Chapter VI

Interactive Brand Experience:
The Concept and the Challenges

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Abstract

E-marketing has evolved from an environment that was solely direct response to one that includes significant opportunities for brand development. Internet marketing uses a rich set of tools to create exceptional customer experience that results in strong relationships with the brand. Off-line tools like elements of the brand and image-building promotional programs are as important as ever in building brand equity.
To those have been added online tools, including personalization, customization, cocreation, purchase-process streamlining, self-service, brand community, rich media, product self-design tools, and dynamic pricing. This gives the marketer a rich choiceboard of off-line and online techniques from which to select the most appropriate for the brand and any given promotional activity. The challenges are to select the most effective tools and then to execute flawlessly and seamlessly at all customer touchpoints to achieve the desired quality of customer experience.

Introduction

From the onset, marketers have regarded the Internet as the consummate direct-response medium. The ability to interact one-on-one with customers and the ability to track their every move allowed precision targeting never before possible. More recently, it has become clear that the Internet can also be used in branding efforts. The ability to blend direct response and branding efforts is, at the same time, the Internet’s greatest benefit and its ultimate challenge to marketers. This chapter will examine online branding techniques and consider their effectiveness. It will then propose a branding concept that will help to integrate marketing activities in both interactive and traditional media environments and discuss the challenge posed by the need to integrate communications channels. Since the acceptance of the Internet as a venue for brand development is a relatively new phenomenon, even in terms of the existence of the Internet, we begin there.

Branding Efforts on the Internet

A direct marketing mindset permeated successful Internet marketing activities in the early years, one that valued immediate and measurable response and had little patience for marketing effort with long-term payoffs. It is still reflected today in the majority of the metrics—hits, visitors, page views, for example—that are the stock in trade of measurement on the Web. As early as 1997, Briggs and Hollis challenged the widely-held belief that click-through on banner advertisements was the most important measure of Internet success. Their experiment found an increase in favorable attitude in all three product categories used in the study. The impact was greatest in a brand never before
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Mary L. Roberts (2005). *Advances in Electronic Marketing* (pp. 103-121).
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