

A case study: cancer research uk



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Cancer Research UK, amongst others, have embraced web 2.0 and taken the initiative to promote online activities particularly through user forums, blogs and social networking sites. Focused on providing information, Cancer Research UK has grown to become the world's leading charity dedicated to cancer research. Statistics show that around 300,000 people are diagnosed with cancer in the UK every year. Every two minutes someone is told they have cancer. And every year more than 150,000 people die from the disease. It is difficult to overstate the human tragedy caused by cancer. In February 2002 The Cancer Research Campaign and the Imperial Cancer Research Fund merged to create Cancer Research UK- whose objective is to reduce the number of people dying from cancer.

Their dedication towards cancer research has, over the years, employed the services of more than 4500 scientists, doctors and nurses in over 40 towns and cities in the UK. They offer information to those willing to listen- the general public, health professionals, cancer patients and their families. They are also in partnership with government in Westminster, Scotland, Wales and Europe to ensure cancer is at the top of political agenda. In four years, the charity grew its campaigner base from zero to well over a third of a million.

This study shall be a reflective analysis of how well they have been able to take advantage of the opportunities the web has to offer. Our focus shall be to examine the role of e-business as it is reflected on branding, their extent of segmentation, their digital marketing approaches and how well they have embraced social networking.

We employed various statistical tools and models to describe the academic studies that govern each concept as well as a comparative analysis to show how well their web site has fit into previous academic studies. We conclude in favour of their efforts in embracing e-business and all it has to offer.

Academic Studies

TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM):

Fig. 1: A Unified model for e-commerce relationship

Professor Prashant Palvia of Bryan School of Business and Economics, University of North Carolina, developed the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in his attempt to demonstrate the importance of website utility and creation of loyal online customers.

Davis et al. (1989) assert, “ A key purpose of TAM is to provide a basis for tracing the impact of external factors on internal beliefs, attitudes and intentions”. The TAM model (see Fig. 1) assumes that system use is determined by behavioural intention (BI) to use it. This is influenced by the user’s attitude (A), which is directly influenced by beliefs about the system: perceived usefulness (U) and perceived ease of use (EOU). According to intention-based theories, user adoption and usage behaviour are determined by the intention to use IT. The satisfaction and value-adding activities experienced creates a positive response from users thus ensuring loyalty; and higher number of prospective users.

BRANDING

The internet allows consumers to react and interact, creating a dialogue outside managerial control (Travis, 2001). Visitors' overall satisfaction is an indicator of " how well customers' like their experience at the site and it is probably the best indication of their willingness to return to the site again" (Jiang and Rosenbloom, 2005, p. 159). Thus, the creation and maintenance of a website requires a variety of service innovations that add value (David & Foray, 1995).

Besides interactivity, numerous articles discuss the effects of websites on brand attitude and intention variables. For example, website quality and design (Loiacono, Watson, and Goodhue, 2002; Wolfinbarger and Gilly, 2003). However, in this new environment, a well-designed web-site is no longer sufficient; instead, delivering a satisfying and valuable experience online is important and may be key to increasing favourable brand perceptions and purchase intent (Florès, 2004a, 2004b).

Dave Chaffey (2002), in his book " E-Business and E-Commerce Management" summarised Chernatony and Malcolm's (1992) definition of a brand as being ' dependent on a customer's psychological affinity for a product, and is much more than physical name or symbol elements of brand identity'.

On the contrary, one of branding's academic pioneers; David Aaker defines branding (brand equity) as " a set of five categories of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm or to that firm's

customers, or both” (Keller, 2003). These categories of brand assets are (1) brand loyalty, (2) brand awareness, (3) perceived quality, (4) brand associations and (5) other proprietary assets (e. g., patents, trademarks and channel relationships). This is illustrated in a model (see Fig. 3). We shall be considering this frame work as it relates to e-business in the later part of this study.

Aaker’s Brand Equity Framework

Competitive advantage

Help process/retrieve information

Differentiate/position

Reason-to-buy

Creative positive attitude/feelings

Extensions

Reason-to-buy

Differentiate/position

Price

Channel member

Interest

Extensions

Anchor to which other associations can be attached

Familiarity-liking

Signal of substance and commitment

Brand to be considered

Reduced Marketing cost

Trade Leverage

Attracting new customers

Create awareness

Reassurance

Time to respond to competitive threats

Other

Proprietary Brand Assets

Provides value to firm by enhancing:

Efficiency and effectiveness of marketing programmes

Brand loyalty

Prices/margins

Brand extensions

Trade leverage

Competitive advantage

Provides value to customer by enhancing customer's:

Interpretation/processing of information

Confidence in the purchase decision

Use satisfaction

BRAND EQUITY

Brand Loyalty

Brand Awareness

Perceived Quality

Brand Association

Fig. 3 Source: Keller (2003)

In order to appropriately apply the David Aaker's Brand Equity Model to e-business, being the focus of this study, we have tried to apply these concepts to focus on the tactical details of e-business (website structure, design and concepts); as shown in Table. 1.

Brand awareness.

Perceived quality.

Brand associations.

Brand loyalty.

The website should inform people about the product:

Is it easily distinguished from other brands?

Can it be easily recalled to memory?

Is it designed in a way that will be appealing to users?

Is it informative?

What online techniques are employed to ensure awareness?

The website should be structured, designed and conceptualized to create positive user-experience through customer service.

Content quality (Can the customer easily find relevant, up-to-date content?

Are there errors?)

Adequate performance of web site infrastructure in terms of availability and download speed.

Ease of contacting a company for support by e-mail or the customer's preferred channel.

Quality of response to e-mail enquiries and fulfilment quality

Acknowledgement of customer privacy

Reflecting and supporting the characteristics of the offline brand

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The website should be capable of inducing users to revisit.

Website quality and design

Personalisation

Customer willingness to revisit the site

How committed are customers to the brand?

SEGMENTATION

Segmentation is the process of subdividing a large market into a unit with similar purchasing behaviour (Hills, C., 2000). The most target market strategies are centred towards meeting individual customer's needs, and wants (Kotler, P., 2006). However, in order to ensure an effective segmentation process, the company needs to identify internet or online activities that add value from the perspective of the customer.

However, market segmentation is considered unnecessary if the product or service in question is homogenous-a necessity to all. In such scenarios mass marketing is considered a better option. Markets are segmented upon geographic and demographic variables such as age, location, race, sex, education. It can also be segmented on the bases of behavioural and psychographic variables such as: lifestyle, patterns of decision-making, ideology, attitudes, risk aversion, and value. (Elaine Brechin, 2002)

DIGITAL MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Researchers have proven that the increasing use of Web-based technology is heightening the expectation of customers on the availability of services and

the nature of the services provided (Armistead & Kiely, 2003; McGaughey, 2003). Pleasant and well-designed websites are no longer sufficient for attracting customers and making them want to return. Substantial amounts are invested nowadays to develop additional services in order to deliver superior website experiences able to generate revisits and enhance customer relationships.

Consequently, the merger of branding and marketing-online advertising- is being used to drive traffic directly to their web offer and, at the same time, to build brand awareness. Berthon, Ley-land, and Watson (1996) suggest that the level of interactivity on a website is critical in converting visitors from interested contacts into interactive customers; hence the need for effective marketing communications.

The internet is becoming a powerful tool for firms emphasizing a customer service orientation (Leveburg, 2005). This is related with the fact that in the virtual world, the contact is intangible, there are no physical surroundings or front line personnel and therefore the portals are just another type of Service Company with a rising customer participation in the development-provision of the service (Gounaris & Dimitriadis, 2003).

In spite of previous contributions (Porter, 2001) and the prolific use of internet for marketing purposes, it has been reported that e-business is “generally poor” (Burke, 2002; Darian, Tucci, & Wiman, 2001; Griffith & Krampf, 1998; Kolesar & Galbraith, 2000; Zeithaml, 2002), and many failures seem to occur because e-companies fail to deliver real added value services to the customer and to meet his/her expectation (Zott et al., 2000). This is

due to failure on the part of the company to identify the most effective mix of communication to drive traffic to e-commerce sites (Chaffey, 2002).

David Chaffey (2002) suggests different techniques (Offline and online communications techniques for e-commerce) that can be used to acquire new user traffic with an intention to promote repeat visits (see Fig. 6 and Table. 2).

Offline ad

PR or WoM

URL

Offline

Prompt

Web site

Reciprocal links or featured in content

Search engine

Paid banner or sponsorship

E-mail ad or direct e-mail

Offline marketing communications

Online marketing communications

Fig. 6 Offline and Online marketing communications

Online marketing communications

Search Engine

Link building

Viral marketing

Banner advertising

Provides an index of content on registered sites that can be searched by keyword.

A process of inducing traffic to a site by increasing the number of links.

Techniques used to increase number of links include:

Reciprocal links: these are two way links agreed between two site owners.

PR-content mentions: if links to an organisation's site are featured in media sites like online newspapers, magazines and so on.

Affiliate networks: used by e-tailers to drive traffic to site.

Sponsorship: paying for sponsorship of another site or part of it, especially a portal, for an extended period.

Banner ad campaigns: can be rated by: Reach (the percentage of web users who see the advert); Recognition (spontaneous and prompted recall of advert from web users); Clickthrough; Traffic quantity (number of visitors); Traffic quality (those who proactively use the site) and Cost.

E-mail is used to transmit a promotional message to another potential customer. E. g. ' e-mail a friend', screen saver and online postcards.

Banner ads are based on . GIF graphic files that are usually hosted on a separate server; to the user it appears as part of the web page. These can be: Static, Animated, Interactive or Rich media.

Offline marketing communications

Include advertising in established media such as print, TV and radio.

PR, Word-of-mouth and so on.

Table. 2: Offline and Online marketing communications

SOCIAL NETWORKING

Establishing a dialogue with customers, to understand and anticipate their needs is key to offer better and personalized products and services (Lewi, 2005). Social networks can simply be described as people having conversations online using a range of communication tools such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Bebo and Twitter. A social network is exactly what it says on the tin, it's a communication network of social contacts and seems to have become the most popular way to stay in touch(Morris, S., 2010).

Forrester Research (2010) stated that the number of people using the web will increase by 45 percent to 2. 2 billion by 2013; the total global internet audience is currently 625 million and two thirds of these internet users (417 million) have now joined a social networking site. The implication of this is

that security risk will equally be substantial. Therefore it is a concern that site owners must address.

Analysis

In this section, we shall be evaluating our analysis against the theoretical underpinnings, mentioned in the previous section, that form a basis of what a website structure, design and concept should look like. However, the tactical details of these components are identified on the Cancer Research UK (CRUK) website and analysed using reliable statistical data from analytical sites like Alexa and Google Pagerank.

Each section shall be examined accordingly.

BRANDING (see Table. 1)

Cancer Research UK has enjoyed the luxury of being among the top ten charities in the UK. With 166, 807 charities registered in the UK, collectively generating an annual income of

£51. 2bn, Cancer Research UK has seen its fundraising income grow from £419 million to £433 million, being 8. 5% of the annual income. More so, they have had the reputation of being the leading funder of cancer research in the UK. Just like other charities, CRUK has been successful in taking advantage of e-business to help the people who need them the most- but also to let those people help them in return. This has been the secret behind their brand strategy- the people.

Aside raising funds, CRUK have a number of online objectives, ranging from providing information to those affected by or concerned about cancer to

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attracting some of the world's top scientific talent. Hence, because people are the object of their online strategy, it has been designed to respond to changes in both technology and user behaviour.

For CRUK, their brand campaign has been a key objective that has absorbed millions of pounds. Because they are an information-based charity with an objective of giving correct information about cancer, they have invested millions of pounds in funding researches across the UK. This is what has distinguished them from other charities, giving them a positive brand image. For instance, CRUK research sites are barely 30 miles away from over 90% of the UK population. Fig. 9 shows the total work of research done in 2008- ranging from breast to brain cancer- giving a total £355 million spent on cancer research. In fact, for every pound they receive, excluding retail, 80 pence is channelled towards research.

In an effort to further boost their brand presence, CRUK have embarked on online/offline activities that would yield loyal customers/users. Some of these activities are mentioned in the later parts of this study. However, CRUK website ([www. cancerresearchuk. org](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org)) has been successful in its content quality- giving up-to-date information on research findings. Their website has also been able to adequately reflect their online objective, which is providing information as well as building a relationship with people. Their e-mailing facilities, podcasts, blogs, banner adverts are all a reflection of what they stand for. However, they've been careful not to infringe on the privacy of users giving customers the opportunity to air their views as it relates to cancer research thus building an e-community.

CRUK brand campaign saw them embark on several online/offline activities. For instance, the 43 Run 10k events, which will take place across the UK sometimes in 2010, have been backed by a widespread campaign across national and regional press, with outdoor ads and an online game called Rooftop Runner. Most times, more than 60, 000 people sign up to participate. This campaign has attracted the most runners since its inception in 1994, with nearly 740, 000 participants. The philosophy behind this is that: People tend to run with someone else, but usually have someone in mind that they are running for. Natasha Hill, the supporter marketing director at CRUK, in an interview recalled one participant who said “ they felt like their mother was with them as they ran, but rather than feeling sad, it made them feel amazing”. In the long run, this is what helps in building a positive brand image because through word-of-mouth, more people get involved. This in turn creates loyal customers.

Furthermore, CRUK recently launched a website seewhereyourmoneygoes.org.uk – to highlight the work donations make possible, which brings donors and survivors to life using 3D and video technology. As a way of exploring new media, they also developed reality game, the first ever designed to raise funds as part of its core gameplay. The game. Operation: Sleeper Cell, encouraged only 66 people to donate, but it shows the charity isn't afraid to be innovative. They went further feature cancer patients and survivors, rather than actors in their ads which span TV, radio and the web. The fact that the ad uses real patients and survivors is enough to boost people's confidence and loyalty to the brand-Cancer Research UK.

SEGMENTATION

CRUK's website has been segmented in such a way that users find it easy to find the category in which they fall into. Since it is an information-dissemination website, it is categorized in the most simplistic way.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION MARKETING (see Table. 2)

Search Engine: A well designed search engine optimization is key towards building traffic to any web site. The Cancer Research UK website is a UK charity site that offers news and information about the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of tumors. They became online on the 27th of July, 2001. The domain visibility of [www. cancerresearchuk. com](http://www.cancerresearchuk.com) is (..... hits) in the Google search rankings.

Alexa traffic rank for [cancerresearchuk. org](http://cancerresearchuk.org) is 65, 733th on the lists of websites owned by different organisations around the world. Fig. 7 is a statistical data illustrating the trend in the number of visits to the site in the last six months. As observed, the change in rankings shows the volatile nature of the web and its users.

Fig. 6

The CR website is ranked 3, 440th in Great Britain (see Fig. 8) and 228, 614th in the US. This illustrates the relevance a well designed, structured and conceptualizes has in drawing traffic. In view of the fact that most users are concerned about the ease of getting information from the web as quick as possible, search engines and directives are the primary way of finding

information about a companies (Chaffey, 2002). Consequently, the traffic of a site increases if there search engine is effectively optimised.

The top “ keywords” driving traffic to Cancer Research UK website from search engines (see Fig. 8) show that users who type in “ cancer research uk” and “ cancer research” are linked directly to the site.

Fig. 7

The average load time for cancerresearch. org stands at 1. 696 seconds making it better than 66% of other websites.

Fig. 8

It gets about 25% of visits to its web page through various search engines.

Link Building: CRUK has been successful in building several links that lure traffic to their website. Distinct of all is their award-winning cancer information website CancerHelp UK ([www. cancerhelpuk. org. uk/](http://www.cancerhelpuk.org.uk/)), with over 2. 3 million pages viewed each month. It is the patient information website responsible for giving good general information about cancer, prevention and treatments. It also gives detailed information about specific types of cancer. The site has the only searchable database of clinical trials that is specifically written in non-medical English language for patients and relatives. And trial summaries on their clinical trials database were also viewed around 76, 000 times each month.

Cancercare ([www. canccare. org/](http://www.cancercare.org/)) offers support services including counselling, education, financial help and practical assistance. National

Cancer Institute ([www. nci. nih. org/](http://www.nci.nih.org/)); American Cancer Society ([www. cancer. org/](http://www.cancer.org/)); American Association of Cancer research ([www. acccr. org/](http://www.acccr.org/))

Banner advertising: A visitor who clicks on a banner ad is transported through to the destination site of the company who paid for the banner ad. Hence, banner ads are one of the main revenue models for the internet.

Cancer Research UK has opted Internet advertising to attract donations, as a key part of its campaign. It increases awareness of the Cancer Research brand using various banner formats. Advertisements that direct users to the charity's web site, where online donations can be made.

In 2008 they launched an online forum, Cancer Chat, where people talked to others affected by cancer. In May 2008 they also launched Science Update Blog to debunk cancer myths and report on the latest developments in cancer research globally. The blog has been hugely popular and recently won an Association of Medical Research Charities science communication award for best online research information.

SOCIAL NETWORKING

People are much more receptive to charity messages through social media than they are to brands' marketing messages.

Sites like Facebook have given supporters not only a meeting place, but also the ability to send out relevant information about fundraising events or campaigns to a potentially unlimited network of friends. And best of all, this kind of outreach happens organically. Facebook currently ranks in Unicef's

top ten donor referrals. Charities are particularly well placed to benefit from this activity because of the widespread support they engender.

Cancer Research UK has also created mobile sites to encourage donations. It rolled out its mobile site ahead of its Breast Cancer Awareness month in 2008, encouraging donations via either mobile or click-to-call functionality to speak to a representative (www. nma. co. uk, 2008).

CONCLUSION

We began this study by looking at the TAM model which illustrates the behaviour of a user towards the web. In the same context, we considered the Aaker's Brand Equity concept which illustrated the various categories of branding. Furthermore, academic studies on segmentation, digital marketing and social networks all reflected the significance of the 'customer' as far as the structure, design and concept of building websites is concerned.

However, in the course of analysis, we observe that the CRUK website has rightly employed their online strategy in strengthening a mutually beneficial relationship between them and their supporters.

We also suggest that in years to come, further advances in web technology will allow them to become even more responsive and proactive providing crucial information and services to those who need them most.