studies and the Six Online Brand Building Elements: A Discussion

Online brand building requires structured efforts by marketers in an organized fashion. The ten brands discussed above in their brand-building efforts, make use of the proposed six steps of the online brand building process somewhere or the other. In the present section, the above-mentioned ten brands are categorized into three subgroups namely: Product Brand, Service Brand and Person Brand.

Case studies of ten successful brands - Brand Obama, Amazon.com, Tinder, Apple, Christina Aguilera, Netflix, Mad Men Season-3, McDonald's, Evian and Oreo have been thoroughly analysed. The common elements of the branding (or rebranding) efforts of these brands are the same as those proposed in the study. These elements present a potential stream of research in the area of internet-based branding.

Figure 4: Categorization of the 10 Brands



Just like the physical world brand building, online brand building also follows certain steps. These steps include - defining the brand essence, website development, consumer participation in brand voice, buzz creation and marketing, brand experience and brand campaign monitoring.

In the case of product brands, the brand essence of Oreo is 'as the world's favourite cookie, Oreo has been a part of memorable family moments', the one of Apple is 'think different' and that of Evian is 'live young'. If we consider the service brands, the brand essence of Amazon.com is 'earth's biggest selection', that of McDonald's is 'food, folks, fun', that of Netflix is 'watch quality TV shows and movies, anytime, anywhere', that of tinder is 'friends, dates, relationships and everything in between'. The brand essence of Mad Men 3 and all the other seasons of mad men, which is filled with competition and drama is 'smoke and mirrors' (Parker, 2013).

In the case of the person brands, the brand essence of Brand Obama is 'change at the grassroots level' and that of brand Cristina Aguilera is 'teen's choice'.

All the brands considered in the study have their own websites. The basic elements of the websites are in harmony with the brand essence. In the case of Oreo, the cookie is always the hero, the colour elements are consistent (white and blue) and the graphics are bold to create a brand identity that can readily be extended across multiple channels. The distinctive Oreo cookie is always the star. Apple, in its website, instead of colours, uses, ample amount of whites, greys and blacks, and a text layout symbolizing technology and innovation. Evian, the still water brand, uses ample amount of baby pink colour, symbolizing the baby within. With the brand essence of 'earth's biggest selection, Amazon.com has a website based on jungle theme. The website of McDonald's is in unification with the brand message of fun, food and folks, a fun experience though the use of elements like logo, graphics, text and copy; and type face. Netflix, in its website, displays the brand name in its classic form, red colour and block letters and the mantra 'Watch quality TV shows & movies, anytime, anywhere'. Tinder showcases the pictures and stories of happy couples who met on Tinder. Mad Men, in its website, makes use of dramatic colours and images of action packed scenes.

In the case of person brands, Brand Obama uses plenty of white space and soft blue palate which is easy on the eyes symbolizing 'harmony'. The Christina Aguilera website features pictures and news of Christina.

To provide for customer participation in brand voice, Oreo presents a steady stream of multi-screen friendly biscuit entertainment on Facebook and Twitter, the Facebook community having more than 40 million likes. Apple provides for a passionate community of Apple fans

while Evian promotes the discussions on YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Pinterest.

In the case of service brands, Amazon.com provides opportunity for user-generated content and consumer reviews; McDonald's has a real time community channel, while Netflix provides for viewer reviews and branded social platforms. Tinder, in the platform, nine billion matches-hear their stories, makes use of confessions and testimonials by users, while Madmen Season 3 made use of Madmen Avatar Communities to generate the word of mouth.

If we consider the person brands, Brand Obama provides for an opportunity for user-generated content and consumer reviews. When Christina Aguilera was launched, her marketers provided for customer participation in brand voice by initiating and providing for chats on online communities.

Buzz marketing is yet another step of online brand building. Brands use a number of methods of buzz marketing. Among the product brands, Oreo uses the campaigns like the Dunkaton campaign and a steady stream of multi-screen friendly biscuit entertainment on Facebook and Twitter, Apple makes use of teaser marketing campaign, dragging on the suspense for as long as possible and Evian has a Live Young channel on YouTube and the Evian babies.

Among the service brands, to create buzz Amazon.com makes use of free gift certificates for refer-a-friend, McDonald's makes use of the campaigns like 'cool train' and 'where is bob', Netflix initiated the buzz by the help of 'orange is the new black', Twitter chat, Tinder in order to create buzz initially took to early supply-side seeding and word of mouth growth and Mad Men 3 made use of the 'mad men yourself' application.

Person brands also make use of buzz creation and buzz marketing to build their brands. Brand Obama makes use of online presence to garner supporters, raise excitement and provide information in a viral fashion. When Christina Aguilera was launched, buzz was created by generating online discussions regarding competition between her and Brittany Spears.

Brand experience plays a very important role in brand building whether it is offline or online. In the case of product brands, Oreo's taste and style completely differs from other cookies, Apple delivers brand promise and Evian is about experiencing the experience of living young.

In the case of service brand, Amazon.com is known for its ease of use; McDonald's provides happy meals and toys which kids love; Netflix provides for a greater consumer control over the service; Tinder's service is better than other dating apps as it softens the blow of rejection, has a provision for gamification, variable rewards, ego boost, a painless sign up and on boarding process; and Mad Men Season 3 delivers the brand promise.

In the case of person brands also, brand experience plays a very important role, Obama is known for a youthful and dynamic leadership; Christina Aguilera, when launched had a fresh voice teens could relate to.

Measuring and monitoring of online brand building campaigns also plays a very important role. Among the product brands, Oreo is known for its agile marketing strategy and monitors the efforts by listening to what consumers are saying through social media monitoring tools. Apple makes use of analytics like share of search to measure against the competitor brand and make use of the results in further campaigns. Evian monitors the branding efforts by listening to internet chatters.

Among the service brands, Amazon.com is known for 'The culture of Metrics'. McDonald's makes use of social analytics to reach real time marketing goals.

Netflix monitors the results by monitoring of subscriber acquisition and retention. Tinder makes use of analytic software called 'interana' to monitor its branding efforts. Mad Men 3 by monitoring the viewership measured the results.

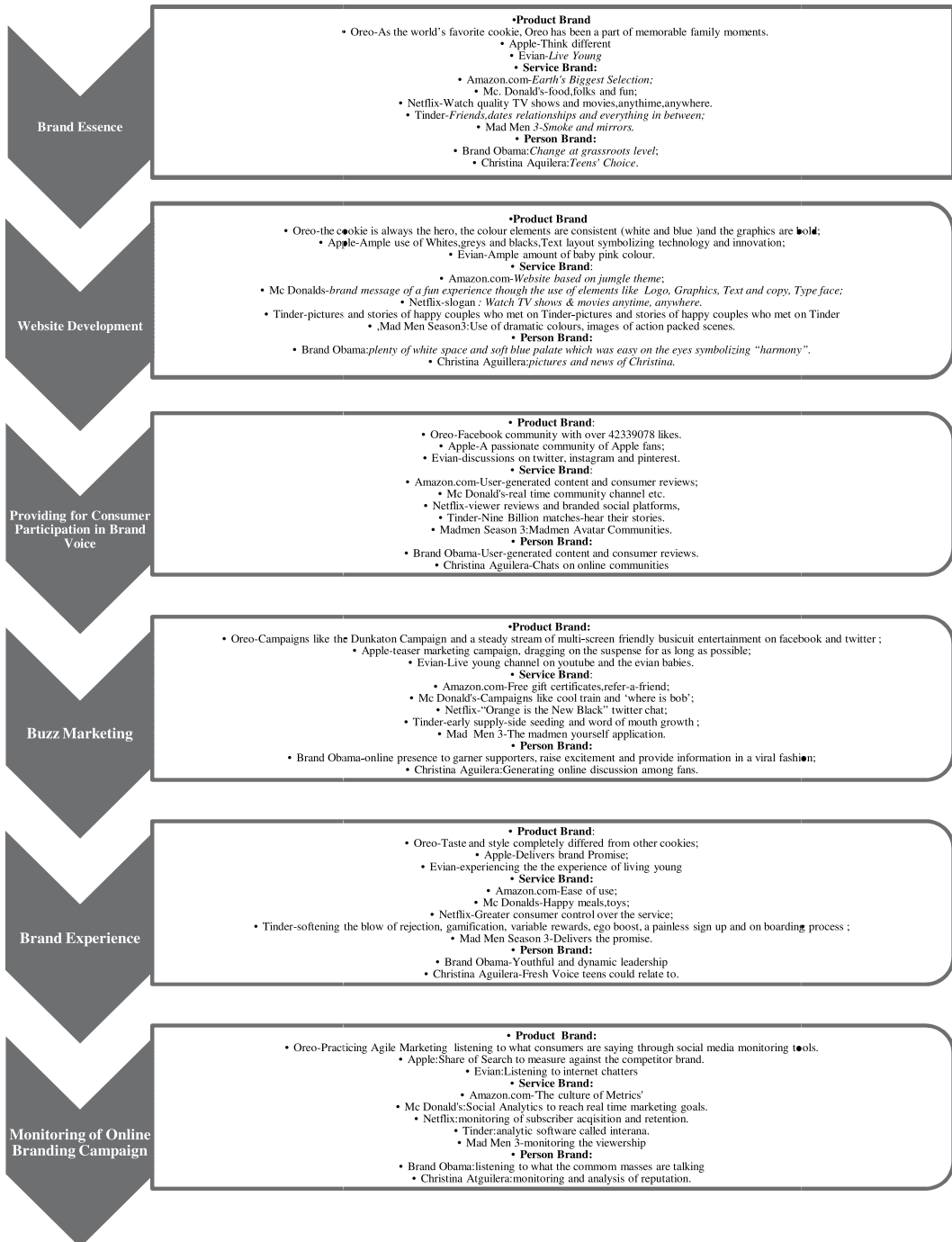
Among the person brands, Brand Obama measures and monitors the branding efforts by listening to what the common masses are talking. The online brand building efforts of celebrity brands like Christina Aguilera are measured and monitored by analysis of reputation.

Internet provides several advantages such as speed, global reach and anonymity. Online branding allows firms to build trust with today's informed and powerful consumers. Online branding also considerably cuts down on advertising expenses. This gives the business a twenty-four hour operation channel and therefore, consumers can learn about the products at any given time.

Online branding includes a wide array of online techniques to promote a company's brand. Online branding is important because if approached systematically and implemented strategically, it helps marketers create personal and dynamic connections between brands and millions of potential customers. Such connections are rare and often difficult to stimulate in the traditional advertising arena dominated by traditional press or traditional advertising (Zinger and Gilksman, 2012).

In today's scenario to be noticed online by the target audience is not a difficult task. Organizations can take certain steps to make online branding efforts more successful. Smart brands have already started developing online branding strategies and creating communication ideas for their products, which customers enjoy discussing about.

Figure 5: Flow Chart Summarizing the Six Steps of Online Brand Building



5. Conclusion

The internet and social media revolution has largely replaced the traditional methods of branding with online branding. The existence of large online communities and united online groups of informed consumers imply that power lies now in the hands of the consumer.

The way people think about their purchasing and consumption activities has changed a lot now and is mainly due to access to information via the internet (Kozinets, 1999). The growth of internet facilitates consumers to share and exchange consumption related advice via online consumer reviews and other form of electronic word of mouth, making use of electronic media such as online discussion forums, electronic bulletin board systems, newsgroups, blogs, review sites and social networking sites. The new user driven technologies increase the speed, reach and utility of the message. Over the last few years, these technologies have taken over the web leading to a revolution in the user generated content and global community. Social media and user driven technologies, with each passing day, are reshaping economies.

In order to match up with these revolutions, firms now force their resources on making use of various online platforms to disseminate the marketing message in a better way. This shift has forced researchers to redirect their efforts from the traditional methods of brand building and advertising to exploring the depths and heights of online branding.

Marketers, by approaching internet-based branding in an integrated and organised manner, in accordance to the steps proposed in the study, would be able to ensure that their internet campaigns support their general branding strategy rather than detracting from it. Organized branding efforts can deliver an increased value to customers that in turn leads to more positive brand equity.

The internet and the new digital technologies present new opportunities to engage companies with the brand in new ways and lead to strong brand consumer relationships.

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