

# Online Brand Awareness, Brand Equity and the importance of Professional Value-Added Content

A research article by Dr Tali Rezun

## Abstract

This research article deals with online brand awareness, brand presence, brand trust and brand equity. The research article was constructed to explore alternatives to paid online brand promotion and to offer a different perspective to online branding. Part of the research, literary review and implementation are directly sourced from Dr Rezun doctorate dissertation "Company Generated Problem-Solving Content on Social Media (SM) and Online Brand Equity: Designing and Testing a Model for Its Effectiveness". This research article, also emphasises the importance of professional value-added brand content in the context of brand reference and reveals the components behind the online brand awareness building process.

*Keywords: online brand awareness, brand equity, corporate identity, online brand presence, online brand exposure, brand trust, business performance*

## Introduction

The importance of online brand awareness and professional value-added content with its positive effect on brand equity and business performance has become an exceedingly important marketing issue. To date, there has been limited empirical literature on the importance of online brand awareness and the impact of professional value-added "content-type". However, there is a consensus among researchers that professional branded content has a positive effect on online brand awareness, and, in fact, results in improved business performance. The literature on marketing, branding, and internet sales is much more abundant, but none of that research directly addresses online professional content structure (e.g., content type and content thematic) and online company branding. The research objective was to shed some light on the online marketing business strategies and to support marketing managers to better understand the online brand awareness as a process and its implementation.

## Definitions

### Online Brand Awareness

OBA (Online Brand Awareness) is a process, that combines professional value-added content, use of

advanced web technologies, use of advanced SEO techniques and the use of Social Media. OBA results in brand positioning, brand exposure and online brand equity.

### Brand Equity

Brand equity has been defined as a set of brand assets and liabilities that are linked to the brand's name and symbol (Verbeeten & Vijn, 2010). Due to the huge growth and popularity of online SM networking web sites, marketers and consumers started to build and promote consumer-brand relationships under the umbrella of online communities. Marketers can facilitate, promote, and advertise their brands, and consumers can manage and promote successful brand communities where they can lead other people to engage voluntarily in different community activities and ultimately promote the desired brand (Lee, Kim, & Kim, 2011). This is one reason that leads to online brand equity value and points to the importance of online brand value if positions are managed correctly. The concept of brand equity began in the early 1990s to bridge the gap between short- and long-term marketing success by denoting a non-financial market based intangible asset which reflects future profits resulting from the past activities (Clark & Clark, 2004). In late 2000, brand equity become one of the main components

for measuring marketing performance and an important source of competitive advantage especially in the service industry. The importance of brands on the internet as proxies has been used to create trust and to label brand equity as a key competitive factor for online success (Christodoulides, De Chernatony, Furrer, Shiu, & Abimbola, 2006). Brand equity has recently received a good deal of attention from both managers and academics alike. It is now accepted as a core marketing concept and its importance has been recognized by the media attention of the consulting firm's annual rankings of the world's top brands (Verbeeten & Vijn, 2010). Creating, promoting, publishing, and sharing professional value-added content through online channels, companies' brand equity value rises and leads to better business performance, general OBA and firms trust in the client perspective.

### **Business Performance**

At the corporate level, business performance is usually assessed by Return on Investment (ROI) and measured by changes in the stock price and dividend. Despite its wide use, ROI has been criticized as the only indicator of the economic rate of return (Jacobson, 1987). There is also non-financial business performance indicators (e.g., brand-equity measures and lately online brand awareness) that are associated with businesses financial performance, referring to brand equity as incremental utility of value-added to a product, suggesting that brand equity is a multidimensional concept, with key dimensions awareness, brand association and behaviour, extremely relevant to all companies, eventually leading to better business performance. To achieve better business performance product or a brand must "stand out from the crowd" to sustain long-term financial durability, therefore online brand awareness is crucial nowadays.

### **The OBA Challenge**

With every year online branding is becoming more demanding, but also with every year there are new online possibilities emerging. To establish new online brand awareness, several challenges must be addressed; (1) trusted brand concept with a strong support story must be build; (2) supporting value-added professional content must be produced; (3) advanced WEB technologies must be implemented; (4) publishing SM content network must be created, and; (5) advanced SEO techniques must be applied.

### **(1.) Brand Concept**

Brand development is a complex process involving creation of a unique brand image which represents the product and attracts consumers' attention. A brand needs to associated with a deeper meaning and value, that consumers can later identify with. To reach the millennials, lately brands associate with ecology, health and modern living habits. Appealing brand image is not nearly enough these days. Positive brand connotation, online awareness, brand pedigree and added value of brands products are the foundations of successful modern brand.

### **(2) Professional value-added content**

The importance of professional content and its positive effect on brand awareness and business performance has become an exceedingly important marketing issue (Botha, Farshid, & Pitt, 2011). The idea is to produce value-added branded content that helps readers with potential problems, questions, or situations from specific business fields or practices. In return, value as an expert and brand value grows in the reader's perspective. If the content is prepared and maintained correctly, readers can share it, and in a sense the brand marketing is free (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Ashley & Tuten, (2015) analysed creative strategies in online content shared by some top brands and found SM channels were used most frequently. The authors noted that those marketing campaigns that used professional content on SM added touch, prospective, and strengthened consumer-brand relationships. Regardless of the channels used to promote, position or sell a product/service, any branded professional content should be customer-oriented to ensure customer's engagement with the brand. The main goals of structured value-added professional content are knowledge sharing, education, answers frequently asked questions, advise to relevant professional topic, and exclusivity. Hence, professional value-added branded content can trigger audience engagement in brand sharing and cover the importance of generated content to sales results. Furthermore, a creative strategy of content making can focus on matching the brand to consumer aspiration, experience, feelings, insight and the need for knowledge or deliverance of a product. Regardless of the marketing channels used to promote, position, or sell products and or services online, the branded content must be connected to the customer to engage the customer with the brand, especially if it is the customer's intention to share branded content through its network. As a result, professional value-added content can trigger audience engagement in brand sharing and include the importance of company-generated content to sales results (Ashley & Tuten, 2015). If content has been prepared and monitored correctly, businesses, in a sense,

are able to have free brand marketing (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Furthermore, professional value-added content is the future of search engine optimization (SEO) and it will always be rewarded (Gillette, 2011). Therefore, professional value-added content is one of the major issues to be achieved when positioning a new brand online.

### **(3) Technology**

Company's home website is a centre of the linkage network, surrounded by the SM profiles and sites, it is a company online reflection and offers the first contact to partners, clients and potential company new friends. Online brand awareness is directly connected to brand websites performance, online experience, security and brand SEO. For OBA to work, website speed, security and mobile responsiveness is a must. It all starts with choosing a hosting company, as it should offer specific features, such as; (a) fast SSD storage; (b) appropriate CPU and RAM to power projected website traffic; (c) WordPress support with cPanel; (d) SSL support, and; (e) responsive technical support, to ensure uninterrupted website operation. There are a lot of choices which platform to choose, but one stands out tall. WordPress is highly recommended with customizable designs, SEO support, mobile responsiveness and high security. The online world is a new frontier offering unlimited possibilities, but at the same time, security is not to be neglected. There is a number of safety measures, that can protect positive OBA, and are to be considered; (a) due to potential attempts of email hacks and email duplication, email passwords should be changed constantly and other email security measures should be taken; (b) WordPress admin login can be strengthened with complex login credentials; (c) Identity theft in the form of fake emails or SM handles are used mostly to attack key personnel, and usually mimic a close team member; (d) fake duplications of project websites and SM profiles are in most cases used with phishing attempts targeting your community, so if such a site or a profile is discovered a public warning should be issued, what sends strong responsibility message to brand community and strengthen the public OBA image.

### **(4) Publishing SM content network**

Social media (SM) sites create value for customers by providing the possibility of brand connection and two-way communication. Posted content is a critical vehicle to reach prospective customers and should be written with the client audience in mind. The content should address current and important issues for the targeted clients and the content must be updated frequently for effectiveness (Winterberg, 2013). Thus, there is a compelling need for a research or a conceptual

framework to aid companies to build content which serves as a more successful way to brand positioning and to attract and engage potential clients. Holt, (2016) found that companies such as Facebook and YouTube had a positive effect on brands. Holt also discussed the impact of on-line audience behaviour regarding paid brand advertising and compared it with feedback marketing strategies as a means of two-way communication between companies and customers. Starbucks, for example, had encouraged its customers to provide feedback and suggestions to help future product development through its "My Starbucks idea" web page. Empowering customers had a positive effect on Starbucks' customers "care" relationship. In essence, relationship marketing focuses on establishing and developing a learning relationship with customers, rather than just focusing on sales with increased value to both the business and customer. Social Media content marketing offers free unlimited content distribution, personalization, and customer two-way communication (Csordás & Gáti, 2014). Botha, Farshid and Pitt (2011), Cheng (2012), Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, (2016), and Schweidel & Moe, (2014) point out the importance of professional value-added content and its positive impact on better revenues and sales. Moreover, Verhagen, Boter, & Adelaar, (2010) have suggested that professional brand content has an effect on the online purchasing process. Hollebeek, Glynn, & Brodie, (2014) point out that consumers have become increasingly more knowledgeable about brand engagement in SM.

### **(5) Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)**

When Google become the dominant search engine, things changed dramatically and companies had to create content rather than to "borrow" it. In actuality, these new changes have been positive, because the quality is rewarded and "black hat" techniques have become less and less effective, forcing higher quality content. Professional value-added brand content is now a number one priority. "It's more about the experience than the engine." Pointed out Tornoe, (2016) in his beginning statement of a fresh article from Digital publishing and explained that the game had changed when Google become the dominant search engine and changed the rules giving priority to quality content, forced the companies to focus on creating rather cheating, the author also added, that this lead to what many SEO experts called the new era of "Search Experience Optimization". Tornoe, (2016) also pointed out that the new changes are actually good news because now the quality is rewarded and the black hat techniques become less and less effective, giving place for the higher quality content which deserved to be found.

## Limitations

Fast-changing internet environment, the lack of available literature and the facts are, that almost no research explored content in its structure or type to support online brand needs, there are some mentions emerging (e.g., professional and firm content), but that's is all, therefore opening this topic to further research.

## Conclusion

This research article builds the basics to support positive effect on online brand awareness using professional value-added content, advanced web technologies and SM. This article provides general guidance for online support building brand equity and online business exposure. Article serves as an overview for digital marketers, offers support, and explains specific definitions. However, careful consideration must be given to its application in different industries to ensure that content type, content publishing, SM platforms, and its relationships are aligned properly. The importance of professionally value-added content and its positive effect on online brand awareness is an important part of this article as is the positive effect on branding (see Botha, Farshid & Pitt, 2011; Cheng, 2012; Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan, 2016; Schweidel & Moe, 2014). Unfortunately, research has yet to explore structure or format of content to support companies' online needs.

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## **Bios**

Dr Tali Rezun is Slovenian, of Slovenian and Jordanian origin. Born in Ljubljana in 1978, he started his entrepreneurial career at the age of 18 and grew his business organically until this day. Dr Rezun specializes in various fields of tourism, management, leadership, online brand marketing and Blockchain technology. In 2012, Tali finished his EMBA and later in 2018 his Business Doctorate (i.e. DBA) specializing in online brand development, SEO and Social Media Marketing under the domain of Cotrugli Business School, where he also enjoys the title of a lecturer. Currently Dr Rezun acts as a group CEO in Lighthouse Holding Ltd, publishes articles associated with his expertise, serves as projects consultant and appears as a guest speaker to the media. (<https://talirezun.com/>, [contact@talirezun.com](mailto:contact@talirezun.com))