



Real-Time Branding and Social Media: a New Model Based on Thematic Analysis

Ghasem Zarei¹ & Mohammad Bahadorinezhad²

University of Mohaghegh Ardabili. Ardabil, Iran

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Abstract

Branding stands as a major component of any business, regardless of its size or commercial drive. It encompasses all efforts leading to the perception of a product, service, or organization in the minds and eyes of the audience or customers. Essentially, branding aims to create and fulfill a promise about a brand. Real-time branding focuses on improving consumer communication by providing brand-relevant information that connects with consumers' lives. Social media serve as an effective tool for this type of branding.

The purpose of this study is to develop a model for real-time branding within the context of social media. This research uses qualitative thematic analysis with MaxQDA software. Experts in branding, social networks, and university professors specializing in these fields make up the study's population. They were selected based on the method used to develop the research model. The analysis identifies eight categories and thirty-four criteria essential for real-time branding: (1) timely supply of customer needs, (2) brand image, (3) brand awareness, (4) brand identity based on authenticity, (5) timely response, (6) creating value for customers, (7) customer participation in branding, and (8) an appropriate branding strategy. These categories help to facilitate and to direct real-time branding in companies.

Moreover, the study reveals that social media plays a critical role in real-time branding. Market feedback, information sharing, interaction, communication, choosing the right social network, content scheduling, sharing, and production are the dimensions and categories identified for social media in branding. These have also emerged as criteria influencing real-time branding in the proposed model. Aligning the message with the moments expected by the audience and enhancing responsiveness to customer needs are the most effective tasks a brand must undertake. These efforts are crucial for increasing customer satisfaction and promoting customer interaction with the brand, leading to more voluntary cooperation in real-time branding.

Keywords

Branding; Real-Time; Social Media; Real-Time Branding; Brand and Social Mediated; Consumer Interaction; Market Feedback; Brand Strategy; Digital Marketing; Content Management



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1 Email: [zareigz\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:zareigz[at]gmail.com) ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4949-5871>

2 Email: [noemail\[at\]noemail.org](mailto:noemail[at]noemail.org)



Брендинг в реальном времени и социальные медиа: новая модель на основе тематического анализа

Зарей Гасем¹, Бахадоринежад Мохаммад²

Университет Мохажхег Ардабили. Ардебиль, Иран

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Аннотация

Брендинг является одним из основных компонентов любого бизнеса, независимо от его размера и коммерческой направленности. Он включает в себя все усилия, направленные на формирование представления о продукте, услуге или организации в сознании и глазах аудитории или клиентов. По сути, брендинг нацелен на создание и выполнение обещаний относительно бренда. Брендинг в реальном времени фокусируется на улучшении коммуникации с потребителями путем предоставления актуальной для бренда информации, которая связана с жизнью потребителей. Социальные медиа служат эффективным инструментом для этого вида брендинга.

Цель данного исследования – разработать модель брендинга в реальном времени в контексте социальных медиа. В исследовании использован качественный тематический анализ с помощью программы MaxQDA. Аудиторию исследования составляют эксперты в области брендинга, социальных сетей и преподаватели университетов, специализирующиеся в этих областях. Они были отобраны на основе метода, использованного для разработки модели исследования. Анализ выявил восемь категорий и тридцать четыре критерия, необходимых для брендинга в реальном времени: (1) своевременное удовлетворение потребностей клиентов, (2) имидж бренда, (3) осведомленность о бренде, (4) идентичность бренда, основанная на аутентичности, (5) своевременное реагирование, (6) создание ценности для клиентов, (7) участие клиентов в брендинге и (8) соответствующая стратегия брендинга. Эти категории помогают облегчить и направить брендинг компаний в режиме реального времени.

Более того, исследование показало, что социальные медиа играют важнейшую роль в брендинге в реальном времени. Обратная связь с рынком, обмен информацией, взаимодействие, коммуникация, выбор правильной социальной сети, планирование контента, обмен и производство – вот те измерения и категории, которые были определены для социальных медиа в брендинге. В предложенной модели они также выступают в качестве критериев, влияющих на брендинг в реальном времени. Приведение сообщения в соответствие с моментами, ожидаемыми аудиторией, и усиление реакции на потребности клиентов – наиболее эффективные задачи, которые должен решать бренд. Эти усилия имеют решающее значение для повышения удовлетворенности клиентов и развития их взаимодействия с брендом, что приводит к более добровольному сотрудничеству в брендинге в реальном времени.

Ключевые слова

брендинг; реальное время; социальные медиа; брендинг в реальном времени; бренд и социальное опосредование; взаимодействие с потребителями; обратная связь с рынком; стратегия бренда; цифровой маркетинг; управление контентом

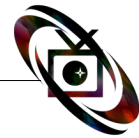


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1 Email: zareigz[at]gmail.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4949-5871>

2 Email: noemail[at]noemail.org



Introduction

One of the goals that companies globally pursue is to establish a desirable brand for their company and products, hence the novel role of brand managers in organizational structures. Branding is the process of creating an appearance, feel, and personality for a company or product (Tan et al., 2019). The main purpose of branding is to create a positive perception of the company in the public eye and to shape the way customers think and approach the brand. The pathways and manners through which a brand appears communicate, and acts are all fundamental parts of the branding process (Cocker, Mardon, & Daunt, 2021).

Branding is a comprehensive, yet incremental process for which different methods have been lined up, and hence can be sought after. The development of digital communication and social networks has led to a new and challenging environment for companies to branding in addition to the classic methods of branding. In recent years, the ever-increasing prevalence of social media has introduced a novel avenue for highly optimal digital branding programs. Although advertising campaigns and public relations were pivotal to the promotion of the brands, the last decade has witnessed the tide of social media improving the brand value of organizations, companies, products, and services, represented by the ranking of search engine pages provided to customers. That is, social networks have become a marketing tool for entrepreneurs that provide better access to potential customers, and businesses and companies use it as part of their marketing and branding efforts.

A rather emerging topic on the use of social networks by brands is real-time branding, which is defined as establishing interaction at the right time, and in the right place with customers. Real-time branding is a concept that relies on the significance of fashioning a brand relationship with the customer at the right time, thereby seeking to address the needs of customers in real-time, for which, one can imagine that social media are the optimal tools.

Brands seek to establish meaningful connections and elicit positive responses from consumers by aligning their social media messages with the trending content that are highly discussed on social media. This practice of sharing the brand message at the right time is known as real-time branding (RTB), and the purpose of those brands is to establish relevant communication and receive positive responses from consumers (Komala et al., 2021).

The idea behind real-time branding is to promote communication to consumers by delivering brand content relevant to what's going on in their lives. With real-time branding, brands aim to bridge the gap between brands and consumers by addressing the very moments consumers are experiencing on social media. This focus on improving customer recognition of the brand is perceivably apart from digital content marketing (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019). Real-time branding is a notion that draws from the significance of establishing a brand rela-

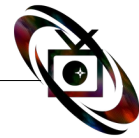


tionship with the customer at the right time, thereby seeking to respond to the needs of customers in real-time. One of the tools of branding is the use of social networks, which becomes more important in the field of branding in real-time, and the reason for this is the discussion of time and its importance in branding.

Evidence from the literature has established that real-time branding is positively related to sharing behavior in social networks (Willemsen et al., 2019). Although social media platforms provide engagement metrics, such as shares, likes, and comments, researchers call for a broader set of metrics to represent message effectiveness indication (West et al., 2019). For example, Akpınar and Berger (2017) found that brands may sacrifice advertising effectiveness when focusing on increasing shares, such that aspects of content that increase sharing behavior (e.g., removing a brand or product from the brand message) reduces the popularity of the brand name. That is, to achieve social media effectiveness, it is not only important to know the number of likes or shares of brand messages, but also their overall impact on brand performance. Moreover, researchers often measure the performance of messages using a broader set of consumer responses, such as attitude toward the message, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention (Komala et al., 2021).

The ever-increasing prevalence of social networks and the consequent attraction of the vast number of users in different parts of the world have made it particularly applicable to the realms of marketing and branding (Zerfass et al., 2017). There is a plethora of perceived benefits to social media, including providing new possibilities for interacting and maintaining relationships with friends and loved ones (Dhir et al., 2018). Furthermore, social media also enables communication with new types of “digital friends”, which can include social media influencers – bloggers, YouTubers, Instagrammers, and celebrities, often considered by many as close as long-time friends or even family members (Reinikainen et al., 2020). Also, brands can evoke strong semantic associations with their products and service or even create feelings of love in devoted people (Tan et al., 2019). This effect may be particularly relevant among young people who are often “attracted to popular brands” (Dhir et al., 2016).

Social media not only solidifies the relationship between the company and the customer but also prompts the capacity of the company in structuring interactions with consumers, ultimately leading to fundamental shifts in the comfort, volume, speed, and nature of communication and interactions. (Komala et al., 2021). Social media can build a brand and raise its awareness; Social media tools allow companies to reach millions of people. Since many people visit social media daily, the presence of a brand in all these networks can help to inform people, get to know the company, and be aware of the brand (Ahmad and Iqbal, 2013). Brands can effectively develop and increase relationships with customers and get appropriate feedback from the presentation of the brand in society through establishing communi-



cation and interaction with customers so that they can introduce and advertise the brand at the right time (Feng and Xie, 2019). This is the very same notion of real-time branding that has garnered little-to-no attention from brand researchers and experts. Therefore, social media can play an important role in branding and creating diverse brands in different fields.

Even though real-time branding is only extensively employed owing to this presumed effect on consumer responses, little is known about whether real-time branding is an effective social media strategy and, if so, why. That is, real-time branding has remained highly elusive among researchers and in this literature. Therefore, the present research was as such an attempt to conceptualize and hence bridge the gap left by the thin literature on real-time branding. On the other hand, messages stemming from real-time branding allow brands to connect meaningfully with the moment that captures the attention of social media users. However, the creative development of branding messages in real-time is perceivably subject to intense timetables (Willemsen et al., 2019). Therefore, the significance of social media for real-time branding is simply incontestable, and the relevance of time in this field of branding is rather based on the nature of messages in social media, which can transfer data and information quickly and on time. Considering the aforementioned discussion, the main purpose of this research was to provide a model for real-time branding mediated by social media in implementing this concept.

Research background

Real-time Branding

Branding is one of the rather major components of any business, no matter how large or commercially-driven they are. Branding refers to all the efforts that lead to the perception of a product, service, or organization in the minds and eyes of the audience or customers. Branding in its most essential form is to make, and hence realize, a promise about a brand (VanMeter et al., 2018). An effective branding strategy would bestow upon the seeking company a major edge in an increasingly competitive market. Branding is a systematic process that is used to generate awareness and increase customer loyalty (Park et al., 2017). The main purpose of branding a product, service, or organization is to create a mindset and vision for a particular business, to the extent that the customer would depend on it to meet their needs. This requires high-level orders and the prerequisites for prospective investing. Branding can thus be represented as exploiting every opportunity to tell people why they should choose a certain brand over other similar brands. In general, branding is a process during which the emotional status of a product or service is reflected, thereby improving its value for customers and other beneficiaries (Phillips, McFadden, and Sullins, 2012).

Brands can inspire their customers by creating strong connections or even fashion feelings of compassion in individuals by providing suitable and timely



messages thereto (Tan et al., 2019). This effect may be particularly strong among younger people who are regularly perceived to be “attracted to popular brands” (Dhir et al., 2016). These intimate and online relationships are intertwined as brands seek endorsements from “powerful” influencers to gain the trust and attention of influencers’ followers. For example, in the beauty industry, influencers, followers, and brands have formed active online communities. Therefore, real-time branding is grounded on the fact that the desired messages are transmitted and presented to customers at the right time (Lawson, 2021).

The idea behind real-time branding is to promote communication to consumers by delivering brand content relevant to what's going on in their lives. With real-time branding, brands aim to bridge the gap between brands and consumers by addressing the very moments consumers are experiencing on social media. This focus on improving customer recognition of the brand is perceivably apart from digital content marketing (Hollebeek and Macky, 2019).

Brands seek to establish meaningful connections and elicit positive responses from consumers by aligning their social media messages with the trending content that are highly discussed on social media. Real-time branding is extensively employed owing to this perceived effect on consumer responses (Waardenburg & Mazerant, 2018).

Real-time branding involves the use of real-time data for the brand managers to make decisions based thereon. Rather than creating and pursuing a pre-planned branding plan, real-time branding is based on a fixed schedule to create a focused strategy in line with current trends and is dependent on immediate feedback from customers (Augusto, Godinho, and Torres, 2019). Real-time branding seeks to connect consumers with the product or service they pursue at the moment (Ang, Lee, & Leung, 2007).

Real-time branding efforts have become more effective than ever through relentless innovation in social media and other communication technologies. With Facebook, Twitter, and other popular social media platforms, businesses can gather up-to-date information about their target audience (Woodwald et al., 2018). Within mere minutes, social networks can turn simple text- or image-based information into a marketing message to share, and everyone is exposed to these messages as they want to be a part of the latest trend or fashion. When companies strategically structure their advertising campaigns to reflect a current event or fever, their product or service may become more attractive to consumers (Warren, 2019). Today's consumers are all about instant gratification, so by tailoring a relevant marketing message to consumers when they need it, they are more likely to buy a product or service because they recognize the immediate benefit they can attain (Weingarten and Berger, 2013).

The researchers suggest that the promising effects of real-time branding can be attributed to advertising creativity, although this is yet to be directly tested. Real-time branding messages allow brand managers to connect meaningfully with



the moment that captures the attention of social media users. If implemented successfully, this promotes the innate creativity of the message, considering that relevance is an important dimension of creativity. However, the creative development of RTB messages is subject to intense time constraints, which in turn can have a negative impact on message originality, itself another dimension of creativity. As such, this conflict of interest, and hence the need to strike a trade-off in the creative development of real-time marketing messages and its differential effects must be addressed before evaluating the efficacy of RTB on consumer responses and its underlying processes. (Willemsen et al., 2018).

Social Media

The ever-increasing prevalence of, and accessibility to, the Internet has paved the way for social media to become an essential marketing tool, as they have assumed the role of offering the capacity of rapid reproduction and dissemination of information from one node to another. That is, businesses can gain access to a broader range of potential customers by bringing out this capacity (Hsieh et al., 2018). Therefore, brand content in social networks is transmitted at a faster rate, to a wider audience, and at a much lower cost than most traditional media (Phillips, McFadden, and Sullins, 2012). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as a set of Internet-based applications that are built on the ideological and technological basis of the Internet and allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content. These media allow producing content for customers who were previously only consumers of content. Eventually, users value the websites that have given them such a possibility, and it will lead to gaining the trust of customers (Gaustad et al., 2019).

Social media has not only altered the pathways through which brands and consumers communicate, but also the very subject of discussions. More precisely, social media platforms help their users to be more responsive to each other as well as to what is happening in the current world (Parent, Plenger, & Bal, 2011). This responsiveness is reflected in social media conversations, as consumers are more likely to talk about things that are happening at the moment. The capacity to monitor this exchange of messages in real-time enables brands to be more responsive, and hence be held accountable. They can participate in the conversation by aligning their messages with moments that are being discussed on social media, such as public holidays, trending topics, breaking news, or festive moments. By doing this, brands increase the relevance of their message by connecting their brand messages to conversations about the moments that are top of mind. This real-time alignment of brand messages by getting into social media conversations is defined as real-time branding (Khodami et al., 2021).

Social media is deemed by many a groundbreaker in interactive and collaborative online communication, one that puts the reciprocated communication between the user and the company at the heart of everything. These media run contrary to traditional Internet methods, where websites offer a one-way avenue of commu-



nication for users (Mazerant and Willemsen, 2018). The benefits of social media are aplenty, including offering new possibilities for interacting and maintaining relationships with friends and loved ones (e.g., Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Chung et al., 2011; Dear et al. colleagues, 2018). Moreover, social media also enables communication with new types of “digital friends”, which can include social media influencers – bloggers, YouTubers, Instagrammers, and celebrities, often considered by many as close as long-time friends or even family members (Reinikainen et al., 2020).

Social media provides vast opportunities for brands to interact with customers and potentially turn them into loyal and long-term supporters of their products/services. At present, social media has become a major front for brands, as customers value the recommendations of their friends and family as trusted sources when making purchasing decisions, thereby providing a great opportunity for brand managers to employ real-time branding to send the brand message correctly and appropriately to the customer (Malthouse et al., 2018). As such, digital marketers consider these media as an integral part of RTB strategies that can be used to interact with customers, thereby taking the role of a powerful catalyst in spreading the brand message, increasing awareness, and promoting online participation (Puri et al., 2017).

According to Huang et al.'s (2024) perspective, brands do not only interact with customers directly, but can also interact with consumers by using other consumers. In today's environment, consumers' doubts about brands and traditional media are increasing, and social media can be effective in reducing this doubt and strengthening interaction with consumers. According to the view of Huang et al. (2024), this interaction can increase the competitive advantage of the brand in the market and promote the company's brand due to the quick and diverse communication it creates with consumers. They showed that the four elements of fun, trendiness, customization and word of mouth in social media marketing have a statistically significant direct effect on consumer-brand interaction.

Empirical Background

In a paper entitled “Spot-On Creativity: Creativity Biases and Their Differential Effects on Consumer Responses in (Non-)Real-Time Marketing” Mazerant et al. (2021) stated a challenge in digital content marketing is to create meaningful messages in meaningful moments. To do so, brands frequently align social media messages with topical moments, also known as Real-time Marketing (RTM). While RTM aims to make meaningful connections, creative development is subject to time pressure due to its real-time nature, which could have a negative effect on originality and craftsmanship, two other creativity dimensions besides meaningfulness that drive consumer responses. We address this tension by examining the creative crafting of RTM on Instagram and its consequences. Based on a content analysis of 516 Instagram messages, we indeed found a meaningfulness bias for RTM, such that meaningfulness comes at the expense of originality and crafts-



manship. However, the findings from the content analysis, as well as an additional experiment (N = 245), showed that only craftsmanship and originality, and not meaningfulness, positively induced consumer responses. Implications are discussed.

In their study, “Branding in the time of virtual reality: Are virtual store brand perceptions real?” Pizzi et al. (2021) investigated whether consumers display similar brand perceptions between physical and virtual store environments. Specifically, the authors the set of causal relationships through which the virtual store experience affects consumers’ perceptions and intentions toward the retailer’s brand. The results from an experimental study manipulating the store environment (virtual vs. physical) reveal that individuals exposed to a virtual-reality-based retail environment perceive higher levels of presence than those exposed to a more traditional, physical store environment; moreover, this positive effect does not depend on individuals’ technological self-efficacy perceptions. Higher levels of presence positively affect the shopping experience, which then produces a positive change in value perceptions, which ultimately leads to higher patronage intentions and WOM referrals. Despite the presence of inattentive blindness found in the virtual environment, the results show that such an image transfer from the store environment to patronage intention holds even when individuals cannot correctly recall the store brand.

Wallace et al. (2021) stated in their study, titled “Outcomes for self-expressive brands followed on social media: Identifying different paths for inner self-expressive and social self-expressive brands”, that Brands provide a means for consumers to present the self, expressing their inner selves (the ‘real me’), or their social selves (how others see me). With the rise in social media use, academics and practitioners seek to understand how consumers’ self-expression through following brands online leads to brand outcomes. This study investigates the inner and social self-expressiveness of brands as separate antecedents of two outcomes: intention to co-create value and willingness to pay a premium price. Insights from 332 followers of brands on social media reveal that the inner and social self-expressiveness of brands drive these outcomes differently, as online brand engagement and brand trust mediate the relationship between self-expressive brands and brand outcomes, but only when the brand can express the inner self. The findings have implications for the study of self-expressive brands and their influence on brand outcomes.

Ghotbi et al. (2021) examined in their research the impact of real-time marketing on brand engagement in social media networks, stating therein that today’s consumers are often well-informed and more critical of marketing messages from companies, where opinions of peers often weigh heavier than information provided by employees of a company. Also, resulting from the rise of social media, brands can today communicate with consumers in real time. Social media has played a great role in how storytelling is created nowadays. Stories are known for their ability to capture attention, engage and influence people, create meaning,



exemplify values, and gain trust. Given the fact that real-time marketing is a rather new concept and that theoretical framework regarding the topic can be hard to come by, we feel that an abductive approach is certainly most suitable for the research we aspire to perform. Internet and e-libraries have been our primary sources of data, and we have especially been using the Internet in the early stages of research to get a good and solid understanding of the chosen subject. The data was collected from scientific journals, Thomson Reuter, and Google Scholar databases. Next, the researcher's observations of different types of Real-Time Marketing and their effects and consequences were presented, along with visual examples. Finally, the findings have implications for managers and marketers.

Reinikainen et al. (2021) performed a study titled "Making and breaking relationships on social media: the impacts of brand and influencer betrayals". This study considers how the relationships between social media influencers, brands, and individuals are intertwined on social media and analyze the spill-over effects of feelings of betrayal. An experimental design with two transgression scenarios (influencer vs. brand) was created in this study, and 250 individuals were recruited to participate in the study. The results show that a perceived betrayal by a brand can negatively affect the perceived coolness of the social media influencer that has endorsed the brand, as well as the para-social relationships that followers have with the influencer. Accordingly, a perceived betrayal by a social media influencer can negatively affect attitudes, trust, and purchase intentions toward a brand that the influencer has endorsed. The current research helps in understanding brand and influencer transgressions and highlights the fact that both influencers and brands should have a sense of collaboration responsibility. It also introduces the concept of influencer coolness, understood here as a desirable success factor for social media influencers, which partly explains their desirability and influence, and a feature that can be endangered through both influencer and brand betrayals.

Anderski et al. (2023) conducted a study titled 'Empowerment of human brands: Brand meaning co-creation on digital engagement platforms'. They studied the concept of interactive branding in human brands. They presented three new types of functionality for co-creating human brands in digital engagement platforms.

In a study titled Consumer engagement in social media brand communities: A literature review, Santos et al. (2022) examined the theoretical foundations of consumer engagement with brand communities in social media. According to the studies of these researchers, with the boom of social media, various studies have investigated the participation of consumers with brands in these media, but the studies lack a comprehensive understanding in this field. According to this survey, researchers have provided different definitions and studied consumer participation using attitudinal, behavioral and motivational dimensions. This study



showed that the theory of uses and satisfactions and the theory of social identity were the most references in previous studies.

Research Methodology

The current research is an applied study that employs qualitative thematic analysis for its purposes. The authors also make use of field research methods to have more natural control over research variables. The statistical population of this research are branding and social networks experts and university professors in the field of brand and social networks, which were selected considering the method used for developing the research model, that is, thematic analysis. There were several criteria for the selection of participants, including academic studies in the field of marketing, at least 5 years of work experience in the field of digital marketing and branding, operational cooperation with several different companies in the field of branding. Purposive sampling was used for the study and resumed until theoretical saturation, culminating in a sample size of 16 participants. Library-based archives and contents were used to collect the necessary data and gain information regarding the theoretical foundations and research background, while statistical methods were used to examine research hypotheses. Furthermore, in-depth interviews were used to collect information in this research.

MaxQDA 10 was used to analyze the data outputted from thematic analysis and coding of the data collected from the discussion with experts. Data analysis is achieved by repeatedly reading the data, through which, the main concepts of the data were obtained. The coding procedure respectively included (1) open coding, (2) axial coding, and (3) selective coding on themes. Then, assigned codes with common axes are transformed into a set of concepts, and categories are extracted from the concepts. Finally, the research theory is formulated by drawing relationships between categories and concepts.

The following measures were taken to confirm the validity of the research tool and to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings from the perspective of the researcher, participants, or readers:

Data alignment and self-review of the researcher: the obtained concepts and categories were continuously compared with the data and their suitability was evaluated.

Review by the members: the participants in the interviews examined and reviewed the obtained categories and expressed their opinion concerning them.

Peer review: In addition to receiving the valuable opinions of supervisors and advisors, the extracted concepts and categories were reviewed with several branding professors and experts.

Participatory nature of the research: the participants helped in analyzing and interpreting the data.

In the present research, the within-subject design criteria were used to calculate the reliability of the conducted interviews. The within-subject agreement



method can be used by the coder (evaluator) to calculate the reliability of qualitative research. For this purpose, one of the experts was asked to participate as a research associate (coder). Trainings and methods necessary for coding were instructed to the research associate. In each of the interviews, the codes that are similar in the opinion of two people are marked as “agreement” and the codes that are not similar are marked as “disagreement”.

Research findings

The analysis of the demographic characteristics of the interviewees indicated that 16 experts participated in this research. These participants were marketing professors and academic branding experts with Ph.D. grade educational levels. Also, most of these people have enough experience in the field of brand and branding in the industry and market environment and have a history of cooperation and experience with commercial and industrial companies. Finally, the opinions and views of the experts were collected and analyzed in the form of theme analysis, the results of which are presented below.

Creation of primary codes: In the creation of primary codes, meaningful units of data are first labeled using a conceptual name, and then the obtained concepts are categorized using more abstract names. 61 open codes were identified among 168 codes;

Searching for themes: In axial coding, separate themes are placed next to each other in a meaningful framework, and the relationships therebetween, especially the relationship between the core theme and other themes, are determined. Axial coding leads to the formation of concepts and categories. All similar codes are placed in their group. Then all the extracted codes are revised and compared with the texts so that nothing is missed. The results of axial coding are shown in Table (1), from which it is evident that 67 open codes are categorized in the form of 34 axial codes and 8 selective codes.

Frequency	Open coding	Axial coding	Selective coding
4	Coordinating social media messages with moments	Content sharing schedule	Content management
5	Content sharing at the time of national ceremonies		
4	Sharing content with customers' specific timing		



4	Content production based on occasions		
5	Creating content at the same time as the changes	Producing instant content	
6	Creating content based on creating excitement and entertainment		Attractiveness of the content
4	Content production based on customer needs		
5	Close connection between the brand and the customer		
6	Establishing wide communication channels	Timely republishing	
6	Using attractive messages	Creating viral messages	
4	Emotion-based advertising in the media		
4	Using group advertising in the media	Using media waves	
5	Receive feedback from customers	Continuous monitoring of information and market changes	
5	Continuous market evaluation		
4	Monitoring trends and events around the brand	Monitoring trends and events around the brand	
4	Evaluation and performance of people to the brand		Continuous monitoring and marketing research
6	Examining the sense of brand in the minds of customers		
6	Checking the needs of customers in the market	Monitoring the trend of preferences and views of consumers	
4	Assessing customer concerns about the brand		
4	Examining brand conditions in social networks	Social media monitoring	



5	Evaluation of consumers' view of the brand in social networks		
5	Facilitating users' access to the Internet	Control of information exchange	
6	Ability to monitor information exchange		
7	Get feedback from customers	Customer feedback management	
7	Providing a customer relationship management system		
6	Brand response to demands	Accurate and timely response	Communication and accountability
6	Responding to customers' needs when they need them		
5	Creating timely communication with the consumer at the right time	Creating a platform for interaction	
4	Two-way brand-customer interaction based on the right time		
4	Providing information about brand changes	Real-time clarification	
6	Transferring information about issues and problems		
4	Training the human neuron of the brand field		Internal branding
4	The experience of brand employees	Appropriate manpower in the field of brand	
5	Using team building in the field of brand	Professional response team	
5	Using creative forces in branding		
2	Using celebrities in branding as brand ambassadors	Development of brand ambassadors	
6	Improving the quality of services and products according to market needs	Adequate quality of products and services	



7	Providing quality products		
3	Customer engagement through friendship groups	Help build and develop brand communities	
4	Customer engagement by creating entertainment		
4	Brand promotion through social exchange		
5	Brand promotion through word of mouth in friendship groups	Strengthening the platform of customer participation	Consumer participation
5	Loyal consumers active on social media		
6	Sharing brand content by customers		
6	Brand loyalty in the media	Loyal consumers active on social media	
4	Investigating the movement of market behavior	Predicting market behavior	
4	Evaluating market conditions and predicting its behavior		
4	Predicting different consumer behaviors based on environmental changes	Analyzing possible scenarios of consumer and market behavior	
5	Behavioral identification of customers based on new approaches		Forecasting consumer and market behavior
4	Examining macro market conditions based on environmental components	Scenario analysis of future macro changes	
6	Evaluating the effects of macroeconomic variables on the market		
4	Anticipating the future needs of the brand	Making brand decisions in advance in each scenario	
4	Create meaningful communication to receive feedback	Development of creative thinking of employees	Creativity
5	Get new ideas from employees		
5	Search for information		



4	Meeting unique customer needs		
6	Create a creative image of the brand	Creativity in response	
5	Creativity in the type of response to customers		
4	Time-based content production	Create a platform for consumer creativity	
5	Content production based on synchronicity with events		
6	Paying attention to the details and requests of the customer	Knowing the characteristics of target consumers	
6	Accurate understanding of the needs and desires of the customers		
5	Choosing a social network based on the type of customers	Choosing social networks according to the target market	
7	Publish content tailored to each platform	Adjust the message according to the type of social media	Audience
5	Knowing the characteristics of friendship groups	Understanding the culture of consumer groups and brand sects	
5	Categorizing customers based on different friendship groups		
6	Participation of athletes in branding	Use of influencers according to the target audience	
4	Participation of actors in branding		

Table 1. Research codes and categories

Revision and description of themes: Each of the themes consists of one or more concepts, which express the “characteristics”, “conditions” and “situation” of the category considered in the field of study. Another important point is the simultaneity of “recommendation” and “prescription” in the main and sub-themes of the research; In the sense that the formed themes did not only have a descriptive load referring to the description of the existing situation or the description of the desired situation but also have a prescriptive aspect to them. That is, each code represents the acts that should be pursued or avoided in the way of achieving



the desired situation. It is possible to determine their importance by using the frequency attributed to each code.

The output of the software related to the frequency of the codes given to the themes separately for each of the interviewees is given in the following tables and figures.

Code System	Continuous mo...	Com...	Inter...	Con...	Fore...	Crea...	Audi...
Real-time Branding							
Content management							
Content sharing schedule							
Producing instant content							
Attractiveness of the content							
Timely republishing							
Creating viral messages							
Using media waves							
Continuous monitoring and marketing							
Continuous monitoring of inform:							
Monitoring trends and events ar							
Monitoring the trend of preferen							
Social media monitoring							
Communication and accountability							
Control of information exchange							
Customer feedback managemer							
Accurate and timely response							
Creating a platform for interactio							
Real-time clarification							
Internal branding							
Appropriate manpower in the fiel							
Professional response team							
Development of brand ambassa							
Adequate quality of products an							
Consumer participation							
Help build and develop brand cor							
Strengthening the platform of cu							
Loyal consumers active in social							
Forecasting consumer and market b							
Predicting market behavior							
Analyzing possible scenarios of c							
Scenario analysis of future macr							
Making brand decisions in advan							
Creativity							
Development of creative thinking							
Creativity in response							
Create a platform for consumer							
Audience							
Knowing the characteristics of ta							
Choosing social networks accordi							
Adjust the message according to							
Understanding the culture of cor							
Use of influencers according to t							

Figure 1. Code matrix from MAXQDA

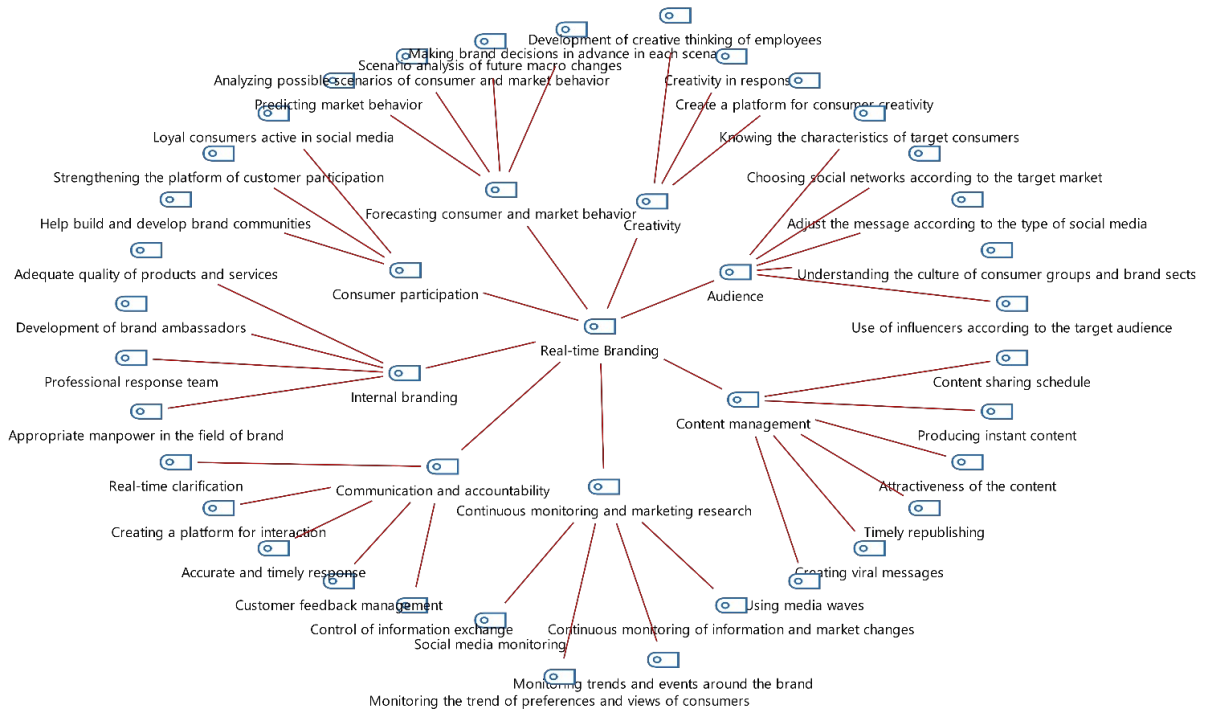


Figure 2. RTB distribution model from MaxQDA



Figure 3. RTB final model



Conclusion and suggestions

The authors developed a model for real-time branding in the context of social media in this research, for which they interviewed experts and used thematic analysis method. The analysis results show that real-time branding has 8 themes (selective coding) and 34 categories (axial code) which are presented in Figure 3. Themes or dimensions such as content management, continuous monitoring, marketing research, communication and accountability, internal branding, consumer participation, forecasting consumer and market behavior, creativity, and recognition of audience were determined to be the main dimensions of the proposed model for real-time branding in the context of social media. That is, the results show that these dimensions and components can facilitate and direct real-time branding in companies.

The results further indicate that the timing of content sharing, the readiness to produce instant content, the attractiveness of content, timely republishing, the creation of viral messages, and the use of media waves are the components that can lead to the improvement and promotion of message content in social networks and content management in branding. By delivering the right content at the right time, paying attention to the attractiveness of the message, and precision in the timing of its publication, these components direct the customers to the brand as they consider the brand as particularly attractive and entertaining.

Also, persistent monitoring of information on market changes leads to a diverse set of information on the market and hence an accurate understanding of the needs and demands of customers. Monitoring the trends and events around the brand, monitoring the trends of preferences and views of consumers, and monitoring social media platforms can provide appropriate information about the target market and customers for brand managers to decide on how to best respond to the needs of the market.

Communication and responsiveness are other indicators that are represented in real-time branding. This dimension reflects that controlling the exchange of information between the brand and the customer, managing customer feedback, and responding accurately and timely to the demands of the market and customers will lead to an effective two-way communication channel, where appropriate and useful information can be exchanged easily. Moreover, creating a platform for two-way interaction and sensible clarification will lead to unequivocal trust between the customer and the brand. Furthermore, building trust, among customers, providing the right response to consumer needs, estimating the specific needs of customers, and producing content based on the right time are all pillars of successful branding. These components can enhance customers' motivation to connect with the brand in line with real-time branding.

It is hence safe to argue that real-time branding drives customer participation in promoting the brand, leading to mutual recognition of the brand, customer cooperation in brand promotion, and the necessary but voluntary active participation of



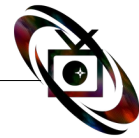
the customer in branding, among others, through which customers would feel being treated as special in interaction with the brand. In this situation, the brand is a reminder of originality and specialness for customers, and they will see themselves as different from other people, and this adds to the power of the brand. Aligning the message with the moments expected by the audience, as well as improving the response to customers along with the brand's response to the demands are important efforts that the brand can make to gain more customer satisfaction and to improve the degree of customer interaction with the brand. These efforts create more customer satisfaction and will lead to them having more voluntary cooperation in the branding process in real-time.

The very pinnacle of any organization and institution is its employees. That is, employees have a decisive role as individuals who receive and analyze information. Choosing the right human resources in the realm of branding and forming a professional team to address the needs of customers would result in improved mutual communications, ultimately leading to an upturn in customer attraction rates. All being said, promoting creativity in the responsiveness of the employees and establishing a platform for creativity for consumers are of utmost significance in internal branding and the promotion of creativity of employees. Creative employees can react appropriately at the moment to market changes or customer demands, in turn prompting greater customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Consumer participation is paramount in a plethora of academic and practical realms. In branding, helps to create and develop brand communities. Establishing a solid platform for customer participation is a priority in all branding-related endeavors. Loyal and active consumers on social media can be good ambassadors for the brand. That is, customers are the best and least expensive marketing and advertising channels for the brand.

Predicting consumer and market behavior, and in general, future market conditions would certainly gift brand managers the opportunity to react fittingly to market conditions. Forecasting the market behavior and analyzing possible scenarios of consumer and market behavior enables timely adoption of the measures necessary for the prospective provision of services and products that would simply protect the company from the shock of environmental changes. Analyzing the scenario of future major changes and making brand decisions beforehand in each scenario can improve the competitive edge of the brand in the future market.

Getting familiar with the market and beneficiaries of the brand is deemed among the most important components of branding, which is widely perceived to be the only way to devise appropriate programs and measures in different avenues of marketing. Selecting the optimal social network platform for the target market requires proper knowledge of the market. Also, tailoring the message to the desired social media platform and understanding the culture of consumer groups and brand sects helps to better uncover the needs of customers at the time



they require. For instance, employing influencers suitable for the target audience be pivotal in directing the brand-related trends.

Based on the findings, company managers are highly advised to employ social media for real-time branding purposes as they were shown to have a significant effect thereon. Moreover, establishing constructive interactions between the brand and customers through the creation of a suitable communication channel enables receiving feedback from the market and customers. Furthermore, it is suggested to choose the right social media platform for real-time branding. This challenge is facilitated by choosing the same username and choosing a social network suitable for the type of business and target customers.

By presenting a model of real-time branding, this study strengthened the insight regarding branding and social media. Future research could focus on empirical validation of the proposed model in diverse market and industry contexts, Introducing quantitative elements to complement the qualitative analysis could enhance the robustness of the findings. Adding a consumer-centric study to understand the reception of real-time branding efforts could provide deeper insights.

Conflict of interest

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** Social network belonging to a company recognized as extremist in the territory of the Russian Federation | Социальная сеть, принадлежащая компании, признанной экстремистской на территории РФ