

**CREATE, BUILD AND MANAGE ONLINE BRANDS
FOR INTERNET COMPANIES**

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*to my daughter Margarida,
undoubtedly the best part of me*

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Preparing my master's thesis was to me a very important milestone, and get to this moment I write the acknowledgments makes me to go back in time to the moment I decided to start my master's thesis. If I'm here today writing these words I owe it to many people. As stated by the English poet John Donne, no man is an island.

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A thank full of gratitude to my parents. Was them who brought me to this point in my life, through the way they raised me and because of all they have done for me.

A special thanks to my wife Cidália, my lifemate on this incredible journey that life is. On this track full of turns and constraints, knowing that you are by my side gives me the courage and strength I need to continue pursuing our dreams and goals.

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyse and identify the main constructs that leads to successfully create, build and manage online brands for internet-only companies. Based on this, an online brand management explanatory model can be it generated.

In order to do so, two different but sequential approaches were used: was developed an extensive and systematic literature review in order to explore the research theoretical background and identify literature main findings; from this review eighteen papers were selected and from those some preliminary reflections were taken. Then, a focus group session was performed in order to do an empirical research and test preliminary findings; from these some conclusions can be drawn.

Based on these conclusions were possible to identify several constructs responding to the research question: trust, which stands out as the prominent construct, purchase and repurchase intentions, which are linked to other aspects as loyalty, achieved experience or ease of use and consumer satisfaction reflecting assets as privacy, commitment and consumer engagement. All of those constructs stands out as those who influence the most the success when creating, building and managing online brands for internet companies.

Keywords: internet marketing; online marketing; digital marketing; brand; online brand management;

JEL: M31 and L86

Resumo

O objetivo desta dissertação é o de analisar e identificar as principais variáveis que conduzem à criação, construção e gestão com sucesso de marcas online para empresas de internet. Baseado nisso, poderá ser gerado um modelo explicativo da gestão de marcas online.

Neste sentido, duas abordagens diferentes mas sequenciais foram adotadas: foi desenvolvida uma extensa revisão sistemática da literatura com o objetivo de explorar os fundamentos teóricos da pesquisa; desta revisão foram selecionados dezoito artigos e a partir destes alguns resultados preliminares puderam ser retirados. Posteriormente, foi realizado uma sessão de ‘focus group’ com o objetivo de efetuar uma pesquisa empírica e testar os resultados preliminares alcançadas. Destas, foram possíveis retirar-se conclusões.

Baseado nestas conclusões foram possíveis identificar algumas variáveis que respondem à pergunta da pesquisa: a confiança, a qual se destaca como uma variável proeminente, a intenção de compra e de recompra, as quais se encontram ligadas a outros aspectos como a lealdade, experiência obtida ou facilidade de utilização e a satisfação do consumidor que reflete ativos como a privacidade, o compromisso ou o envolvimento do consumidor. Todas estas variáveis sobressaem como aquelas que mais influenciam o sucesso quando estamos a criar, construir ou gerir marcas online para empresas de internet.

Palavras-chave: marketing de internet; marketing online; marketing digital; marca; gestão de marcas online;

JEL: M31 and L86

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In 1899, Charles H. Duell (Director of U.S. Patent Office) allegedly stated that "*Everything that can be invented has been invented*". Although there is no evidence that this statement was asserted by this author (Sass, 1989), it is outstanding to reflect about all the evolution that mankind has witnessed since 1899.

Actually, we are living in an unparalleled period in history, especially since the passage of the so-called information society to the knowledge society. In this, person generates, processes, shares and makes available to all members of the society knowledge that may be used to improve the human condition.

This knowledge society has benefited greatly from the growth of Information Technology and Communication. Indeed, in terms of technology much has been changed since the Atanasoff–Berry computer - ABC (the first automatic electronic digital computer, conceived in 1937) to the cutting-edge technology present nowadays on our smartphones.

The advent of the internet delivered enormous amounts of information to people. The evolution of the internet from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 offered persons ways to connect with each other worldwide as well as become content users and producers (Constantinides and Fountain, 2007). Innovation in digital technologies and mobile devices offers individuals a means to connect anywhere, anytime, where digital technologies are accessible.

In Western societies, the changes we have witnessed lead people to change (not so) slowly their habits and customs. People move from buying their groceries at the neighbourhood store to buy in food retail stores, and are nowadays moving from these to the online buying process through electronic platforms from e-suppliers, who deliver the groceries at our front door.

Shopping websites have become a fairly universal marketing channel and the Internet as well as information technologies have taken on a very important role in the global

economic system, as e-stores becomes mainstream economic entities, with the assistance of technology. Also, the Internet as a shopping channel has improved consumers' lives and spending habits, making businesses face an inevitable revolution and challenging their methods of operation (Fan and Tsai, 2010).

At present time we are moving forward a direction where the presence in virtual space is becoming increasingly vital. In most areas of business is unthinkable not to be online and in many of these not being online is synonymous with nonexistence. As suggested by Weill and Woerner (2013), we are moving from 'Placement' to 'Spacement', from a world that was tangible, product-based and oriented toward customer transactions to a world more intangible, more service-based and oriented toward customer experience.

This changing world leads us to profound transformation on brand management. As referred by Leone *et al.* (2006), effective brand management is critical, and it's a mistake to ignore its important role in developing long-term profit streams for firms, whether they are manufacturers or retailers.

Brands are used by consumers as an important tool for organizing information and simplifying their decision making process both in cyber and traditional marketplaces (Merrilees and Fry, 2002). Today's consumers are increasingly likely to first encounter a brand online than offline, which means companies need to make sure potential clients get a favourable first impression of their brands.

This change also alters the equilibrium between consumers and brands, and even the brand equity has been influenced by this new perspectives. As referred by Aaker (1991: 15) "*brand equity can be defined as a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customer the added value endowed to products and services*". As defined by Kotler and Keller (2012), it may be reflected in the way consumers think, feel, and act with respect to the brand, as well as in the prices, market share and profitability the brand commands.

Nowadays every company made a huge effort in order to properly manage their brand in a fast moving environment. As an example, we can see that several years ago brand communication was based on the triumvirate press, television and radio and technology evolves at a slower rhythm. Today, brand communication is based on multiple platforms, increasingly digital. Technology evolves at a considerable rhythm and almost every day something new is born, invented or discovered.

1.1 Research question and objectives

The question we are hypothetical to answer in this dissertation is: which are the constructs that leads to successfully create, build and manage online brands for internet companies.

Regular brands export their brand awareness and brand image to online life, working as an extension of their offline awareness and image. However, a new brand that only exists in online environment doesn't have offline assets to export. Understand which are constructs that lead to successfully create, build and manage an online brand for stand-alone internet companies is the main objective of this dissertation.

So, the objective is to identify the key features that should be taken into consideration when we want to create and manage an online brand and what features emerge as more important. Based on this, we should be able to generate an explanatory model with the identified constructs that we should take into consideration when creating, building and managing an online brand for a company that only exists on the Internet.

1.2 Literature review objectives and empirical objectives

In order to achieve the expressed objectives it was decided to move forward in two different paths: to do a systematic literature review and to do a qualitative research based on a focus group.

Concerning the systematic literature review, the aim was to develop an extensive research that could lead by relevant existing literature to understand how we can create, build and manage a brand for internet companies.

After the conclusion of the systematic literature review it was decided to do a focus group. The option for performing this qualitative research was linked to the importance of testing the preliminary reflections and validates or rejects these findings. It was considered important to do so in order we could test and move forward with a proposal for an explanatory model for the research question under consideration.

1.3 Methodology

Concerning the methodology adopted was chose to carry out a systematic literature review about the subject in study, and export their findings into a data extraction form. From this systematic literature review we were able to find preliminary reflections that were tested in a qualitative research through performing a focus group.

In the focus group were tested the systematic literature review preliminary findings and new findings could be reached. From this range of findings, conclusions could be taken and an explanatory model for the constructs that influences online brand management could be presented.

1.4 Dissertation structure and structural framework

This dissertation is divided in six chapters, as follows:

The first chapter is dedicated to the introduction where are underlined the importance of the research, identified the research question and the general and specific objectives as well as the literature review objectives and empirical objectives. The used methodology is explained, the dissertation structure is detailed and a structural framework is presented.

The second chapter is devoted to the systematic literature review where the definition of the study subject is presented, as well as the key words to be used in the research. It's also presented the used strategy for identifying the best quality papers and underlined the research specifications.

The third chapter is dedicated to the systematic literature review outcomes, which is presented in a data extraction form. In this was decided to use a data extraction form composed by the author's name and year of publication, name of the journal, the base theory of the study or construct, the adopted methodology and sample, the main conclusions of each paper, as well as research limitations, future research and managerial implications.

In the fourth chapter are presented the preliminary reflections reached through the systematic literature review. Three constructs were identified and a preliminary online brand management explanatory model is advanced.

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the focus group. The objectives and procedures are presented, the group characteristics are identified and the focus group session is described. Conclusions have been reached and presented.

In the sixth chapter dissertation conclusions are presented, as well as limitations of the study. Future researches are highlighted and managerial implications are also identified.

The structural framework of this dissertation is presented, as follows:

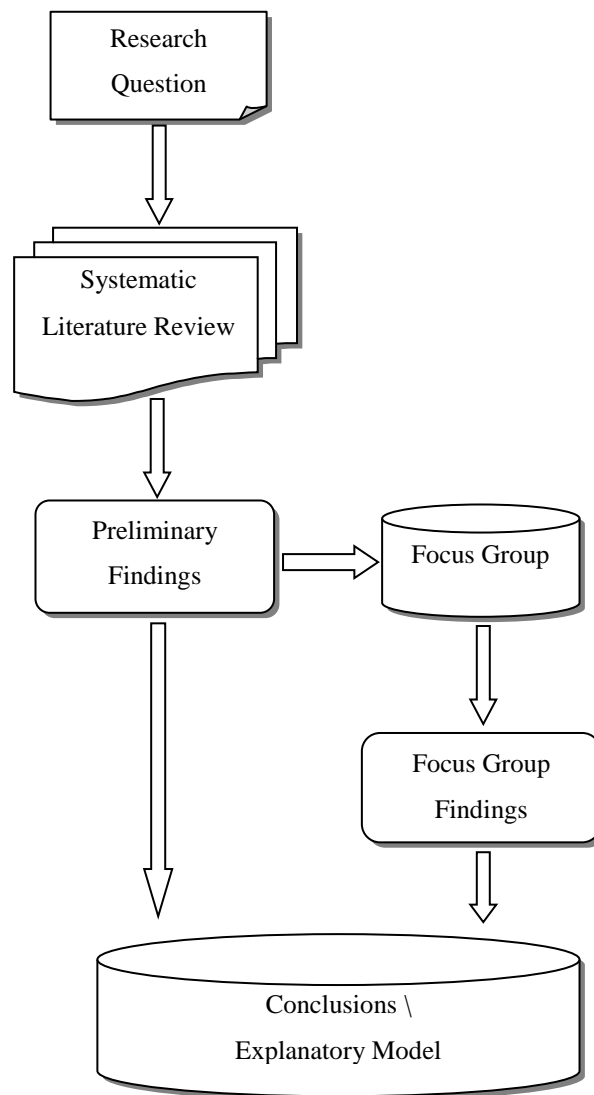


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of this dissertation

Source: own elaboration

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background: Systematic Literature Review

2.1 Research Interest

With the evolution of humanity, technology and internet usage in particular, the relationship between the market, consumers and brands are constantly being challenged. In this increasingly changing world consumers make choices that comprise within themselves more and more variables that influence their decisions.

As Internet usage grows, brands are becoming even more important than they have been in other channels or environments. With new options emerging every day from many unknown providers from all over the world, customers want to choose a supplier that represents a set of values or attributes that are meaningful, clear and trusted.

With the proliferation of this competition, products and services are easily duplicated or replaceable; brands become in this way an important asset for simplifying the decision-making process for consumers. If we are able to properly manage this asset, this can create difference, relevance and affinity (Otim and Grover, 2006). In fact, one of the main factors that consumers use for first distinguishing providers is brand name, which is known to be positively related to perceived levels of brand trust (Ruparelia *et al.*, 2010).

The interest of studying only internet companies comes from the fact that both the brick-and-mortar companies as well as hybrid companies (both physical and internet presence) benefit from the use of same brand offline and online. Internet companies do not have values or attributes to import from the physical world and they have to create those assets from scratch.

Concerning the offline brands import benefits, many authors identify several effects from the use of the brand in both environments, such as halo effect, dilution effect, the spill over effect or the feed-back effect (Kwon and Lennon, 2009). Most hybrid retailers (or brick-and-click as mentioned in several literature) operate under the same retail brand name in both channels to exploit the halo effect from their existing offline image, despite running the risk that retailer's online performance may dilute the brand's

positive image if the online performance fails to meet consumers' high expectations that are based on the retailer's positive offline brand image (Kwon and Lennon, 2009).

Stand-alone internet companies such as major players like Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon or eBay and even smaller internet businesses all over the world faces the challenge of creating, building and managing a brand that doesn't import attributes or values from the physical world. Many authors confirm that the ease of establishing a brand and the significance of branding in cyberspace are more difficult and more important than many initially suggested (Delgado-Ballester and Hernández-Espallardo, 2008). However, the reasons for building a brand and the process and discipline to manage one are based on the same principles that have been proven over time.

2.2 Objective of this systematic literature review

The aim of this systematic literature review is to develop an extensive research that can lead by relevant existing literature to understand how we can create, build and manage a brand for internet companies.

For this propose it was defined several criteria in terms of quality, time range, scope of study, language of the papers and others, which will be detailed as follows.

2.3 Defining study subject

The proposed study subjects in this dissertation are the factors that drive to successfully create, build and manage online brands for internet-only companies.

The question of brand management in the online context appears in this study as the core element. Actually, since the early stage of internet that this topic has been subject of interest and study, largely because much starts changing in how consumers look and interact with brands and products.

Many authors refer to different aspects as notably significant questions in online brand performance. Although we can identify different variables among several authors, it's

common to identify brand-consumer interaction and consumer behaviour as central aspects that influences online brand management.

Thereby, we can observe De Chernatony and Christodoulides (2004) suggesting that consumer evaluate brands through a hierarchy structure, emphasising the rational values first (functional values, emotional values and promised experienced). On the other hand, if we observe the key conclusions reached by Delgado-Ballester and Hernández-Espallardo (2008), we can identify consumers' beliefs, attitudes and intention as main factors on building online brands. Other authors, as Da Silva and Alwi (2008) states that for the online context the brand characteristics that emerge are personalisation, customer service, ease of use and security.

Trying to reach conclusions and identify the different variables that are constructs to successfully manage online brands for internet companies is the subject under study in this dissertation.

2.4 Defining the key words in this research

Defining the terms in this research emerges as an important fact in order to have a unified vision of what we are referring to and what we are studying.

The terms create, build and manage are linked to the brand lifecycle. Create is linked to the introduction on the market, build is linked to the growth on the market and manage is linked to the maturity phase of the brand in the market. In the study presented here, it seems to be important to cover the life cycle of the brand.

Regarding online brands we're referring to those who do not have physical existence and as such cannot export those assets from the physical to the virtual world.

Concerning internet companies, we can identify in the literature three types of existence: the traditional brick-and-mortar companies (traditional brands with physical presence), the hybrid companies (also referred as 'brick-and-click', due to fact they have physical and virtual presence) and pure internet companies which are our scope of

study; several internet companies can be identified as Google, Facebook, Twitter, Amazon, Spotify or Whatsapp among others.

2.5 Systematic Literature review versus narrative literature review

The type of literature review adopted in this dissertation is the systematic literature review in order to fulfil the objective of systematic reviewing of the existing literature regarding creation, building and manage online brands for internet companies.

Following this intention, the main objectives concerning this review are:

- A thorough examination of the existing literature review with the aim of having a profound vision of current research on this subject
- Understanding the key milestones for create, build and manage successful brands for online-only companies
- Identify the constructs that influences consumers perception regarding online brands

2.6 Search strategy for quality papers

The searches for papers with relevance for this investigation were made in ABI/INFORM Complete.

2.6.1. Search for the best quality papers

Having as starting point that the purpose of this Systematic Literature Review was to use only the best quality papers available were used several filters to leach the database:

- Full-text papers: with this first filter it was guaranteed that we were working only with full-text papers available
- Peer-reviewed papers: with this second filter it was guaranteed that the papers used were scientific papers
- Scholarly journals: with this third filter it was guaranteed that it was only considered papers published on scientific journals

2.7 The Harzing Quality List of Journals

With the intention of having the best quality papers available, it was defined to use only best quality papers published in the best quality journals.

In order to be able to carry out the quality journals selection, it was used the Journal Quality List – Fiftieth Edition, 5th July 2013, compiled and edited by Professor Anne-Wil Harzing. From this one, it was chosen to use the WIE 2008 — WU Wien Journal Rating May 2008 List.

The chosen WIE 2008 list includes only A/A+ journals, and from this was considered all the journals that are under the decided scope of study.

2.8 Scope of study for the selected journals

Knowing that the subject under study involve several scientific study areas, it was defined to choose all the papers from the following subject areas:

- Marketing
- Entrepreneurship
- General Management & Strategy
- Management Information Systems - Knowledge Management

With this choice was attempted to cover the maximum possible study areas that could address this topic.

Nonetheless, and aware that this is an increasingly multidisciplinary field which is studied by different disciplines, care was taken to divert from areas of study related to technology or engineering, which do not represent our scope of study

2.9 Specification and justification of the time frame to be examined by the Systematic literature review

For the time frame to be examined in this systematic literature it was considered the web 2.0 phenomenon as a starting point of date range to be examined.

Web 2.0 describes sites that use the technology beyond static pages from previous sites and is commonly accepted by the community to define Web 2.0 as a collection of open-source, interactive and user controlled online applications expanding the experiences, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing / refining of informational content (Constantinides and Fountain, 2007).

The term Web 2.0 was proposed by O'Reilly in 2005 and it has quickly become the new buzzword of Silicon Valley (Constantinides and Fountain, 2007), and references to a turning-point O'Reilly identify in 2004.

Therefore, it was choose 2004 as starting point and 2014 as the ending point in order to reflect the peak investigation available.

2.10 Papers languages use

They were considered only papers written in English or in Portuguese, due to languages limitations of the researcher.

Chapter 3 – Systematic Literature Outcome

3.1 Several researches for the literature review

Since the beginning of this literature review, numerous researches were conducted to find the best words that would meet the object of study. Some expressions like "Digital" or "Digital Marketing" were dropped because too often reflect studies in the field of engineering or development of electronic equipment.

As time passed and the research deepened, it follows that the expressions that best defined the subject of the study were linked to "online" and "internet". Thus, it was concluded that the core of the research would take place with the keywords "online", "brand" and "internet companies". These keywords were joined by terms that reflect the scope of the study, i.e., how to "create", "build" and "manage" online brands.

This way we have reached the terms used in the five researches carried out in this literature review. The choice to perform of this strategy was taken in order to fulfil the objective of trying to include as many articles available on the subject.

Therefore, the following searches were conducted:

Search A: online + brand* + internet companie*

Search B: online + brand equity + internet companie*

Search C: brand + online + create* OR creating + internet companie*

Search D: brand + online + build* OR building + internet companie*

Search E: brand + online + manage* OR managing + internet companie*

3.2 The primary outcome of each search strategy

The results obtained with each of the five studies are shown separately and illustrated in figures as a flow diagram.

For the Search A: online + brand* + internet companie*, the results are illustrated in Figure 1 as a flow diagram.

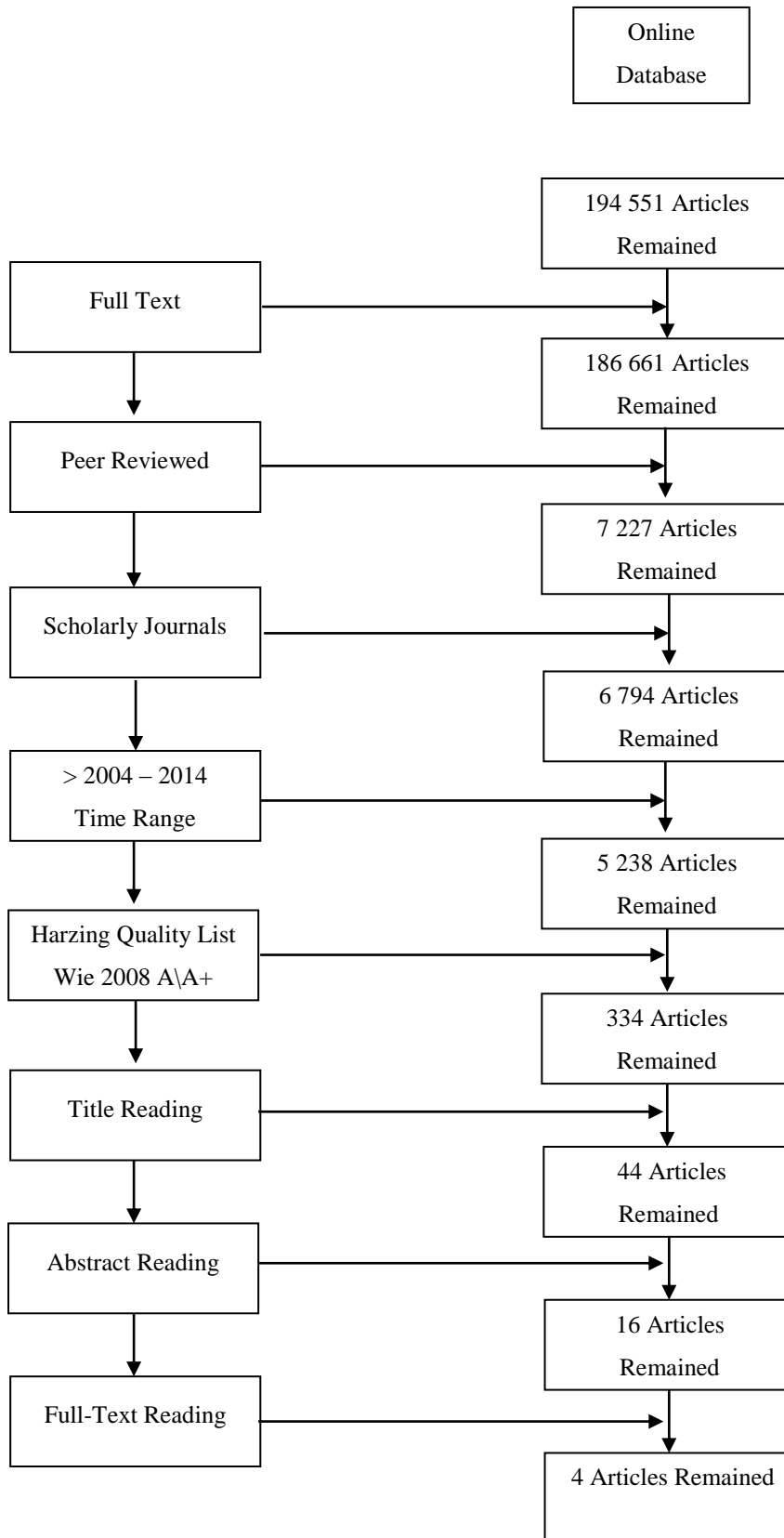


Figure 2: Search A selection process

For the Search B: online + brand equity + internet companie*, the results are illustrated in Figure 2 as a flow diagram.

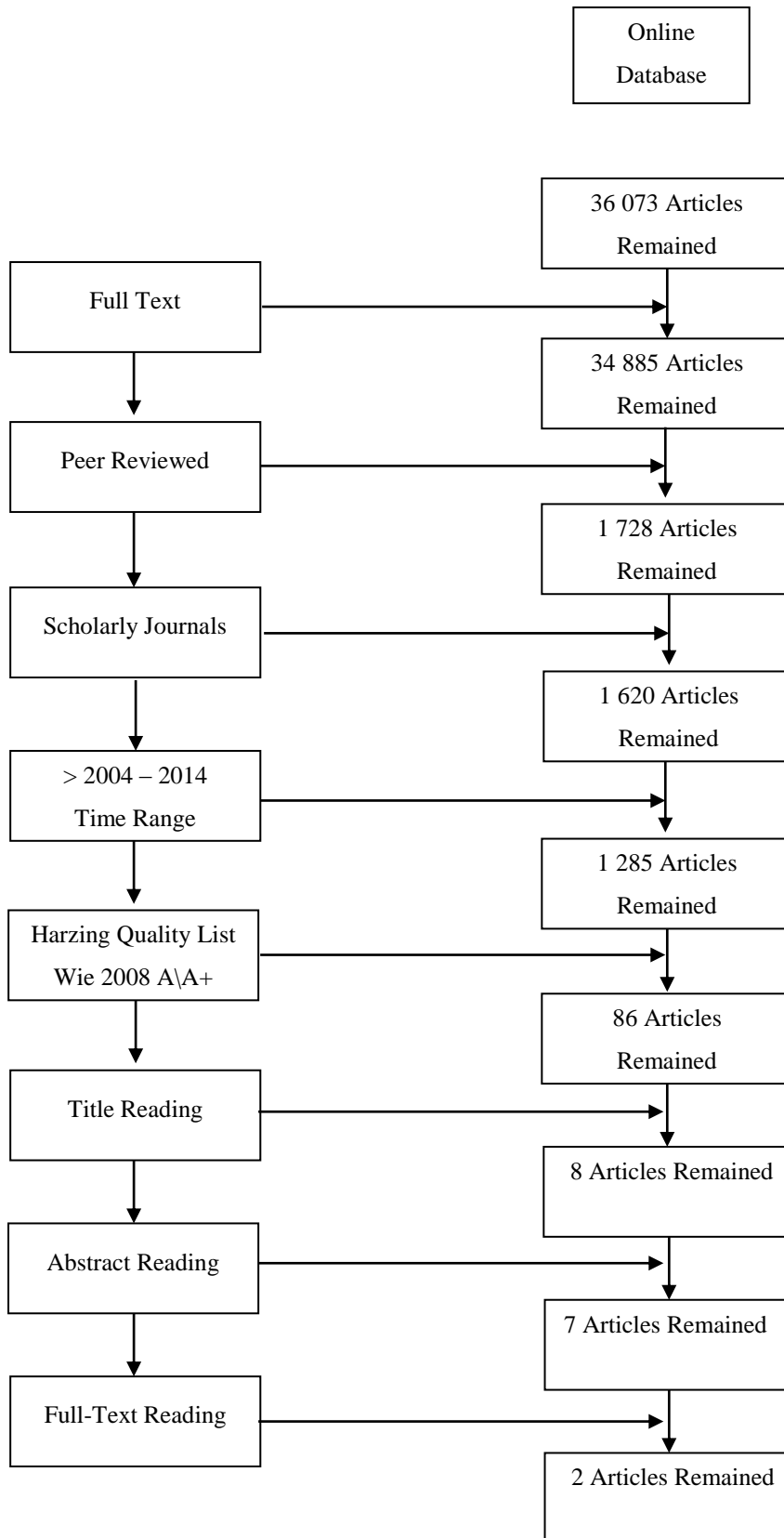


Figure 3: Search B selection process

For the Search C: brand + online + create* OR creating + internet companie*, the results are illustrated in Figure 3 as a flow diagram.

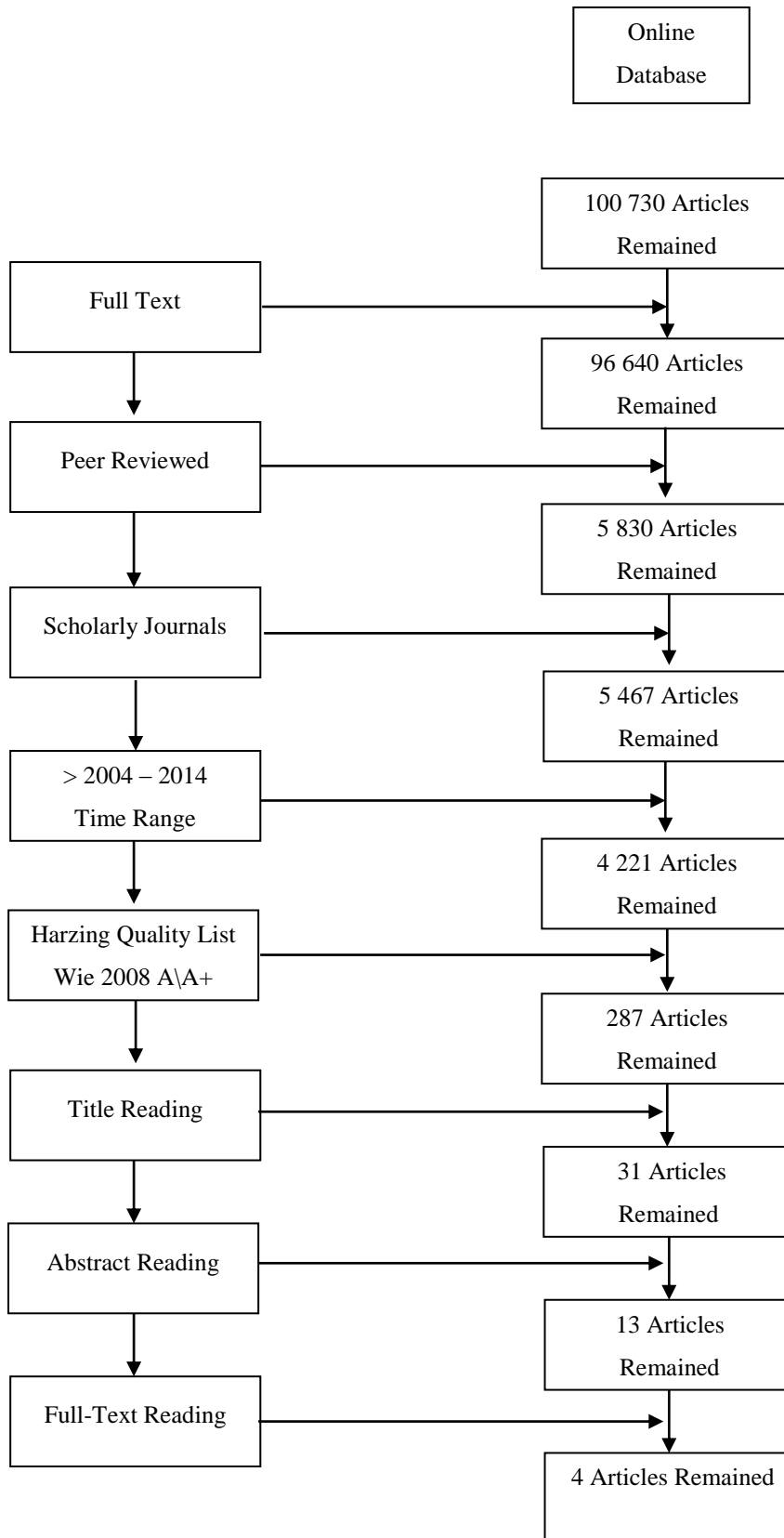


Figure 4: Search C selection process

For the Search D: brand + online + build* OR building + internet companie*, the results are illustrated in Figure 4 as a flow diagram.

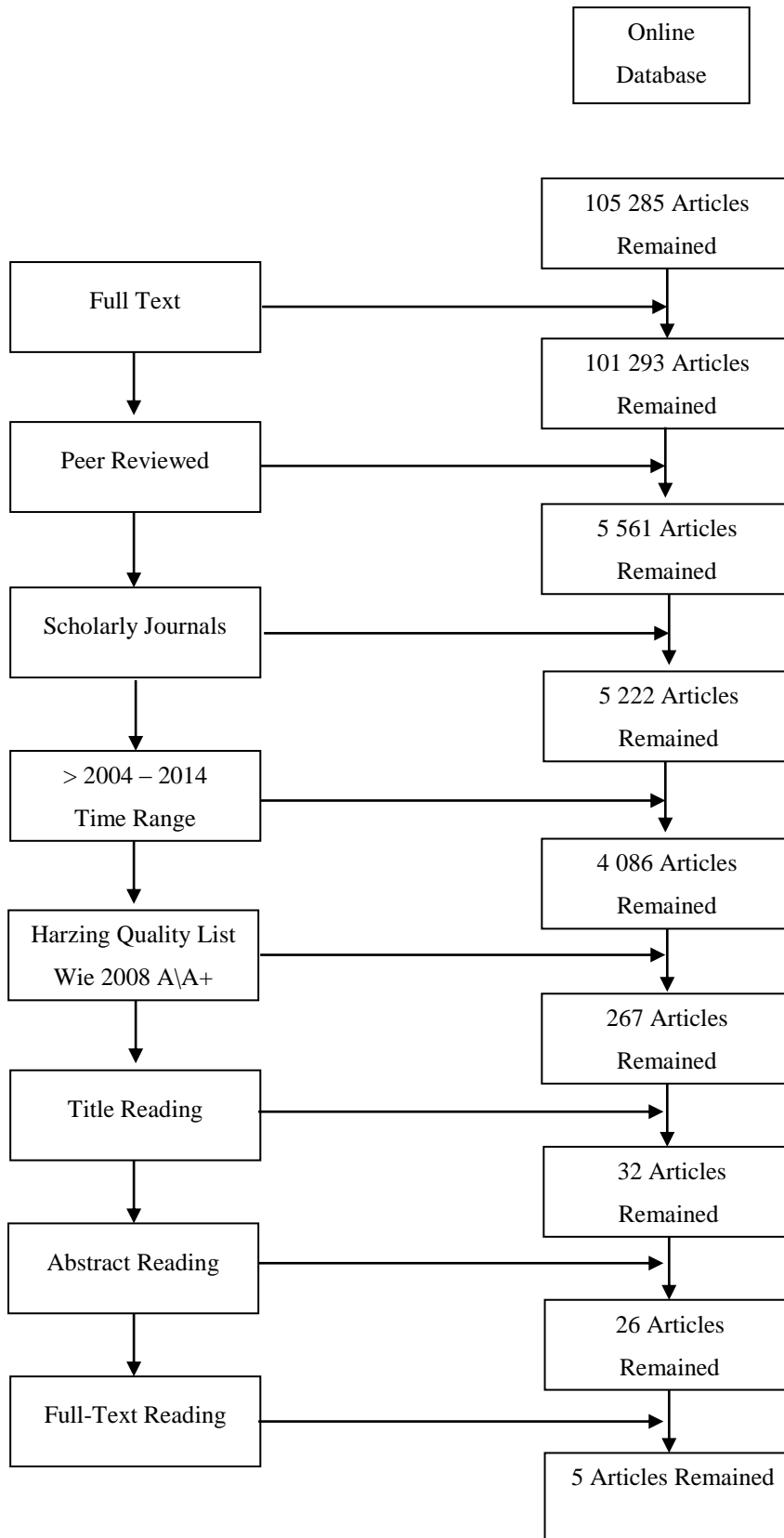


Figure 5: Search D selection process

For the Search E: brand + online + manage* OR managing + internet companie*, the results are illustrated in Figure 5 as a flow diagram.

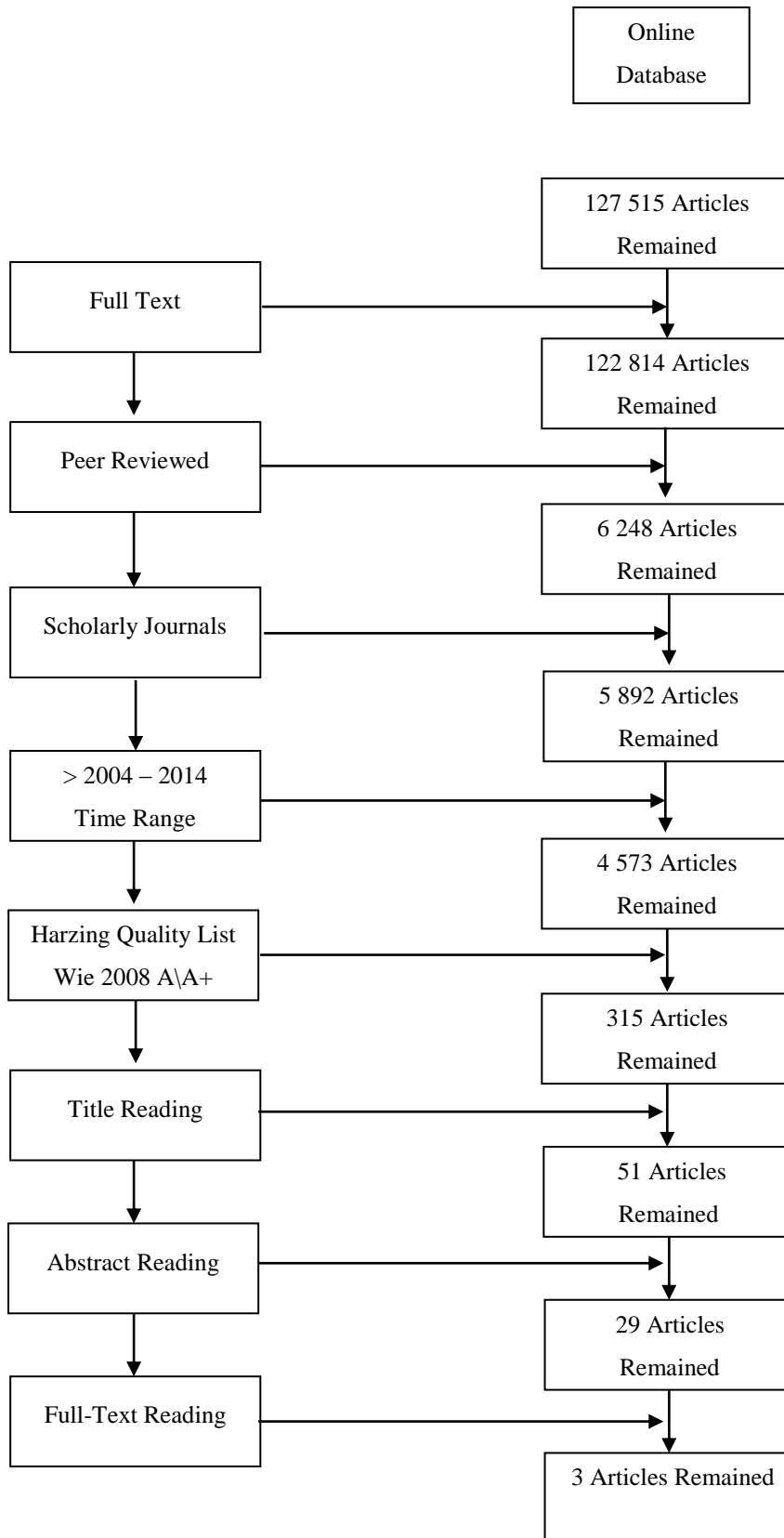


Figure 6: Search E selection process

3.3 The aggregate outcome of the search strategy

The sum of the results retrieved from the literature review search is illustrated in Figure 6 as a flow diagram.

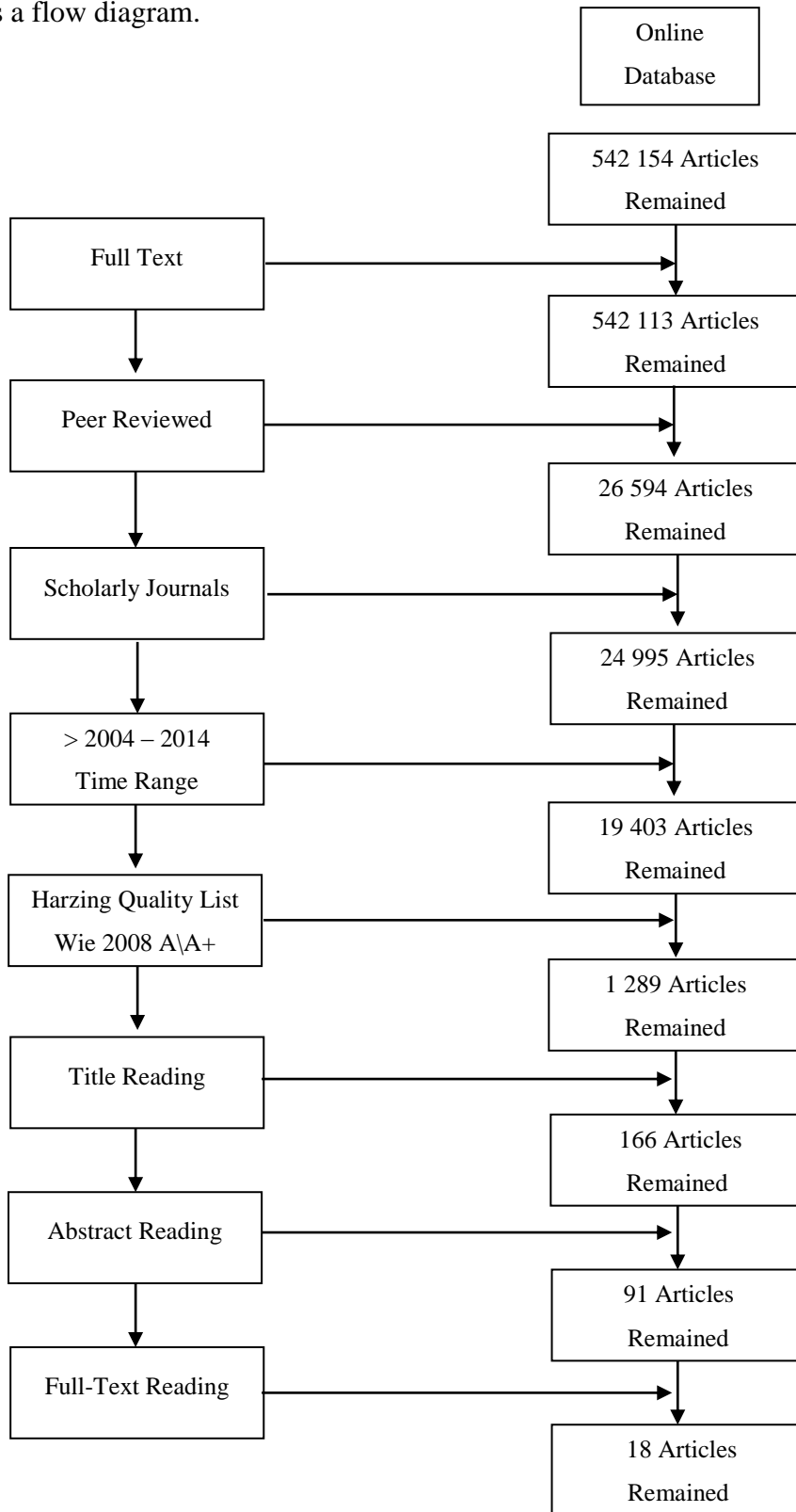


Figure 7: Sum of Searches selection process

In the analysis of the sum of different search results we must have to take into account that some articles found in the different searches were repeated. These articles were being purged as they were being detected. As an example we can say that of the 91 articles that remained in abstract reading, 46 were repeated.

3.4 Data extraction form

In this systematic literature review was created and used a data extraction form in order to extract the data from the selected papers and also to be able to document the process of data extraction. As for the elements extracted from the papers, they were divided in three main groups: general information, study characteristics and main results.

About General Information were taken in account three fundamental elements: Author's, Year of publication and name of the journal that published the article. Regarding the studies characteristics, were taken in account the base theory of the study or construct and the adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics). Concerning on key results were highlighted the main conclusions, the limitations and future research and managerial implications.

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
1	Otim, S., Grover, V., (2006)	European Journal of Information Systems	Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA); Consumer Behaviour	Quantitative approach; Secondary data, sample size of 150 stores	Web-based companies can foster customer loyalty by focusing mainly on post-purchase customer service dimensions, especially customer support; pre-purchase and transaction-related services are somewhat important, support product search and evaluation have a weaker effect on customer repeat purchase intentions	Limited to computer purchases; future research can address other durable products as well as nondurable transactions goods and examine the capabilities needed for offering web-based services	Companies must follow an integrated approach to managing a customer's relationship; post-purchase services are the most important in fostering customer loyalty; trust in the relationship is fundamental to its longevity
2	Hur, W.-M., <i>et al.</i> , (2011)	Management Decision	Brand Community Commitment; Loyalty Behaviours; Brand Loyalty	Quantitative approach; Primary data; Partial Least Squares (PLS) Analysis; one-on-one personal interviews; sample size of 200 Chinese female online brand community users (based on Beijing or Shanghai)	Identified that brand community trust and affect leads to brand community commitment; and that brand community commitment leads to brand loyalty behaviours; brand community commitment have a strong effect on word-of-mouth	Limited to treat brand community commitment as a unidimensional construct; future research may consider Multidimensional constructs and relational variables, such as self-congruity; consider generate more valid measurement items for WOM through other measurement scales in communication and loyalty areas	Brand community activities influence the relationships among community participants, brand and the company; having a space in which customers can directly participate is very effective in enhancing customers' loyalty; trust and affect are vital factors in enhancing customers' brand community; commitment word-of-mouth

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
							marketing mediated by brand communities very effective
3	Benedicktus, R. L., et al (2010)	Journal of Retailing	Trust Construct; Purchase Intentions	Quantitative Approach; Hypotheses testing through online scaled response questionnaire; Primary data; Study 1: sample size of 302 undergraduate students; Study 2: sample size of 261 nonstudent respondents	Favourable consensus information led to increased trustworthiness perceptions and purchase intentions; physical presence stimulates trustworthiness of unknown retailers, but brand familiarity presents similar level of benefits (convey trustworthiness with consumers and increase purchase intentions)	Both studies examined effects for only one product category; Future research can compare physical store presence effect across products with search-dominant versus experience-dominant attribute; and also include other trust cues as price disclosure, real-time advice and ease-of-navigation	Consumers are cautious when making purchases on the Internet, therefore retailers should develop trust with their consumers through brand familiarity, physical presence and consensus information.
4	Sashi, C.M., (2012)	Management Decision	Customer Engagement; Relationship Marketing	Examination of practitioner views of customer engagement followed by a discussion of its links to the relationship marketing; Formulation of a conceptual model.	Customer engagement focus on costumers and their needs, provide superior value relative to competitors (generating, disseminating, and responding to customer needs and market orientation) and build trust and commitment with costumers	Implicit hypothesis need empirical studies; Future research can examine the mix of social media, other digital media, and non-digital media appropriate for each stage of the customer engagement cycle	Connect and interact between sellers or current customers with potential customers and succeed in turning them into transactional customers creates the possibility of their transition through subsequent stages of the customer engagement cycle, with some of them eventually becoming

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
							fans; Customer engagement turns customers into fans.
5	William, K., et al (2008)	European Journal of Information Systems	Theory of interaction design; design dimension and design objectives for digital services	Iterative process of observation and analysis; identification of fundamental design dimensions; creation of a design taxonomy of digital services	Creation of a Digital service design taxonomy, thru analysis of four design dimensions (Service delivery, Malleability, Pricing/funds and Service maturity) and their dependencies of design objectives (business, interaction and technology)	In order to strength actual taxonomy, empirical studies should be considered; Future research should consider qualitative interviews and quantitative data collection from digital service companies	Useful tool in evaluating the market presence and trajectory of digital service providers; these must be aware to concepts of service maturity, service delivery, as well as malleability and effective pricing/funding in order to improve the possibility of success
6	Fueller, J, Von Hippel, E., (2009)	MIT Sloan Management Review	Brand creation theory; Online communities brand creation	Quantitative Approach; primary data; online scaled response questionnaire; sample size of 216 members of 'outdoorseiten.net'	Online communities have the potential to create strong brands at low cost; high brand engagement from communities members to communities brands	The study was conducted online at a community brand web site; future research should analyze major markets (such as software markets) and understand the relative competitive positions of commercial brands and user community brands	Traditional companies would be wise to pay attention to community brands phenomenon; commercial brands should evaluate the creation of cobranded products
7	Laroche, M., et al, (2004)	Journal of Service Research	Intangibility and Perceived risk construct	Quantitative Approach; primary data; structured, non disguised	Significant strong impact of mental intangibility on perceived risk; the	Use of student sample, the set of goods and services selected and the use of paper	Companies can adopt two non mutually exclusive strategies to reduced perceived risk:

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
				questionnaire; sample of 783 college students.	intangibility-perceived risk model had a stronger relationship with generic products than with brand products; in the online environment, factors as privacy, security, assurance and trust also influence perceived risk	questionnaire for the online environment results appears as main study limitations; future research should include different products and test the online environment using an online questionnaire	implement initiatives that directly address the risk (e.g., guarantees) or create solutions for the factors that contribute to intangibility (e.g., increase tangibility)
8	Pan, Yue, Zinkhan, G., (2006)	Journal of Retailing	Social contract theory; privacy policies and trust constructs	Quantitative Approach; primary data; pretested questionnaire; sample of 150 respondents out of 525 potential subjects contacted via telephone	An e-tailer site should have a clearly stated privacy policy; the mere existence of such privacy policy increase consumer trust	Hypothetic buying scenario as a limitation of this study; further research should imitate a real complete transaction, and investigate the root causes of privacy risks	The shopper's privacy concerns should mainly arise from their evaluations of the store itself and not from the lack of privacy disclosures
9	White, T. B., et al, (2008)	Marketing Letters	Effect of degree of personalization	Quantitative Approach; Multiple factorial experiment; Primary data; Study 1: sample size of 86 undergraduate students; Study 2: sample size of 354 undergraduate students	Consumers' responses to highly personalized messages are dependent on their perceived of being justified; high distinctive personalized messages had, at best, equal click-through intentions than lower distinctiveness messages.	Use of student sample is a limitation of this study; the second study were largely exploratory in nature, and the demonstrated effects were relatively small; Further research should use a non-student sample in a non-laboratory setting, and	Consumers reaction to exchanges involving personal information follow a utility maximization principle, in which they are willing to incur the costs of personalized messages only if they perceived net benefits of that costs

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
						research on factors such as message matches consumers' personal preferences.	
10	Collier, J. E., Bienstock, C. C., (2006)	MIT Sloan Management Review	Consumer quality evaluation; Quality construct; consumer behavior	Quantitative Approach; Primary data; online questionnaire; sample of 338 consumers who has completed an online transaction before.	A consumer evaluates an online retailer's through five website attributes (ease of use, privacy, simple design, consistency and flexibility, and good information), the capability to deliver the product (time frame between placing the order and receiving the product, accuracy of the order and the condition of the order received) and the ability to solve a problem.	One limitation of the study concerns the discrepancy in experience in online transactions among the sample; Further research could measure the same quality construct for online auctions sites	Consumers' judge quality through interaction with the website, the outcome of the retail transaction and the successful resolution of problems when they occur. Consumer trust in online retailers appear as a success factor and linked to the perception of high-quality
11	Urban, G. L., <i>et al.</i> , (2009)	MIT Sloan Management Review	Bayes' Theorem (to infer cognitive styles)	Quantitative Approach; Primary data; online questionnaire; sample of 835 current and potential broadband users	Marketing is communication, and morphing to cognitive styles enhances communication. Ratings increase significantly from a nonmorphing site to a morphing site on the relevant measures: trust, helpfulness,	Cultural limitation (UK potential clients only), field of study (broadband clients) and website design focus as limitations for this study. Future research should extend the EGI algorithm to other marketing-mix elements, as	Confirm that website characteristics can affect purchase probabilities; "One size fits all" may not be the most effective advertising strategy. Targeted messages can build empathy and increase sales.

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
					ease of use and information identification	well as cultural dimension	
12	Khalifa, Mohamed, Liu, Vanessa, (2007)	European Journal of Information Systems	Customer retention phenomenon construct	Quantitative Approach; Primary data; online survey study of 122 online shoppers	Experience and habit appears as important effects on repurchased intention, which is indicative of online consumer retention	The research is limited to the online factors (doesn't reflect product delivery or other related issues); further research should consider online and contingent offline factors simultaneously; this study can be replicated in emerging and innovative online channel activities	Online costumers may be segmented into four major profiles, according to experience and shopping habit; to each of these profiles should be assigned different marketing objectives and priority of retention efforts
13	Rose, Susan, et al, (2012)	Journal of Retailing	Customer Experience Construct	Quantitative Approach; Primary data; online questionnaire; sample of 220 online customers based on USA and Europe	Perceived control affects customers' affective state and their confidence in online shopping decision (thru connectedness, customization and ease-of-use); Cognitive Experiential State and Affective Experiential State are identified as part of Online Customer Experience; confirm the relationship between the main Online Customer	The sample does not include a significant number of emerging Generation Y group of young people; greater geographic reach could help understand cross-cultural differences in a global e-retailing market. The study explores the online repurchase intention; further studies should consider test the online purchase behaviour model	Online shoppers sense of control and empowerment appears as main variables for Online Customer Experience; Emphasis on three sources of control: ease-of-use, customization and C2C interaction (connectedness between customers)

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
					Experience outcomes: satisfaction, trust and repurchase intention.		
14	Weill, P., Woerner, S. L., (2013)	MIT Sloan Management Review	Customer Value Proposition; Customer Experience;	Quantitative and qualitative approach; Primary and secondary data; survey; sample of 118 companies; companies financial data analysis; companies news reports and other public information analysis; case studies analysis; in-depth interviews;	Three main trends: every aspect of business becomes increasingly digital; the increasing number of "digital natives" (young current and future customers and employees); dawning of the age of customer voice; Many industries are moving quickly from "Place" to "Space" (from physical content, packaging and infrastructures) to a hybrid or pure-online offer of products, services and contents	Further research should consider focus on determine the degree of interdependency for each business model (see if interdependency is another channel to explain performance), and understand how the <i>superior</i> business models drive performance, through the advantage of scale	A Digital Business Model has three components: content (creation of unique content), customer experience (improve most frequently performed tasks and eliminate most frustrating customers' experience) and platform (complete update of technology and processes, mobile and mobile apps oriented).
15	Lwin, M. O., Williams, J. D., (2006)	The Journal of Consumer Affairs	Perceived Risk, Product Quality, Purchase Intention	Quantitative Approach; Primary data; online experiment; sample of 240 internet users in a simulated online shopping context	The presence or absence of brand name was found to influence perceived risk, product quality and purchase intention. The interaction with the warranty information was consider insignificant (retailer	Use of simulated environment as a limitation of this study; further research should observe a real transaction experience, and investigate the source causes of perceived risks, product quality	Differential impact on consumers' perceptions of the web site warranty information based on the reputation on the retailer; Brand name knowledge appears to be a strong influence of risk

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
					reputation moderates the effect of expressed warranty)	assumption and purchase intention	perception regardless of warranty information
16	Garrigos-Simon, F. J., et al, (2012)	Management Decision	Social networks; relationship marketing	Qualitative approach; secondary data; examination of previous literature	The impact of social networks and especially the new context Web 3.0 in organizations is increasing and supplant other areas in organizational structures. Community managers and crowdsourcing process are acquiring increasing importance	The fact we are in the presence of an exploratory analysis appears as a limit to this study and requires further studies, such as concentrate on the impact of community managers on organizations or analyze how to use the crowdsourcing at every step of the value chain	Possible sources of competitive advantages through crowdsourcing and community managers need to be studied for each organization
17	Constantinides, E., (2004)	Management Decision	Strategic management (for electronic commerce)	Analysis and comparison of two case studies, through a six step methodological process	Fast paced environment of the online business requires continuous evaluation of market conditions, frequent strategy assessment and close monitoring of competitive moves; Permanent orientation towards innovation and expansion as a prime strategic as a mean of surviving, maintaining competitive advantages and growth	The study is limited to the internet mediated marketplaces; Further research should try to answer the question: do internet firms follow different approaches than traditional ones in formulating their corporate strategy?	High performance in dynamic environments is a characteristic that must be constantly pursued through an ongoing process of change which is in line with changes in the competitive advantages; reluctance to undertake any long-term strategy commitment

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Paper Number	Author's and Year of public.	Journal	The base theory of the study or construct	Adopted methodology and sample (and characteristics)	Main Conclusions	Limitations and future research	Managerial Implications
18	Sultan, F., Rohm, A., (2005)	MIT Sloan Management Review	Brand Management; Marketing Communication; Mobile Marketing	Qualitative approach; primary data; in-depth semi structured interviews; sample of executives responsible for managing worldwide advertising and media in the Global Media Group at Adidas International	Identify six major issues to consider before implementing a mobile-marketing strategy: Exploiting the capabilities of mobile marketing; using universal appeals to tap into global markets; addressing privacy concerns; aligning value-chain partners; integrate the mobile platform with other media; develop mobile-specific metrics	The fact this is a single-source study represents a limitation; further research should focus on multiple sources, as well as others areas of activity	A key challenge in mobile marketing is to interact with individuals in a meaningful manner that adds value to the brand-consumer relationship without being intrusive. Importance of finding out exactly how to integrate the mobile platform within their overall marketing strategies

Table 1: Systematic literature review data extraction form

Source: own elaboration

Chapter 4: Preliminary Findings

At this point, we can draw preliminary findings and synthesis.

The first construct that was identified through the literature review was ‘trust’. In fact, this category is identified in 10 of the 18 selected papers which highlight the trust as an important asset in managing brands online.

Trust emerges as an important role in managing the life cycle of online brands, whether we are referring to online retailers, services providers or product suppliers. In fact, trust appears by far as the main positive indicator for online brand loyalty and customer quality judgment (Collier and Bienstock, 2006).

Because we're dealing with an intangible world the consumer presents different behaviours and perceptions from the tangible world. The perception of risk is presented as a very important concern and trust appears as a factor that reduces perceived risk (Laroche *et al.*, 2004) and increase consumers' purchase intentions (Benedicktus *et al.*, 2010). The presence or absence of brand name was also found to influence perceived risk, product quality and purchase intention and appears to be a strong influence for trust (Lwin and Williams, 2006).

Trust is also presented in the literature as an attribute that influences consumers in dealing with online brands, whether we are referring to brand communities and the effects on increasing the brand's relationship with customers (Hur *et al.*, 2011) or the connectivity and interaction between sellers and current customers (or potential customers), which leads to the creation of the necessary engagement to brands over time, with some of them even becoming fans (Sashi, 2012) in the social networks.

Another construct that is not to ignore at this moment is repurchase intentions, which appears as an important variable in this research field. As suggested by Otim and Grover (2006), repurchased intention can be used as a measure for consumer loyalty. Although companies must follow an integrated approach to managing a customer's

relationship, post-purchase services are the most important in the development of customer loyalty (Otim and Grover, 2006).

Loyalty also appears in the literature as a variable that influences the consumer repurchase intention. In this sense, we can find that brand loyalty behaviours can be translated into repurchase intention (Hur *et al.*, 2011), and that emotional state of customers and their trust in a brand influence their decision to shop online (Rose *et al.*, 2012).

Still in respect of repurchase intention, experience and habit also appears as factors that influences consumers (Khalifa and Liu, 2007) and can be used as an indicator of online consumer's retention. Brands that are able to develop different customer experience strategies to respond to different online customers profiles and shopping habit can gain advantage in repurchased intention.

The third underlined construct is consumer satisfaction. Indeed, customer satisfaction appears as a variable that influences any transaction or use of a service, independently of his physical or virtual nature. However, in the online environment, the consumer satisfaction and consumer relationship has strengthened due to the multiplicity of existing competitors and the ease with which consumers can change suppliers.

One of the world's major concerns regarding the use of internet (whether in seeking information, use of social networks or online purchases, as examples) relates to privacy issues. Thus, consumers' satisfaction will be greater as greater the feeling of existing privacy. Every internet company should have a clearly privacy policy, and existing literature states that the mere existence of privacy policy increase consumer trust (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006).

Related to consumer satisfaction consumer engagement arises. As suggested by Sashi (2012), customer engagement focuses on customers and their needs and represents an important role for generating higher corporate performance, including sales growth, superior competitive advantage and profitability. The justification underlying these assertions is that engaged customers play a key role in viral marketing activity by

providing referrals and recommendations for specific products, services or brands to others. With the proliferation of social networks, these activities have become even more important, rapid and effective; In fact, online communities have the potential to create strong brands at low cost (Fueller and Von Hippel, 2009).

To complete the analysis of customer satisfaction we must underline that also arises from the literature the importance of ‘adaptive’ strategies, i.e., brands increasingly focus on customer satisfaction by adapting their content to consumers. Literature confirms that website characteristics can affect purchase probabilities and that ‘one size fits all’ may not be the most effective strategy. In fact, targeted messages can build empathy and increase sales (Urban *et al.*, 2009).

Based on these preliminary findings and having identified ‘satisfaction’, ‘trust’ and ‘repurchased intentions’ as those constructs that arise in a more consistent manner from the systematic literature review, it is possible to advance with an ‘online brand management’ preliminary explanatory model, as follows:

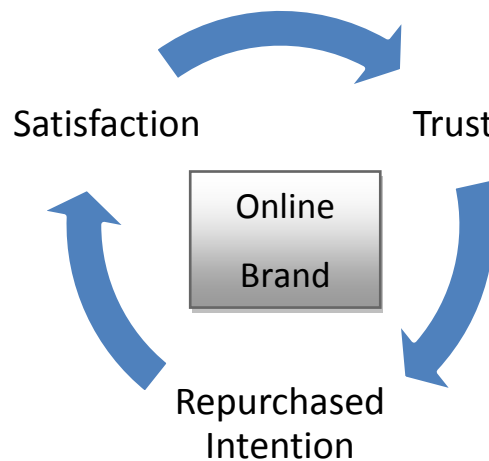


Figure 8: Online brand management preliminary explanatory model

Source: own elaboration

Chapter 5: Qualitative Research

5.1 Focus group

In order to consolidate the initial findings of this research, it was considered useful to have a qualitative research. The purpose of this qualitative study was to test the preliminary results and confirm or refute the main conclusions obtained from the systematic literature review. Thus, was decided to conduct focus group to achieve this qualitative research.

As proposed by Malhotra (2007), a focus group is an interview conducted by a trained moderator in a non-structured and natural manner with a small group of respondents. The main purpose of the focus group is to get insights on issues of interest and can lead to achieving a common finding or generate some kind of consensus on the issues discussed.

Malhotra (2007) emphasizes that a focus group generally includes 8 to 12 members, should last between 1 to 3 hours and should be homogeneous in terms of demographic and socioeconomics representing a wide spectrum of opinions and personal characteristics, which provides enough different opinions to stimulate a discussion without making each participant compete for time to talk.

5.2 Objectives and procedures

The decision for conducting the focus group was related to the importance of testing the preliminary findings reached on the systematic literature review, along with a small sample of the target audience of this study, and to verify if their opinions validate or reject these findings. It was considered important to perform this confirmation in order to support a proposal for an explanatory model for the question under consideration.

The original purpose behind the session was to gain a better understanding of what online consumers and customers perceive regarding online brands from internet companies, as well as to confirm if the attributes and constructs that emerged from the systematic literature review were validated.

Krueger (1994) suggests that focus group should be characterized by homogeneity, but with sufficient variation among participants to allow for contrasting opinions. In this focus group, participants were recruited to reflect a range of different attitudes (and skills levels) towards online brands, with different academic areas but all participants were college graduates (except one professional graduate), aged 28 to 49 years.

Group size was eight, with four male and four female participants, and the discussion followed a semi-structured route as literature reports that less-structured approaches should be considered when exploratory purposes need the group to reveal more of their perspective on the research topic (Morgan *et al.*, 1997). Specific guidelines were however prepared and used to prevent that the debate follow an unreliable course.

The discussion was recorded and fully transcribed, so that comments could be linked to individual participants.

5.3 Group general characteristics

It was decided to choose people with a diversity of characteristics within a standard group.

In this group the age range varies between 28 and 49 years, allowing us to achieve important age diversity. We are also in the presence of people with higher education, income above the national average, mostly members of households with children and seekers of technological and cultural goods. These characteristics lead us to a group with very significant levels of consumption.

During the planning of the focus groups was noted that would be useful to distinguish between different levels of internet usage among group participants. Thus, we chose to distinguish as suggested by Emmanouilides and Hammond (2000) into low users, moderate users or heavy users.

With respect the specific characteristics of this group, we can say that we are talking about individuals who collaborate with a local development association and are in

constant contact with new developments and new procedures. We can say that we have an up-to-date group of people.

Another interesting feature of this group is related to the fact that we are in the presence of a group of people seeking cultural products (books, music, etc...), which use internet to buy those due to fact they have not much offer in traditional stores in their city.

5.4 Focus Group Session

The Focus Group occurred on March, 31th, 2014. This Focus group was conducted with 8 participants in the city of Moura (Beja District, Portugal) and lasted for about two hours. It was choose to identify the person with letters in order to respect their privacy but may identify each one of them and their sentences.

5.4.1 Group specific characteristics

There follows a brief summary of the participants in terms of internet usage in order to have a succinct description of the experience and exposure regarding the subject under study. Therefore, we may state that:

- A is a frequent internet user, in a daily basis, using mainly search engines, social networks and on-line shopping; she considers herself as a moderate user.
- B is a heavy internet user, also on a daily basis, using several service and product providers, search engines, and he's an online consumer with at least one purchase per month.
- C is a low internet user, although he uses internet on a daily basis. He uses search engines and news services; he never had an online shopping experience, and he doesn't forecast to do any online buy in the near future.
- D is a heavy internet user (the most heavy on this group), using internet also on a daily basis, from several service and products providers either for personal and professional proposes; he shops online in average more than once a month.
- E is a moderate internet user, using internet also on a daily basis, either for personal and professional proposes. In personal terms, she uses search engines

and news services; in what professional proposes concerns she uses internet for keeping up updated regarding legislation and accounting procedures.

- F is a heavy internet user, using internet also on a daily basis, via different types of services, social networks, news services aggregators; he's also an online buyer, doing at least two transactions a month (the most active concerning online shopping experience).
- G is a moderate internet user, also using on a daily basis, using search engines, social networks, but not online shopping; she is also news services consumer.
- H is a moderate internet user, using also on a daily basis. She uses mainly for search engines and social networks; although she's not a regular online consumer, she already made some online buys.

The socio-demographic characteristics of this group are express in table 1:

Group Member	Age	Gender	City	Level of Education	Field of Study	Occupation	Internet Usage
A	40	F	Moura	Master Degree	Psychology	Superior Technical Staff	Moderate
B	28	M	Moura	Professional Graduate	Construction Drawing	Individual Entrepreneur	Heavy
C	49	M	Moura	Honours Degree	Philosophy	Middle Management Staff	Low
D	32	M	Moura	Honours Degree	Socio and Cultural Animation	Superior Technical Staff	Heavy
E	37	F	Moura	Honours Degree	Management	Financial Department	Moderate
F	38	M	Moura	Honours Degree	Sociology	Superior Technical Staff	Heavy
G	45	F	Moura	Honours Degree	Economics	Superior Management	Moderate
H	39	F	Moura	Honours Degree	Agricultural Engineering	Training Coordinator	Moderate

Table 2: Characteristics of focus group members

Source: own elaboration

5.4.2 Focus Group discussion and findings

The group one discussion was conducted according to the Focus Group Script developed for this study (which can be found in the Appendix I).

Concerning the use of the internet all participants are daily users; they all use different types of services such as news services, meteorology services or search engine services. Actually, all participants identified the same search engine as their first choice (Google). Regarding online shopping experience, all but one mentioned that they have already made at least one complete transaction. In fact, several participants mentioned they usually made at least one transaction per month.

When asked about the first key-question (see Appendix I), most participants mentioned credibility, security and third party referral as important characteristics (in relation to third party referrals, different opinions were registered during the focus group concerning word-of-mouth, personal referral and social networking referral). In fact, participant 'D' refer that *“the existence of a physical store positively reinforces the credibility of an online store”* and gave the example of FNAC to emphasize his opinion.

Continuing the discussion around this issue, 'D' also underlined that for him is quite important that there is a description in the website of the forms of payment, shipping procedures and availability of different payment methods. Indeed, in what payment methods concerns was unanimous distrust regarding payment with visa card, and all of them stated that the first option would be other forms of payment (MB card, PayPal, etc..). Many of the participants even stated that if were only available visa card payment they wouldn't complete the transaction.

'B' participant introduced the issue of time limits for suppliers to deliver products. For him, an issue that can lead from choosing a supplier rather than another is the fast delivery of products. He also claimed that the quality of information about the products represents an enhanced trust. 'F' participant highlighted the shipping costs as a variable to be considered, but for him one of the main differentiating features is the ease of use, whether we are talking about websites or mobile apps.

Summarizing, and having to jointly identify the three main positive characteristics offered by online brands from internet companies, the group highlighted price, payment methods and perceived quality. Regarding unhelpful characteristics, the group underlined payment methods (which arises both in positive and negative characteristics), returns policy and excessive advertising.

About excessive advertising, most participants emphasize “YouTube” as an example (‘B’ and ‘D’ in particular); for the majority of opinions, this service supplier has at this moment excessive advertising which leads users to retreat from this ‘streaming media’ provider. They also stressed that “YouTube” appears at this moment heavily loaded with too much information, what turns out to be an unpleasant experience.

When asked about the second key-question (see Appendix I), participant ‘E’ indicated satisfaction (with initial purchase) as a key factor to influence the repurchase (or reuse of services). Participant ‘A’ mentioned the compliance with the contract conditions in a previous experience as a positively factor to influence repurchase. Nevertheless, most of the participants emphasize that they usually do price comparison before deciding where to buy, even if they had a good previous experience with a certain provider.

In sequence with this question, the usability and habit emerge; one of the recurring services for all participants are search engines, and when questioned about which search engine do participants prefer all of them refers Google; asked why the option for this search engine, habit and accurate information were the main answers. Only ‘F’ participant claimed having recourse to other search engines to be able to refine the search if the first provider does not offer the sought content.

Summarizing, and having to jointly identify which characteristics influence positively the repurchased or reuse, the group identify satisfaction, ease of use (focusing on speed of use and prompt process) and price as those who stand out.

Concerning the third key-question (see Appendix I), participant ‘A’ indicated that the temporal existence of a company conveys her Trust; i.e., “*a company who has many*

years conveys more confidence that a new company with little history". Participants 'B', 'C', 'D', 'E' e 'G' all refer third party referral as a factor that conveys trust.

Concerning Third Party Referral (TPR) they all indicate the personal references as a primary source for a reliable reference. Regarding others forms of TPR, Word-of-Mouth (WOM) appears to be a form of referral also quite acceptable, although not homogeneous within the group. Indeed, 'B', 'E' and 'H' participants did not give great value to the WOM referral source if they don't know the person very well or do not recognize their knowledge and skills to assess the subject under question.

Still in respect of trust on TPR, participant "C" stressed a remarkable question when he claimed that *"I get an idea of intuitive confidence by word-of-mouth"*. Participant "F" added to this subject that *"the clients review (on travel sites like Booking, for example) have a positive reinforcement on me"*.

Continuing to examine the TPR factor, 'D' participant claim that he thinks that referrals that appear in social networks are not a good referral *"Maybe if they appears in specialized blogs. If not, I do not trust"*, he argues. With this affirmation, many participants claim that they also do not trust the opinions that emerge in social networks. 'A' and 'H' participants claim that *"Everyone became an expert in all matters and began to give their opinion on all subjects in social networks"*. 'A' participant also claimed that *"is very easy to give a like on a facebook page, but do people really like that page? Or they just do it because someone asked them to?"* Most of this group participant agreed with participant 'A'. All group participants ultimately agreed that referral through social networks is not a reliable referral and they do not give high value to it.

Still concerning the third key-question (see Appendix I), participants also underlined that they give large importance to clarity of information and clarity of the proceedings. Participant 'A', 'F' and 'G' emphasize that for them was very important this issues. Related to this previous topic, emerge in discussion the privacy issue. For all participants, this issue is of great importance.

Privacy concerns are common among all internet users. The extent to which this concern affects each internet user differs from person to person. In this group, one of the main problems of privacy is linked to payment by credit card, having six participants who claim never to use credit card as a payment method because they do not trust the security systems provided by electronic retailers.

Summarizing, and having to jointly identify which characteristics influence positively trust in an online brand from an internet company, the group identify privacy and/or security (this respect, it is noted that privacy and security are seen as a single large theme), brand familiarity and consensus information.

5.5 Main conclusions and discussion

From the focus group conclusions can be drawn.

In generic terms, we could observe that this issue arouses considerable interest in people, largely due to fact we are referring to a subject that is increasingly present in people's lives. In fact, most people feel a connection with this topic and it is not hard to get opinions from them.

Although not initially expected, were observed differences in terms of gender concerning this subject: it was noted that male participants were more sensitive to internet and technology issues and that for female participants the ease of use and the trust were highlighted as main worries. This point seems really interesting as we could be facing constructs that may exist while managing online brands targeting genders.

The first construct that emerged from the focus group was purchase intentions. Actually, for this construct several variables were mentioned as largely important on the purchase decision process. Aspects like credibility, third party referral, security, the announced fast delivery of products or the quality of information were all mentioned. Nevertheless, when asked for what influence most, price rises as number one. In this subject, price, payment methods and perceived quality emerged as main aspects for purchase intentions.

Other construct that appear was repurchase intention. And in common purchase and repurchase intention have price as a main concern. Indeed, individuals claim that they do price comparison during the buying process even if they have had a previous positive experience with an electronic retailer or an online supplier.

Still in what repurchased intention concerns, the group also identify that satisfaction and previous positive experience works as a positive influence to repurchase decision. It has also been highlighted usability and ease of use as positive features that reinforce repurchase intentions. In sum, price, satisfaction and ease of use influence positively repurchase intentions.

Having been the trust constructs that stood out in the systematic literature review arises as logical to test this finding in the focus group and try to understand if people also highlight it as major influence. And in fact, trust reappears as the main construct that influence consumers on their relation with online brands.

With respect trust, several variables arise to influence this construct. The key feature mentioned was personal references as a primary source for a reliable reference. Indeed, third party referrals emerged as significant influence when reeling on an online brand.

Nevertheless, distinction has been made from word-of-mouth and social networking referral. Participants quite differ from these two forms of TPR, and consensually said they put more importance on trust arising from WOM than by social networking. Was fairly unanimous that social networking referral had not so much weight in this group as one might assume.

Still related to trust, the clarity of information and the clarity of procedures were also discussed. These two are identified as quite important variables when consumers are evaluating the trust potential of a provider. One last aspect that emerged from this analysis was the privacy and security issues. Although privacy and security are independent variables, the group associate both as a unique concern. This concern is

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probably the major one among internet users and naturally appears on this discussion as vital when trusting on online brands.

Group members identify the privacy disclosure on website as a reliable form of measuring e-tailers or services providers' securities concerns, although they claim rarely to read them. In terms of personal information, most of individuals are convinced that they are not adequately protected. In terms of transactions security, most participants don't feel enough safe when performing it.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications

In order to accomplish the objectives, it was developed an extensive literature review on the subject in study in order to explore the theoretical background and comprehend the literature main findings. After that, a focus group session was performed in order to analyse the consumer perception, expectations and feels about online brands from internet companies. Based on information gathered from the literature review and the focus group, conclusions could be drawn.

Concerning the systematic literature review was possible to reach some preliminary findings and it was achievable to identify three main constructs that influences the creation, build and management of online brands for internet companies: 'trust', 'repurchase intentions' and 'consumer satisfaction'.

After this preliminary findings became important to test the reached results with a qualitative research and analysis the main constructs found. In this case the choice fell on a focus group in which was possible to discuss about three main constructs that influences the creation, build and management of online brands for internet companies: 'trust', 'purchased intentions' and 'repurchased intentions'.

Regarding trust, this construct stands out as a main influence on consumers and on their relation with online brands. It emerged from the systematic literature review as an important asset while managing the life cycle of online brands, whether we are referring to online retailers, services providers or product suppliers. In fact, trust appears by far as the main positive indicator for online brand loyalty and costumer quality judgment (Collier and Bienstock, 2006).

Due to fact we are dealing with an intangible world consumers presents different behaviours and perceptions about brands than in the tangible world. The perception of risk appears as a major concern and trust emerge as an asset that reduces consumer perceived risk (Laroche *et al.*, 2004). It is also important to always keep in mind that consumers show a more positive attitude towards the products that are difficult to manufacture (Aaker and Keller, 1990) rather than those that are intangible.

Still regarding the perceived risk it was also found that the presence or absence of brand name influence perceived risk, product quality and purchase intention. This asset also appears to be strong influences on trust construct (Lwin and Williams, 2006). Trust equally appears as a construct that influences consumers when dealing with online brands, whether we refer to brand communities (Hur *et al.*, 2011) or to the interaction between sellers and customers (current or potential). This indeed leads us to the creation of the necessary engagement to brands over time, with some consumers even becoming fans of certain brands (Sashi, 2012).

On the focus group, several variables appear influencing trust. In fact, the key feature mentioned was personal references as a primary source for a reliable reference and third party referrals arise as significant influence when relies on online brands.

Nevertheless, distinctions have been made between word-of-mouth and social networking referral. Participants quite differ from these two forms of third party referral and consensually said they give more importance on trust effect arising from word-of-mouth than arising from social networking referral. Was fairly unanimous that social networking referral had not so much weight in this group as one might assume.

Still related to trust, the clarity of information and the clarity of procedures arise. These two are identified as fairly important assets in the moment consumers are evaluating the potential trust of a provider. One last aspect that has emerged from this analysis was the privacy and security issues. Although privacy and security are independent variables, the group associates both as a unique concern. This concern is probably the major one among internet users and naturally appears on this discussion as vital when trusting on online brands.

The second construct that emerged from this study was purchased intention. Discussed in the focus group, several variables were mentioned as largely important on the process: credibility, third party referral, security, the announced fast delivery of products or the quality of information were all mentioned. Despite that, when asked for what influenced the most individuals, price rises as number one asset. In this subject

price, payment methods and perceived quality emerged as main constructs for purchase intentions.

The third construct that emerge from the systematic literature review was repurchase intentions. As suggested by Otim and Grover (2006), repurchased intention can be used as a measure for consumer loyalty. In fact, loyalty appears in the literature as a construct that influences the consumer repurchase intention. In this sense, we can find that brand loyalty behaviours can be translated into repurchase intention (Hur *et al.*, 2011), and that emotional state of customers and their trust in a brand influence their decision to shop online (Rose *et al.*, 2012).

Still with regard loyalty, experience and habit also appears as constructs that influences consumers (Khalifa and Liu, 2007) and can be used as an indicator of online consumer's retention. Brands that are able to develop different costumer experience strategies to respond to different online costumers profiles and shopping habit can gain advantage in repurchased intention (Novak *et al.*, 2000).

When discussed the repurchase intention topic on focus group, several common constructs with purchase intentions emerged. Price appear as main aspect and participants claim that they do price comparison during the buying process even if they have had a previous positive experience with an e-tailer or an online supplier. Still on this matter, the group also identifies satisfaction and previous positive experience as a positive asset on repurchase decision process, and also highlighted the usability and the ease of use as positive assets which reinforce repurchase intentions. In sum, price, satisfaction and ease of use emerge positively on repurchase intentions.

Consumer satisfaction was the fourth construct highlighted on this study. In the systematic literature review it appears as a construct that influences any transaction or use of a service, independently of his physical or virtual nature. However, in the online environment, the consumer satisfaction and consumer relationship has gained a new dimension due to the multiplicity of existing competitors and the ease with which consumers can change suppliers.

Related on this construct, privacy issues and security aspects emerged. A major concern of internet users worldwide is related to issues of privacy. In this sense, consumer satisfaction will be greater as greater the feeling of existing privacy. Every internet company should have a clearly privacy policy, and existing literature states that the mere existence of privacy policy increase consumer trust (Pan and Zinkhan, 2006).

Another aspect that appears linked to consumer satisfaction is consumer engagement. As suggested by Sashi (2012), costumer engagement represents an important role for generating higher corporate performance, including sales growth, superior competitive advantage and profitability. The justification underlying these assertions is that engaged consumers play a key role in viral marketing activity by providing referrals and recommendations for specific products, services or brands to others. With the proliferation of social networks these activities have become even more important, rapid and effective. As suggested by Fueller and Von Hippel (2009), online communities have the potential to create strong brands at low cost.

The adaptative strategies complete the analysis of customer satisfaction. Brands increasingly focus on customer satisfaction by adapting their content to consumers. Literature confirms that website characteristics can affect purchase probabilities, and that 'one size fits all' may not be the most effective strategy. In fact, targeted messages can build empathy and increase sales (Urban *et al.*, 2009).

By this means it was summarized the main conclusions reached in this dissertation which has put in evidence the main constructs achieved. The systematic literature review has enabled to reach preliminary findings which were validated by the focus group. Based on the conclusions that were reached and taking into account all constructs that influenced the subject under study, it is possible to advance with an Online Brand Management Explanatory Model, as follows:

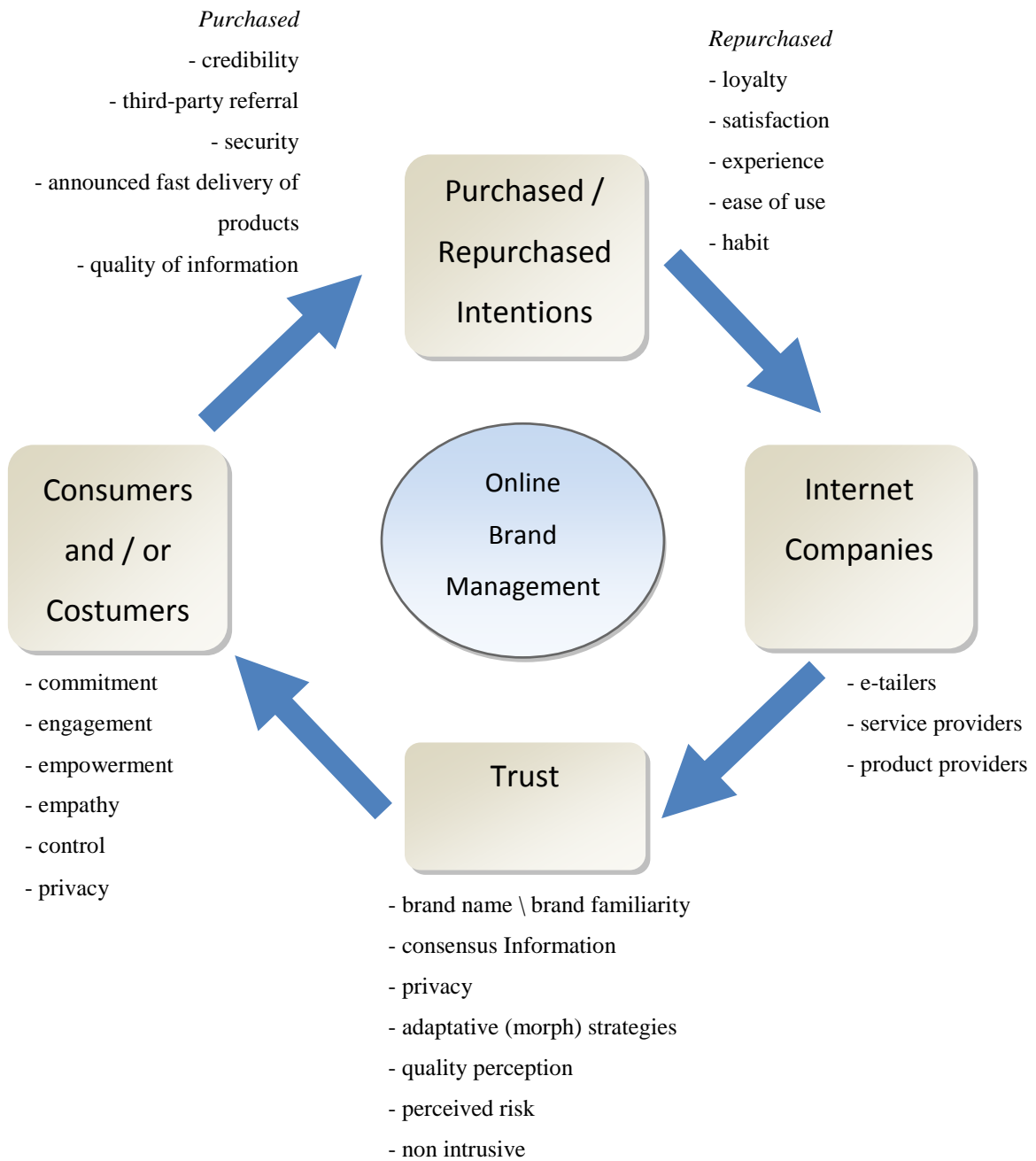


Figure 9: Online brand management explanatory model

Source: own elaboration

As settled on the introduction, the defined objective for this dissertation was to understand which constructs leads to successfully create, build and manage online brands for internet companies. Based on the findings reached and presented, it is correct to say that this objective has been achieved.

Based on the above objective it was expected that this findings could generate an explanatory model for the theoretical question under study. With the identified constructs that arise from this research, it was also possible to create an explanatory model for online brand management and allowed to achieve the other objective initially settled.

6.1 Theoretical and managerial implications

In terms of theoretical implications, it can be stated that this dissertation contributes to the theory by identifying the constructs that influence the online brand management and also by presenting an explanatory model for the theoretical question under study.

Regarding the constructs, trust, repurchased intention and consumer's satisfaction are highlighted as main features. Concerning the explanatory model, are highlighted the relationship between consumers and internet companies through the constructs trust and purchased / repurchased intentions.

In terms of managerial implications, some aspects arise of most relevance. One of the most importances regards the ability of internet companies and their brands to stimulate repurchase intention for customer, allowing increasing consumer loyalty and at the end, increasing revenue.

Also in what managerial implications concerns, trust appears as major concern regardless we are facing an electronic retailer, a service provider or a product supplier. In the intangible world of online brands, customers are very sensitive to the confidence on online brands and this construct can be crucial for their success.

As a final aspect regarding the managerial implications it appears critical while managing online brands to value and measure the social network implications. In fact, it is proved in the literature the importance of customers engagement with brands through online communities and should not be underestimated the importance of clients' comments on websites as a positive reinforcement to trust on buying process.

6.2 Limitations and future research

One possible limitation of this study refers to fact that we are advancing with an online brand management explanatory model that hasn't been tested. Although this model arises from the theoretical and empirical conclusions presented on this dissertation, would be of great accuracy to test it, preferably through a quantitative study and if possible with multicultural and multinational data source. This would be of great relevance, as it would allow us to extrapolate with the required degree of certainty the results achieved for the reality of internet companies that operate globally.

Future researches may also attempt to explore a finding that was not evident in the early stages of this study: understand the social network's impact on consumers and measure if this is consistent with the commonly accepted impact on consumers. Indeed, future studies may attempt to test whether social networks are being overvalued or not.

Due to the importance that trust construct presented, future research should also focus on this and explore trust influence on the studied subject. Moreover, it was shown that this could be a research topic with a vast exploratory area.

One last reference for a not initially expected findings concerning gender difference that may be explored in future research. In the focus group, female participants highlighted the ease of use and trust as main worries while dealing with online brands. This point seems really interesting as we could be facing constructs that may exist in managing online brands targeting women.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Focus Group Script

Introduction	Explanation of what is a Focus Group. Introduction to the subject in study (manage online brands for internet companies). Brief explanation of “Internet Companies” definition to participants.
Opening	Please tell us your name, age, degree, field of study and level of internet usage.
Transition	Are you frequent internet users? Do you use internet services, such as news services, meteorology services or search engine services? Do you usually make online purchases? How often?

Key-question No.1	What are the characteristics that online brands from internet companies you consider most important when deciding whether to use a service or make a purchase online? (either positive or negative characteristics)
Group Discussion	If you had to choose together the three main characteristics (both positive and negative) among those which have been mentioned, which would they be?
Key-question No.2	When performing a repurchase or a service reuse from an internet supplier (either service or e-retailer), which characteristics influenced you the most?
Group Discussion	If you had to choose together the three main characteristics among those which have been mentioned, which would they be?
Key-question No.3	What are the aspects that lead you to have or not have trust in an online brand from an internet company?
Group Discussion	If you had to choose together the three main characteristics among those which have been mentioned, which would they be?

Create, Build and Manage Online Brands for Internet Companies

Conclusion

We are currently investigating the key features that lead to successfully create, build and manage online brands for internet companies. Do you consider adding anything that could help us?