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Marketing Communications
Assignment

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	3
2.0 Background of chosen organisation.....	3
2.1 Overview of the Organisation	3
2.2 Customer base and product/service range.....	3
3.0 Different Uses of integrated marketing communications	4
3.1 Differentiate	4
3.2 Remind or reassure.....	4
3.3 Inform and Persuade	5
4.0 Role of promotional tools	6
4.1 Role of each promotional tool.....	6
4.2 Distinguishing between above-the-line and below-the-line	8
4.3 Usage in the Organisation	8
5.0 Benefits from electronic marketing tools.....	8
5.1 Benefits to the Organisation.....	8
5.2 Identifying additional techniques	9
5.3 Role of marketing research in this Process	10
6.0 Outlining push, pull and profile strategies in the context of the organisation's communication Strategy	10
6.1 Push Strategy.....	10
6.2 Pull Strategy	10
6.3 Profile Strategy.....	11
7.0 Conclusion	11
References	12

1.0 Introduction

This report analyses the marketing and communications strategies of the consumer technology company Apple. The first section presents a brief background of Apple as an organisation, including information on its customer base and products/service range. This is followed by the main analysis in the report, beginning with a discussion on the use of integrated marketing communications at Apple. This is followed by a discussion on the role of promotional tools from the Promotional Mix in the context of Apple's marketing communications. The report distinguishes the above and below-the-line marketing approaches of Apple and further considers their relevance in the consumer buying process of an Apple consumer. The benefits of electronic marketing tools are summarily shown, detailing various practical situations where Apple benefited from using these tools. Lastly, push, pull and profile strategies of marketing communications are developed in the context of Apple's communication strategy.

2.0 Background of the chosen organisation

2.1 Overview of the Organisation

Apple is a global market leader in consumer technologies that range from smartphones and laptops to digital audio streaming services. Apple's market presence has grown steadily under the leadership of the late Steve Jobs, who worked to create an era of innovation at Apple (Podolny and Hansen, 2020). This led to the company developing market-defining products, designed with the industrial aesthetic and Apple branding (Turner, 2007). A handheld music player was consequently an iPod, whereas a laptop device was called the MacBook (Podolny and Hansen, 2020). The contemporary smartphone design used today was popularised by Apple under the iPhone brand (Eadicicco, 2017). Therefore, Apple has a recent history of redefining consumer electronics and digital entertainment, and its market success allowed it to become one of the few global companies with a multi-trillion dollar market valuation.

2.2 Customer base and product/service range

The Apple brand commands a global following of brand loyalists, who are found among the Generation Z aged demographics (Sohn, 2023). The brand image of premium quality sells a marketing strategy which sees consumers self-associate with the Apple brand. Consumers of

Apple products experience a distinguished feeling from the attentive and industry-leading customer service that is available across physical and virtual channels to owners of Apple products. The company has branched out into other products and services to diversify its ecosystem of Apple-branded consumer lifestyles. Through iTunes, Apple has been an early mover in the digital music streaming service industry (Gartenberg, 2019). More recently, Apple launched a digital streaming service through which it airs entertainment content that is exclusive to the digital Apple TV platform (Gartenberg, 2019). These endeavours have also been successful at creating market engagement, however, the majority of revenue at Apple is drawn from the sales of its iPhones and other devices. The report will now address the individual sections through which Apple's marketing communications activities will be analysed.

3.0 Different Uses of integrated marketing communications

3.1 Differentiate

Apple has successfully used marketing communications to differentiate itself from its rivals in the broader consumer technology segments. For instance, the iPhone smartphone has been marketed as a better quality product compared to rival offerings such as Samsung, in part due to the robust software support (Almeida et al., 2021). This is communicated to customers through advertisements, where an instance shows that Apple also promoted the quality of privacy to its consumers in cities across Germany (Owen, 2019). Through this action, the smartphone becomes differentiated as it is promoted through a quality-of-life feature that is privacy, advertised across traditional billboard channels. Germany has the highest penetration of smartphone users in Europe and is therefore a more technologically literate society that values conventions such as consumer privacy (Tibler, 2019). Apple, therefore, addressed this need through their billboard marketing strategy, representing a successful instance of localising the marketing content to promote a global standard of quality represented by the Apple brand itself.

3.2 Remind or reassure

The message in marketing Apple products as offering privacy is reinforced across different Apple products and services, to substantiate the quality of privacy across the omnichannel environment of Apple's ecosystem. At the annual Worldwide Developers Conference (WWDC)

in 2021, for instance, Apple CEO Tim Cook promotes new quality-of-life features that enable privacy in the Apple user's lifestyle (Higgins, 2021). This includes preventing the digital tracking of emails and adding more features to apps that handle sensitive user information such as Apple Pay wallet and the Private Relay feature available exclusively to subscribers of Apple's digital iCloud storage service (Higgins, 2021). This reminds consumers that Apple stands for privacy as a value across different products and services, and reassures them that their privacy will be safeguarded and their digital security will be upheld while interacting with Apple's ecosystem of products and services (Leswing, 2021). Therefore, marketing communications promote this through such PR events whereas individual products promote privacy through channels like billboards (Rehman, Gulzar and Aslam, 2022).

3.3 Inform and persuade

Apple's role in informing and persuading would-be buyers as well as regular customers can be equally presented through the use of Kotler's 5-stage consumer behaviour model (Kotler, 1965).

Kotler's 5-stage consumer behaviour model

Problem recognition

In the preliminary stage, the consumer develops an awareness of a problem that is affecting their quality of life. This can be found in the lack of a product or service to solve a personal need, such as a smartphone that offers reliable all-day battery life.

Information search

In the second stage, the consumer searches for information related to products or services that can solve their particular needs. In this instance, the consumer seeking a new smartphone would doubtless find information about Apple's iPhones, as it is a globally recognised brand. However, Apple's role in informing and persuading the consumer can be determined here, as the consumer will find information that objectively confirms that iPhones offer a higher battery standby performance compared to other smartphone competitors like Samsung (Butani, 2022). This direct comparison creates a strong impression on the buyer's consciousness owing to the objectivity of the performance difference.

Evaluation of alternatives

At this stage, the consumer will evaluate alternatives across different brands. Apple's iPhone can therefore be compared in this scenario with other rivals like Samsung's Galaxy phones. At this

stage, the consumer will be empowered to make an informed decision that increases their association with the brand as an external stakeholder.

Purchase decision

Having determined that the Apple iPhone would solve the pain point of battery drain in the daily use of smartphones, the consumer makes the purchase decision as a buyer and a direct end-user. Apple's capacity to persuade the customer here is also strong, as customers are offered various attractive payment schemes including buy-back value on their current or older smartphones (Guy, 2022).

Post-purchase behaviour

The sales personnel present in Apple stores is trained to engage with customers strategically designed to create a warm and friendly association between the brand and the consumer (Gallo, 2015). Their participation when shopping through in-store purchases enhances the consumption experience, and the consumer is also satisfied when the smartphone provides the enhanced battery performance as advertised. This leads the consumer to become a brand advocate or loyalist of Apple, as Apple has a strong lead in metrics for such behaviour as Net Promoter Score (Trustmary, 2020).

4.0 Role of promotional tools

4.1 Role of each promotional tool

The Promotional Mix presents five different media elements that offer a choice of promoting the brand to consumers (Lang, Lim and Guzmán, 2022). For Apple, the role of these promotional tools, as well as the general role of the tools in marketing communications, will be summarily shown.

Promotional Mix

Advertising

Advertising involves using traditional and virtual mediums to promote the brand. Traditional mediums range from billboards and print media, whereas virtual mediums can include search engine optimisation or social media marketing. Traditional advertising mediums create a visceral reaction to the brand promotion, making it effective in promoting the brand to a localised segment of consumers. The instance of marketing the privacy feature of Apple products in

Germany is a positive role fulfilled by traditional billboard marketing (Owen, 2019). Virtual marketing through mediums such as social media platforms sees the brand partner with an independent influencer marketer to promote the product organically. This is achieved through strategies such as clicking a mirror selfie where the distinctive Apple logo of the iPhone is visible, increasing the influencer's follower's association with the Apple brand through their association with the influencer.

PR

PR events like WWDC promote the brand's latest products and features to global audiences (Higgins, 2021). This promotional tool was popularised at Apple by the late Steve Jobs, whose iconic appearance in a black turtleneck was as much a promotional quality of the Apple products as the products themselves (Smith, 2012). This legacy of promoting the brand through PR events continues through present leaders like Tim Cook, ensuring Apple's marketing continues to perform on the legacy of Jobs.

Sales promotion

Strategies under this approach involve influencing the consumer's purchase intent through pricing strategies designed to elicit a more attentive response from lowered prices. For Apple, this is observed in the price cuts that are offered on older models of iPhones when the new model is released (Guy, 2022). Apple also offers time-limited discounts during special festive occasions such as Christmas to entice consumers during such a consumerist spending season.

Direct marketing

Direct marketing is performed through one-on-one marketing approaches. For Apple, this is evidenced through its website which also operates an e-commerce storefront for purchasing Apple products globally. The website is designed with the same quality of design language that makes Apple distinguished through its choice of fonts and colours (Kim, Jung and Kim, 2020). Consumer sentiment is positively engaged through exposure to such curated choice of web page design, and Apple's success here makes it a successful performer in digital direct marketing to a culturally diverse and global consumer base.

Personal selling

Personal selling is experienced when buyers interact with Apple employees in Apple stores. The employees are trained to engage the buyers through the APPLE strategy, where each letter represents a broader engagement action by the store representatives (Gallo, 2015). Customers are

approached with a warm greeting, and their need is probed through polite enquiries. A solution is summarily presented to the customer, through a product or service offered by Apple (Gallo, 2015). The customer's issues, or other queries, are listened to with attentive detail. Lastly, the interaction ends with a 'fond farewell and an invitation to return' (Gallo, 2015). This strategy engages the consumer directly by creating a psychological impulse to oblige in hearing out the personal sales pitch given by the employee.

4.2 Distinguishing between above-the-line and below-the-line

Above-the-line marketing involves creating brand awareness on a large scale, whereas below-the-line involves creating localised awareness among consumers. While the former secures a widespread brand presence, the latter ensures individual customers are engaged to make them optimised for driving maximum value through marketing communications.

4.3 Usage in the Organisation

Above-the-line marketing at Apple is readily evidenced through the aforementioned instance of billboard marketing in Germany. Other advertisements such as Mac vs PC created significant brand awareness for MacBook laptops over non-Apple branded alternatives (Ives, 2017). Apple uses data analytics to optimise its below-the-line marketing to consumers. Through this approach, a more detailed consumer profile is created for individual consumers, allowing Apple to target them individually with customised promotional offers, product recommendations and other engagement techniques (Manko, 2021). This is fulfilled through the use of marketing across emails and push notifications on smartphones as well.

5.0 Benefits of electronic marketing tools

5.1 Benefits to the Organisation

According to Kotler, an organisation's marketing task involves identifying consumer needs and desires and targeting their satisfaction in a manner that sees the firm act "more efficiently and effectively than competitors" (Zeithaml and Zeithaml, 1984). Keeping this in context allows the report to detail the accurate benefits of electronic marketing tools for Apple.

Search engine optimisation

Apple achieves search engine optimisation through indirect effects caused by its branding strategies. For instance, if a consumer searches for an 'Apple smartphone', the adjacent details are automatically promoted such as 'iOS' for the smartphone operating system on iPhones.

Email

Apple allows its consumers to gain access to personalised marketing content, such as promotional offers and new product information, through email-based subscriptions to the automated marketing platform at Apple. This allows Apple to benefit from offering a customised experience to its consumers through analysis of their buying habits and assorted behaviours (Globaltechoutlook, 2021).

Social media

Apple also achieves this indirectly, as its business strategies have positioned it to benefit from social media indirect marketing. While Facebook has ownership of the popular social media platform Instagram, its algorithm is optimised to offer better image upload quality to iPhone users exclusively (Usman, 2020). This sees numerous users use the iPhone to take their photos, whether they be selfies or group photos. The visibility of the iPhone and the Apple brand in these global photos creates indirect social media marketing through user-generated content, which is made more effective through ownership and optimization of Instagram as it is one of the top 3 social media platforms globally.

Video Marketing

Apple products are promoted through advertising videos streamed across digital channels such as social media platforms including YouTube. Through these digital portals, Apple can launch iconic video marketing that uses creativity to engage consumers.

5.2 Identifying additional techniques

Apple's brand position allows it to benefit from engaging with new consumers through indirect promotional activities created by existing brand loyalists. This sees products such as the iPhone become promoted through word-of-mouth marketing and peer recommendations, which occur in person as well as digitally (Mourdoukoutas, 2011). In the virtual environment, this is achieved through actions such as leaving positive reviews for Apple products on e-commerce platforms such as Amazon. It is also achieved indirectly through positive comments on Apple products being left on related or unrelated media content hosted on different websites such as YouTube,

Twitter or Reddit. Benchmarking websites like DxOMark promote the iPhone for its photographic prowess. These various instances hold the same conclusion in common; Apple's branding strategy and product advantage creates various opportunities for indirect promotion through diverse stakeholders such as industry benchmark websites, global influencers and common consumers.

5.3 Role of marketing research in this process

Apple uses marketing research extensively through big data analysis of its consumer data. Through this, it gains accurate insight into individual consumer behaviour through instances like search history, browsing history, purchase habits and other identifying factors. These details allow Apple to create a stronger segmentation of its consumers, which consequently leads to more effective targeted electronic marketing activities such as email newsletters.

6.0 Outlining ¹ push, pull and profile strategies in the context of the organisation's communication strategy

6.1 Push strategy

Apple's push strategy sees it promote quality improvements in its products as push elements through its PR events like WDCC. Its retail stores are situated in prominent and upscale localities across global markets, which promote the brand's qualities of exclusivity and luxury through retail distribution actions. Instances to support this are readily available, such as housing the Paris store in a 200-year-old building on Champs-Elysees (Nurjuwita, 2018). In Singapore, a recent Apple store was opened at the upscale Marina Bay destination (Ravenscroft, 2020). In London, a prominent retail store is present on Regent Street, which is characterised by shopping opportunities across numerous stores (Eccles, 2020). In this way, the Apple brand is used to communicate retail luxury and exclusivity across different global markets in alignment with the same qualities exuded in Apple products like iPhones.

6.2 Pull strategy

One of the foremost motivating factors of the pull strategy for consumers is shopping with Apple due to its after-sales service and long-term software support. This pull strategy is particularly

effective as direct rivals like Samsung have attempted to replicate the same software support for their smartphones (Fathi, 2021). Such pull strategies work for Apple owing to the high demand for iPhone products, differentiation driven by marketing and high brand loyalty.

6.3 Profile Strategy

The profile strategy influences how stakeholders perceive the brand, through its market positioning as well as brand identity. The annual keynote event hosted by Apple promotes the Apple brand through yearly new product launches, and these events are hosted by the CEO directly. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is another approach under profile strategy. Under Jobs' tenure, Apple sidelined CSR as it would impede the performance of core innovations needed to position Apple in its present leading position (Zheng and Lee, 2018). Presently, Apple has a dedicated CSR programme which funds instances like the \$100 million for Racial Equity and Justice Initiative (REJI) (Kastrenakes, 2020). Other measures see it create an equitable environment for LGBTQ+ employees, consumers and other stakeholders interacting with the firm, which has been recognised through leading scores given to Apple under the Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index (Fingas, 2019). Consumers from such minority groups respond positively to such profile strategies as it aligns with their well-being while positioning the firm as being socially responsible (Kim, 2022). Lastly, Apple's effectiveness at using this strategy is underlined by its strong ESG Risk Rating of 16.8, positioning it as a low-risk company in the context of Environmental, Social and Governance sustainability.

7.0 Conclusion

The report has audited the marketing communications performance of the Apple brand. In doing so, it identifies the unique advantage of Apple where its brand identity and product offerings allow stakeholders to create indirect promotional content that benefits the brand's relationship with its consumers. Therefore, the success of Apple is grounded in creating products that satisfy market demand while elevating the consumer experience through advertising, brand image positioning and promoting Apple products as lifestyle-enhancing offerings that uplift the consumer's self-esteem and quality of satisfaction derived from consuming the product.

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