

Rebuilding Brand Awareness during Early-Stage B2B Rebranding: A Case Study of Formexa in the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector

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ABSTRACT: In business-to-business manufacturing, brand awareness plays a vital role in supporting long-term relationship and strategic positioning. This Study investigates how brand communication strategy influences client brand awareness during the early stage if a rebranding process. The case focuses on Formexa, a precision manufacturing company in Indonesia that rebranded from its former identity, Altro, in mid-2024. Despite internal alignment on the new brand direction, external findings revealed a decline in retained clients and weak awareness among long-standing clients in the pharmaceutical sector. Using a qualitative single case study design, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with internal stakeholders and clients from pharmaceutical firms such as PT PHMR, PT OTP, and PT IFN. Thematic analysis revealed that communication during the transition lacked consistency, failed to engage client in the early stage of the buyer journey, and relied heavily on informal channels such as exhibitions or verbal updates by sales teams. These gaps led to limited brand recognition and minimal brand recall, particularly among key retained clients. The study concludes that structured and consistent communication, delivered across multiple touchpoints, is essential to rebuild awareness and retain brand trust in post-rebranding B2B environments. Thus, research contributes to the B2B branding literature by highlighting how communication strategy acts as a key determinant of awareness during identity transformation in manufacturing firm.

KEYWORDS: Brand Awareness, Brand Communication Strategy, B2B Marketing, Case Study, Pharmaceutical Manufacturing, Rebranding.

INTRODUCTION

Brand awareness is a foundational element in business to business (B2B) marketing that supports client trust, facilitates decision-making, and enables long-term commercial relationships. While awareness has long been emphasized in business to consumer (B2C) contexts, it is increasingly recognized as critical in B2B markets, particularly during times of brand transition such as rebranding. In industrial sectors where clients rely on credibility, technical consistency and historical performance a lapse in awareness during rebranding may disrupt long-standing relationships and hinder marketing repositioning.

The pharmaceutical manufacturing industry in Indonesia has expanded significantly over the past decade, driven by the implementation of the national health insurance program (Jaminan Kesehatan Nasional) and growing domestic demand for high-quality, cost-effective medical products. Alongside this growth, many manufacturing firms are reevaluating their branding strategies to increase competitiveness, enter new markets, and align with global manufacturing standards. One such firm is Formexa, a precision manufacturing company formerly known as Altro, which initiated a full-scale rebranding process in the third quarter of 2024.

The rebranding of Formexa was intended to signal a strategic shift beyond pharmaceutical tooling, expanding into broader manufacturing solutions and sectors such as automotive and consumer goods. The transition included a new name, visual identity, brand mission, and broader service portfolio. However, early indicators suggest that this transformation was not clearly communicated to key clients segments. Internal reports and external interviews revealed that while the number of newly acquired clients had increased in the months following the rebranding, the number of retained clients had steadily declined. This indicates that rebranding efforts may have failed to reinforces brand awareness among retained clients, particularly those in the pharmaceutical sector who had long standing familiarity with the Altro brand.

Qualitative interviews with procurement and production personnel from companies such as PT PHMR, PT OTP, and PT IFN revealed that awareness of the Formexa brand was often fragmented or delayed. Many respondents reported learning about the rebranding not through official channels, but rather through passive means, such as changes in packaging, conversations with sales staff, or mentions



at industry exhibitions. This absence of consistent and proactive communication reduces the perceived clarity of the transition and, in some cases, led to confusion over the company's identity, reliability, and product continuity.

In B2B environments, brand awareness is not merely about recognition, it is also about familiarity, relevance and sustained credibility. Failure to effectively communicate a rebrand may result in uncertainty, eroded trust, and clients attrition, even when product quality and service remain unchanged. The case of Formexa illustrates a common challenge in B2B rebranding: translating internal change into externally recognized value. While internal teams might share a new identity, clients may not automatically transfer their trust to a new brand name until supported by consistent communication and clear communication.

Based on this background, the present study aims to examine how brand communication strategy, defined by message consistency, channel selection, and timing, influenced brand awareness during the early stage of B2B rebranding. This study intends to provide empirical insight on the relevance of organized communication in maintaining clients awareness and trust during strategic brand transitions in manufacturing industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Brand Awareness in B2B Contexts

Brand awareness to the degree to which clients recognize or recall a brand, either through visual elements, verbal identifiers, or associative meaning [1]. In the business to business (B2B) context, brand awareness has strategic relevance to influence, since it affects trust, purchase consideration, and relationship continuity. Unlike in business to consumer situation, where awareness may result from broad market exposure and emotional branding, B2B awareness is strong related to reliability, functional value and historical performance.[2]

Aaker's Brand Awareness pyramid divides awareness into four phases: unawareness, brand recognition, brand recall, top of mind awareness.[1] In B2B context, clients often progress through these stages based on accumulated trust and consistent performance, rather than mass media exposure. This makes awareness more sensitive in times of change and slower to grow. During a rebranding process, particularly in trust-based industries such as pharmaceutical manufacturing, loss of awareness may result in client uncertainty or disengagement.

Roy and Sarkar (2015), emphasize that rebranding stage, presents a significant risk if awareness continuity is not carefully managed. In such cases, clients may fail to associate the new brand with the capabilities or legacy of the previous one, Altero brand.[3] This gap might can lead to identity dissonance and weakened loyalty. Therefore, awareness should be regarded as a strategic link between past identity and future positioning as well as a result of an outcome of communication efforts.

B. Brand Communication Strategy

Brand communication strategy is defined as the structured and coordinated effort to deliver a brand's message, identity, and value to internal and external audiences [2]. In B2B context, this strategy becomes important things during rebranding phase, as retained clients may need reassurance that changes in branding do not affect quality, service, or credibility. According to Homburg et al. (2010) brand awareness in industrial markets is significantly influenced by communication strategies that emphasize both technical performance and relational value[4].

Successful rebranding requires more than simply announcing a new name or updating a logo. Romaniuk and Sharp (2004) argue that message consistency and frequency are critical drivers of brand salience and recall [5]. In B2B context, inconsistent or limited communication can lead to fragmented awareness and reduced brand confidence—especially in settings where purchasing decisions involve multiple stakeholders. These gaps often fail to meet the expectations of long-term clients who are familiar with the legacy brand.

Gajanová (2021) reinforces this view through the B2B adaptation of the See–Think–Do–Care buyer journey [6]. In this framework, brand communication should begin well before the point of purchase, starting at the “See” stage to build awareness and recognition. If communication only begins during the “Do” stage, when transactions occur, it is too late to shape brand perceptions. In the case of rebranding, early-stage communication becomes critical to preparing clients for the transition and reducing friction in the awareness-building process. To visually contextualize this framework, Figure 1 presents a simplified representation of the See–Think–Do–Care model adapted for B2B communication. It illustrates how different types of marketing content align with each phase of the buyer journey—from awareness generation through retention.

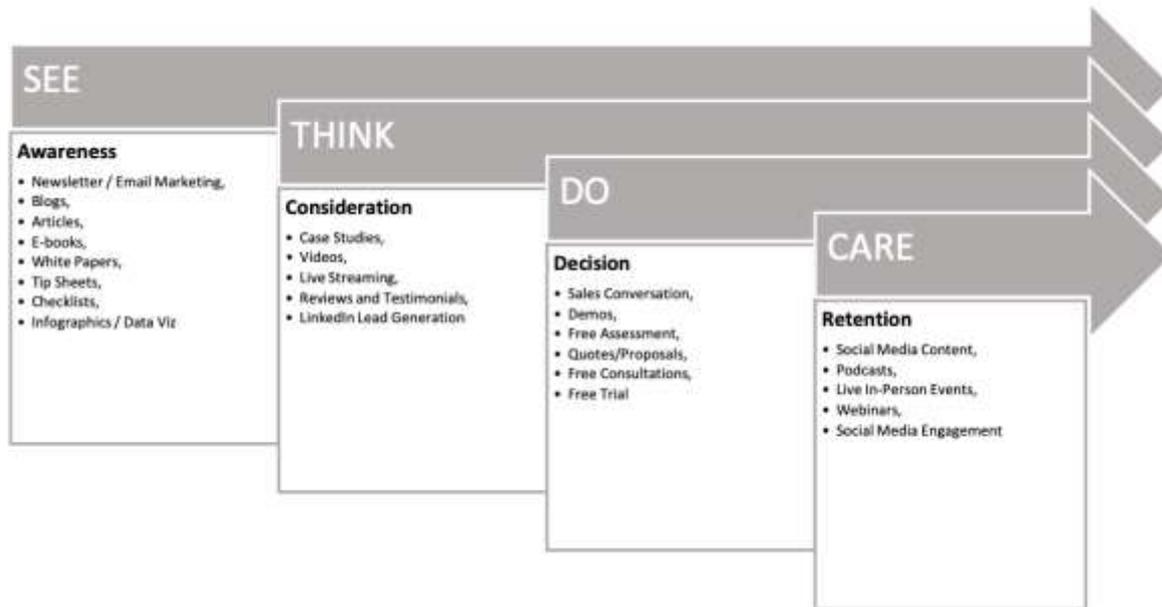


Figure 1. B2B Clients Journey Framework: See-Think-Do-Care Model

In the context of the Formexa, this model helps explain why the company’s communication fell short during the “See” and “Think” stages. As clients reported first learning about the rebrand during transactional interactions, such as packaging or quotations documents, it suggests that communication efforts were concentrated in the “Do” stage, too late to shape brand salience. This reinforces the importance of developing multi-stage messaging strategies that align with the B2B buyer journey and gradually build trust across each phase.

This study positions Brand Communication Strategy as the central independent variable (X1), focusing on its role in shaping Brand Awareness (Y) during the early phase of B2B rebranding. Under a new identity, communication becomes even more important since it is the main means of converting internal brand change into external market understanding and helps to prevent client loss and rebuild recognition under a new identity.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative descriptive single case study approach to explore how brand communication strategy influences brand awareness during the early stage of rebranding in a B2B manufacturing context. The selected case is Formexa, an Indonesian precision manufacturing company that rebranded from its legacy identity, Altro, in mid-2024. The qualitative approach is considered appropriate to explore stakeholder perceptions, communication dynamics, and the contextual challenges in awareness formation during rebranding phases [7].

A. Data Collection

Data were collected using two main methods:

- Semi-structured interviews with both internal and external stakeholders; and
- Document analysis of internal communication material, marketing brochures, and brand manuals issued during the rebranding period.

The internal participants included individuals directly involved in planning and executing the rebranding process, such as the marketing manager, sales manager, and brand strategist. External participants were procurement and production staff from several pharmaceutical companies with long-standing business relationships with the company. To maintain confidentiality, all names and organization have been anonymized. For example, pseudonyms such as PT PHMR, PT OTP and PT IFN are used to refer to client firms.



B. Sampling Strategy

This study employed purposive and criterion-based sampling to ensure the selection of participants with relevant experience and direct involvement in the rebranding process. Internal stakeholders were selected based on their strategic involvement in brand related decisions across departments such as marketing, sales, and quality control. Their insights were essential in understanding how the rebranding was planned, communicated, and perceived internally.

Two main criteria guided the selection of external stakeholder: (1) retained customers who had direct interacted with the business before the rebranding and (2) new clients who started their interaction following the change of direction. This allowed the study to evaluate, within the pharmaceutical industry, brand awareness development between legacy and new clients group within the pharmaceutical sector.

Two main criteria guided the selection of external respondents from pharmaceutical manufacturing companies: a combination of newly acquired clients starting their involvement after the rebranding or retained clients who had interacted with the company before rebrand. Their inclusion provided a comparative view of how the rebranding affected brand awareness across different clients' segments. By applying these criteria, the study aimed to capture perspectives that were most relevant to evaluating the effectiveness of the brand communication strategy during the early stage of rebranding.

Data were analysed using thematic analysis, following the six step process stated by Braund and Clarke [8]. This method was selected for its flexibility and suitability in identifying patterns within qualitative data, particularly in exploring perceptions and communication effectiveness and consistency of messaging, and the development of brand awareness during the early stage process of rebranding. Continually, the themes develop naturally while still based in the research goals. To enhance the credibility and depth of the findings, initial themes were cross validated through internal document analysis, including reports and other communication materials. This triangulation helped ensure the consistency, reliability, and contextual relevance of the identified themes. In addition to interview data for supporting documents data, were analysed to verify the statements made by participants.

By allowing cross-validation between various types of data, this triangulation approach not only increased the findings' credibility but also strengthened the interpretive rigour. The study was able to create a more comprehensive and trustworthy understanding of how brand communication impacted awareness during the rebranding phase by fusing firsthand accounts with recorded data[9].

FINDINGS

The key findings from the interviews and document analysis are presented in this section, focussing on the communication-related challenges that affected brand awareness during Formexa's initial rebranding. Four significant themes came out: (A) communication inconsistency, (B) delayed awareness among retained clients, (C) lack of early-stage engagement in the buyer journey, and (D) gaps in messaging strategy and identity reinforcement. Each is discussed below.

A. Communication Inconsistency across Channels

Several clients reported that they first became aware of the new Formexa brand identity through informal or passive means, rather than structured communication. For example, Dky, a procurement manager at PT PHMR, shared

"We received no formal notification about the rebranding. It just appeared on the box one day."

Similarly, Mnt from PT IFN stated that her awareness of the rebranding began only after seeing the brand at a trade exhibition. These accounts suggest that Formexa relied heavily on interpersonal interactions and incidental exposure—such as packaging, verbal updates, or event booths—rather than executing a coordinated communication campaign.

From an internal perspective, the marketing team confirmed that communication efforts were embedded into routine activities such as sales visits, brochure distribution, and post-event follow-ups, rather than being rolled out through a formalized brand announcement. This fragmented approach limited reach and clarity, leading to varied levels of recognition and understanding among existing clients.

B. Delayed awareness among retained clients

Thematic coding revealed that retained clients—those who had existing relationships with Altro—experienced greater confusion and delay in recognizing Formexa as the same entity. In contrast, new clients who were onboarded after the rebranding tended to show higher recall, having been introduced to the new identity from the outset. One such example came from PT OTP. Lky, a procurement officer, explained:



“Honestly, we didn’t realize Formexa and Altro were the same company until one of our engineers asked about a past invoice.” This gap indicates a failure to reinforce continuity between the old and new brand. Instead of proactively guiding clients through the transition, Formexa introduced a new identity without clearly linking it to the legacy brand they already trusted. As a result, brand recall was weakened and familiarity disrupted—especially among core accounts that had long-term exposure to the Altro name.

C. Lack of Early Engagement in the Buyer Journey

Across multiple interviews, it was evident that most clients only became aware of the new brand during or after the point of transaction, typically during quotation discussions, packaging receipt, or verbal clarification from sales staff. This timing corresponds to the “Do” stage in the buyer journey, rather than the earlier “See” or “Think” stages where brand perceptions are formed.

This reactive form of communication limited the brand’s ability to shape pre-purchase consideration. In B2B settings, where trust and technical credibility are built long before decisions are made, the absence of early-stage communication reduced Formexa’s visibility and weakened its perceived legitimacy as a familiar partner.

D. Misalignment in Messaging Strategy and Identity Reinforcement

Document analysis confirmed that communication materials across departments were inconsistent. While brochures and trade booth materials featured the Formexa name and updated branding, many internal forms—such as quality control documents and order confirmations, still used the Altro name. This dual usage contributed to mixed signals and client uncertainty about the legitimacy and continuity of the brand.

Internal interviews revealed that although updated branding assets had been produced by the marketing division, they were not uniformly distributed or adopted across all departments. The lack of shared guidelines and implementation control further diluted the brand transition, giving the impression that the rebranding was partial or superficial rather than strategic and complete.

Table I. Brand Awareness Summary from Formexa Client Interviews

Company (Pseudonym)	Client Type	Initial Brand Encounter	Key Concern
PT PHMR	Retained	Packaging	No formal notification
PT OTP	Retained	Verbal Clarification	Failed to connect with Altro
PT IFN	Retained	Trade exhibition booth	Still referred to as Altro

These results show that retained customers often experienced the rebranding in reacting and informal ways, leading to fragmented awareness and weakened brand recall. Particularly in keeping continuity with Formexa's long-standing identity and preserving client trust, the lack of organized, consistent, early-stage communication seriously compromised the efficacy of Formexa's rebranding efforts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how brand communication strategy can impact to the brand awareness effect during the early stage of a B2B rebranding process. Through a single case study of Formexa, an Indonesian precision manufacturing firm rebranded from Altro, the research identified communication challenges that hindered awareness formation among long-standing pharmaceutical clients.

The findings reveal that inconsistent messaging, informal delivery channels, and the absence of early-stage engagement significantly limited brand recognition and recall. While new clients adapted to the Formexa identity with relative ease, retained clients continued to associate the company with its legacy brand, resulting in awareness fragmentation and weakened trust. These patterns underscore the critical role of structured, multi-channel communication in preserving brand continuity and client’s confidence during brand transitions.

From a managerial perspective, rebranding in B2B settings must be supported by a proactive communication framework that begins well before transactional engagement. This includes clear messaging across buyer journey stages, consistent visual and verbal identity, and reinforcement through digital and relational touchpoints. Failure to do so may lead to brand confusion, reduced loyalty, and client’s attrition.



The study is limited by its single case design and qualitative scope, which restricts generalizability. Future research could explore comparative case studies or employ mixed-method approaches to further examine communication strategy effectiveness in B2B rebranding across different sectors.

Nonetheless, this study contributes to the B2B branding literature by highlighting how communication strategy directly shapes brand awareness in the early phases of rebranding. It offers practical insights for industrial firms seeking to navigate identity transformation without compromising client relationships. These insights could be expanded in future studies by examining communication challenges in other trust-sensitive sectors, especially where brand consistency plays a critical role in regulatory or safety-related contexts.

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Cite this Article: Ayundari, N.K. (2025). Rebuilding Brand Awareness during Early-Stage B2B Rebranding: A Case Study of Formexa in the Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Sector. International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 8(5), pp. 2386-2391. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V8-i5-49>