Marketing communications

Marketing communications (**MC**, **marcom(s)**, **marcomm(s)**) uses different marketing channels and tools in combination:[1] Marketing communication channels focuses on any way a business communicates a message to its desired market, or the market in general. A marketing communication tool can be anything from: advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, sponsorship, communication, promotion and public relations.[1]

MC are made up of the marketing mix which is made up of 4P's: Price, Promotion, Place and Product, for a business selling goods, and made up of 7P's: Price, Promotion, Place, Product, People, Physical evidence and Process, for a service based business.[2]

Background

Marketing communications[3] includes advertising, promotions, sales, branding and online promotion. The process allows the public businesses use to know or understand a brand. Successful branding involves targeting audiences who appreciate the organization's marketing program.

Advertising is a small but important part of marketing communications; the marketing communications mix is a set of tools that can be used to deliver a clear and consistent message to target audiences. It is also commonly called the promotional mix. Crosier (1990) states that all terms have the same meaning in the context of the 4ps: Product, price, place and promotion.[1] Price can send a message to the target audience. For example, comparing a $50 bag to a $10 bag, the former may be view as a luxury or more durable item.

The marketing plan identifies key opportunities and threats, set objectives and develops an action plan to achieve marketing goals. Each section of the 4P's sets its own object; for instance, the pricing objective might be to increase sales in a certain geographical market by pricing their own product or service lower than their competitors. This creates a significant change in the market because more people of the target market would aim to do business with your organization than your competitors, because pricing is one of the most significant aspects of marketing that can change the whole market positively and or negatively.

Definitions

- Communication Barriers: Communication barriers are factors that hinder the effectiveness of a marketing communication. Major communication barriers are: Noise and clutter, consumer apathy, brand parity and weak creative ideas or strategies. Noise is an unrelated sensory stimulus that distracts a consumer from the marketing message (for example, people talking nearby making it

hard to hear a radio advertisement). Clutter is the high number and concentration of advertisements presented to a consumer at any time. As attention cannot be divided, there is a limit to how much can be taken in and processed, which means that a strong marketing communication needs to stand out from the clutter and be heard above the noise. (Ang, 2014. "Principles of Integrated Marketing Communications". Page 11.)

- Consumer apathy is the tendency of a consumer to avoid marketing communications. The consumer may not be interested, or consider themselves "in the market," and as such attempt to shut out the irrelevant marketing stimuli; this is known as selective attention. Alternatively, a consumer may be "in the market," yet not be aware of the brand or products existence or prevalence. Consumers tend to purchase familiar brands, and will not be inspired to investigate alternatives. One approach marketers use to overcome apathy is to create incentives, such as competitive pricing or loyalty rewards. (Ang, 2014. "Principles of Integrated Marketing Communications". Page 11.)

- Brand parity means a brand is not significantly different from its competition. Without a distinct value proposition, consumers do not develop brand preference or associations, and instead purchase purely based on price (Ang, 2014. "Principles of Integrated Marketing Communications". Page 12). This is not ideal, as effective marketing communication increases brand equity. One important objective of marketing communications is to develop a strong, unique brand identity that allows the brand to be positioned separate from its competition.

- Marketing mix is the most important part of marketing strategy, which is "the framework to manage marketing and incorporate it within a business context[4]".

- Marketing strategy: how a business achieves their marketing objectives. The initial step to achieve a marketing strategy is to identify the market target and build up a plan that the business can implement.[4]

Communication

Communication is one important aspect of the marketing mix.[5] Marketing communication is often the largest component of communication within a company, which may be to present company values, objectives or specific products and services to investors, customers or the general public. In the 21st century, communications objectives focus on more customized messages, targeting customer groups or individuals to create high responses and greater brand interaction.[5]

As business becomes increasingly global with greater access to Internet, mobile phones and social media, new challenges exist to inform people in targeted foreign markets. Shifts in the global economy and access to new markets lead also to greater demands for product shipping and associated services. To be effective, communication strategies must converge with marketing objectives while also accounting for local languages, dialects and cultural norms.

External communications might involve market research questionnaires, office website, guarantees, company annual report and presentations for investors. Internal communication can be the marketing materials, price list, product catalogues, sales presentations and management communications. On the other hand, each market demands different types of communications. For example, the industrial market demands a more personal communication but the consumer market demands non-personal communication.[5]

There are also 4 different fundamental types of communication.

- One-to-many: this kind of communication is the most original communication. It is "generated from a single broadcast point and then available over airwaves or in mass print runs[5]". This type of communication is usually adapted to news distribution that does not specific not even interactive.

Such as in an urgent notice play over airwave from broadcast in an industry, it is helpful for the general announcement.

- Many-to-one: many-to-one is usually connected to the one-to-many communication.[5] For example, a reply button in your email box, a prepaid number bought from Spark. All the communication techniques proceeded to the public with bi-directional communication from mass communications.[5]

- One-to-one: this is the most intensive and interactive communication at a one-to-one level.[5] There are so many examples like a sales presentation; a negotiation in the market or direct delivery is base on the one-to-one communication. Most of this communication is face to face. But in the development of Internet, email and online shopping are taking place the chance to face to face of people. Which is provided the chance to sellers and buyers talk more directly. Another important is instant message 'chat' channel like Wechat and Facebook, which are becoming extremely popular in business.[5]

- Many-to-many: on the background of highly developed Internet, the many-to-many communication has been growing up such as online chat rooms, 'blogging' websites.[5] The many-to-many communication stands for the participants are able to exchange their ideas and experiences.

One-to-one is more immediate, while the many-to-may channels tend to be less urgent but with greater longevity.[5]

Psychology of communication

One of the primary goals of a marketing communication is to persuade consumers, by either changing their perception of a brand, product or service, or persuading them to purchase (or feel motivated / tempted to purchase) a product or service. The "Elaboration Likelihood Model" is used to demonstrate how persuasion occurs. When a marketing communication message is sent out, first it must be acknowledged and attended by the receiver. By giving their attention to the marketing communication, consumers will begin to process and comprehend the message. There are two routes to persuasion: Central and peripheral. Central route processing is used in high-involvement purchase decisions. These are infrequent, high-risk purchases, usually involving large amounts of money and a significant amount of time (for example, purchasing a house or car). Because these purchase decisions are high risk, a large cognitive effort is expended in order to rationally select the most logical and valuable option available. In these marketing messages, information about the product or service itself is most valuable. Peripheral route processing is employed in low involvement purchase decisions. These are frequent, low-risk purchases, generally of a low or medium cost in which choices are made more on affective (or emotion based) values rather than cognitive (or rational) values. Because of this, marketing messages will employ more storytelling and imagery, focusing on how the product or service makes one feel, and the associations it has, rather than the attributes and specifications it possesses.

Communication process

Communication can be defined as process of using, word, sound or visual cues to supply information to one or more people.[6] A communication process is defined as information that is shared with the intent that the receiver understands the message that the business intended to send.[7] The communication process was once thought of as having the source of the message, which is then encoded, put through the chosen communication channel, which is then decoded by the recipient and

then received.[8] Throughout the middle of the channel there is the potential for noise to distort the message being sent.[8] Once the receiver has the message they then give feedback to the original source, where they then find out whether the campaign has been successful or not.[8]

With the prevalent use of technology, customers are seeking out information about brands, products and businesses prior to purchase.[9] This means that there is a need for an additional channel within the communication process, so it is a more accurate representation of the current business environment. Businesses are now having to take into consideration that both opinion leaders and opinion formers who have a great influence over today's society and their perceptions. So they have to be included into the communication process before the recipient of the message receives it.[10]
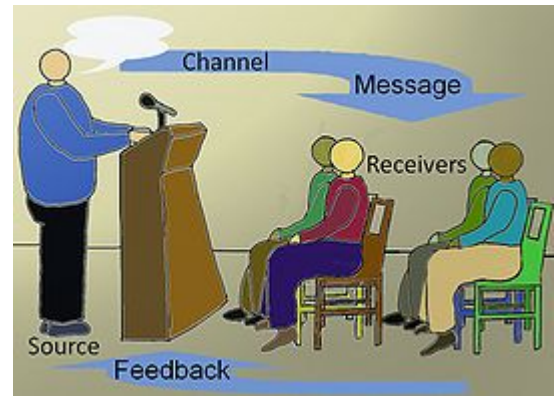
Transactional Model of Communication

This model is more effective when there is common ground between the senders and receivers so they can communicate effectively. Choosing the appropriate source helps develop the message and appeal to the targeted audience. The source will be more effective if they are relatable to the target audience. This realm of understanding is represented by the overlapping circles. The more knowledge the source has about who they are targeting, the better they can understand how the receiver may interpret or react to the message.[11]

The components of the transactional model are:

- **Source:** The source is an individual or organization that has information to share. The source (or sender) creates and sends the information to another person or group of people. The source maybe an individual (e.g. a sales person or spokesperson) or a non-personal identity (e.g. a corporation or organization). The communication process begins with the source, marketers must carefully choose a source as it affects how the message will be perceived by the target audience.[11]

- **Encoding:** This is transposing the intended meaning of the message with words, symbols or pictures to show a message. Encoding is the development of the message that contains the information the source hopes to convey. It is putting together the thoughts, ideas and information into a symbolic form that can be transmitted and understood by the receiver.[11] Encoding the message is the second step in the communication process. The encoding process leads to development of a message that contains the information or meaning the source hopes to convey. Encoding is extremely important, it is a brain activity that takes effect when the receiver makes sense of a brand message or idea used to convey meaning: words, colour, pictures, signs, symbols or even music. The message may be verbal or nonverbal, oral or written, or symbolic (e.g. the sound of a brass band being redolent of simpler times or heritage). or it can often include 'cues' such as the Nike 'swoosh' which indicates success. Often things can get in the way of the "correct" encoding and the interpretation of the intended message (decoding). There are methods the sender can use to make sure the receiver interprets the message correctly, these methods include; channels, consumer insights, having similarities with the receiver and frame of reference (e.g. age, values, culture).[8] Finally, it is extremely important for the sender to get to know its receiver and this is accomplished through research for targeting strategy. These concepts help craft the intended message in the minds of the consumer.

- **Message**: The message comes from the encoding process, it is the content, meaning or information the sources hopes to convey. The message can be in many forms such as verbal, non-verbal, oral, written or symbolic.[11]

- **Channel**: The channel is the method by which the communication travels from the source or sender to the receiver.[8] There are two types of channels, personal and non-personal. Personal channels of communication are direct and target individual groups. Personal communication channels are connected with two or more persons who communicate directly with each other face-to-face, person-to-person through telephone, email or fax. Social channels also fall under the category of personal communications. Friends, neighbors, associates, co-workers, or family members are all means of social channels.[3] Carrying a message without interpersonal contact between sender and receiver is known as non-personal channels of communication. Mass media or mass communications are examples of non-personal channels, since the message is sent to many individuals at one time. Non-personal channels of communication are made up out of two main types, the first being print. Print media includes newspapers, magazines, direct mail, and billboards. The second type is broadcast; broadcast media includes radio and television.[12]

- **Decoding:** The receiver unravels the symbols to interpret what is being communicated. Transforming the sender's message back into thought. This is influenced greatly by the receiver's frame of reference (or realm of understanding) which involves their values, attitudes and state of mind when receiving the message. For the model to be effective the decoding by the receiver would match the encoding by the source, meaning they correctly understand the message that was sent.[11] Decoding is the process of interpreting messages and relies on correct encoding and the ability of the receiver to deconstruct transmitted meaning. Decoding occurs when the message reaches one or more of the receiver's senses. Consumers both hear and see television ads, others consumers handle (touch) and read (see) an advertising offer (e.g. coupon). According to Belch & Belch this process is deeply influenced by the receiver's frame of reference or field of experience, which refers to the experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and values he or she brings to the communication situation.[8] For effective communication to occur, the message decoding process of the receiver must match the encoding of the sender. Over this entire means the receiver comprehends and correctly translates what the source is trying to communicate. Effective communication is more likely to emerge when there is some common ground between the two parties. The more familiarity the sender has about the receivers, the better the sender can understand their needs, commiserate with them, and over all communicate more effectively.

- **Receiver**: The individual (s) that the source shares thoughts or information with. The receiver hears, sees or reads the message and decodes it.

- **Noise:** Noise is any external interference during this communication process. Any external factors that creates unplanned distortion. This distortion can make it difficult for the receiver to interpret or assign meaning to a message as it was intended by the source. Examples of noise in the encoding of the message could be lack of radio or television signal. Noise can also occur when the sender and receivers fields of experience do not overlap, if there is no common ground between them, which may result in a misunderstanding in the meaning of the message.[11] Throughout the communication process, the message is subject to irrelevant factors that can distort or interfere with its reception. Noise is the physical or Psychological fundamentals either from inside or outside of the process of communication. Noise acts as a barrier as it makes the message less accurate, less productive and unclear. It may even prevent the message from ever reaching the receiver. Physical noise is often triggered by badly made images or messages (e.g. poor print quality) or elements of distraction (e.g. consumer scrolling through TV advertisements). Psychological noise could be mixed meanings, poor credibility of source or the insignificance of the message to the consumer requirements. Not having a connection with the receiver and lacking in common ground usually cause this. This may result in unsuitable encoding of the message such as; using a sign, symbol, or word that is unfamiliar or has different meaning to the

receiver (e.g. sending a message in foreign language that is not understood by the receiver). The more common ground there is between the sender and the receiver, the less likely it is for noise and barriers to interrupt a message.[8]

- **Response/Feedback**: The receiver's reaction to the message provides feedback to the sender. This is the set of reactions after seeing, hearing or reading the message. The receiver's response is the feedback and lets the sender know how the message was decoded and received. A form of feedback in an interpersonal selling situation could be questions, comments or any reactions (such as expressions) about the message. In mass media an indication of how the marketing communications were perceived is the amount of sales after the message has been sent. There are many different ways such as attitude change, store visits and inquires that provide feedback in mass media. Feedback can help to improve the communication process and the success of future messages.[11] The receiver's particular type of reactions after seeing, hearing, or reading a message is known as a response. Receivers' responses can range from either non noticeable actions or noticeable actions. Non noticeable responses can be storing their information in memory and noticeable responses are immediate action such as dialing the commercials number to order a product advertised on television. One of the main goals of communication is receiving appropriate receiver responses, feedback closes the loop in the communications flow and lets the sender monitor how the intended message is being decoded and received. To achieve this goal one can ask indirectly or directly for the response, or assist the receiver in giving the response.[3] Receiving feed back can be more difficult for parties that advertise through the channels of mass media, because advertisers are not in direct contact with their customers so other methods must be obtained to determine how their messages have been received. While the critical form of feedback happens through sales, it is often hard to show a direct relationship between advertising and purchase behavior. So marketers; visit stores, check coupon redemption, use reply cards and listen to customer inquiries to achieve feedback. Once a significant amount of feedback/response study has been gathered advertisers would then have enough information to determine reasons for success or failure in the communication process and from there they can make appropriate adjustments.

Opinion leaders and opinion formers

Opinion leaders are consumers who have large influence over the purchasing behaviour of other consumers.[13] These can be peers or celebrities, and often represent a "desired state" in the eye of the influenced consumer. By following the consumption patterns of opinion leaders, consumers aspire to achieve a similar status or lifestyle, and project a similar image. Because of this, opinion leaders are powerful factors in marketing communications. Having opinion leaders endorse a brand can increase brand awareness and sales. Due to this, large companies pay highly influential celebrities to endorse their products.

You can receive the opinion leaders' thoughts or feeling towards the product/service through paid advertising, social media, blogs, or any other form of written media.[14] These can be direct, or indirect influences.

Opinion Formers are consumers who are regarded by their peers as being highly knowledgeable and trustworthy.[15] They are considered experts in selecting the highest quality products due to their extensive knowledge, and as such are able to influence the purchasing behaviour of other consumers despite lacking the celebrity status of an opinion leader. They have specialized knowledge about the area which corresponds with the product, service or business. For example, this could be a doctor sponsoring a form of medication, or a personal trainer recommending a sports brand to the customer. This means that both opinion leaders and opinion formers have a large influence on the consumer

and their perceived view of the business, product, or service provided.[16] If a brand is specializing in the sale and manufacturing of makeup products, the business would want to look at someone who is both known for their knowledge about makeup and also someone who they know is popular within that community, so that the message is as wide spread throughout their target market as possible.[16] Opinion leaders add another link in the communication process, acting as a "meaning filter" for the receivers of the message (Dahlen, 2010). The message is sent from the sender and the opinion leaders share their opinions with the targeted audience.

Adjusted model of communications

The core model of communication has been criticized for its linearity – sender, message, receiver and its absence of structural perception.[17] Since then an adjusted model of communication has developed.

The adjusted model of communication was developed within a marketing context, when marketers saw that people were affected more by influential homophilous groups (family and friends) and heterophilous groups (outside the person's network) than mass media (Dahlen, 2010).

The adjusted model is different to the core model of communication because it incorporates opinion leaders also known as gate keepers.

Traditional media

Television

Television has since its inception dominated the advertising media scene, due to its combination of visual and aural stimulation, allowing for greater attention grabbing and more effective transmission of messages than other forms of media. It has a few disadvantages: television commercials suffer from being "zipped" and zapped". "Zipping" is the term given to fast forwarding commercial break sessions during the pre-recording of programs. Often viewers will record programs purely so they can be viewed without the commercial breaks. "Zapping" is the term given to the habit of many consumers to change channels during commercial breaks. This is also done to avoid watching advertisements. Using television advertisements is beneficial due to its wide reach and the degree to which content can be segmented according to the intended target market. Advertisements are carefully paired with time segments and / or linked with appropriate programming, known as "media vehicles". This helps to ensure the intended audience is being reached with the marketing message.[18]:118

While initial production costs of a television advertisement are high, it is likely to reach a mass audience and, therefore, maintains a low cost per viewer, making it an efficient communication platform.[19]

Radio

Radio by definition is the broadcasting of sound programmes to the public and today can be live streamed through a broadband connection or digitally transmitted into people's cars or homes.[20] Despite being the oldest form of media transmission still being used, marketing via radio remains a popular and effective choice due to its relatively lower cost and convenience (radio exposure can occur

during transit, at work, and during recreational activities). Due to the lack of a visual aspect, radio advertising attempts to create imagery in the consumers mind. Radio advertising is also extremely effective at reinforcing messages encountered in other channels (such as television).[18]:122 A familiar jingle or voice associated with a brand enhances brand and ad awareness, ultimately increasing brand equity. This is an example of "Integrated Marketing Communications", in which multiple marketing channels are simultaneously utilized to increase the strength and reach of the marketing message. Like television, radio marketing benefits from the ability to select specific time slots and programmes (in this case in the form of radio stations and segments within).

Fill et al.[19] argue that radio communication promotes "emotional consumer–centric associations" as each listener is forced to construct a visual representation of the words and sounds such as music in their minds. A common technique used by companies is known as imagery transfer, where a complementary visual television advertisement is used alongside a one-dimensional radio advertisement featuring a similar audio track to stimulate a visual association between the two.[21] Research suggests this sub-conscience relational thought process greatly benefits future brand recognition and awareness.[19]

Radio infomercials are often a simple script that is read out by the presenter. This is quick and does not require extensive lead times due to minimal production efforts.[20]

Print

Printed media is the most basic form of media advertising. It is the most challenging to create strong imagery with, due to its lack of sensory stimulation, but can be effective in efficient, clear information communication and message delivery. Where a consumer may miss a message in video or audio (perhaps a loud noise interrupts, or someone blocks their view) in print the message remains visible indefinitely. Aspects such as size, colour and style can be used to increase effectiveness relative to other print advertisements, which is important as despite being a basic media communication channel, print is the second largest medium after television (Ang, 2014. "Principles of Integrated Marketing Communications". Page 126.).

Traditionally, marketing communications practitioners focused on the creation and execution of printed marketing collateral. Traditional media, or as some refer to as old media, has been used within the marketing and advertising world for many years.[22] Traditional media encompasses conventional forms of advertising media, such as television, magazines, newspapers, radio, and direct mail and outdoor. For many decades, these forms of communication have been the main source for marketers to reach both consumers and other companies. In a world with no internet and the vast world of social media, roots of advertising and promotion lie within traditional media, where there is a more direct, physical way of advertising.

Advertising in the form of print is used by businesses in the form of billboards, magazines, newspapers and posters, to get their message across to the target audience. Businesses will usually place a billboard in areas where in can be easily seen and where the target audience will spend their daily activities. Newspaper, magazines and posters are smaller in size and can be found in numerous places allowing the general public availability to read them. Depending on the product or service that is being advertised, marketers may specify where majority of their prints may go to, such as advertisement of a new shampoo may be more common within salons.

Print media are a highly customizable, varying in print size, font, positioning and colour combination. Newspapers commonly use coarse paper and tend to have poor reproduction quality, while magazines can enhance the appearance of a certain product due to the heavy weight gloss paper used which translates colour well and offers a long lasting quality and likeability.[19] Magazines function as a frame, a psychological device which manipulates perspective and judgement.[23] For example, Vogue, a leading paid circulation fashion magazine,[24] publishes advertising efforts alongside beautiful imagery and elegant photography, the association of the two communicates respectability and sophistication and promotes the creditability of the brands which appear in the same publication. Due to the high-quality reproduction, magazines tend to last longer and are often found in hair salons and waiting rooms. Consumers often cut out individual images which further prolongs the message and increases potential exposure. Although the relevance of the message may be lost during this extended time, brand awareness may still be raised.[19]

Magazines are often segmented by subject such as women's health, automotive or fashion and therefore effectively reach a particular target market while newspapers focus on geographical regions which tend to appeal to a broad representative population sample and, therefore, offer low impact in selectivity. Newspapers are often run on a weekly schedule offering up to date information and coverage of local events and businesses as a lower coast alternative. Such advertisements in smaller typeface and are black and white.[19]

Decline

Traditional media is gradually losing effectiveness.[25] This change is driven by two key factors: audience fragmentation and ability to choose commercial content. Television, radio, magazines, and newspapers are becoming more fragmented and reaching smaller and more selective audiences. The rapid growth of communication due to interactive media, particularly the internet have caused the changes in the use of communication through media, with businesses preferring to use modern media over more traditional media methods. Consumers cannot avoid new and innovative ways of communication.[22] Many marketers believe that traditional methods of advertising have become too expensive and is not cost-effective compared to modern media. Traditional forms of marketing communications such as advertising are one way in nature, whereas new media allows marketers to perform a variety of functions.

Communication platforms

Communication platforms like Skype, Facebook or other types of media have become extremely important means of communication. Although there are other methods of communications that aren't just related to social media, people can also be hugely influenced by their peers, this process is known as social mediation. Marketing Communication Platforms are a powerful capability for personalizing and expending marketing contents in an automated fashion based on the profile of the recipients.[12]

A platform by simplest definition is a raised floor or stage. It functions as a similar principle in marketing communications, providing awareness and information about a specific brand or product.[26] Strategic selection of various communication platforms is known as a media strategy which aims to engage an audience in a meaningful conversation and, as a result, create a lasting relationship.[27] Modern technology has expanded the use of platforms and ways in which consumers and the brand can interact. As a result, the context of platforms and how they are defined has changed.[28] There are various platforms by which communication is transmitted,[19] and these can be categorised as paid, owned, earned and shared, formally named as the integrated communication

triangle by Grönroos and Lindberg-Repo.[29] The model acknowledges that communication must be credible and trustworthy to be effective. Studies reveal many consumers look at review forums and ask friends or peers whom they trust for ratings on products before making a purchase decision.[28] Therefore, effective communication relies on an integrated approach of one dimensional and interactive platforms.[30]

Explicitly planned market content is communicated through non-personal communication platforms.[31] The brand is in control of the platform, message content, frequency and repetition of the communication message.[32] This is typically accomplished through traditional paid platforms, such as, print, electronic, outdoor and alternative media, that aims to target a mass segment of the target market.[31]

Other aspects of noise decrease the effectiveness of message penetration, for example, most paid communication platforms, print and electronic media are filled with marketing and advertising messages and are subject to clutter, often forcing brands to compete for attention.[26] To eliminate noise brands often choose to include inserts such as samples and scent strips within magazines while newspapers utilise "call to action" inserts such as coupons which encourage consumers to visit or try a local service or good.[19]

Guerrilla marketing

Due to the rise in advertising clutter, there has been a push for non-traditional media such as guerrilla marketing.[33] Guerrilla Marketing is usually a low-cost way of generating buzz through creative or unexpected communication platforms.[34] Outdoor settings provide potential ground to gain attention from a large audience. An example is customizing street infrastructure or creating an event such as a flash mob. Research rates guerrilla advertising as having a higher perceived value compared to other communication platforms, which tends to result in a positive consumer response.[33] An example of successful guerrilla marketing was created by Volkswagen (VW) in their promotional "driven by fun" campaign, where consumers could use VW "fast lane" slide instead of the escalator to get to the bottom of the stairs faster.[35]

Touch points

Every point of contact is a form of communication and it is, therefore, necessary to consider touch points as a communication platform. Touch points can be either physical or a human interaction between a brand and the consumer which influence customer decision-making process during pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase.[36]

There are many ways in which a customer may interact with a business.[26] Interactions occur through direct customer service exchanges, a company website, the point of purchase environment and product packaging or performance.[36] These all contribute to consumer perceptions of a particular brand. For instance, the service-scape of a purchase touch point such as a retail store can influence the perception of quality and service through lighting and layout or other sensory touch points, for example smell.[26] Fast fashion retailers such as Topshop maintain a white store interior and exterior which is perceived as luxurious.[37] Likewise, the higher price point and packaging of

Ferrero Rocher may communicate sophistication and better quality. Visual appearance can have a significant effect on purchase decision,[36] companies such as Coke a Cola and Pepsi provide a free fridge to distributors to control how products are displayed at the point of purchase.[26]

Multiplier effect

While boarding a United Airlines flight, Dave Carroll saw baggage handlers on the tarmac damage his guitar "Taylor".[38] After failed attempts to solve the issue through customer service, Carroll uploaded a humorous YouTube video titled "United breaks guitars",[27] which has experienced significant viewership and currently holds over 15 million views.[39] Reportedly, United faced a significant drop in the stock market.[27] Carroll's YouTube video is an example of the **multiplier effect**, and how consumer attributes are shared through user-generated content (UGC) networks and word of mouth communication.[27] Research shows customer are more likely to pass on negative experiences, and therefore, such interactive platforms of communication have a significant impact on purchase decisions and brand outlook.[32]

This links to the new trend in consumer behaviour and integration of marketing communications, where technological developments have enabled socially mediated communication. The dynamics of communication platforms has changed from one-way flow where companies were in control of the message to a continuum dialogue where businesses interact with consumers in a co-creative process.[32] As Andy Lark, Commonwealth Bank CMO states "the power has shifted, we are now entering a transparent age where there are no secrets".[40]

Traditional models view paid media platforms as the primary source of information, however, this has changed due to technological developments in communication platforms which enable dialogue among consumers within a consumer-centric communication from which meaning is constructed.[28] This multi-dimensional non-linear flow of communication allows a many to many exchanges of information through platforms such as UGC. UGC includes all the ways in which people publish creative content publicly online through blogs, chats, forums, online platforms for product reviews and social media websites such as Facebook, YouTube and Instagram,[32] this is known as earned and shared media.[27]

Co-creation

Nike is an example of how such earned and shared media has created co-creation due to a shift in the consumer relationship through customer empowerment. Nike ID is an online application that allows customers to design their shoe and therefore "Just do it online".[26][32] Market-generated media is still an important communication platform and information source.[32] Consumers tend to consider both market-generated and UGC when making a purchase decision,[28] particularly, for higher involvement product like vinyl albums.[41] However, the movement from traditional media to various forms of online and UGC marketing is a rising trend, and academics recognize that marketing communication is an open system and customer attributes are influenced by multiple aspects of business surroundings through various communication platforms[26] Ultimately positive brand encounters manifest brand supporters who contribute to positive earned and shared media, through product recommendations online and offline.[28]

The internet

The Internet features both non-personal as well as personal forms of communication. It has become one of the most dominant sources of information for most consumers. Belch & Belch (2012) explain that the internet is mostly a non-personal form of communication as consumers are absorbing information provided online with no personal contact between the consumer and the organizations that are providing the information on their websites. However, as the internet continually develops, it is now progressively changing into a form of personal communication as consumers have the ability to interact with marketers online as well as communicate and share information with one another through the use of social media.[8]

The Internet allows many multimedia documents to be shared among its users. In 2003 approximately 30 million websites have been registered worldwide and 650 million were connected to the Internet.[42] The Internet as a marketing tool can be used to reach customers directly, inform customers, create brand loyalty, build relationships and altogether be used as a marketing communications platform. Online advertising can be used to build brand attitudes, it includes techniques such as: graphic images as website banners, pop-up advertisements, homepage restyling and anchor deals (co-operation between two organizations).[43]

Interactivity

Interactivity is the typical feature of the Internet that was first proposed by John Deighton.[44] He argued that in Internet business environment clients rather than the marketers usually start the interaction and they will actively look for the information that they need. Moreover, personal responses of customer will be collected by corporation and their individual demands will be met according to their personal desire.

On one hand, traditional media is the "push" media where marketers send their broadcasting messages to customer, in which consumers seldom have a chance to give their feedback. Therefore, the interaction between the two parts is far and few between. On the other hand, Internet media have the attribute of "pull" where customers on the Internet have the freedom to search the items of their wish. For instance, whenever a consumer type "flower" on Google's search engine, an advertisement of a specific flower shop might occur on the top or bottom of the search result page by the program of the Google Adword.[45] Internet makes it possible for Google to find the right time to place the proper ad to the potential suitable consumer who might be in proper need. This way the traditional one-way "push" communication becomes the two-way "push and pull" interaction which is more active than before.

Individualisation

Compared with the traditional media where one same information sent by the company is received by all the consumers, Internet media can send "tailored" information in accordance with the personal need of a specific consumer.This is another advantage of two-way interaction of the Internet media. One of the first and most famous example of this attribute is the personal tailored service provided by Amazon in which consumers are called by their names and "tailored" recommendations are provided according to their previous purchase records.[46] Furthermore, besides "tailored" individual service, with the development and accumulation of consumers' information on the Internet, mass customisation become possible in which companies provide "tailored" content to particular segment of consumers with similar interests. Douban is a Chinese social networking service website which allows its users to rate the movie, TV dramas, music and concerts. It rapidly grew to 200 million registered users in 2013 (founded in 2005). In addition, people who like the same TV drama, like

Game of Thrones, or fans of the same movie star, such as Tom Cruise, will group together to discuss and share their feelings. This is where companies could take advantage of mass customisation to sell their products or reinforce their brand equity in suitable target consumers. We can see that by doing so, the interaction and co-operation of companies and consumers are deepening, widening and multiplying in a variety of ways.

Industry restructuring

Restructuring followed by disintermediation and reintermediation is one of the essential features of the transition from traditional to Internet marketing communications. Internet may make the traditional distributors or retailers leave out of the business simply because the Internet communication is less costly than them. JD.com significantly changed the distribution channels of personal computer selling in China by letting the consumers order different parts of the computers and then pact together online before 2009, leaving tens of thousands of retailers in that field out of their jobs. In 2015, JD.com accounted for 22.9% of the Chinese online shopping's market share.[47] Again, according to *Financial Times*, with the shifting trend of using mobile phones for online purchase in China, the people using cellphones to log on to the Internet outnumbered those using PC,[48] the next wave of restructuring faced by JD.com and its major competitors like Alibaba. In 2014, JD.com's orders deriving from mobile phones increased to 543%, compared with the last year's quarter of the same period. Haoyu Shen, the chief executive of the JD.com, ascribed this result to its own company's app rather than the co-operation with Tecent, the Chinese second largest online corporation, although it invested in JD.com on March 2014. We can see that as a company doing business of ecommerce, JD.com has been constantly facing challenges and opportunities of reintermediation with the rapid shifts of the technology development of the Internet.

Social media

Social media's market share is rising thanks to services like YouTube, Facebook and Instagram. To personally engage with existing and future customers, reinforce brand messaging, influence customer opinions, provide targeted offers, and service customers more efficiently, companies are beginning to use external social media platforms.[49]

Email

Email marketing is directly marketing a commercial message to a group of people using email. In its broadest sense, every email sent to a potential or current customer could be considered email marketing. It usually involves using email to send ads, request business, or solicit sales or donations, and is meant to build loyalty, trust, or brand awareness. Email marketing can be done to either sold lists or a current customer database. Broadly, the term is usually used to refer to sending email messages with the purpose of enhancing the relationship of a merchant with its current or previous customers, to encourage customer loyalty and repeat business, acquiring new customers or convincing current customers to purchase something immediately, and adding advertisements to email messages sent by other companies to their customers.

In-product communication

Another channel for direct digital marketing is in-product communication (or in-product marketing), which delivers marketing content directly to a user's internet-connected device or software application. In-product marketing content is often very similar to that of email marketing campaigns, but the segmentation and delivery is more targeted. Because email has become a standard tool in the digital marketing toolkit, the email channel often is overloaded and overused, leading to much lower open rates, lower engagement rates, lower click-through rates (CTR), and lower conversion rates. The rise of internet-connected (IOT) devices is enabling a growing number of consumer products manufacturers to take advantage of this channel of marketing communications, to supplement other digital marketing channels.

Direct marketing

Direct marketing is defined as the process in which individual customers' responses and transactions are recorded.[50] Direct marketing has increased over the past decade and is an important aspect to Marketing Communications. Direct marketing's largest strength is that it is a communication tool that is designed to build the relationship between the customer and the brand.[51] A large part of this area is Customer Relationship marketing. organizations use accounts of the customers to give specific experiences in order to satisfy their needs. It is the process of managing detailed information about the customer's touch points with the objective to maximize satisfaction and loyalty. This type of communication can be transmitted in person, by telephone, mail, email or website.[43] An important part of direct marketing is that it is the interaction between the organization and the customer and is mostly a two-way communication. Direct marketing relies heavily on databases, which contain valuable information on the customers. organizations should understand that databases could provide a competitive advantage and in turn increase profitability. Mistakes that organizations make are treating databases as an expense rather than an investment and not maintaining or updating them sufficiently.[43]

Direct mail

This form of direct marketing is usually a letter, catalogue, or sample. These items are sent through post, e-mail, fax, and courier. This communication indicates that the recipient has shown interest in or has previously purchased from the organization . Advantages of direct mail are personalisation, careful targeting, creativity and flexibility. Email is low-cost, but can be lost through spam and junk email filters. Direct mail is heavily dependent on databases that should be kept up to date.[43]

Telemarketing

Telemarketing is the type of marketing communication transmitted through telephone. There are 2 types of telemarketing: Outbound and Inbound.[43] Outbound telemarketing is used by organizations to reach out to potential customers, generate sales, make appointments with salespeople and introduce new products. Inbound telemarketing is where people call the organization to complain or inquire about products. Both outbound and inbound can be used as a customer service strategy to boost sales and receive suggestions for improvement. Advantages of telemarketing are that it allows targeted communications, it is a flexible and direct interaction between the organization and the

customer, it can accompany the personal selling platform well and it is cost effective per contact compared to personal selling. A disadvantage is that call centres are usually used to handle outbound and inbound telemarketing, which needs to be implemented, managed and financed.[43]

Mail order

Mail order as a form of direct marketing is a catalogue of products that customers can order to receive in the mail. This form of direct marketing dates back over 100 years. Home shopping, online shopping and teleshopping now accompany it. With current technology mail order has improved. Now there can be a larger range in catalogue, delivery is faster, and complaints are dealt with professionally. Advantages of mail order are they exert less pressure to the customer than telemarketing and sales are easy to manage, however costly infrastructure is required in maintaining the back-end.[43]

Direct-response advertising

Direct-response advertising is a message transmitted through traditional media communications that requires the reader, viewer, listener or customer to respond directly to the organization .[43] The audience may respond to receive more information or to purchase a product. A common example of direct response advertising is in television "home shopping". Viewers are told to purchase the product right away to receive a particular deal or discount. Disadvantages are that focus can be lost because of the medium of communication and the targeting can be less narrow compared to direct mail. organization 's messages can get cluttered and crowded. By using radio and magazine advertising organizations are able to narrow in on their target audience.[43]

Cellular marketing

Cellular marketing uses audience's mobile phone and SMS to promote a product or brand. Advantages are that there are high levels of flexibility and it can be easily integrated through computer systems using the Internet to send mass text messages. Using databases this platform of marketing communications allows organizations to directly target customers and remember important information such as their name. Uses for sending mass SMS messages to customers could be reminding them to renew magazine subscriptions, giving exclusive product discounts, or building brand reputation through competitions or sweepstakes. When using customer's personal information permission must be granted.[43]

CD/DVD technology

CD and DVD can be used as part of e-communications. Entire marketing presentations, catalogues, brochures and price lists can be stored on a CD. CDs are small and simple to hand out to target audiences and most modern computers have CD drive readers, however most of the aforementioned information can be presented on a website or email.[43]

Integrated marketing communications

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is the use of marketing strategies to optimise the communication of a consistent message of the company's brands to stakeholders.[52] Coupling methods together improves communication as it harnesses the benefits of each channel, which when

combined together builds a clearer and vaster impact than if used individually.[53] IMC requires marketers to identify the boundaries around the promotional mix elements and to consider the effectiveness of the campaign's message.[54]

In the mid to late 1980s, the marketing environment was undergoing profound environmental changes with implications for marketing communications. Media proliferation, audience fragmentation, globalisation of markets, the advent of new communications technologies, the widespread use of databases meant that the old methods, and practices used in mass marketing were no longer relevant. In particular, the rise of digital and interactive media meant that marketers were relying less on advertising as the dominant form of marketing communications. Amongst practitioners and scholars, there was an increasing recognition that new approaches to marketing communications were required. That new approach would become known as *integrated marketing communications.* A number of empirical studies, carried out in the early 1990s, found that the new IMC was far from a "short-lived managerial fad," but rather was a very clear reaction by advertisers and marketers to the changing external environment.

Integrated marketing communications is a holistic planning process that focuses on integrating messages across communications disciplines, creative executions, media, timing and stakeholders. An integrated approach has emerged as the dominant approach used by companies to plan and execute their marketing communication programs [55] and has been described as a *paradigm shift*.[56]

IMC unifies and coordinates the organizations marketing communications to promote a consistent brand message.[57] Coordinating the brands communications makes the brand seem more trustworthy and sound as it is seen as a 'whole' rather than a mixture of different messages being sent out.[58] The IMC perspective looks at the 'big picture' in marketing, advertising and promotions.[11]

History

The impetus to rethink marketing communications came from a number of environmental changes that were becoming increasingly apparent throughout the mid to late 1980s. Media was proliferating and at the same time converging, audiences were fragmenting and many new communications disciplines were emerging. Few advertising agencies provided the full suite of services in terms of the varied communications disciplines. Companies were reliant on a multiplicity of service providers for assistance with advertising, public-relations, branding, packaging, sales promotion, event organisers and other promotional activities. Each of these communications disciplines was treated as a "silo"; with little thought to the synergies between them,with the result that many different stakeholders involved in presenting the company's external image throughout the breadth and length of a campaign.[59] In that environment, both practitioners and theorists recognised the potential for confusing or inconsistent brand images to develop across media and across different communications disciplines.[60] The fragmentation of audiences presented marketers with particular challenges. No longer were they able to communicate with mass markets via mass media; instead they needed to communicate with increasingly tightly defined market segments, using highly specialist media and communications disciplines. New media and the use of databases were enabling marketers to communicate with customers on a one-to-one basis.[61] The old methods and practices associated with mass communications were failing to serve the realities of the new era.[62] The imperative to present a clear, coherent and unified narrative in both internal and external communications was becoming increasingly apparent by the late 1980s.

In 1989, two discrete events served to draw attention to the fact that industry attitudes to marketing communications were shifting. Firstly, the consulting firm, Shearson-Lehman Hutton published a report on the subject of consumer advertising, signalling that a number of market-place changes would force packaged goods marketers to adopt a more integrated approach to marketing communications. Their report also noted that high-end manufacturers (e.g. automobiles) and up-market services (e.g. cruise vacations) were more inclined to use integrated promotions.[63] Secondly, the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4A's), instituted a task-force to investigate integrated marketing communications (IMC), with the result that the first official definition was published. The AAAA defined IMC as, "a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines (e.g. general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations) and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact."[64] At this stage, the development of IMC, focused primarily on the need for organisations to offer more than just standard advertising and to integrate the various communications disciplines.[65] The 4As originally coined the term the "new advertising"; however, this title did not appropriately incorporate many other aspects included in the term "IMC" – most notably, those beyond traditional advertising process aside from simply advertising.[66]

In 1991, the faculty of Medill School of Journalism, Northwestern University in conjunction with the AAAA, began the first empirical research study designed to investigate how IMC was being used.[67] The study focused around understanding the concept and the importance of IMC and also to analyse the extent in which IMC was practiced in all major U.S advertising agencies. This initial study was then replicated by other studies with a view to examining how IMC was being used in other countries; New Zealand, UK, US, Australia, India, Thailand, South Africa and the Philippines, etc.[68] The findings from these studies demonstrated that the new IMC was far from a "short-lived managerial fad" but rather was "a very clear reaction by advertising agencies and their clients as they are affected by a multitude of factors such as new forms of information technology including development and usage

The Medill School at Northwestern was the first university to teach course in integrated marketing communications

of databases, media fragmentation, client desires for interaction/synergy, and global and regional coordination."[69] This was the second stage of IMC's development, where the focus shifted to documenting the practice of IMC as a global phenonenon. In other words, researchers were attempting to codify practices that had been used for some time.[70]

In 1993, Don Schultz and his team published the first text-book dedicated to IMC.[71] Their work, simply entitled, *Integrated Marketing Communications,* described IMC as a totally new way of looking at the whole of marketing communications, rather than looking at each of the parts separately. And, in the same year, the Medill School at Northwestern University changed their curriculum to include a focus on this new idea of integrated marketing communications rather than the traditional program which had emphasised advertising.[72] IMC emerged from an "academic department that, for several decades, had been recognized as the number one advertising program.[73] Since the mid-1990s, virtually every text-book on the subject of marketing communications has adopted an integrated perspective or has added chapters on IMC in new editions of standard works.[74] Collectively these books focus on the IMC planning processes and this represents the third distinct stage in the evolution of IMC – an emphasis on managing and organising IMC.[75]

Over time, scholars have advanced different definitions of IMC, with each definition exhibiting a slightly different emphasis. Yet, in spite of the variety of definitions in circulation, there is general consensus that integrated marketing communications should be viewed as a planning process.[76] Some scholars have pointed out that because IMC is both a process and a concept, it is exceedingly difficult to define.[77]

Some of the key definitions that have been advanced during IMC's evolution are outlined here:

- "IMC is the process of all sources and information managed so a consumer or prospect is exposed which behaviorally moves the customer more towards a sale." (Schultz, 1991)[78]

- "The strategic co-ordination of all messages and media used by an organisation to influence its perceived brand value." (Duncan and Everett, 1993) [79]

- "The process of strategically controlling or influencing all messages and encoring purposeful dialogue to created and nourish profitable relationships with consumers and other stakeholders." (Duncan & Caywood, 1996)[80]

- "[A three-pronged definition] One-voice marketing communications is integration that creates a clear and consistent image, position, message, and/or theme across all marketing communication disciplines or tools. Integrated communications refers to the creation of both a brand image and a behavioural response that emanate directly from marketing communications materials such as advertisements. Coordinated marketing communications associates 'integrated' with the concept of 'coordination'. (Nowak & Phelps, 1994)[81]

- "IMC is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinate measurable persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers and prospects, and other that are targeted, relevant internal and external audiences." (Schultz & Schultz, 1998)[82]

- "IMC is the concept and process of strategically managing audience-focused,channel-centred, and results-driven brand communication programmes over time." (Kliatchko, 2005)[83]

- "An IMC program plans and executes various marketing activities with consistency so that its total impact exceeds the sum of each activity. It is a strategy in which different communication tools like advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and personal selling work together to maximize the communication impact on target consumers." (Saeed et al., 2013)[84]

- "IMC is the planning and execution of all types of advertising-like and promotion-like messages selected for a brand, service, or company, in order to meet a common set of communication objectives, or more particularly, to support a single ' positioning'." (Larry Percy, 2008)[85]

Today, there is general agreement amongst both practitioners and scholars that the emergence of IMC represents "a significant example of development in the marketing discipline... [that] has influenced thinking and acting among all types of companies and organizations facing the realities of competition in an open economy."[86] Belch and Belch argue that IMC has become the dominant approach used by companies to plan and execute their marketing communication programs[87] while other scholars have described IMC as a *paradigm shift*.[88] Larry Percy argues that "the planning and execution of *all* marketing communication should be *integrated*".[89]

Meaning of integration

Within the literature there is no absolute agreement about the meaning of "integration" in the concept, "integrated marketing communications". The concept of IMC has evolved during its brief history, and with that different ideas around the meaning of integration have been advanced.[90] The diverse views surrounding IMC and its meaning can be explained by the early state of theoretical development and research on IMC which gives rise to a mulplicity of different perspectives. As the discipline matures, these different views are expected to converge.[91]

The marketing and advertising literature identifies many different types of integration:

Functional integration

Functional integration refers to the capacity of the different promotional tools to complement each other and deliver a unified, coherent message. Each of the communications disciplines (advertising, PR, personal selling, sales promotion etc.) has its own strengths and weaknesses. For instance, it is generally recognised that straight advertising is very effective at creating brand awareness, but much less effective at converting awareness into actual sales.[92] As consumers approach the actual purchase,

Integrating the creative and the media can result in imaginative and powerful messages that grab attention and are noticed

they may turn to other types of promotion such as personal selling or direct marketing. A carefully planned communications program will include a blend of tools in a way that the messages move the customer through the various stages of the purchase decision – from need recognition through to purchase and post-purchase stages. Integrating the communications disciplines addresses the question of how the strengths of one discipline can be used to overcome the weaknesses of a different discipline.[93]

Message integration

Message integration is also known as *image integration* or *creative integration*. A key task for IMC is ensuring consistency in executions within and across the different types of marketing communications, as well as over time. Everything connected with an IMC campaign should have a similar 'look and feel', irrespective of the medium or tool. Message integration does not imply that messages need to identical. Rather it means that every piece of promotion – from advertising to direct mail to collateral materials to packaging to posters to corporate vehicles to business cards and office stationery – should be immediately recognisable as part of the same livery.[94]

Clearly, media releases which are often part of a PR program are very different to persuasive messages used in advertising. However, messages should include a similar tone and at least some common elements so that each message looks like it is part of a coherent, integrated campaign. Every execution is part of the brand's identity. Consistent executions facilitate brand awareness. People associate the 'look' of the brand's marketing communication with the brand itself. Consistent executions are more of a 'feeling' that ties everything together; a unique look or feel so that the target audience recognizes a

brand's marketing communication even before they see the brand name. The key to consistency is the visual feel. This is because the visual memory for the imagery associated with the brand actually elicits faster brand identification than the brand name itself.[95]

Media integration

Much IMC planning is concerned with co-ordinating different media channels to optimize the effectiveness of marketing communications programmes. If brand communications "reflect implied brand values and imagery that are consistent throughout differing media channels, then clearly these channels act in a mutually reinforcing way with each successive consumer engagement."[96] Certain messages may not translate into other media. For instance, messages containing 'sex appeals' may work well on TV because movement lends itself to eroticism, but may become "flat" in a static medium such as print. In such cases it is important that the secondary media support the primary media and that messages harmonise.[97]

Research studies suggest that consumers learn more quickly when they are exposed to messages via different media. The explanation for this is that slight variations in execution create a slight mental perturbation which grabs attention, and results in more elaborate encoding of the main message argument. By exposing consumers to the same message through multiple media, there are more opportunities to engage with consumers. In short, a multi media strategy is more effective.[97]

Integration of timing

Integration of timing refers to the timing messages so that they operate to support each other and reach potential customers at different junctures, depending on when they are most receptive to different types of message or depending on the consumer's readiness to buy.[97]

Other types of integration

Other types of integration include:[98]

> **Coordinated integration** refers to the ways that different internal and external agencies (e.g web designers, advertising agencies, PR consultants, graphic designers) coordinate to provide a consistent message.
> **Stakeholder integration** refers to the way that all stakeholders (e.g. employees, suppliers, customers and others) cooperate to communicate a shared understanding of the company's key messages and values.
> **Relationship integration** refers to the way that communications professionals (e.g. marketing managers, advertising managers) contribute to the company's overall corporate goals and quality management.

Criticisms

Both practitioners and scholars agree that IMC makes practical "good sense".[99] Consequently, the discipline has relatively few critics. Nevertheless, researchers have pointed to areas that are in need of further research, and highlight some of the discipline's deficiencies:

- Some practitioners and scholars argue that IMC is not new. Skeptics point out that the more experienced commmunicationsd managers, especially national brand managers, have always

practised integration.[100]

- A more serious criticism of IMC concerns the problem of measurement. The value of IMC activities has proved very difficult to measure due to the interactions of different communications tools.[55] A growing number of scholars agree that the lack of rigorous measurement metrics and methods represents a major challenge for the discipline.[101]

- Studies have shown that, while managers are familiar with the IMC concept in theory, it is not widely practiced. Such findings suggest that IMC is easy to understand, but difficult to do. One possible explanation for the slow uptake is that organisational barriers to implementation may have become entrenched and are difficult to overcome.[102] A number of organisational characteristics have been cited as possible barriers to implementation. These factors include: a mind-set that has been built up over the years which promotes specialisation rather than integration; organisational structure which has been designed to manage specialisms (e.g. advertising, PR as separate branches); manager ability and lack of skills in integration; agency remuneration systems and the adequacy of budgets.[103]

Marketing communications framework

The **marketing communications planning framework** (MCPF) is a model for the creation of an ICM plan. Created by Chris Fill,[104] senior examiner for the Chartered Institute of Marketing, the MCPF is intended to solve the inadequacies of other frameworks.

Marketing communications planning framework, created by Chris Fill. Drawn by Matthew Revell.
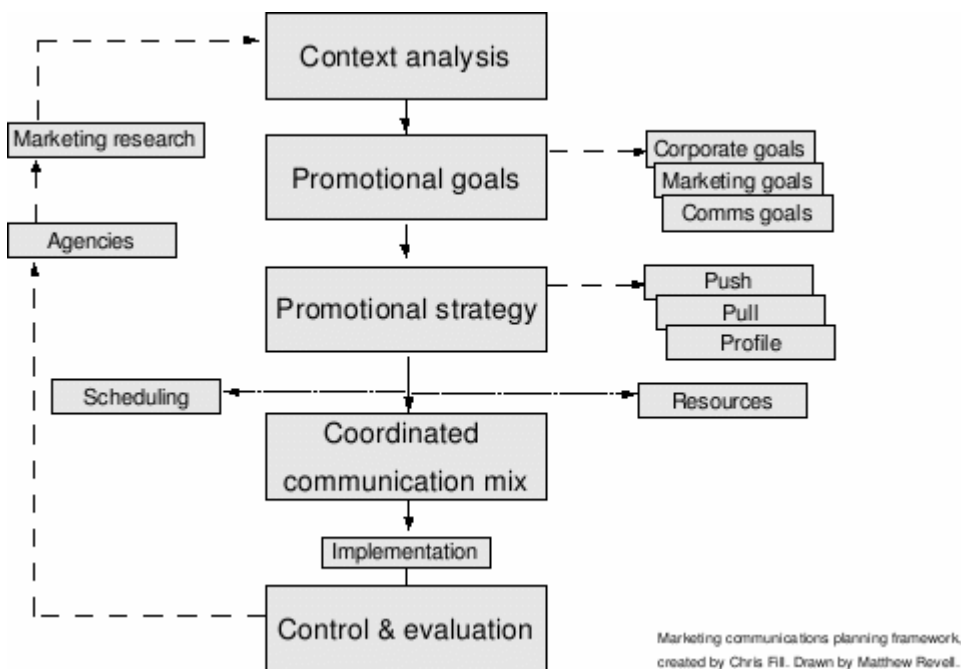
IMC planning approaches

Inside–out approach

An "inside-out" approach is the traditional planning approach to marketing communication. Planning begins "inside" the organisation by identifying the goals and objectives which are often based around what has always been done. Communication's task then becomes a process of "selling" the organisation's message to the "outside" or external stakeholders. .[105]

The inside–out approach to integrated marketing communications has been criticised as a one sided view point, since it combines the elements of communication and marketing to create a single unified message. Porcu and his team point out that many of the first, tentative attempts to practice IMC were primarily concerned with integrating the message, so that to organisation appeared to speak with "one voice," but failed to adopt a more rounded customer orientation. The inside–out approach is weak due to the stagnant, outdated method.[106]

Outside–in approach

The outside–in approach of integrated marketing communications seeks to understand the needs and wants of the consumer.[106] In addition to the previous category, this approach establishes significant progression. Organisations can gain in-depth knowledge based on consumers and therefore can accommodate the way they approach to fulfil their requirements. Relationship marketing aids in building up a history of frequent conversation between organisations and stakeholders which contributes to trust.[107] Communication builds rapport that could prove to be profitable as they retain clientele. The outside-in approach offers a unique way to planning, as it operates backwards by concentrating on customers first, then determining the most effective course of marketing and communication methods to implement. Effectively managing the strategic business process is crucial as it defines the steps to follow which ensure brand value is upheld.

Cross-functional planning approach

Cross-functional planning approach of integrated marketing communications diverges away from the other two categories, it does not centre around the concept of marketing promotional elements, instead the focus has shifted toward restructuring the organisation to increase a customer-centric environment. This approach recognises that messages do not just come from the marketing department, but can come from virtually any department within the organisation.[108] Investing for the reorganisation sparks change where all departments interconnect to work cohesively toward managing and planning all stages of brand relationship. As a unified organisation, the cross-functional process is a competitive advantage as they can achieve profitable relationships with customers and stakeholders. This can be achieved through improving the relation amongst messages sent from all departments through channels to the receivers. By sending strategic messages and monitoring any external reaction, organisations gain feedback data from consumers which can be used to inform subsequent planning or fine-tuning of the communications strategy. The process is circular, not linear,[109] at the beginning organisation and consumer communicate by interacting and dialogue which ignites the relationship, over time trust is earned and the consumer may continue to purchase, which in turn increases sales and profitability for the organisation and finally, the relationship is strong and the organisation retains clientele.[54] Interactive communication is advantageous for a cross-functional approach as the business and consumer are both involved in brand communication.[110] Implementing IMC is a flexible process due to the changing nature of the marketing dynamics therefore by eliminating borders within the organisation it allows for this notion.

Barriers to implementation

The barriers to implementation have been cited as one of the main reasons for the failure to adopt holistic approaches to IMC.[111] The key barriers cited in the literature are:

No support from senior management

It is vital for an organisation who implements integrated marketing communications to have the commitment from all levels of employees, including senior management.[52] The union between both marketing and corporate goals should coincide and support simultaneously. The lack of involvement from senior management could lead to IMC being deprived of resources which prevents the full potential IMC can deliver for the organisation to benefit from.[110] Higher levels of the business need to coincide with the efforts of staff in the strategic planning to grasp that IMC's programme is valuable.

Clients are confused about the concept

Some companies such as advertising agencies could possibly take advantage of the integrated marketing communications model, due to the stress they receive from clients and budgets being reduced.[52] The introduction of new technology broadens the boundaries for advertising elements to endeavour with such avenues like the internet. Their focus may stray from the core principles of IMC which is to integrate the elements together, as they're less effective individually. Also, their clients may not grasp the IMC concept as an essential attribute, therefore, they perceive IMC as saving money due to the strategic juxtaposition.

Organisation is too specialised

One of the core fundamentals of integrated marketing communications is that of the focus aspires toward a customer orientation.[52] In spite of that, the purpose of some organisations have not adopted the framework and are still task orientated. Examples include public relations, direct marketing and advertising.

Conflict within organisation

Trying to implement integrated marketing communications into strong hierarchy structured organisations may cause staff resistance due to the nature of horizontal communication causing disagreements amongst staff.[52] Staff may not perform their tasks and functions which jeopardises the work environment. For IMC to be successful the culture of the organisation needs to accommodate an open perspective where communication amongst the varying departments are managed tactically.[112] Individuals reactions toward the new restructure will differ, as some become custom to the process and enjoy the borderless integration, on the other hand, some may feel threatened from the absence of control that once maintained order and power within the previous structured organisation (Vladmir, Miroslav, & Papic, 2012). A corporate structure may not necessarily invite IMC due to their culture being incompatible for the integration.

Removing barriers

Integrated marketing communication is the process of communicating an idea in order to attract customers using an array of tools. It is the process of sending out a message to a receiver (Communications, 2016). Depending on the company values and the type of product or service they offer, the most appropriate message to deliver will depend on the brand and consumer. To understand how integrated marketing communication can benefit a business, three main areas will be discussed. These areas being who the Sender is? Who is the Receiver? And what tools can the sender use in order to pass a message on to the receiver?

Practical solutions towards improving marketing strategies by using ICM can be done through two differing marketing concepts the four P's or the four C's . Also, the uses of encoding and decoding should be followed, all of which intertwine to form growth in sales financially for a business.

A sender is someone who is aiming to communicate an idea to a receiver, which might be an individual or a group. Marketers must first understand who the receive is in order to successfully implement marketing communications. For example, Staples seeks to identify itself as a 'one-stop' shop for all office needs. It advertises a wide variety of office supplies, safe and on time delivery, competitive pricing and excellent customer service. Staples focuses its marketing efforts on advertising those values. Their slogan "To make more happen, everyday". This theme is the most appropriate because it attracts their target audience. Workers have little time on their hands, the product they offer will give them the ability to make life easier; by doing so, they save time. In today's fast-paced lifestyle, if a service is convenient, customers will most likely use the product. Staples have successfully taken the necessary steps in order to communicate their values to their customers. They have done this through understanding who they are and who they should be targeting.

4C's

Originally, marketing was focused around the 4P's (product, price, place and promotion) which concentrated on companies' internal concepts. The idea of integrated marketing communications was first raised in 1993 by Don E. Schultz, who changed the 4P's concept into the 4C's model. The four parts include consumer, communication, convenience and cost, taking into consideration the needs and wants of consumers. Integrated marketing communications accomplished synergy when each element was executed in accordance with the overall vision of the organisation's campaign, which allows the message to be executed efficiently.[54] Finding out who the target market is to answer the 4C's: knowing what products they're willing to purchase, the amount of money they are willing to spend for it, how the product will fulfil their needs and wants, the accessibility of the product and how easily correct information is transmitted.[113] Changing the emphasis onto what consumers desire leads to a higher success being attained through IMC, as it is being influenced by not only internal stakeholders but also external ones.

Communication-based relationship marketing

Expanding from this, Tom Duncan and Sandra E. Moriarty formed the concept of communication-based relationship marketing. This model diverged from the concept of the general one way, business influencing consumers what to believe scenario.[114] However, Duncan and Moriarty argued that communication between business and consumers was the key to developing strong establishment for consumer orientated marketing endeavours. The process of IMC through communication-based marketing goes through a sequential three stage process. Organisations begin with choosing an effective mixture of communication methods; then, the marketing methods are selected; thereafter, the best of each element is fused and integrated together which thence is channelled from the organisation to the audience.[115] Subsequently, these findings shaped modern marketing, focusing on an interactive two-way approach that builds rapport with stakeholders. Developments from integrated marketing communications have evolved into three categories: inside-out approach, outside-in approach and cross-functional strategic approach.

Branding

Branding goes beyond having a logo; it is how businesses communicate on behalf of their company, verbally and visually. A brand is a conversation — it is how people talk about your company when you are not in the room.[49] Consumers are constantly interacting and meeting with brands. This can be through television or other media advertisements such as event sponsorships, personal selling and

product packaging. Brand exposure such as this is known as a brand touch point or brand contact whereby the organization can try impressing its consumer. Without branding, consumers wouldn't be able to decipher between products and decide which one they like most. People may not be able to even tell the differences between some of the brands, they would have to try each brand several times before being able to judge which one was best. In order to help with purchase decisions, marketing communications try to create a distinct image for the brand. Brand associations are made to encourage linkages with places, personalities or even emotions which creates a sophisticated brand personality in the minds of the consumers. This shows how brand communications add value to products[30] and why branding is a crucial aspect to the communication platform.

Focus

Marketing communications are focused on the product/service as opposed to corporate communications where the focus of communications work is the company/enterprise itself. Marketing communications are primarily concerned with demand generation and product/service positioning[116] while corporate communications deal with issue management, mergers and acquisitions, litigation, etc.

Customer-focused versus customer-centric

A recent revelation in integrated marketing communication is the change in the role of the customer within the business world. Due to the fast-paced growth of technology, customers are rapidly gaining more power through forums such as word of mouth; now with capabilities of reaching a much wider audience through the use of social media. Recognizing this power shift, organizations have begun to re-evaluate their typical marketing strategies and customer approaches from the traditional customer-focused attitude to the wide-spreading customer-centric method in order to develop a more integrated strategy.

A customer-focused approach can be defined as "when an organization learns more about the habits of the customer so that they can identify opportunities for cross-selling etc" (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). While this type of approach can be viewed as entirely satisfactory, Kliatchko (2008) introduced a contrasting concept which concentrates on "working from the outside in" and promotes a different perspective on organizations. When an organization adopts a customer-centric technique, they forgo the view that customers are only passive receivers of marketing techniques and focus on listening to what their needs are and striving to satisfy them; integrating the customer into the process (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). Many organizations are yet to relinquish such control, as shown by research conducted by *Campaign* magazine, which can only be suspected to be due to the fear that it could potentially diminish the marketing profession (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). This view, however, is rebutted by Saihtiri et al. (2014) who claims that "achieving superiority in customer-centric performance is then rewarded through stronger brand performance in the marketplace".

See also

- Advertising – emphasises historical and social aspects of advertising
- Advertising management – focuses on practical managerial approach to advertising
- Brand awareness
- Consumer behaviour
- Co-marketing

- Marketing activation
- Marketing mix
- Media intelligence
- Media relations
- Promotional mix
- Real-time marketing

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