

Rebranding as a Growth Strategy in Digital Platforms: A Study of Urban Company and Its Gig-Based Business Model

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Abstract:

This paper examines rebranding as a growth strategy in digital platform businesses through the case of Urban Company, formerly Urban Clap, with a specific focus on how brand transformation interacts with platform scaling, category expansion, worker enablement, and investor positioning. Urban Company rebranded from Urban Clap in January 2020 to build a more globally acceptable umbrella identity and to support its ambition of becoming a horizontal gig marketplace across multiple service categories. Using secondary data, this study synthesizes company disclosures, investor-facing documents, media reports, and peer-reviewed research on rebranding, digital platforms, and gig work. The analysis finds that Urban Company's rebranding was not merely cosmetic; it aligned with a broader strategic shift toward ecosystem building, sub-brand development, service standardization, partner professionalization, and eventual public-market readiness. Financial and operating indicators show that the company's consolidated revenue reached INR 827 crore in FY24 and INR 1,261 crore in FY25, while profitability improved sharply, with net profit reported at INR 239.76 crore in FY25. The study argues that, in digital platform contexts, rebranding can function as a growth-enabling strategic architecture rather than a communication exercise alone. The paper contributes a platform-specific perspective to rebranding scholarship by connecting brand evolution with gig-based governance, trust creation, and diversification.

Keywords: Rebranding, Gig marketplace, Digital platforms, Growth, Evolution.

Introduction

Rebranding has traditionally been studied in the context of corporate renewal, mergers, repositioning, crisis response, and image modernization. Recent literature reviews show that rebranding research has expanded, yet much of it still concentrates on conventional firms, legacy brands, and broad consumer response patterns rather than platform-mediated service businesses. This creates a useful research gap because digital platforms operate through multi-sided interactions among customers, service providers, technology systems, and investors, which makes the logic of rebranding more structurally complex than in single-product firms.

Urban Company presents a strong case for examining this gap. In January 2020, UrbanClap officially changed its name to Urban Company, with co-founder Abhiraj Bhal stating that the new brand was intended to support universal appeal and a global footprint across categories including beauty, wellness,

and home repairs. The rebranding also signalled an evolution from a category-linked consumer app identity toward a broader company-level platform architecture that could support multiple services, geographies, and sub-brands.

The strategic significance of the case increased further as the firm moved toward stronger governance and investor visibility. Urban Company filed its draft red herring prospectus with SEBI in April 2025 for an IPO of INR 1,900 crore. Around the same period, the company reported stronger financial performance, improving profitability, and new growth levers such as Native products and worker-support initiatives, which make it possible to analyse whether rebranding formed part of a larger growth strategy rather than an isolated identity change.

Literature Review

Muzellec and Lambkin argued that corporate rebranding is often driven by structural change, strategic refocusing, or external pressures, and they positioned rebranding as a process that can reshape stakeholder meaning rather than merely visual identity. Their work remains foundational because it treats rebranding as a strategic response to changed organizational realities. This perspective is directly relevant to digital platforms that expand into new categories and audiences. Merrilees and Miller proposed that successful corporate rebranding requires continuity between the old and new brand, integration with internal culture, and credible delivery of the revised promise. Their framework is especially useful for platform firms because customers and workers both experience the brand through service consistency, not only through communication. For a gig platform, failure to align internal systems with external promise can weaken trust on both sides of the marketplace. Stuart and Muzellec emphasized that rebranding carries both opportunity and risk because it can refresh market meaning while also disrupting established associations. This tension is visible in platform businesses where a familiar consumer-facing identity may support recall, yet constrain category expansion. Rebranding therefore becomes valuable when the old name limits future strategic scope. Contemporary literature reviews show that rebranding scholarship has grown but remains fragmented across consumer behaviour, corporate strategy, and communication perspectives. Available research also indicates increasing interest in authenticity, stakeholder perception, and emerging market settings, but there is still limited explicit treatment of digital multi-sided platforms and gig-mediated service brands. Research on digital platforms helps explain why this gap matters. Platform businesses rely on network effects, intermediation trust, standard-setting, and governance mechanisms that differ from traditional firms. In gig work settings, brand reputation influences not just purchase intention but also partner onboarding, service acceptance, compliance, and perceived fairness. A 2024 study on gig women workers in urban India noted that Urban Company had more than 52,000 workers across Indian cities, and that 36 percent of them were women, highlighting the workforce significance of the platform model. Broader gig economy research in urban India also points to recurring concerns around income stability, welfare, and sustainability, suggesting that platform branding is inseparable from labour legitimacy. A case-based academic study titled *Urban Company: The Road from Local to Global* documented the company's progression and explicitly linked the 2020 rebranding to a wider growth vision. However, that study did not centre rebranding as a growth strategy in itself, nor did it connect the brand shift to later financial outcomes, sub-brand architecture, and IPO-stage positioning. The present paper addresses that gap by integrating rebranding literature with platform-growth and gig-economy scholarship.

Research Gap

The literature reveals three clear gaps. First, most rebranding studies do not focus on digital service platforms whose brand value depends simultaneously on customer trust, worker participation, technological reliability, and investor confidence. Second, Indian platform businesses are often discussed in entrepreneurship or gig-economy terms, but not through a dedicated rebranding-growth lens. Third, existing discussions of Urban Company often describe its business evolution or financial performance without systematically analysing how the brand transition from UrbanClap to Urban Company supported platform broadening, category diversification, and market legitimacy.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the strategic rationale behind Urban Company's rebranding from UrbanClap to Urban Company.
2. To analyse whether the rebranding aligned with measurable business growth in revenues, operating scale, category expansion, and investor positioning.
3. To assess how the rebranding supported trust formation and professionalization within Urban Company's gig-based business model.
4. To develop a platform-specific understanding of rebranding as a growth strategy in digital marketplaces.

Hypotheses

H1: Urban Company's rebranding was positively associated with strategic growth in business scope, category breadth, and platform legitimacy.

H2: Urban Company's rebranding contributed to stronger trust architecture by aligning brand identity with service standardization and partner enablement.

H3: In gig-based digital platforms, rebranding functions as a growth strategy when it is integrated with operating model changes rather than limited to symbolic identity change.

Theoretical Framework

This study combines corporate rebranding theory with platform strategy logic and stakeholder theory. From corporate rebranding theory, the paper adopts the idea that rebranding is a strategic response to organizational evolution, especially when the prior brand no longer captures the scope or future direction of the firm. From platform strategy, the paper uses the proposition that growth in digital marketplaces depends on trust, standardization, network orchestration, and category scalability. From stakeholder theory, the study recognizes that Urban Company's brand must work simultaneously for customers, service partners, regulators, and investors.

Based on this integrated framework, the study treats rebranding as an independent strategic intervention and growth outcomes as dependent variables reflected in revenue growth, profitability trajectory, expansion of offerings, and improved legitimacy in public-market and labour-market contexts. The mechanism linking the two is brand architecture: a broader name, clearer umbrella identity, and standardized promise can reduce category constraints, improve stakeholder recognition, and support ecosystem expansion.

Research Methodology

This paper uses a qualitative-descriptive case study design based entirely on secondary data. Secondary data were collected from Urban Company's investor relations materials, annual business summaries, IPO-related disclosures, established news reports, and academic research articles on rebranding, digital platforms, and gig work. The use of secondary data is appropriate because the study seeks to interpret an already observable strategic transition over time.

The study relies on document analysis and pattern matching. First, statements explaining the rationale for the 2020 rebranding were extracted from reliable reports and company-linked materials. Second, business performance indicators from FY23 to FY25 were reviewed to identify whether the broader brand shift coincided with operational and financial scaling. Third, relevant academic and policy-oriented literature was used to interpret Urban Company's rebranding in the context of gig-platform governance and stakeholder trust.

The study is limited by the nature of secondary data. It does not directly measure consumer perception through surveys, nor does it establish strict causality between rebranding and performance outcomes. However, it offers strong analytical value by triangulating real company disclosures with independent media and scholarly literature.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

1. Strategic logic of the rebranding

The 2020 shift from UrbanClap to Urban Company was explicitly justified as a move toward a more globally acceptable and universally understandable identity. The old name had high memorability in India but was semantically linked to a narrower consumer interaction frame, while the new name could accommodate a wider horizontal marketplace model and support multiple geographies and verticals. This indicates that the rebranding solved a strategic naming constraint: it expanded symbolic space for future growth.

The Delhi Business Review case also noted that the brand shift reflected the company's ambition to become a horizontal platform with a global footprint. In rebranding theory terms, this was not a cosmetic redesign but a strategic redefinition of category boundaries. The brand architecture was adjusted to fit the company Urban Company wanted to become, rather than the service app UrbanClap had originally been.

2. Rebranding and business growth indicators

Urban Company's performance trajectory after the rebranding suggests that the broader identity was accompanied by substantial organizational scaling. The company's annual business summary reported consolidated revenue of INR 637 crore in FY23 and INR 827 crore in FY24, representing 30 percent year-on-year growth in FY24. Financial data available through market reporting show revenue rising further to INR 1,261 crore in FY25.

Profitability also improved sharply over time. Profit before tax moved from a loss of INR 312.44 crore in FY23 to a loss of INR 92.73 crore in FY24 and then to a profit before tax of INR 28.55 crore in FY25. Net profit for FY25 was reported at INR 239.76 crore, with one report noting that the turnaround was aided by deferred tax credit recognition along with stronger operating efficiency. These figures do not

prove that rebranding alone caused growth, but they support the interpretation that the new brand identity formed part of a scalable growth model that ultimately aligned with stronger business outcomes.

3. Expansion beyond core services

A major sign that the rebranding supported growth strategy is the company's widening business scope. Urban Company's FY24 summary highlighted investments in service quality, technology, partner enablement, and the launch of Native RO water purifier devices. Later reporting showed Native revenue growing 303.3 percent year on year to INR 116 crore in FY25. This matters because a broader corporate identity such as "Urban Company" is more capable than "UrbanClap" of accommodating consumer products, home infrastructure solutions, and sub-brands under a single platform umbrella.

The same strategic pattern appears in later initiatives such as Revamp, a home makeovers offering launched under the company umbrella. Although these developments occurred after the initial rebranding, they illustrate the long-term value of adopting a more extensible brand identity. The rebrand therefore appears to have functioned as an enabling platform for adjacent-category growth.

4. Trust, partner enablement, and the gig model

In gig-based businesses, a brand must reassure customers about reliability while also attracting and retaining service partners. Urban Company's FY24 summary emphasized partner training, claims disbursement, and formal-credit facilitation, including INR 37.2 crore worth of loans to service partners through third-party NBFCs in FY24. These initiatives show that the firm's growth model depended on institutionalizing worker support and service quality, not just expanding demand.

The significance of this is reinforced by gig-work research. A 2024 study reported that Urban Company had more than 52,000 workers across Indian cities and that women represented 36 percent of them. Broader gig-economy scholarship has identified opportunities such as flexible income and market access, but also persistent challenges related to security and sustainability. In this context, the Urban Company brand can be interpreted as a trust mechanism that seeks to professionalize gig work and convert fragmented informal service labour into a more standardized marketplace offering.

5. Rebranding and IPO-stage legitimacy

By 2025, Urban Company had filed a DRHP with SEBI for a proposed INR 1,900 crore IPO. IPO-stage firms require not only growth but also narrative clarity for investors. The umbrella identity "Urban Company" communicates organizational seriousness, multi-category potential, and governance maturity more effectively than a narrower app-era name. This interpretation is strengthened by investor-facing disclosures that frame the company around financial transparency, growth strategy, and long-term value creation.

The company's FY25 operating scale also supports this legitimacy narrative. One 2025 report stated that Urban Company had 6.8 million annual transacting customers and 47,888 average monthly active service partners in FY25, with average monthly earnings of INR 26,407 for those partners after platform fees, taxes, and related costs. Such figures suggest that the company's brand has evolved from a consumer convenience label into an institutional marker for a large two-sided service platform.

Discussion

The findings support the view that rebranding in digital platforms can act as strategic infrastructure for growth. Urban Company's case shows that rebranding can broaden category meaning, support ecosystem extensibility, and strengthen institutional legitimacy when it is aligned with service standardization, partner development, and investor communication. This extends mainstream rebranding literature by

showing that, in multi-sided platforms, the brand does not only shape customer perception; it organizes the relationship between technology, labour, operations, and capital.

The case also suggests that successful platform rebranding must be operationally backed. The name change would have had limited strategic value if it had not been followed by measurable advances in training, technology, financial performance, and category expansion. Urban Company therefore demonstrates that rebranding becomes a growth strategy only when the revised identity is reinforced by a scalable business model and credible execution.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Urban Company's rebranding from UrbanClap to Urban Company was a strategically meaningful move that supported the firm's transition from a service app into a broader gig-based digital platform. Authentic secondary evidence shows that the rebranding aligned with horizontal expansion, stronger stakeholder legitimacy, new product and service adjacencies, and a more mature investor narrative. The company's improving revenue and profitability trajectory, combined with its partner-enablement measures and category diversification, indicate that the rebranding formed part of a deeper growth architecture rather than a surface-level communication exercise.

For scholarship, the paper contributes a more contemporary and original angle by locating rebranding within digital platform governance and gig-economy scaling. For practice, it suggests that platform firms should treat rebranding as effective only when it is integrated with operational quality, workforce systems, and long-term brand architecture. Urban Company thus serves as a strong example of rebranding as a growth strategy in India's platform economy.

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