BRANDING STRATEGY FOR METROLEAP MEDIA INC.

by

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BSc., Simon Fraser University 2008

PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

In the
Faculty
of
Business Administration

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Summer 2009

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Abstract

Metroleap Media, owner of Metrolyrics.com, is in need of a brand strategy that consistently showcases identity and provides a positive and engaging experience for its users. The Lyrics space is highly competitive with search engine optimization being a key success factor. Guidelines have been developed for governing all company properties including Metrolyrics, Metroleap’s corporate website, and other social networking initiatives. These guidelines ensure that Metroleap’s brand will have a strong strategy and identity while giving users a positive brand engagement and experience.

Keywords: Online; Websites; Branding; Corporate Brand; Brand Strategy; Social Networking
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Metroleap Media Inc for supporting me through my MBA and this project paper. I would also like to thank both my readers Michael Parent, and Andrew Von Nordenflycht for the time and effort they put in guiding me through this process. Lastly I would like to thank my family and Milun for being there for me throughout the last year. I could never have done it without all of you.
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1: Introduction

1.1 About Metroleap Media and Metrolyrics.com

Metroleap Media is a privately owned Burnaby-based media company that owns a vast array of entertainment websites. Metroleap’s largest website, Metrolyrics.com is the largest music lyrics website online (Comscore, 2009) and receives over 32 million unique users monthly. Metrolyrics.com is the sixth largest music entity online (Comscore, 2009) and is ranked alongside large multinational companies specializing in music and entertainment content such as MTV Music and Yahoo! Music. Metrolyrics.com was the first lyrics only website to obtain licenses from copyright holders in order to compensate artists and songwriters accordingly.

1.2 The Online Lyrics Space

For a number of reasons, people want to be able to find the actual lyrics for their favorite songs. Unclear or misunderstood lyrics can change the entire meaning of a song. Debate over ‘correct’ lyrics would be endless if it weren’t for the many websites that provide music lovers with correct lyrics. Now that more and more music is bought online, actual CD booklets have become obsolete and are rapidly being replaced by these websites.

Lyrics websites can be profitable due to extremely low overhead associated with hosting one of these websites. The revenue from these websites is generated through advertisements and through the sale of ringtones. Their business model can be considered
an ad revenue/traffic based one. The majority of traffic, including that of Metrolyrics, is directed to these websites from search engines like Google and Yahoo, rather than going to the lyrics sites directly (Metrolyrics Google Analytics, 2009). Some of these websites operate as small businesses, while others have a sole webmaster that does all of the work.

There are two types of websites that provide lyrics to an internet user, ‘lyrics only’ websites, and music websites. The music websites are usually large companies that provide music-related content such as: Yahoo! Music, MTV, and Disney. These websites are all currently licensed through Gracenote. They are also backed by multi-million dollar companies but receive less traffic to their lyrics offering than Metrolyrics (Comscore, 2009). For example, MTV.com offers lyrics, music videos and other offerings to their users but only receives nine million unique US visitors. Metrolyrics, on the other hand receives ten million unique US visitors by offering lyrics only (Comscore, 2009). There are two possible reasons why MTV.com has less traffic. One may be because MTV.com does not show up on the first page of search engines results for a search term such as ‘Miley Cyrus Lyrics’ (Google, 2009). A second possible reason is that to navigate from the homepage to the actual lyrics page is somewhat challenging taking roughly four to five clicks (MTV.com, 2009).

1.2.1 Copyrights & Licensing

Since its inception, this industry has been in a ‘grey area’ about copyright legalities despite recent efforts to legalize online publication. While it is currently
‘illegal’ to post copyright material online, there have been no repercussions for lyrics websites that are doing so.

The music industry is notorious for suing North American websites that profit from its copyrighted material, and a great example of this was how Napster was dealt with. Music sites operating outside the US or Canada are usually not potential targets since it is hard to enforce copyright laws in other countries. Over the past few years, major record labels have refused to see the potential in what the Internet can offer them. Rather than embracing technology, they continue to put up roadblocks. This has been evident in their response to numerous advances in technology like Napster, and Mp3 file sharing.

Guitar Tab websites, are very similar to Lyrics websites except that instead of providing lyrics, they provide guitar tabs for users to learn how to play songs. All these websites have been shut down, except those operating outside of the US and Canada. The music industry sent ‘cease and desist’ letters to the majority of these websites resulting in their disappearance from the web within weeks. UltimateGuitar.com located in Russia is still able to operate because copyright laws are nearly impossible to enforce in foreign countries, and this results in an unfair advantage to those who should be bound by industry regulations.

The two companies that are able to license lyrics to any music property online are Gracenote and Lyricfind. The royalty process and negotiation with record labels that goes along with licensing lyrics and paying out artists is very complicated. Licensing lyrics is a relatively new concept and this is why only two companies are currently doing it. There are a lot of regulations and guidelines that go along with publishing licensed lyrics. For
example Gracenote does not allow users to copy and paste lyrics because record labels don’t want people having the ability to copy ‘their’ proprietary content.

Gracenote has licensed Yahoo Music, Metrolyrics.com, MP3lyrics.com, LyricsMode.com, Clear Channel, MTV, and Disney Radio (Gracenote, 2009). LyricFind has licensed sites such as Rhapsody, Last.fm, Lyrics.com, Slacker.com, Music.com, LyricsDir.com, and Cox Radio (Lyricsfind, 2009).

In April 2008, Metrolyrics.com became the first lyrics-only website to sign with most major record labels to begin paying royalties (Metroleap Media Inc, 2008). Licensing differentiated Metrolyrics from the rest of the lyrics websites by making it one of the only legal players in the industry (Metroleap Media Inc, 2008). Since Metrolyrics negotiated its deal with Gracenote, the model has been replicated for other lyrics websites such as Mp3lyrics.com and Lyricsmode.com. These lyrics websites are relatively small in terms of traffic when compared to Metrolyrics. However they may pose a threat in the future.

1.2.2 Demand for Lyrics

The demand for lyrics is very significant but may ‘appear’ to be declining in light of certain data. In 2006, research company Hitwise.com listed the keyword ‘Song Lyric’ as the sixth most searched topic. Then in 2007, they listed it as the 31st, an apparently significant drop (Kopytoff, 2006). Lyrics searches may have declined on this list of apparent keywords but their demand continues to grow for Metrolyrics especially. Keywords have become more specific as users enter particular song titles, artists and
actual lyric phrases rather than typing ‘song lyric’ into the search engine as had been done previously.

Metrolyrics.com ranks currently as one of the top 500 websites globally and the 201st in Canada (Alexa, 2009). These rankings suggest that there is a strong demand for lyrics. In Figure 1, it can be seen that Metrolyrics’ traffic rank peaked shortly after licensing their lyrics with Gracenote. This was most likely due to increased publicity and media coverage.

![Alexa Daily Traffic Rank Trend For Metrolyrics.com](image)

*Figure 1- Metrolyrics Alexa Traffic Rank (Author adapted from Alexa, 2009)*

### 1.2.3 Main Competitors

105 lyrics websites and Yahoo! Music have been analyzed to calculate market share of the lyrics industry. Yahoo! Music was used in this analysis since it is the third largest music entity online and provides lyrics as well as music content (Comscore, 2009). AZlyrics.com and Lyricsmode.com were also analyzed since they are the next two largest lyrics websites. Figure 2 displays the top ten Lyrics websites online and their
respective market share for the months of February, March, and April of 2009 (Hitwise, 2009). The four-firm concentration-ratio for the top four websites is 50% meaning that there is an opportunity for new websites to penetrate the market (Comscore, 2009). There is a high level of competition in this industry especially in terms of search engine optimization. New songs are released everyday and websites need to optimize according to which songs become popular. Optimizing for ‘lyric’ or ‘song lyric’ is no longer good enough as users type in more specific search terms.

AOL Music and Myspace were not selected for analysis even though they are ranked numbers one and two respectively in the music industry (Comscore, 2009). It is important to note that AOL Music redirects its lyrics traffic to Metrolyrics, while Myspace is a music social networking platform and is not a primary competitor of Metrolyrics.
Yahoo! Music

Yahoo! Music is not only a lyrics website, but also a full music platform. Its various offerings include: hosting music videos, live artists sessions, and audio streaming. Yahoo! Music receives over 21 million unique US monthly visitors (Comscore, 2009). Yahoo! Music receives 24 percent of the music and lyrics market share, whereas Metrolyrics receives 11 percent (Hitwise, 2009). Of these 21 million visitors, Yahoo! and Metrolyrics share only two million (Comscore, 2009). Yahoo! Music is backed by the Internet giant Yahoo! and also uses Gracenote for its licensing.
**AZlyrics.com**

AZlyrics receives four million unique monthly US visitors (Comscore, 2009) whereas Metrolyrics receives ten million. AZlyrics receives roughly eight percent market share of the Lyrics space. When running audience duplication through Comscore, Metrolyrics and AZlyrics share approximately two million of the same US visitors.

AZlyrics was part of the Artistdirect Network up until June of 2009 but has since left and redirected their Comscore traffic to the Jango Music Network. Artistdirect is in the top 10 music properties online (Comscore, 2009). Artistdirect is a network of music related websites that includes 17 lyrics websites under its umbrella. AZlyrics was Artistdirect’s largest property. AZlyrics, along with the other Artistdirect lyrics websites, are not licensed and are considered to be illegal competitors.

Jango Music is a network of websites focused on audio streaming and music advertising platforms. They have licenses to stream audio legally, but it is interesting to see them affiliated with an illegal copyright ‘infringer’ such AZlyrics. Jango currently redirects their traffic to Metrolyrics, and Metrolyrics redirects their audio streaming to Jango even though AZlyrics is now operating under their network.

**LyricsMode.com**

LyricsMode receives roughly four million unique visitors monthly (Comscore, 2009). It is not part of any larger network and is the 13th largest music entity online (Comscore, 2009). Lyricsmode has a very similar design to all the other lyrics websites. In terms of market share, it receives about six percent of the total lyrics space (Hitwise, 2009). Metrolyrics and LyricsMode share roughly two million visitors (Comscore, 2009). LyricsMode recently began licensing through Gracenote for its lyrics offerings.
1.2.4 Market Summary

Overall, the top four firms are taking only 50% of the market share. This means that the industry is fairly competitive and that there is room for new entrants. There is an oligopoly in regards to licensing as only two firms (Gracenote and Lyricfind) have signed with enough record labels to form a viable lyrics product for these websites. Even though there is a licensing structure, the majority of smaller websites choose not to license, as the licensing fees are very high and take directly away from their bottom line.

The key success factor in this industry is the use of search engine optimization. With search-engines providing the majority of traffic to these websites, there is a risk of search engine algorithms shifting or of websites falling behind in terms of search engine optimization, resulting in a player dropping out of the market and a new one rising to the top.

1.3 Demographics

This industry serves music fans who want to know the lyrics to the latest songs. Originally, song lyrics were printed inside CD booklets for customers who purchased an album. Since the introduction of MP3s, many users no longer buy CDs and therefore look for lyrics online. Lyrics are searched online using search engines because it is the only way to find lyrics quickly and accurately given that not all lyrics websites have a complete up-to-date database.
Since Metrolyrics is the largest lyrics website, its demographic profile is an excellent profiler of who is searching for lyrics. All demographic information has been collected using Comscore and shows the following results:

- Metrolyrics’ visitors are 50% generation Y, 30% Generation X, and 20% Baby Boomers.

- The gender split is 57% females, and 43% males.

- 80% of the users have a college or higher education.

The typical lifestyle of a Metrolyrics visitor is that of one who loves music and is culturally sophisticated. This user embraces new technology and is a heavy internet user who generally goes online every day to do anything from downloading music to Internet banking (Metrolyrics Advertising Pack, 2009).
2: Brands and Branding

2.1 What is a brand?

A brand is the holistic image or identity that a company or product holds in customers’ minds. A brand is not born but made. It encapsulates a name, product or services, and a concept that influence buyers (Kapferer, 2008). For customers, a brand establishes identity, assures quality and conveys a particular status and prestige (Parent, 2009). These factors can reduce search costs and perceived purchase and psychological risks (Parent, 2009) associated with purchasing a product.

2.1.1 Basic Awareness

A brand enables customers to be aware of its products. Without a name to associate with particular products and services consumers would have a hard time differentiating between different companies. A benefit of integrating corporate image into brand strategy is that it has a humanizing effect on the corporation’s image (Loewen, 2006) and inturn increases overall awareness of both the company and its products. This outcome helps to build relationships and to create loyal customers which results in a competitive advantage over similar companies who are impersonal and do not have a corporate image in place.
2.1.2 Consistency and Product Quality

A brand enables a consumer to easily identify with products. Once consumers value a brand and trust it, choosing it again is more practical for them because it guarantees them consistency in quality (Kapferer, 2008). Branding also enables a company to cultivate an ongoing relationship between itself and the consumer (Hasanali, Leavitt, & Williams, 2005). Branding enables a corporation to position itself within the market by demonstrating a clear set of expectations related to quality, capability and value.

2.1.3 Personality and Ethical Values

Brands enable businesses to showcase their corporate culture, their values, and their distinct or unique qualities. To begin developing a brand, a company must interpret the market and understand its competitors in order to determine what position it currently holds and the position it desires to achieve. It also needs to define who it is and what values it holds. Once a company clarifies its values, and the direction it is leaning towards, it can then really begin to develop its branding strategy to include a personality and the ethical stance it wishes to portray.

Certain brands can be associated with responsible behaviour. In an online world where information is readily available, copyright holders have difficulty exercising control over who gets their content. Having legal content and compensating accordingly enables a company to be transparent. With a strong ethical brand, shareholders and customers have an overall better understanding of who the company is and what it is wishing to do.
2.2 Benefits of a Strong Brand

A brand’s primary function is differentiating itself from the other competitors (Hasanali, Leavitt, & Williams, 2005). The objective behind branding is to create an influential and significant identity in the minds of consumers in order to encourage them to choose a specific brands product rather than a competitor’s product.

Branding can strengthen a website’s overall image and aid in distinguishing it from competitors. The online world is highly competitive and branding is a way to gain a needed advantage. If a brand has a strong, clear message and provides a sense of familiarity, consumers have stronger recall of the brand (Kapferer, 2008) and then visit the website more often.

2.3 What builds a brand?

2.3.1 Product Quality

A brand enables a consumer to easily identify with products. Once consumers know a brand, choosing its products is easier than researching to find new comparable products. If a brand is consistent in providing quality products, consumers will continue to choose that brand (Kapferer, 2008).

2.3.2 Customer Experience

Similar to product quality, a customer’s experience with a company’s product or service will affect their perception of the brand. With online web companies, these dimensions are especially important as they directly relate to the way a website is designed. A web brand experience is defined as “a consumer's positive navigations (using
web-based communities and participating in events) and perceptions (the attractiveness of cookies, variety and uniqueness of visual displays and value for money) with a specific website.” (Hong & Perks, 2005, pp. 438-452)

If a website is not user-friendly, is not appealing to the eye or is deficient in terms of these four dimensions, this will decrease user satisfaction and in turn decrease brand equity.

In contrast, a web company that features prompt email replies, live-chats, a ‘contact us’ forums, improves user experience and helps the user identify a particular brand as one that cares about its visitors.

2.3.3 Employee Engagement with the Brand

When employees have extensive knowledge of the brand, significant benefit to the organization can result (King & Grace, 2008). Brand engagement is the internal factor that promotes a particular brand. If employees feel strongly about the company, they will directly or indirectly express these feelings to others. Proper employee engagement helps to develop a brand. To the extent that staff is supportive of brand guidelines, they will correctly implement them and will be less likely to become disgruntled and engage in negative public relations.

Through the internalization of the brand, employees are better equipped to convey the company brand correctly to customers (Berry, 2000). While this does not directly relate to online websites, it may play a factor, especially if employees are having direct contact with visitors through email and blog posts.
2.3.4 Relationships

Other attributes that affect a brand include its reputation and relationship with other companies. When companies form partnerships with other brands, they may actually capture a larger portion of the market share (Chiang, Lin, & Wang, 2008) as they expand into larger segments. Link exchanges and advertisements are means by which websites can integrate their content with that of partner businesses.

Through knowledge of these basics about brands and branding, guidelines on how to portray a consistent image to the target audience can be developed, as in the next section.
3: Metroleap’s Branding Strategy

3.1 Metroleap’s Current Branding Strategy

Metroleap’s branding strategy is inconsistent. Logos and colour schemes on the website differ from Metroleap’s corporate image, and in turn, Metrolyrics has low brand awareness. Metroleap must define a corporate branding strategy that includes its largest property, Metrolyrics.com, so that there is a consistent clear and concise message to the users. If it can successfully implement this branding strategy, the company will be able to increase loyalty along with page views per user. Metrolyrics relies solely on organic (non-paid) search results, and would benefit by increasing brand awareness so that visitors might visit its website directly rather than by going through search engines to find the content they are looking for.

Brands incorporate a sense of trust and loyalty, which are critical in the online world, and with Metrolyrics’ current layout, design and colour scheme are unattractive. With a more professional and clean look the website would entice users to come back and leave an overall better impression on the visitor. The majority of Metrolyrics’ visitors are not loyal nor can they really experience Metroleap’s brand through Metrolyrics because the company logo is not present on the homepage. Metrolyrics’ smaller competitor AZlyrics relies heavily on brand awareness and receives most of its traffic from users going directly to its site (Hitwise, 2009). AZlyrics displays copyrighted material do for which it does not have licenses, and therefore shows illegal content to its users. Despite this, its users display a stronger brand awareness and preference for this website.
Increasing Metrolyrics’ brand awareness may give it a larger competitive advantage over the competition.

3.2 Benefits of Branding for Metrolyrics

Building a stronger brand will enable Metrolyrics to secure better advertisers for its website. Advertisers for successful companies feel that Metrolyrics does not portray a strong brand with its current design, and will only advertise with websites that have as strong or, a stronger brand than their own. This puts Metrolyrics in a tough spot when trying to secure high quality brand advertising.

3.3 Analyzing Brand Strategy

3.3.1 Metroleap

A key choice needs to be decided whether to spend efforts and resources branding only Metrolyrics or try to divide resources to include promoting the Metroleap’s brand.

3.3.2 Metrolyrics

Metrolyrics has distinguished itself amongst its competitors by paying royalties to artists and songwriters. This sends a strong message that Metrolyrics maintains ethical values by upholding copyright laws within a slew of lyrics websites that disregard them, websites such as AZlyrics, Lyricsmania, and Lyricsfreak to name a few.

In order to implement a positive brand image, a mission statement could be created that amplifies the ethical principles upheld by Metrolyrics. These values could be placed on a banner somewhere on the page with a link to further information so users could read up on Metrolyrics’s initiatives if they wanted to. The banner might even direct
them to the Metroleap homepage. It is hard to say if visitors would actually read up on Metrolyrics’ initiatives but it wouldn’t hurt to add the information. Another way to showcase Metrolyrics’ values might be through the use of an artist-sponsored campaign that enhances user awareness of these values.

3.3.3 Example Campaign: Metrolyrics - Artist Approved

Since the majority of lyrics websites have illegal content (Gracenote, April 2009), Metrolyrics might launch a campaign that features its values so as to engage users’ awareness and instill in them a loyalty for the company’s ethical stance. Displaying graphics and logos on the website with the slogan “Artist Approved” may draw some attention. This could be extended to include actual artist endorsements of Metrolyrics over other lyrics websites, See Figure 3 for an example. This picture would link to the artist’s Metrolyrics page and would generate revenue for that artist and his or her songwriters. Although it may be difficult to get artists to agree initially, once two or three agreed to endorsement idea, its value would be established and others would follow. Since Metrolyrics serves music fans from around the world having celebrities and artists endorse it would increase brand awareness. Success could be measured through the number of clicks on these banners along with returning visitors rates.
3.4 Brand Position

Metrolyrics.com relies heavily on search engines for traffic, 63 percent of its traffic comes from Google alone (Hitwise, 2009). When typing in a song title followed by the term ‘lyrics,’ Metrolyrics comes up in the top three search results nearly every time. Metrolyrics relies heavily on Google, and therefore is very vulnerable. If Google ever changed its search algorithm and Metrolyrics no longer received the ‘top’ spots it would lose the majority of its traffic, and consequently its revenues. The results of direct access to the website could prevent a loss in traffic and increase the number of return users. In a recent poll of a representative sample of over 193,000 Search users, ComScore June 2009 Media Matrix found that Google received 71% of the search engine market share, followed by Yahoo! with 44% and Ask.com with 22%. These percentages did not add up to 100% due to users visiting multiple search engines for a single search. Bing.com,
Microsoft’s new intuitive search engine only received 0.1% of the market share (Comscore, 2009)

3.5 Competitor Brand Strategy

3.5.1 Yahoo! Music

Yahoo! Music was the first music platform to incorporate legal lyrics through Gracenote. Yahoo! has integrated its lyrics offering throughout its website. Yahoo! Music does not even show up in the first five pages of Google’s search results using the search term “Miley Cyrus Lyrics” (Google, 2009). Moreover, Yahoo! does not even appear in its first five pages of search results using the same search term (Yahoo, 2009).

In the late nineties Yahoo! was a web giant synonymous with online brand advertising (Morrissey, 2008). Yahoo! has failed to compete effectively with competitors such as Google. Today, the company believes that its brand is its strongest asset (Polikarpov, 2009). Currently Yahoo! has a strong music presence on the web being the third largest music entity online (Comscore, 2009) and reaching over 21 million US unique users monthly. Although Yahoo!’s overall market penetration in the search engine business has declined its brand is still very strong and well known, especially in the music community.

3.5.2 Azlyrics.com

AZLyrics is one of Metrolyrics largest competitors. AZLyrics has created a successful memorable and recognizable brand. Nine percent of the website’s traffic comes from visitors who conduct a Google search using keywords related to its name such as: ‘lyrics,’ ‘azlyrics,’ ‘a-z lyrics’ (Hitwise, 2009). Furthermore much of its traffic is
derived from users who go directly to the AZlyrics website. Metrolyrics, on the other hand only receives only two percent of its traffic from the keywords ‘lyrics,’ and ‘metrolyrics’ (Hitwise, 2009). Metrolyrics’ shows strength with respect to search engine optimization when particular song names are entered followed by the word ‘lyrics’ rather than the term ‘lyrics’ or ‘metrolyrics’ on its own. Of its top fifteen search terms the keyword ‘Metrolyrics’ ranks ninth (Hitwise, 2009). This suggests that users are not relying on brand recognition when it comes to searching for lyrics even though Metrolyrics holds the largest portion of the market share. Visitors rely more on Google to provide relevant results than going to a single website to search. This may be a difficult perception to change, however once Metrolyrics’ brand is built, a will be more likely to click on the name even though its search results are farther down the list of Google results.

3.5.3 Lyricsmode.com

Lyricsmode.com is very similar to Metrolyrics in style, layout and offering. Lyricsmode often shows up in Google search results when searching for lyrics (Google, 2009). Lyricsmode is the 15th largest music website online reaching roughly four million US unique monthly visitors (Comscore, 2009).

Lyricsmode is attempting to increase its online presence in a variety of ways. One of its recent offerings is through the use of a Twitter account (LyricsMode.com Twitter Account, 2009). Lyricsmode has 1800 followers (LyricsMode.com Twitter Account, 2009). One of the reasons for their increased number of followers is the large number of
individuals that they follow. Lyricsmode is following roughly 1500 people
(LyricsMode.com Twitter Account, 2009) while having only 2400 followers. What is
also surprising is with this Twitter account the author is Tweeting with broken English.
For examples some latest tweets are “Good Morning tweeple, how are u today? Are u
with your favorite songs?” or “Thx for your words, We’re so proud of it. We’re working
for you everyday” (LyricsMode.com Twitter Account, 2009). However the author is
engaging in conversation with their followers and is tweeting roughly 5 to 10 times per
day.

3.5.4 Competitor Branding - Conclusion

Yahoo! Music is the strongest brand of the three competitors described here. They
are backed by a strong global brand but lack in search engine rankings. AZlyrics fairs
well in the competition given that its website isn’t continually innovating new products
and widgets, nor is subject to frequent updates. Lyricsmode, however, could be a
potential threat as it does copy many of Metrolyrics widgets and other innovative
products in an attempt to stay competitive and increase traffic. Metrolyrics will need to
keep a close eye on all three of these competitors.

3.6 Determining Brand Identity

Metroleap needs to decide whether it is going to promote Metrolyrics rather than
the parent company, Metroleap. Considering that Metrolyrics is growing very rapidly, it
would be wise to put all effort into promoting Metrolyrics as a separate entity and putting
Metroleap on the back burner. The question may be raised why Metroleap doesn’t just
change the company name to Metrolyrics. This however would alienate all the other products and websites that Metroleap has.

Press releases currently speak of Metroleap as a company and Metrolyrics as a website. Metrolyrics’ logo shown in Figure 4 is not even displayed on their website. Figure 5 shows what is displayed on its website instead. The corporate logo has both names Metroleap and Metrolyrics associated with it and this leads to some confusion, since names are very similar. If Metroleap can initially succeed at promoting Metrolyrics as a separate entity, it can then endorse Metroleap at a later date.

Figure 4 - Metrolyrics Logo (Corporate)

Figure 5 - Metrolyrics Logo on Website
3.7 Brand Guidelines

3.7.1 Spelling

Metrolyrics’ spelling needs to be solidified. Employees need to have guidelines for press releases so that spelling is consistent. Whether or not the .com should be put after the name also needs to be addressed. Since it is a ‘.com’ business and there are so many other extensions that could be used, it may be wise to give this some thought.

Examples: Metro Lyrics, Metrolyrics, MetroLyrics, Metrolyrics.com, MetroLyrics.com

Figure 6- Google Search For Metrolyrics (June 11th, 2009)
Metrolyrics’ logo is one word, using all lower case letters, which would suggest that this is what the company has chosen. The problem is that people frequently put a space between ‘Metro’ and ‘Lyrics’. The problem with separating the words is that ‘Metro Lyrics’ could be confused with the band Metro, and its lyrics. Metrolyrics needs to develop spelling guidelines and ensure that they are enforced in all their online and print material. A quick search in Google shows that even the company’s home page keyword has incorrect spelling (using the space) shown in Figure 6.

3.7.2 Logo and consistency

Metrolyrics is currently working at overhauling its design so as to increase its brand awareness. Below is a concept that incorporates its logo into the website. Implementing a concept similar to that shown in Figure 7 would increase brand recognition with Metroleap and Metrolyrics. This logo would be displayed on every page, is very clear and stands out. Metroleap would then be able to display an umbrella brand as was initially intended.

![New Logo Concept for Metrolyrics](image)

*Figure 7- New Logo Concept for Metrolyrics*

3.7.3 Umbrella Brand

Once proper branding guidelines are developed and implemented consistently, Metroleap can begin to use “Metro” as its family brand. The company will eventually
launch Metroartists.com, an indie music artist database and Metroposts.com a music forum. Metroleap has already secured these domain names and has brainstormed layouts and concepts for these two websites. Another location in which it can incorporate the same logo is its other online property, Toparcade.com. This name does not fit into the umbrella brand. Securing the domain Metroarcade.com could incorporate Toparcade.com into the family brand. Currently Toparcade.com does not have a strong brand associated with it but does receive one million unique users monthly (Metroleap Media Inc, 2009). This, however, should not be a main priority until Metrolyrics has successfully re-branded and its brand has achieved increased awareness in the industry.

### 3.8 Developing Brand Experience

Metrolyrics has developed a brand considerable experience. Members to its website are able to submit feedback regarding the site, lyrics to missing songs and corrections to currently posted songs. This is essential in developing a connection with users since it allows them to feel they are contributing to the development of the website. Where Metrolyrics needs improvement, is in the social network aspect of its website. Currently, members are able to add friends, upload an avatar and post onto message boards, but Metrolyrics has not really embraced the Web 2.0 concept. This concept relates to software applications that use the Internet as a platform rather than as an operating system. This concept then incorporates a network of multiple users creating a network effect to make services as it is used more frequently (Chandler, 2007). Metrolyrics is beginning to develop a social networking platform that will increase overall user interaction on the website and will enable users to have a “Metrolyrics” experience.
3.9 Ensuring Positive Brand Engagement

Metroleap needs to give its entire staff training in regards to proper branding. A small staff meeting to develop the brand, and brand values would help to engage the staff and build team spirit. This would positively influence staff relations with visitors along and with various media and business contacts. In light of Metroleap’s recent success in the music industry, having all staff aware of branding guidelines is essential to upholding the brand image.

3.10 Partnerships with Stronger Brands

By partnering with stronger brands Metrolyrics will be able to increase its brand awareness and overall brand value. With reliable industry partners the brand’s overall personality will be strengthened (VanAuken, 2003).

Metrolyrics will continue to partner with other websites to share traffic, but in doing so they must make sure to partner with responsible companies whose values align with their own. It is also imperative that the brands are comparable in size and value. A premium brand would not want to advertise on a website that does not have a strong brand image.

3.10.1 AOL Music Partnership

Metrolyrics has collaborated with AOL Music, one of the largest players in the online music entertainment segment. This is a step in the right direction for Metrolyrics, as it will increase its brand value. Metrolyrics has integrated AOL content on the side of the lyrics pages. Figure 8 displays Metrolyrics’s new footer concept that will show the
partnership between Metrolyrics and AOL Music. Figure 9 displays the AOL Music content to the right of the lyrics.

**Figure 8- Metrolyrics footer displaying partnership with AOL**

**Figure 9- Metrolyrics integration of AOL Content**

AOL has redirected all its lyrics traffic to Metrolyrics. In turn, Metrolyrics has assigned its traffic (see Figure 14) under the AOL umbrella in Comscore. This has put
AOL Music in the number one spot for the music network category. AOL has changed every lyrics link on all of their properties to redirect to Metrolyrics. Figure 10 shows the integration of the main link, whereas Figure 11 shows the particular song redirection link.

Figure 10- AOL Integration of Metrolyrics

Figure 11- AOL Particular Song Redirection
3.10.2 Jango Audio Streaming Partnership

Metrolyrics has also partnered with Jango, an audio streaming website that has secured licensing. Jango’s audio streaming website is a smaller entity when compared with Metrolyrics. Jango however is playing a dangerous game since they have recently received traffic assignments (Comscore) from AZlyrics, Sing365.com, Lyrics007.com, Lyricsfreak.com, and songmeanings.net all of which are all illegal and unlicensed lyrics websites. Figure 14 shows this traffic reassignment. Jango’s audio streaming website receives three million unique US visitors whereas its whole music network receives close to 11 million (Comscore, 2009). Figure 12 shows Metrolyrics’ redirection to Jango, and Figure 13 shows Jango’s redirection to Metrolyrics.

Figure 12 - Metrolyrics audio streaming redirection to Jango

Figure 13 - Jango lyrics Redirection
3.10.3 Billboard Music Partnership

A partnership with Billboard Music is currently in negotiation. Metrolyrics is in talks to integrate Billboard’s charts on the Metrolyrics’ charts page. Billboard would, in turn, integrate Metrolyrics content onto its website. This relationship is still in the developmental process. Billboard has a very strong brand offline, and has been an industry leader in music charts for many years, but its website is only ranked number 24 in the music sector (Comscore, 2009). Being associated with Billboard Music will definitely increase Metrolyrics’ brand strength and reputation in the industry. Figure 19 illustrates a possible concept for Metrolyrics integration of Billboard into its homepage.

One of the ways Metrolyrics can showcase to business partners is through its corporate website. Currently Metrolyrics’ corporate website needs a complete overhaul.
The next section outlines suggestions and a strategy on how to go about revamping the website.
4: Corporate Website Execution Plan

In order for Metroleap to begin to demonstrate a strong brand identity, they will need to revamp their corporate website. A quick glance at the current website will reveal that it does not showcase what Metroleap represents. Metroleap has not focused on its own corporate website since Metrolyrics gets most of the attention.

This poses a significant problem because, as stated earlier, the current website that is not appealing to the eye nor does it match any of the corporate colours or logos. Metroleap’s brand message is not showcased at all. Since this company is an online media company, its corporate website should encompass everything it does and stands for in an attractive fashion.

When clients visit a corporate website, they immediately form an impression about the company based on their visit. Metroleap’s corporate website does not make a great first impression. The website is not current with the latest facts and statistics about its web properties.

A good starting point would be incorporating the logos and colour schemes that Metroleap has already created. Implementing flash elements into the corporate website would give a sharper appeal to the eye and may be a creative avenue for showcasing the Metroleap corporate identity to its clients and business partners.
Figure 15 shows the current Metroleap homepage, and Figure 16 is an example of a concept for a redesigned homepage. Upgrading Metroleap.com to something more contemporary will help increase the users’ overall impression about the company.
4.1 Design, Colour Scheme, Layout

The above concept has a dramatically different design and colour scheme. A lighter colour background with a blue colour scheme is easier on the eyes than the current orange and black theme. This colour scheme is also consistent with the Metrolyrics new design layout shown in Figure 23. The tagline such as “We Are Experts in Online Entertainment” is large enough to attract attention immediately. Metroleap’s two web...
properties and its widget products are noticeable on the top right. The navigation bar in this layout is incorporated in the main window, which makes for easy navigation to all the different pages.

Metroleap’s corporate values, demographic reach, and press releases are also shown on the main window. By placing them here Metroleap easily promote any content or convey any message. Easier navigation along with sharper and neater colour schemes, improve the overall look and feel of this corporate website.

4.2 Content

The navigation bar in Figure 16 provides six different sections on the Metroleap corporate site. When header links are clicked on, they will display relevant information in the main window, for example, a tagline for that particular page along with a different picture. The lower window will display more specific details about that section.

4.2.1 About

The About section would provide visitors with details about Metroleap. A brief history of the company along short biographies and photos of current team members would give visitors a better sense of the faces behind Metroleap. A short description of each of Metroleap’s products including Metrolyrics, Top Arcade Banners, Widgets, Iphone Applications and any other new product that Metroleap has, would also be found in this section.
4.2.2 Advertising

The advertising tab would give a quick overview about advertising opportunities through Metroleap. This would include a description of the demographics that Metroleap serves along with traffic details and click-through rates. The Advertiser Login would enable current customers to login and find particular information and pricing that is not available to the public and is specially created for them. This could include skins showing how Metrolyrics might look, or documents detailing CPM (cost per mil) and other pricing rates.

4.2.3 Downloads

‘Downloads’ would be a section in which users could find the latest documents and files. Whether it be the latest power point file from a presentation, or an advertising media kit, this section would allow visitors to find what they are looking for. Certain document downloads could also be password protected for particular clients.

4.2.4 Press Kit

The press kit would provide links to recent press releases and media about Metroleap. A picture, along with a short review of each new article would enable the visitor to get a sense of what the press has said about Metroleap. This section would have links to both current and past press releases.

4.2.5 Corporate Blog

Metroleap’s public relations company would run a corporate blog that would be featured on Metroleap and Metrolyrics. It would provide information regarding the
company and industry musings. This section would also have a feed in the form a small widget that displayed Metrolyrics’ latest Tweets from Twitter.

4.2.6 Contact Us

The ‘Contact Us’ tab would provide anyone visiting Metroleap with easy access to the right person whether in sales, or technical support. It would also provide basic information such as the company mailing address and fax number. Finally, there would also be a form for submitting emails to particular individuals.
5: Social Networking

5.1 External Social Networking Sites

Metrolyrics needs to develop a stronger identity on mainstream social networking websites including Facebook, and Twitter. A strong presence on mainstream social networking sites is advantageous as it is a way to engage with the users on a whole new level than with a static website platform. To date, Metrolyrics has launched many different widgets that are compatible with these websites including a ‘Lyrics Scroller’, and a ‘Tweet This Song’ link. Metrolyrics has a Facebook group and a Twitter account but these need to be further developed to really gain momentum.

5.1.1 Twitter

Twitter has been growing significantly since January 2009. The website went from three million in January to 18 million unique US monthly visitors in May (Comscore, 2009). Twitter is an excellent way to initiate a conversation between Metrolyrics and its users. Twitter is quick, simple and easy to use compared to other Social Networking websites. Twitter is gaining increasing popularity and has really become a new trend with many popular celebrities including Miley Cyrus, Britney Spears, and Kelly Clarkson who Tweet regular updates about their lives.

Metrolyrics Twitter Account

Metrolyric’s Twitter followers increased dramatically after the addition of the “Follow Us on Twitter” link (Figure 17) on every page of Metrolyrics’. In one week
followers increased from 200 to 900 with the addition of this widget (Twitter Metrolyrics followers, June 2009). Metrolyrics also began experimenting with different topics and tones for its tweets. Giving Metrolyrics a personality, talking about particular lyrics and providing a Twitter link will help to engage followers in starting a conversation on Twitter.

Some example Tweets are shown in Figure 18. These Tweets range from discussion about the latest celebrity gossip, to ‘trending’ topics like Music Mondays. The Twitter account is really trying to engage its followers. Metrolyrics’ has been replying too many of its followers Tweets in order to engage in more conversation with them.

The next step in Metrolyric’s Twitter strategy is to offer contests. Metrolyrics will begin to give away Amazon Music Dollars. The first follower to correctly identify lyrics to a certain line of a random song wins. As Metrolyrics gains more followers, the prizes will become more substantial and the contests will increase in complexity. Metrolyrics’ Twitter account will continue to try and engage users in new ways as time progresses.

Figure 17 - Follow us on Twitter
Metrolyrics has implemented a “Tweet This Song” application. It enables users to tweet their favorite song. The tweet says Reading@metrolyrics ‘name of song’ Lyrics (artist) and the link. Metrolyrics optimized this option to have ‘#lyrics’ to ensure that it is categorized properly in Twitter.

Figure 18- Metrolyrics Twitter Page June 16th
5.1.2 Facebook

Establishing a strong presence on Facebook may contribute to Metroleap’s brand strategy. Through the use of the Fan Page rather than the Group Page, users can become fans of Metrolyrics. Half of Metrolyrics users also visit Facebook (Comscore, June 2009) and therefore Metroleap could try to establish a connection with these users. This link can be achieved through ‘Facebook Connect’. Through this feature, users can seamlessly connect their Facebook account with a particular website. It also provides Metrolyrics with users’ real identity, along with the ability to share content with the users’ friends (Facebook, 2009).

5.1.2.1 Facebook Connect

‘Facebook Connect’ is a new way of integrating the Facebook platform into a website (Facebook, 2009). This platform allows users to seamlessly connect to their Facebook account and to share information from the website with their friends. They can also find out who else uses the site.

Metroactions

Any user actions taken on MetroLyrics can be shared on Facebook via Newsfeed or private message. This would include: Reading lyrics/stories, rating songs/albums, posting comments/reviews and becoming a fan. There would be a Button similar to the one shown in Figure 19 that would be available so that ‘Metroactions’ could be shared on Facebook. The Facebook popup might look like that shown in Figure 20. Figure 21 shows how after performing a ‘Metroaction’ it would pop up in a user’s home feed.
Figure 19- Facebook Share Button

Figure 20- Facebook Pop Up once Share button is clicked

Figure 21- Facebook Home News Feed
Auto Log In

With the auto log in feature users would be able to comment instantly on songs, submit lyrics, and send in reviews. This enables users to have a Metrolyrics’ account without having to spend the time to signing up. Users would see a similar screen as that shown in Figure 22 and would click ‘submit it’ to immediately be signed up. Their email, birth date and location would be taken from Facebook. They would also have the option of picking a username for their Metrolyrics’ account so they do not have to use their real name and prompted to become a fan of Metrolyrics.

![Figure 22- Metrolyrics Account Set-Up Through Facebook Connect](image-url)
**Facebook Fan Page**

The Facebook fan page is a great way for a company to increase brand awareness. It provides a spot for company information, photos, discussion threads, and other notes. This feature puts a stamp on the Metrolyrics’ logo on the fan’s profile page in the ‘About’ section.

### 5.2 Metrolyrics’ Internal Social Networking

In order to embrace the concept of internal social networking, Metrolyrics needs to let users make choices. Being able to make customizable pages through the use of modules and widgets is essential. The ability of users to develop their own home page where they can display the artists they like, what they are currently listening to, and who their friends are would really set Metrolyrics apart from other lyrics websites. Metrolyrics has over 500,000 members and does not really engage them on the level that other social networking sites do. Since Metroleap defines itself as an innovative company, it seems only logical that it set itself apart from the rest by ensuring that Metrolyrics is the first to implement internal social networking into the lyrics industry.

#### 5.2.1 New Social Platform

Metrolyrics is planning on taking a new approach to let its users make choices. Any new content added on Metrolyrics will have a ‘thumbs up/down’ link in the bottom corner where users can indicate whether they like the new content or not. This will provide valuable information for Metrolyrics about the relative success of new products.
Currently Metrolyrics does not permit its users to have much interaction with each other or with the website. There is a basic forum where users can communicate with each other, and a primitive messaging system. Users are able to add friends to their list and leave comments on their friends’ user pages but overall, these functions are barely used. This is most likely due to the complicated nature of the internal social platform. Metrolyrics will need to redesign this internal platform to be simpler, and easier to navigate.

Another feature that Metrolyrics could add that would increase user interactions is a ‘chatbox’. Metrolyrics has steered clear of this in the past due to the problem of spam and inappropriate content monopolizing chat rooms. Metrolyrics will need to implement a system in which the chatbox will be free of spam and be a safe place where users can talk about their favourite music and artists. Since many of the users on Metrolyrics are younger, the use of moderators may be a good solution to ensuring that chatting does not get out of hand and that all content in the chat rooms is appropriate for all age levels.

Having a chat box on every artist page would create an instant bond among those in a particular chat room. Then Metrolyrics could assign ‘Artist Gurus,’ moderators for each popular artist, who would have significant chat traffic control. These ‘Artist Gurus’ would have a relevant title on their user profile page and would be the ‘go to’ user for information about their particular artist.

Another feature that may be a great benefit to Metrolyrics is the use of submitted user content. This feature could extend users’ overall relationship with the Metrolyrics brand. Being able to upload their own concert pictures and have them featured on the Metrolyrics’ homepage may give a user a sense of pride. Posting a list of the concerts
they are attending and seeing if their friends are attending the same ones, will encourage more interaction and will create that ‘community feel’ which Metrolyrics wants to achieve. With the use of geo-targeting, users could be grouped into local communities.

5.2.2 Modular Page Flakes

Metrolyrics is re-designing its website’s look and feel by incorporating page ‘flakes’ into its design. Flakes are modular content widgets that can be moved around on the page by any user. The major component for building this framework is built using AJAX functionality. Each flake can vary in content and include RSS feeds, calendars, notes, and many other widgets.

Metrolyrics will create all its new content in these flakes so users will be able to choose whether they want to view the content or not. Figure 19 displays the use of these modular page flakes. Each flake is like a puzzle piece that fits together with others to form the page. The plus sign on the top right corner of each section (flake) enables users to add it to their Metrolyrics’s homepage shown when they login. Flakes are used extensively in websites such as Igoogle.com and Netvibes.com.

Metrolyrics will try to promote certain content by highlighting different flakes. This subtle approach will emphasize specific content to users. It may also be used to promote particular artists, and holds significant advertising potential. In Figure 19 for example, the Featured CD releases are highlighted in blue to draw the user’s eyes to the page.
Figure 23: New Metrolyrics Homepage Concept with the use of page flakes
5.2.3 User Profile Page, and Playlists

Currently, user profiles on Metrolyrics are very standardized. The profile shows an avatar, recent activity, comments, favorite artists and favorite music and the user’s ‘stats’. See Figure 20, for a print screen of the current profile page.

![Figure 20 - Metrolyric's Current User Profile Page](image)

The new user profile page will have to be modifiable in the same fashion as the new Metrolyrics’ homepage shown in Figure 19. Users could change the colour scheme, integrate their Twitter feed or even add an RSS feed from their personal blog through the use of these flakes. Users would be able to modify the page and add content that they
want to display. This is just one feature Metrolyrics will offer. As users, they will also be able to modify the skin on the whole website to one of their choosing.

5.3 Iphone Application

Metrolyrics’s receive roughly one million unique monthly visitors from mobile web browsers. 80 percent of the mobile traffic originates from iphones/ipods (Metrolyrics Google Analytics, 2009). Metrolyrics will be launching an Iphone/Itouch application by the beginning of July to help increase brand awareness for its website. This application will offer a simple search in which users can search by artist, title, or keywords. It will bring up the lyrics on the next screen. Figure 21 shows how a user would navigate from the iphone homepage to searching, finding and displaying the lyrics. Figure 22 shows the four other features included on this application: the top list of lyrics, the latest lyrics searched a personal lyrics list and a settings page. This will be the first of a few iphone applications Metroleap will launch. The basic application will be free for all users, but there will also be a premium version in which user’s can pay for advanced features.
Figure 25 - Iphone Application Search Feature

Figure 26 - Top List, Latest Lyrics, My List and Settings Features
6: Conclusion

The problem with Metroleap Media’s brand strategy is that its main asset, Metrolyrics receives most of the attention. It is hard to develop a corporate brand if only one asset receives the majority of press. A brand strategy and identity need to be developed for both Metroleap and Metrolyrics in order to increase the brand awareness of both. This strategy must include all aspects of branding including brand colours, logos, values and the more complex aspects such as the corporate website and social networking strategies. Metroleap should continue to partner with strong brands to increase its overall brand value and awareness.

One of the most valuable means to increase overall brand awareness for Metrolyrics, and in turn Metroleap is to ensure that users have a strong and positive brand experience when navigating through Metrolyrics and the Metroleap Corporate website. Design elements and user interface needs to be seamless and userfriendly to ensure a positive engagement.

6.1 Market Analysis

The Lyrics space is very competitive. The top four firms receive around half the market share meaning that new entrants can break through. To emerge as one of the key players in this industry search engine optimization is imperative. Websites that are not constantly optimizing may drop out of the race and a new one may emerge.
6.2 Recommendations

MetroLeap the corporate identity behind Metrolyrics needs to have a website that showcases what it does as a company and the successes it has achieved. Therefore its corporate websites needs a complete redesigned to illustrate its accomplishments. Using a simple layout that is appealing to the eye will give MetroLeap a more polished appearance and will hopefully attract high quality business partners and advertising leads.

Integrating social networking into Metrolyrics will enable users to engage with the website and share with their experience with friends. Through the use of Facebook, Connect and Twitter users will be able to show their friends exactly what they are doing on Metrolyrics whether it be rating a song, or submitting new lyrics. This will help to establish a bond between each user and Metrolyrics. If Metrolyrics could convince each one of its users to invite one friend to start using Metrolyrics its traffic would double to 64 million unique users monthly. Each user on Metrolyrics has a network much larger than one friend and Metrolyrics needs to tap into this. Small tweaks throughout the website that makes it easier to navigate and share information can substantially increase traffic by engaging users to expose their friends to what they do on Metrolyrics.

6.3 Branding and Loyalty

Increasing brand loyalty will ensure that users return directly to Metrolyrics rather than go through Google. Once users begin to share news, lyrics and items with their friends through social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter, Metrolyrics will be able to increase overall brand awareness. Metrolyrics’ really needs to understand how it can engage its audience to ensure that they return and remember Metrolyrics as more than just a lyrics website.
6.4 Metroleap Vs Metrolyrics

Metroleap needs to analyze Metrolyric’s brand strategy and should put more attention into this asset and brand it accordingly. Focusing on branding Metroleap is important but in the end, people will remember the name Metrolyrics rather than the company that created it. If they can commit a few extra resources to help promote the Metroleap brand as well this could be beneficial in the long run as the umbrella brand can increase overall awareness. This can be done through advertising and successful partnerships.
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