

Major Project

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The Impact of Digital Branding on Traditional Branding

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1.0 Introduction

Global companies have taken marketing and commercial strategies of their brands a notch higher by incorporating the most effective and efficient tools. Notably, firms that are dealing with homogenous or even different types of products/services want to make their presence known by advertising and marketing unique features associated with these products/services. This is referred to as branding in sales and marketing quarters because each company wants to show how unique it is in the global competitive market. Therefore, an ample background information on the essence of branding services in a sales and marketing environment is important and this is discussed at length in the following chapter. Further, the study allows readers to understand traditional forms of branding and the most modern techniques of selling a brand to the emerging young population.

Generally, the content in this study focuses on the following areas; how competition drives marketing of products/service brands, characteristics of a brand including equity, loyalty, and identity, history of traditional and online branding techniques, and similarities and differences between the two modes of branding. Further, the presence of social media networks and the internet and how they influence branding efforts is noted. Importantly, there is a need to inform stakeholders how companies have used branding as socio-economic, human and environmental ambassadorial platforms; for instance, UNICEF's partnering with the giant soccer club like Barcelona and HP's environmental policies to minimize carbon pollution. At the same time, the study highlights the effects of digital marketing and advertisements on revenue, sales and growth of the clientele base. The last section of the study showcases pros and cons of applying online marketing services in the firms

operations. Specifically, the aim of this research study is to point out the influence of digital branding on the purchasing patterns/trends of consumers compared to traditional branding methods. The question being addressed in the study reads; is digital branding more effective and persuasive in influencing the decision-making process towards purchasing compared to traditional branding? Further, the following objectives have been used to guide the research process:

- i) To study the transition from traditional branding to modern techniques of digital branding and how it has impacted marketing and promotion strategies.
- ii) To investigate whether there is a relationship between organizations' performance and branding where digital and traditional branding are compared. This will be supported by data findings.
- iii) To study the impact and influence of technology tools such as Internet on buyers' perception of brands, eventual purchasing and customer loyalty.
- iv) To compare the effectiveness and persuasiveness of digital branding with traditional branding with respect to the purchasing decision-making process.

In order to achieve the objectives outline above, a quantitative methodology was applied where survey feedback from online questionnaire, focus groups discussion and secondary data processes were adopted. Using an online survey tool (Survey Monkey questionnaire), participants responded to questions pertaining their age, gender, affiliation and preference to social media applications and tools, and purchasing patterns. Focus groups were significant because they gave first-hand information about participants' perception of digital branding techniques in an interactive manner. For this particular study, 3 focus groups were planned for with an expected turn up of 5 members for each group. Eventually, analysis and interpretation of the survey and focus findings is performed before an informed recommendation is made; also, the study allows for future exploration by researchers who feel that certain aspects of the research problem have not been addressed adequately.

2.0 Research Questions and Justification

2.1 Literature Review

2.1.1 Competition drives brand marketing

Oligopolistic markets have few firms in the market and sell differentiated or homogenous products [1] these tend to be similar but not identical. This implies that each one of them would like to portray its product as the most unique and distinct. In order to do this, firms capitalize on strategies such as branding to place at an advantage with intent of attracting more customers. A unique word, symbol, design, sign or combination of the same defines the concept of branding. Sometime, famous personalities have been used as elements of branding. The objective of branding is to cut out or create an image that differentiates a product from those sold by competitors.

The act of branding imposes a certain level of satisfaction, credibility and quality with regards to customers' expectations. There is also an aspect of branding in terms of what it advocates (believes in) and stands for. Some branding techniques have caught the attention of consumers because of elements such as creativity, inspiration, environmental awareness, care, innovation, and knowledge. The message sent by these important elements informs consumers that the firm is not in the business of amassing profits only, but fulfilling other human and environmental needs.

2.1.2 Brand equity, loyalty, and identity

In essence, a brand is meant to win customers' loyalty though there is an element of equity attached to it. Ideally, it is the commercial value of the product based on how customers perceive the brand name rather than the service/product itself. Brand equity helps consumers understand the product or service's worth. Horne (2015) quotes Aaker (1990) who asserts that, "brand equity is a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol, which adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service" [2]. However, developing a successful branding calls for a review of a number of steps before actual launching and they include the following; generation of an idea, product concept development and screening, development of marketing strategies, business analysis, technical development, brand testing/piloting, and commercialization [3].

Another major attribute that has been associated with successful branding is brand identity. A characteristic known as brand salience helps in making a customer recall a certain brand quickly and easily [4]. Further, brand awareness increases the chances of salience occurring hence the ability of consumers recognizing the brand. Importantly, brand salience helps much in building brand equity because consumers are able to attach a certain worth to the branded product once they come across it.

According to a review article, "*The power of branding*", by the Design Council (2013), a brand is a network (set of associations) a person or persons makes with an organization, company, services, product or individual [5]; the associations may be intentional where marketing and corporate identity does the promotion or it may be out of an organization's control. For example, a media press review that is poorly presented may harm the manufacturer's brand placing negative thought in potential customers' minds. Another empirical investigation conducted by Odin, Odin and Valette-Florence (2001) connects the concept of branding to customers' loyalty [6]. In their argument, the success of a brand in the long run is not based on how many purchasers get to buy it once but those who become regular buyers.

Aderton and Nandan (2011) intuit that successful companies have applied branding as a strategic mode of developing a loyal clientele and dominating their competition [7]. Also, the authors suggest that the entry of Internet technology resulted in online companies doing their operations 'virtually' such as eBay, Amazon.com, TheStreet.com, and Ameritrade. Further, the article compares and contrasts branding techniques of online and traditional companies. They conclude by inferring that both traditional and on-line branding have a stake in winning customers' loyalty and expanding the consumer base. At the same time, it is noted that technologies in future will most likely reduce the distinction between online and traditional brands.

2.1.3 History of traditional branding and genesis of online marketing

Traditional brands came into existence prior to the advent and establishment of the Internet. The development of this mode of branding has been adopted by companies that do business via non-electronic channels; also known as brick and mortar companies. Good examples include brands such as Disney, Mercedes-Benz, Nike, and Starbucks, which specialize in family entertainment, luxury automobiles, athletic accessories, and coffee beverages respectively [7]. However, strategies applied to traditional branding have a major limitation which is the inability to adapt with market and customer dynamics. The old marketing methods of convincing customers seem to be 'frozen' in time.

Another big challenge that has always been posed by some traditional branding methods is their lack of action-oriented approaches. According to Brian Phipps, "paper brands are long on looks and short on action. Such an approach can reduce a brand to ad campaigns rich in pose and posture, little else, thus opening the door for competitor brand advances" [8]. It means that while competitors craft new ways of convincing buyers about their brand, firms stuck with the old strategy seem to be left behind; no change in style and form.

Further, traditional forms of branding have a possibility of shaping perceptions rather than value delivery though digital branding has received similar complaints from opponents of modern branding techniques [8]. A firm's brand ought not to be seen as a player in "perception" games; this limits the ability to augment product innovation. Customers will not live with the same perception you have shaped for

them; over time, they will easily notice that the strategy was more of a perception game rather than product innovation. More so, traditional branding does not capitalize on customer's intelligence and initiative, which would assist firms to develop their brand in new directions. Firms that allow an interactive platform in marketing their brands position themselves on a competitive edge, eventually outdoing those that flood customers with messages assuming that they are uninformed and passive.

The history of digital branding dates back to 1990s though its application was well realized in 2000-2010. Previously, most branding techniques involved print media in the absence of Internet and digital media. Probably, the intensity of competition was not pronounced because not many firms were involved in differentiated products/services as is the case today. At the same time, the digital communication platform was being invented while physical and print media forms of advertisements and marketing already existed. For instance, the invention of computer and Internet technology happened at a time when economic growth was being experienced in developed countries. However, the growth of electronic media coupled with the invention of Internet and social media technology has fast-tracked digital branding. There are a number of issues that have been noted on the effects of digital branding on traditional branding. While traditional branding has the same objective of convincing and drawing in as many customers as possible, digital branding has had a tremendous effect in terms of area covered and the speed with which people get information.

2.1.4 Similarities between traditional and online branding

It is worth noting that a comparative assessment of traditional and on-line brands offers some similar traits. For instance, both forms of branding build their strategies on the concept of innovation. Marketing and brand managers understand that firms that develop a fresh idea or product or an ideal extension of the existing design increases the chances of profitability. Walt Disney's innovative ideas created a new family entertainment industry similar to Google's entry into the Internet industry as a major search engine. Mercedes-Benz invests heavily on the same concept of innovation because they want to maintain customer loyalty. New models that are coming up include add-ons that purposely cater for the needs of the new and expanding customer base. [7]

Globalization and customization of brand products

In addition to innovation, businesses have tried to globalize their products and services through digital branding as well as the traditional system. While it was easy for online companies to market their brands globally since the inception of Internet, the "brick and mortar" companies have not been left behind. A good example is Nike and Starbucks, which have put in much effort to have their presence felt worldwide every day. The success enjoyed by both forms of branding stems from designing the "right" name for the brand. Concisely, brand names should describe firms' businesses and relate to the product in consumers' minds easily. Nike is a Greek word translated as victory and its sole business is to see athletes win in competitions. [7] Another similar trait that is shared by digital and traditional branding is personalization. Renowned companies such as Mercedes-Benz and Nike attach significant importance to customers' input when designing new vehicles and

costumes. Online shops including eBay and Amazon have built websites that allow creation of personalized and private accounts.

Differences between traditional and digital marketing

On the other hand, digital branding seems to differ from traditional branding on a number of areas. First, traditional branded products can be acquired through more diverse distribution networks. Customers are able to get Disney movies from Disney stores, theaters, video stores, amusement parks, and online; Wal-Mart provides its products through its stores, franchises, and online. Second, companies that use traditional branding do not show a strong presence in terms of personalization, for instance, customers' experience compared to online systems. For online branding systems, each user can have his/her information customized, for example, an entire homepage to fit her desires and interests. Online companies have proved to be important especially where choosing from a variety of similar products is made possible.

Traditional companies require an online platform support because it enhances them to market their brands effectively. Amazon and eBay have thousands of product categories from which users can select. The same case applies to services provided by search engines and social media companies like Yahoo, Facebook, and Google which provide information through searching. Notably, there has been a lack of person-to-person customer service when dealing with brands that are solely marketed online. Conversely, customers that want to know more about a product (marketed through traditional branding) can approach customer service personnel and discuss certain particulars before purchasing.

2.1.5 Applying animation for digital branding

Computer and Internet technology have capitalized on media like animation though traditional branding styles like TV apply it. Application developers try to incorporate imagery, sound, fantasy, and motion while selling a brand through digital media. Though words can send a certain message about a particular brand, animation has proved to be a positive input on how customers get to be convinced.

A proper blend of colour, motion and pictures in addition to sound impresses customers even more than mere words could do. Traditional branding styles have had to integrate old methods with modern and dynamic techniques like animation. With regards to the same, marketing communication approaches have changed over the last decade or so after the birth of social media networks. Keller (2009) asserts that, “marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind customers – directly or indirectly – about the products and brands they sell. In a sense, marketing communications represent the ‘voice’ of the company and its brands and are a means by which it can establish dialogue and build relationships with and among consumers” [9]. Branding using animation tools is one way of adopting modern marketing communication channels.

It is evident that digital versus traditional branding is an ideal subject of discussion. Is it necessary to blend the old way of branding products with new emerging technologies or scrap them completely and solely depend on modern technology to promote and market products? Importantly, factors such as age, Internet availability, social-economic, religion and geo-political structures play significant roles in guiding organizations on whether to use digital methods of branding or mix the two modes of branding. In some countries, web services are prohibited and it would not be logical to apply the concept of digital branding.

2.1.6 Generational and age dynamics influence on digital marketing

Considering a number of factors mentioned above that influence the application of digital branding besides traditional branding, it would be necessary to review how these variables drive digital marketing. The growth and development of digital branding has been significantly influenced by the age factor both from the entrepreneurs' view as well as the user of the brand. Concisely, marketers have studied the dynamics of different age groups comprising of generation, X, Y, and Z and eventually tried to blend digital and traditional marketing strategies in order to fulfil the needs of all customers. Young people in their teens and twenties would be easily convinced by a digital branding strategy while baby boomers are likely to stick with the "brick and mortar" marketing method. However, old people appreciate the presence of Internet technology, which has penetrated many spheres of society [10].

Internet marketers and social media designers have capitalized on age dynamics to tap into the large market of young and even middle-aged consumers. Even marketers that apply traditional marketing services for their brands have come to terms with the fact that social media and Internet technology is the way to go. Millenials (generation Y) have a closer affection to electronic media and their desire to want to know the new trends is stirred up quickly. Therefore, traditional marketing systems cannot keep pace with such abruptly evolving preferences and likes. Essentially, large stores such as McDonalds, Nike, and Wal-Mart have had to integrate their systems with online tools in order to reach out to a larger customer segment. With regards to Millenials, Jamie Gailewicz suggests the following:

“ Sellers ought to understand and discover how the millennial generation think and act in term of purchasing behaviour. They have a strong purchasing power which calls for innovative strategies to engage them, to reach the Millenials and integrate a brand into their lives, you will need to understand the basics. There are roughly 79 million Millenials in the U.S 25 per cent of the population, the Millenials stand to have an equal or greater influence, especially considering difference like wealth, education, and their acceptance of ideas” [10]

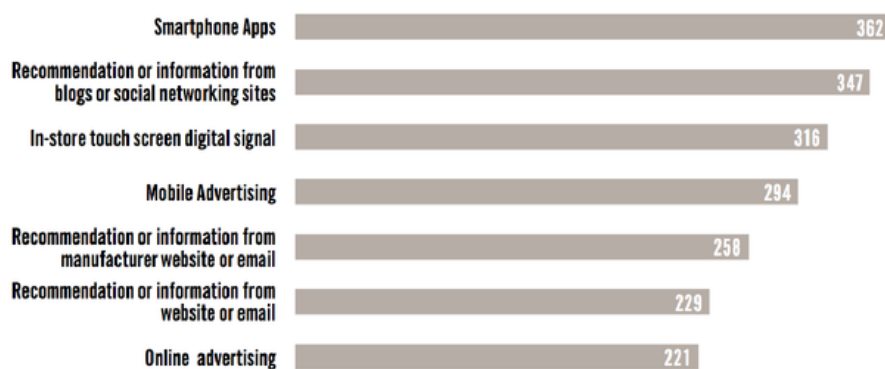
2.1.7 Social media networks and Millennials

The social media network has proved to be a formidable force in fostering digital marketing. This is mainly because Millennials rely on each other and they use smartphone technology to share their opinions so as to make informed decisions. [10]

It implies that entrepreneurs that are able to establish their presence on such a platform are likely to attract the attention of this group. Online application tools like Instagram, Facebook and Twitter have provided a social interaction venue for such needs. Importantly, these online applications have provided groups such as Millennials the power to approve and disapprove something as a way of passing their judgment. When Millennials get to see their voice is heard whether giving an opinion about a certain product, supporting a political figure, or just a cause, they realize their voice has influence and power. It is this secret that digital branding strategists build upon to draw in more people. A schematic diagram below indicates how smartphones have played a big role in influencing millennial shoppers:

MILLENNIAL SHOPPERS: INFLUENCE OF NEW MEDIA ON BRAND SELECTION⁴

Index vs. Total Panel (Avg. =100)



Source: Jamie Gailewicz (2014), *The Next Web*.

Ambassador tool for socio-economic and environmental concerns

Modern digital branding policies have considered socio-economic, environmental, and political affairs as crucial elements while entrepreneurial activities are conducted. Though previous branding techniques (before internet technology) were in a position to propagate various messages concerning environment, pollution, trafficking, poaching, health side-effects, and global security in line with their products or services, they cannot match modern technology. The speed and intensity with which the same messages are passed globally using digital channels is far much higher. Commercial enterprises have purported to include such messages on their brands as a means of showing the global community that they are good ambassadors; environment conscious and human value. World soccer clubs like Barcelona have partnered with UNICEF to campaign for fair treatment of children and against child use. With the help of creative computer graphics, electronic, and digital media, the world is able to see and appreciate the joint efforts between the soccer club and the UN body. It is easy to send such information globally using digital branding than traditional channels.

Geo-politics, wildlife and environmental conservation are some key messages that have not been left behind while integrating digital marketing and tradition branding systems. With the help of creative animation, brand advertisers try to inform consumers that their mission is more than accruing revenues or profits. In order to reach as many people as possible, firms turn to digital marketing which is more effective than using traditional means only. Essentially, this is an important marketing function, which helps consumer learn about who makes and owns the products and

what the brand and company advocate for. It is a way of building brand image and link places, people, events, feelings, things, and experiences. [9]

Hewlett-Packard is one of the leading brands in the computer industry. It has an admirable environmental history with an extended and distinguished culture of environmental activism. In one of its published messages, the company alludes that, “the HP Apollo 8000 System is a liquid-cooled supercomputer featuring energy-efficient design that can help organizations eliminate up to 3,800 tons of carbon dioxide waste from data centres per year” (Hewlett-Packard Development Company 2015) [11].

2.1.8 Revenue, sales and customer base growth

The concept of advertising and marketing brands digitally has become popular because of revenue growth and customer base expansion. Specifically, the objective of setting up online networking systems is to get nearer to customers who want to purchase an item but they cannot be present at the physical store. Firms may or may not be offering a variety of brands but pulling in more customers would be catalyzed due to digital networking avenues. A consumer that is able to get information about a product/service from the comfort of his/her home courtesy of digital marketing would be interested to follow up on the same. It is a means of building a bridge to cover the gap between online and offline operations. According to Adaptive Audience (2013).

“Digital marketing obviously has a decided impact on offline purchasing behaviour. A 2013 Mobile Path-to-Purchase study released by xAd and Telemetrics found that 45% of consumers searching for local products and services tap their mobile devices first, while 49% use PC/online. The study also revealed that mobile users have very high purchase intent with 60% of smartphone and 53% of table users completing their purchases. A Forrester cross-channel shopping survey estimated that 43% of all retail sales are influenced by the web” [12].

There has been a trend of consumers first researching the item online before making the decision to purchase it; sometime a routine known as research online, purchase offline (ROPO). One study showed that 88% of users take some time to do online research before buying offline. [13] Therefore, online marketing and advertising has a substantial influence on online and offline buyers. Some of the tactics that have been employed in bolstering online campaigns are online reviews, customer support community, using brand promoters, social engagement and

monitoring, Email campaigns, brand/local and mobile search advertising [12] Revenue and sales growth discussed above can also be attributed to low cost(s) incurred when using online platforms especially social media networking sites. Marketing channels that adopt Internet and social media services cost lower compared to mass media channels. In fact, websites are able to generate traffic (even for free) in many cases. [14]

Mass media channels are quite effective in sending a brand's message across though costs may be unbearable. Costs incurred in setting up marketing websites in addition to social networking sites are far much less compared to amounts paid for adverts to get ample airtime. Surprisingly, the social media and Internet platform, which require less in terms of set-up costs, perform better by drawing in more customers including the new ones. Nevertheless, digital programs like Internet websites, which exhibit high-volume and high-complexity nature, are more labour intensive albeit low-dollar investments; the positive feature with kind of platform is that customers can be nurtured and tracked specifically. [15]

Demerits of online marketing

While there are a lot of positives on how traditional, digital branding and/or an integration of both platforms has helped in driving revenues and profits skywards, opponents of branding especially the digital version insist that key features of the product are not brought into light. According to this section of consumers, some enterprises have gone overboard in making advertisements sensual and sexual rather than describing what special features are being offered. In relation to the same thing, different generations may perceive and interpret brands differently. Millennials may identify easily with the styling and design used in marketing a product even though it

portrays an “uncomfortable” image or expression. By converse, baby boomers would treat such an advertisement with some measure of dissent. Interestingly, the “provoking” brands are easily marketed through an online networking system. Opponents of branding argue that key information which describes the product, provides health, safety, life, warranty, and quality features has been overshadowed by other elements that seem to please emotions and feelings.

Beverage companies like Coca-Cola have invested heavily on digital marketing both on TV and internet. Some of the marketing adverts show young characters partying, having fun, and dancing while enjoying the drink. Other promotional campaigns show young people who are easily drawn to each other romantically once they consume the drink. In essence, one would not understand the exact message portrayed by such marketing initiatives. Realistically, would drinking of Coke soda increase affection between two people? Do these drinks make consumers more psychologically and emotionally satisfied as observed from the adverts where young people fly in heaven once they drink that bottle? If consumers were to view such digital marketing tactics from the opponents’ view, it is easy to conclude that the main objective(s) of branding and advertisements are not fully achieved.

Apart from mixed perceptions created by consumers with regards to some of marketing campaigns placed on internet and social media sites, complaints of piracy and copyright issues have been common. Music, entertainment, and medical fraternities are some of industries experiencing that challenge. Consequently, consumers cannot easily understand which product is original and which one is

copied. The social media sites become flooded with original and copied brands especially due to increased competition. Concisely, countries that have been lenient on patent and copyright laws constantly experience these problems. If not carefully monitored by respective government authorities, such practices can lead to heavy losses of the real owner of the market.

In his research, *Pros and Cons of Internet Marketing*, Vladislav Yurovskiy (2014) affirms that, “Trademarks or logos can be used to defraud customers and take away a sizeable market share from you...these can also be used for perpetrating negative and erroneous information about your brand, product or service that will ruin your online reputation and lose valuable targeted customers”. If the digital branding is not designed professionally, online visitors may not take it seriously and even leave a negative feedback (a drawback to getting more customers). Unprofessionalism leads to lack of trust and reputation damage. Frequent negative reviews slow down customers’ traffic and interest as far as your brand is concerned. [14]

Successful branding has been closely associated with strategic organizational management where, “managers of brands are essentially involved in the creation of brand description and therefore the degree of brand strength or brand loyalty achieved”. It is evident that these studies have tried as much as possible to look at the success or failure of both traditional and online branding but an in-depth evaluation of how digital branding influences the decision-making process entailing purchasing is needed. This research proposal will draw upon this gap to concisely focus on the strength of digital branding as to how effective and persuasive it is in influencing the purchasing decision compared to tradition branding. In this context, the key concern is not whether customers buy the product once or remain loyal as a result of the branding process. The main object is to understand whether the digital platform is more persuasive and effective in drawing purchasers nearer than traditional methods. While focusing on the objective of the study, some variables aforementioned will be controlled; this will assist in inferring suggestions and recommendations based on analysis and interpretation of data collected during the study.

3.0 Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

3.1.1 Philosophies

This research is based on one of the four main classes of research namely; positivist, social constructivist, pragmatic, and participatory. [16] These different world views are essential in determining how the research study is to be conducted, what should be included as valid knowledge, the right way to source that knowledge, and how it should be analysed. For this particular study, a post-positivist philosophy is adopted because of a number of reasons. It may not be possible to seek ‘absolute truth’ and the research evidence is prone to imperfection for this study. Concisely, there is an attempt to study a certain association, that is, the impact of digital branding on purchasers’ behaviour. It implies that the data collected and analysed here-in may not absolutely give facts on the research problem but provide a foundation for further research.

3.1.2 Approaches

With regards to the above philosophy, the study will adopt a quantitative approach. This is because a post-positivism paradigm is generally associated with quantitative research, which usually involves collection of data, conversion into numerical type, and analysis before drawing a conclusion. The approach for this study is anchored on a crucial research question; is digital branding more effective and persuasive in influencing the decision-making process towards purchasing compared to traditional branding? The objectives of the research study are shown below:

- v) To study the transition from traditional branding to modern techniques of digital branding and how it has impacted marketing and promotion strategies.
- vi) To investigate whether there is a relationship between organizations' performance and branding where digital and traditional branding are compared. This will be supported by relevant secondary data.
- vii) To study the impact and influence of technology tools such as the Internet on buyers' perception of brands, eventual purchasing and customer loyalty.
- viii) To compare the effectiveness and persuasiveness of digital branding with traditional branding with respect to the purchasing decision-making process.

3.1.3 Choosing variables

Being a quantitative analysis with some comparative features, an association between an independent and a dependent variable will be evaluated in relation to the research question. Therefore, the dependent variable will be the decision-making process towards purchasing while the independent one is the digital branding process. The objective of the study is to attest whether digital branding (independent variable) is more influential on the purchasing decision-making process (dependent variable). At the same time, some variables will be controlled including age, gender, social economic status (SES), political, social, race, and religious factors. Notably, if these variables are left unchecked, there is a likelihood of study findings varying.

3.1.4 Strategies, choices and time horizons

The research study will target candidates from both genders and an age span of 18 to 65. University students, teaching and non-teaching staff will be used for purposes of data collection and information gathering. However, the number of participants to be interviewed physically is likely to be influenced by the time available, which may be 2-3 weeks. The choice of candidates and their respective locations is based on resources and time available.

The essence of including candidates with a wide age span is to understand historical dynamics in the way baby boomers appreciate technology revolution. This will be evident from findings from questionnaires, interviews and relevant secondary data. Their views will go further to assist in determining whether modern technology tools such as smartphones and Internet applications/software influence their decision on how they perceive brands. The target study population is an important entity in the study especially when gathering, recording and collecting primary information. Further, it is worth noting that the feedback from older participants may vary from that of young candidates because both sets of people would show some difference in terms of interest and attention to details. Young people are less likely to concentrate on the content of study compared to old people who may be willing to provide more information considering their years and experience. This is likely to be experienced during oral interviews.

3.1.5 Techniques and procedures

However, one of the interesting ways to get the attention of young people is to involve them in small group discussions known as focus groups. Additionally, college students are likely and willing to participate in online correspondences, which are straight, forward and do not consume a lot of time. The design, format and framing of questions such as those used in questionnaires should be easily accessible even in smart phones.

3.2 Data Collection Method

3.2.1 Quantitative Research

As mentioned above, the post-positivist theory adopts a quantitative research approach. It implies that the study features empirical characteristics; that is, the data collected from participants has a significant amount of statistical information. In regards of the research problem and nature of study, statistical data is necessary to assert a bold conclusion that either the null or research hypothesis holds. Data collection methods will consist of primary and secondary sources. The key reason of using the secondary sources is to support primary findings that will be gathered from the primary methods. This study will involve the following as methods of data collection; online survey questionnaire and focus groups. These have been considered because of the short time available for the study.

Questionnaire

A good research is based on how well quantitative questionnaires are designed. In fact, respondents are willing to provide information based on how well the questionnaire is organized. Being an instrument of collecting data, questionnaires should have suitable wording and spacing to make it easy for respondents. This is because respondents do not want to struggle understanding a question because they have limited time due to their own private schedules. The text should be legible and not leading the respondent towards a certain answer. Instructions should be made clear with a definite purpose related to objectives of the study. [19] For instance, questions to be included in this study will relate closely to how people decide to purchase products and services based on whether digital branding influences them easily. Respondents will be able to know the purpose of the research before filling the questionnaires. Additionally, they will have a chance of getting feedback on the research findings.

The questionnaire will have a structured format with open and close-ended questions. There will be physical and electronic questionnaires (self-completion types) to allow convenience for some participants. Questionnaires in this study will be seeking to collect information on basic attitudes of people relating to modern methods of branding and how these attitudes influence decision to purchase an item either online or over counter. They will also determine to check acceptance/embrace of Internet technology as satisfactory method of advertising products in addition to getting baseline information on how digital advertising techniques have changed people's purchasing patterns.

With the help of an online tool, the Survey Monkey, a formal questionnaire with 10-15 questions was constructed. The questions were multiple choices in nature allowing respondents to select their choice answer. Besides, questionnaires will include a Liker scale with scores attached to different responses. For example, a relative score will be attached to the respondent's extent of agreement or disagreement. A sample of questionnaire question with a scored response is shown below:

i) Does web-based branding, as a way of marketing and promotion, perform better than tradition branding in attracting potential customers?

- Strongly agree – 5
- Agree - 4
- Neither disagree nor agree – 3
- Disagree – 2
- Strongly disagree - 1
- Do not know – 0

ii) How would you rank social media in terms of online inquiry traffic?

- Very Effective
- Effective
- Not Very Effective
- N/A

1. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
☐ Male

2. What is your age?

- ☐ 18 to 24
☐ 25 to 34
☐ 35 to 44
☐ 45 to 54
☐ 55 or older

3. On average, how many hours do you spend on the internet per day ?

- ☐ 0-1
☐ 2-3
☐ 4-5
☐ 6-7
☐ 8-9
☐ more than 9

4. In a typical day, how many hours do you spend on social media?

- ☐ 30 min
☐ 1 hour
☐ 2 hours
☐ more than 2 hours
☐ 0 hours

**5. Which of the following social media apps do you use most often?
(please choose two)**

- ☐ Instagram
☐ FaceBook
☐ pinterest
☐ SnapChat
☐ Twitter
☐ Other (please specify)

6. What do you tend to follow the most? (Please choose two)

- ☐ Friends and family
- ☐ Celebrities
- ☐ Interesting companies
- ☐ Other (please specify)

7. Have you ever purchased a product or signed for a service after watching its brand video?

- ☐ Yes, I have
- ☐ No, I haven't

8. How much are you effected by online advertising?

- ☐ I always buy things due to online adversising
- ☐ I sometimes buy things due to online advertising
- ☐ I seldom buy things due to online advertising
- ☐ I never buy things due to online advertising

9. What type(s) of online advertisements effect you the most?

- ☐ Banner/Display advertising
- ☐ Social media advertising
- ☐ Mobile advertising
- ☐ Pre-roll video adds
- ☐ Email advertising
- ☐ Other (please specify)

10. Do you prefer to buy online instead of physical visiting stores?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Sometimes

11. Which of the following do you prefer to purchase online?

- ☐ Products from big companies with wide distribution.
- ☐ Products from companies with good warranty and after sale service.
- ☐ Products from local companies with better price and good quality.
- ☐ Products belonging to companies with good brand image
- ☐ Other (please specify)

12. Does web-based branding, as a way of marketing and promotion, perform better than traditional branding?

- ☐ Strongly agree - 5
- ☐ Agree - 4
- ☐ Neither disagree nor agree - 3
- ☐ Disagree - 2
- ☐ Strongly disagree - 1
- ☐ Do not know - 0

Focus groups

These are small groups that will mainly involve young people, most likely college mates. Instructor(s) will assist in organizing and guiding such settings to ensure that ample time is allocated for the research project. The groups will include 5 members besides a facilitator and each seating will take between 30-45 minutes. The total number of focus groups will be about 3. One assumption that this study makes in line with selecting college peers is that involving senior teaching and non-teaching staff members in such a setting will be challenging. However, it might be possible to have college peers gather in such a group especially with the help of relevant department or school. Older participants would prefer a quiet and serene environment, which favors face-to-face interviews compared to focus grouping.

3.2.2 Sampling structure

The study proposes a total sample population of 45 participants with both genders considered almost equally (25 male/female and 20 female/male). The assumption is that the difference of 5 will not likely affect the outcome of findings because purchasing patterns may probably differ on a small scale; that is, participants may be subjected to similar conditions in terms of access to products/services, social economic status, location and spending patterns. The age young and old candidates to participate in the study will be symmetrically balance; however, the older population may be smaller than the young participants because of availability issues. The target population will have data collection instruments and methods distributed as follows:

- Online survey – 5 male and 5 females (college peers, teaching and non-teaching staff)
- Focus groups – 15 participants (age of 18 to 25 years) meaning 3 sittings at a rate of 5 per group.

3.2.3 Reliability, validity, and generalizability

The mode of sampling explained above involves a simple and random process hence no biasness in form of gender parity, race, or religion. The questions set in questionnaires are standardized because tools such as Survey Monkey are valid and recognized. The expected response rate to questionnaires and survey instruments is more than 75%. Also, the study ensures consistency of questionnaire and interview questions to improve accuracy of findings. For example, the questionnaire poses a question which asks the participant(s) to state how much time he/she spends on social media every day. If the same question is presented to the same respondent more than once, the feedback ought not to change. Concisely, instruments of data collection have been designed to address the impact of modern digital marketing and advertising techniques on people's purchasing behaviors.

3.2.4 Ethical Issues

These are pertinent issues throughout the study's lifecycle. Researchers should practice high standards of integrity to ensure information and/or any data collected from the participants is genuine. For instance, data collected in an environment where coercion or mistrust is prevalent does not pass the test of ethical integrity. Some of these issues included in this study are consent form for informed choices, gathering/collection of sensitive information, confidentiality of data, and inclusivity. [18] Participants will be allowed to give information that deems necessary for the

study objectives according to instructions provided in consent form and other instruments. For example, interviewees will be informed that prior to interview there will be recording to enable the researcher gather data for future analysis. If they are not free or willing to have their information recorded, then recording device will be exempt in this situation. The candidates will also be supported in case they have problems understanding certain requirements on filling forms or questionnaires. There will be a lot of caution during this study because of age and gender disparities because response from one group may not be positive to another. For example, an old professor may think that young college students spend much time online which make them lazy in many spheres of life; on the other hand, young people are likely to state that baby boomers are a bit slow to catch up with high-speed and real-time technology. Such responses need high levels of confidentiality for purposes of research ethics.

4.0 Data Analysis

The study used two key methods to collect and record data. These are survey questionnaires and focus groups. Each of these are analysed at length below:

4.1 Survey Analysis

For purposes of survey, the survey monkey tool was used. It is a convenient and easy survey tool to use providing users with summary, design survey, collection of responses, and results analysis section.

4.1.2 Responses from online survey

This involved presentation of questions to participants online. There were a total of 48 responses on the survey monkey web link. The responses were obtained within one month of the survey exercise. The design of the survey comprised of a total of 12 questions featuring variables such as age, technology tools, time spent on social media/internet platforms, gender, online advertisements and purchasing patterns. It is worth noting that not all questions had a total response of 48 participants with some questions receiving 47 and fewer responses as seen further below. Figure 1 shows total participation throughout the survey period.

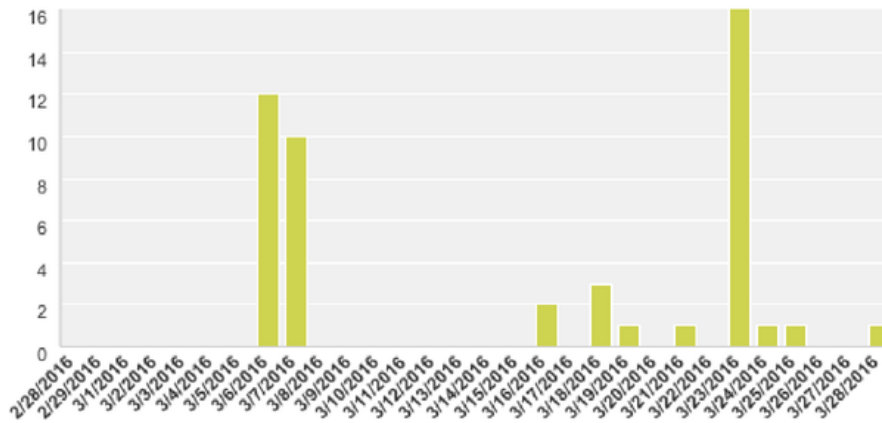


Figure 1: Responses over a one-month period

Gender and age distribution

Of the total participants during the survey, 14 of them were male while 33 were female (Refer to figure 2 below). One member did not participate in the survey meaning that the total responses were 47. The female population accounted for 70.21% while the male's share was 29.79%. This difference is likely to be an influence on other responses from the survey. The age bracket of respondents fell between 18 and 55 years and above as shown on figure 3 below. The lowest bracket of 18 years to 24 years had 16 responses (34.04%), 25 to 34 years had 27 responses accounting for 57.45%, 35 to 44 years and 45 to 54 years had 2 responses (4.26%) for each set. There were no responses from people aged 55 years and above. Figure 2 and 3 show gender and age distribution of respondents.

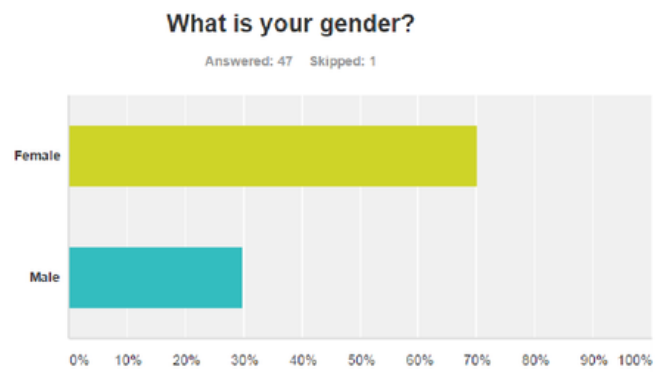


Figure 2: shows gender difference

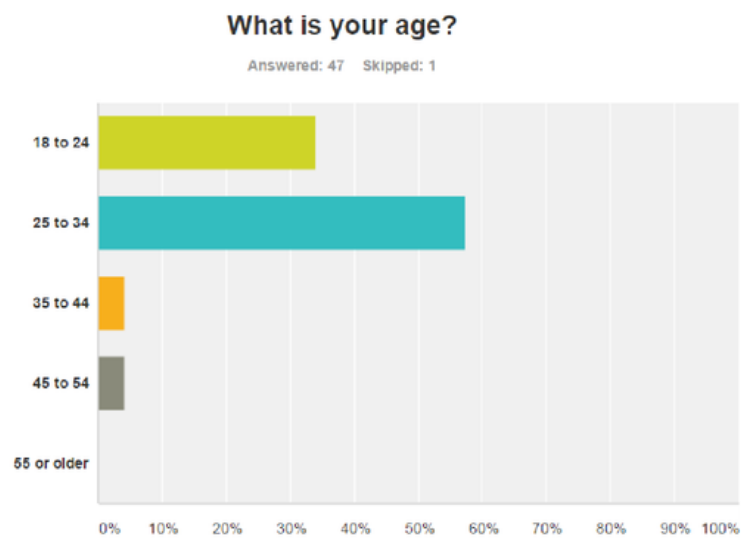


Figure 3: shows age distribution of participants

Time spent on the internet and social media

This was measured in terms of hours per day ranging from 0 to more than 9 hours. Two respondents skipped the question meaning that the total responses were 46. Only one person stated that he/she spent 1 hour on the internet everyday (2.17%). Nine (19.57%) respondents answered that they spend between 2 to 3 hours everyday on the internet. The biggest percentage (36.96%) of the respondents, 17, confirmed that they spend between 4 to 5 hours daily on the internet. Those who spend between 6 to 7 hours were only 9 implying 19.57% of the survey population. Four said they use between 8 and 9 hours daily on internet which is 8.7% share of the total responses.

Interestingly, 6 respondents indicated that they spend more than 9 hours on the internet daily. This was 13.04% share of the survey responses. The survey also sought to determine how many hours are spent by respondents on social media daily. The number of participants or respondents for this particular question was 47. More than half of the respondent (53.19%) indicated that they spend more than 2 hours on social media. Table 1 below shows the outcome of the survey with respective percentages.

Answer Choices	Responses	
30 min	4.26%	2
1 hour	21.28%	10
2 hours	19.15%	9
more than 2 hours	53.19%	25
0 hours	2.13%	1
Total		47

Table 1: Time spent on social media daily

All respondents (48) answered the fifth question about the social media apps they often use. For this particular question, the respondent was asked to pick two social media apps from a list (see table 2). SnapChat and Instagram were the two most popular social media applications with 35 (72.92%) and 32 (66.67%) respondents selecting them respectively. FaceBook and pinterest were the least popular apps used with percentage shares of 10.42% and 4.17% respectively. Table 2 below shows the choices of the respondents and percentage shares.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Instagram	66.67%	32
FaceBook	10.42%	5
pinterest	4.17%	2
SnapChat	72.92%	35
Twitter	33.33%	16
Other (please specify)	25.00%	12
Total Respondents: 48		

Table 2: social media apps used by respondents

Following patterns

In order to determine what is likely to convince the participants in making the decision towards purchasing a product/service, a question was posed to them asking what were they likely to follow. There were three options from which they could pick and these were; friends and family, celebrities, interesting companies and others. Also, the respondents were to choose two options. Notably, friends and family seemed to be the most followed with percentage response of 91.67% (44 responses). Coming second were celebrities with a response proportion of 50% (24 responses). Eighteen respondents seemed to follow interesting companies with a percentage share of 37.5% of the total respondents. All 48 participants responded to this question during the survey.

Online advertisement, purchasing patterns and branding strategies

Participants in the survey were asked to point out whether they have ever purchased/signed for a product/service after watching an online video marketing its brand. For this particular question, 47 respondents answered but one skipped. Those who agreed that they had done so numbered 30 representing a survey population of 63.83% while the 'No' respondents numbered only 17 (36.17%). Another question posed to the participants was to determine how much online advertising affected them. Three people answered that they buy things due to online advertising representing only 6.38% of the survey population. However, more than half of the respondents accepted that they sometime bought things due to online advertisements (24 respondents out of the total 47). Those who said that they never bought things due to online advertising were only 8 (17.02%). Importantly, 32 out of 48 respondents (66.67%) confirmed that the social media advertising affects them the most compared to the other methods. Email and banner/display advertisements came in second (25%) and third (22.92%) respectively. The bar graph below (figure 4) shows how different types of online advertisements affected the respondents in the survey.

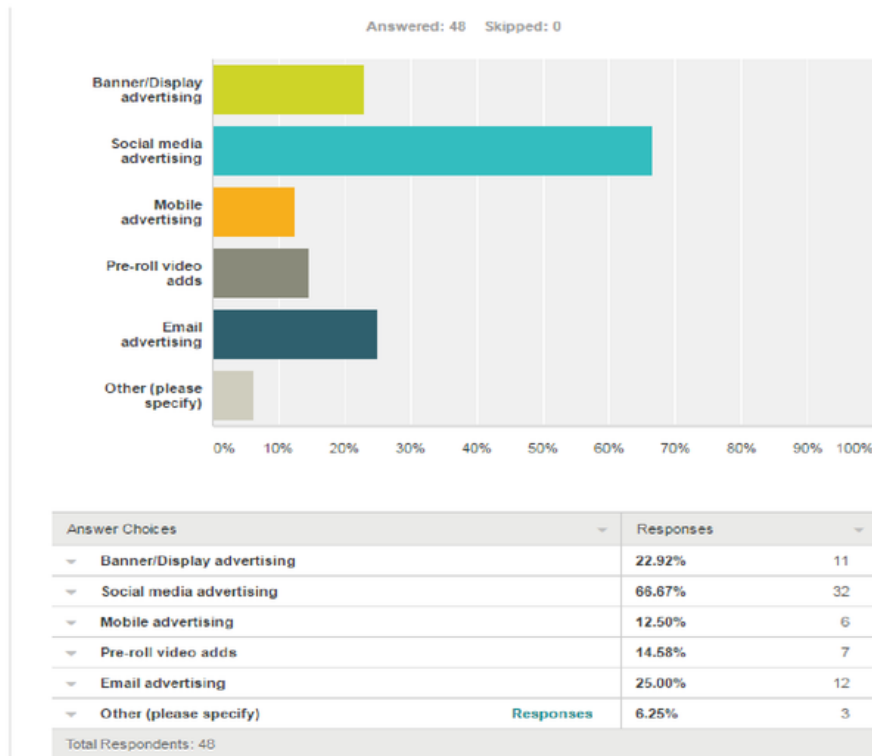


Figure. 4. Shows the effect of diferent types of online advertisements

Another interesting viewpoint shared by the participants was on whether they preferred buyng online instead of visiting ‘brick and mortar’ stores. Eight replied that they preferred online stores to physically visiting stores. However, the majority 66.67% (32 respondents) stated that they sometime preferred online stores to physically visiting them. The survey showed that 34.78% of the respondents preferred to purchase products from big companies which have wide distribution networks while 28.26% want to purchase products from companies with good warranty and after sale services. Surprisingly, only 8 out of 46 respondents preferred goods from local companies with good quality and better prices. Table 3 below shows what type of products respondents prefer to purchase online.

Answer Choices	Responses	
▼ Products from big companies with wide distribution.	34.78%	16
▼ Products from companies with good warranty and after sale service.	28.26%	13
▼ Products from local companies with better price and good quality.	17.39%	8
▼ Products belonging to companies with good brand image	15.22%	7
▼ Other (please specify) Responses	4.35%	2
Total		46

Table 3: preferred products purchased online by respondents

Lastly, a question was presented to the respondents to get their views on how web-based branding compares to traditional branding in terms of performance. More than 52% agreed that web-based branding performed better than traditional branding in terms of marketing and promotion. Only four respondents (8.7%) disagreed with the view that web-based marketing and promotion performs better than traditional branding. This is shown in table 4 below.

Answer Choices	Responses	
▼ Strongly agree - 5	17.39%	8
▼ Agree - 4	34.78%	16
▼ Neither disagree nor agree - 3	28.26%	13
▼ Disagree - 2	8.70%	4
▼ Strongly disagree - 1	0.00%	0
▼ Do not know - 0	10.87%	5
Total		46

Table 4 shows views of respondents on how web-based branding compares to traditional branding in terms of performance.

4.2 Focus groups

Though it was challenging to organize these group meetings, the average success rate of turn up was more than 90%. The first two focus groups had a membership attendance of 5 participants while the last attendance had 4 members. The total male attendance was 5 while female attendance was 9 totalling to 14 members. All participants were of the age between 18 and 35 years thus older participants did not participate. In order to guide the group in line with the objectives of the study and an informed position, the researcher undertaking this project was the facilitator. Some of the questions used in the focus group meeting were borrowed from the survey questionnaire, specifically those regarding online advertisements, the preferred social media apps, comparison between online and traditional marketing strategies and purchasing patterns. Cumulatively, 10 candidates (66.67%) in all focus group sessions indicated their preference of online branding strategies compared to traditional methods. Eight out of fourteen (57.14%) participants stated that they can be easily convinced by online advertisements leading them to purchase an item. On the other hand, 4 participants supported traditional methods of marketing representing a 26.67% share of participation; 3 participants were undecided. Of the 14 members participating in the group sessions, more than half (8) stated that they had purchased a product online at least once and their decisions were influenced greatly by family and/or friends/peers (71.43%) and social media networks (64.29%).

The social media applications used by participants were as follows; SnapChat (6 respondents or 42.86%), Instagram (4 or 28.57%), Twitter (2 or 14.29%), Facebook (1 or 7.14%). One member was not sure which application she mostly used. Lastly, 9 participants (64.29%) confirmed that they prefer buying products from big companies

that have a massive online presence such as Amazon.com. Further, 4 (28.57%) members indicated that they preferred good quality and better price of the brand. About 8% of the participants stated that they prefer products from companies associated with good brand image.

Significance of findings

The sample population was randomly selected hence no instances of biased as well as focus group meetings. With a total respondent population of about 48 people, statistic analysis can be performed at the study level and a theme or generalization projected to a larger population. The data highlights the socio-cultural pattern of people even as they interact with new technologies in almost all their activities. This does not undermine the importance and value of tradition modes of marketing products that was used extensively before the invent of internet and other digital-oriented platform. The approach used in the design of survey questionnaire has not considered some essential variables such as beliefs, religion, piracy, online security and culture. While the internet and social media technology has penetrated many areas in the world, factors such as religion and culture inhibit online branding strategies. Therefore, the approach is supposed to consider such factors.

Without much regards to the gender representation in the survey, the responses on social media apps, time spent on social media site and internet and influence on purchasing patterns portrays a one-direction trend. This trend suggests that the young population significantly recognizes the presence and networking strength of internet and social media platforms. In one way or the other, they are likely to learn of a new product or brand through online devices, software or application. A significant portion of these population is likely to decide to purchase the item they have learned about

online while another section will proceed to a physical store. In both cases, the role played by digital branding tools cannot be ignored. Further, the data is likely to assist prospecting entrepreneurs and/or investors that adoption of digital or online resources strengthens modern methods of promotion, advertisement and marketing of products/services.

Comparatively, the findings from survey closely share similarities with focus group findings. However, it is important to note that the focus population is quite small to project a generalization to a large population. Participants in the survey and focus group acknowledge the existence of social media applications and tools that they have ever come across at one time of their life. There is a common agreement shared among the two groups that people spend sometime visiting social media networking sites and the internet to check or verify some information about a certain product/service. Further, people have ordered goods/services online after reading through their requisite information and specifications. Notably, participants in the survey and focus meetings stated that they consulted their family or friend before making the final decision to purchase.

5.0 Conclusion

Modern marketing operations at the local and global level are increasingly becoming technologically oriented. This demands that transactions be executed quickly and satisfactorily in order to have customers return as many times as possible. This is the concept behind branding strategies. With competition rife and the desire to be the best in the market, companies are strategizing on how to get the biggest share of the market. This is actualized by the process of integrating digital branding with traditional methods. The internet and digital era are coming to pass in order to allow a new era of socializing and interaction. The internet platform which was used in early 2000 may not be applicable at this time. The most recent innovation of social media included Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, FaceBook, pinterest and other platforms. In fact, the survey and focus group results above indicate substantially that the social media plays a significant role in influencing the purchasing patterns of people. From the findings, there is a probability of a person sourcing for information online about a product's specification or features which may influence him/her to purchase online or not.

Though online transactions are ever increasing, traditional companies do not want to scrap the old fashion approach to advertising, marketing and promoting products. At the same time, young people prefer to scroll through social media sites or web sites having been referred to by family members and/or peers. The survey and focus groups findings point to a reality that online branding and the social media applications appear to be inherent factors in the decisions that people make towards purchasing a certain product/service. This study concentrates on the influence of digital branding strategies on people's purchasing decisions. The findings here-in give a general portrait of the significance and the role played by technology tools such as

social media and the internet in marketing and promoting company products. However, researchers are allowed to undertake further studies on some of the gaps that are likely to arise in this study. For instance, how companies compete innovatively to market their products online with an objective of pulling in more customers from physical stores.

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