

INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION – CREATING THE RIGHT RELATIONS WITH THE RIGHT CUSTOMERS TITLE

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ABSTRACT: Integrated marketing communication is an essential concept used in clarifying and managing lucrative relations with the employees, consumers and shareholders and sending a uniform message to provide coherence and the maximum impact of communication as far as organization and its products in all the relation points. In order to provide the success of such an approach the person doing the marketing communication must be headed for observing the steps, as follows: recognizing the target audience, setting communication objectives, creating the message, structuring integrated efficient communication and promotion programs, by choosing both the personal and impersonal communication paths of the message, in order to emphasize the expected feedback from potential and present customers. Hence, the purpose of integrated marketing communication is the simplicity of the message and the use of various online and offline communication means by improving the potential of the company so as to send the right message to the right customers at the right time and place.

Key words: customer, feedback, integrated marketing communication

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Introduction

In the ample process of the global marketing policy of strategies and tactics defining it, the integrated marketing communication plays a major part. Presently, ever more companies pass this concept as a way of thinking reuniting all the other instruments of promotional policy: advertising, sale promotion, personal sales, public relations and direct marketing. At the same, it is also a general notion reflecting reality, used in clarifying and managing a profitable relation with the employees, consumers and shareholders by creating and sending a uniform message to provide coherence and the maximum impact of communication as far as organization and its products in all the relation points.

Hence, the purpose of integrated marketing communication is the simplicity of the message and the use of various online and offline communication means. Small companies present on the market by means of online marketing channels. They are based on integrated marketing communication plans with a minimum budget using any type of e-marketing campaign, from search engine optimization (SEO), making payments online, e-mail and web banner to the most present ones related to webinar, podcast, blogs, Internet TV. However, the large companies may implement such plans having access to generous budgets. Offline marketing channels send the message by traditional printing instruments (newspapers, magazines), mail order, public relations, outdoor ads, radio and TV. However, one wants to select the most efficient communication means emphasizing an efficient and coherent marketing campaign both through the mass-media platform and through

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other smaller and more focused communication means.

Most of the companies practice this orientation towards integrated communication when they want to build up the brand starting from the consumer. They emphasize especially the comprehension of consumers' needs and wishes, of the way in which they are responsive to the messages sent by the company. By means of this process, they aim at improving the image of the organization which is possible due to the quality and the coherence in communicating the brand values to the customer. Practically, the customers shall be presented with the most convincing form of the company products and services in order to guaranty their satisfaction so as they come back to the customer and make them buy.

The main stages the company carefully incorporates and coordinates its multiple communication channels as far as the expected positive results, are:

- Customers' database representing an important component of the integrated marketing system contributing to the segmentation of the consumers and the study of their preferences;
- Strategies resulting from the customer data – an expensive strategy is not always the most efficient strategy;
- The tactics resulting from the strategy with multiple objectives;
- The results/assessment that emphasizes the answers from the customers and the information on the consumers' preferences are collected and analyzed to determine the efficient application of strategy and tactics.

As a marketing manager shows, "IMG builds a strong brand identity in the marketplace by tying together and reinforcing all the company's positioning, images and messages across all its marketing communications venues. It means that your PR materials say the same thing as your direct mail campaign, and your advertising has the same "look and feel" as its Web site". (Ph. Kotler, 2005)

The concept of integrated marketing

The integrated marketing concept at the level of the company may be structured on two levels. In the first stage, the functions of marketing: sale powers, publicity, customers' relations, product management, marketing research shall interact for a better communication. Then, the other departments of the company shall be integrated in the marketing concept. In a company where the manager thinks that the only "profit centre" is the consumer, all the departments: research-development, production, financial department, etc., contribute to the satisfaction of the customer's needs, resulting in integrated management. Each department represents a "supplier" for some departments and a "customer" for others. At the same time, from this point of view, it is necessary to work as a team.

In practice, the marketing people address the target audience through the most appropriate communication instruments, e.g.: publicity represents an essential long-term element by maximizing the awareness of the products towards buying, while the free samples and sale promotions have short-term effects.

"Under this concept, as one can see (fig. no.1), the company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organization and its products". (Ph. Kotler, 2005) The marketing communication mix consists of a set of promotion instruments needing their integration. In order to gain notoriety and appreciation a company has five available communication means:

a. commercial advertising or mass-media communication (paid advertising) is a quality variable at the psychological level with long-term results. In other words, this concept us a mass communication aiming at the same message through indirect and non-personal presentation and promotion contact, paid by a well-paid sponsor set to satisfy its interests;

b. sale promotion is a quantity variable using short-term stimulation techniques in order to encourage the customers in buying and trying a product;

c. public relations (non-commercial advertising) is a set of activities with efficient long term psychological effects. The aim is to build profitable relations with the audience inside and outside the company through favorable publicity and creating programs meant to protect the market image or the company products;

d. personal sales (sale power) is the most efficient instrument from the point of view of the purchase process contributing to creating consumers' convictions and actions. In order to add to this definition we need to emphasize that the sales involve the direct interaction between two or more possible buyers in order to be sold the products;

e. direct marketing is an information means used in promotional policy using databases to identify the potential customers that are to be contacted. It is the most accessible communication means as it is less expensive than other media. It aims at direct reactions among the target so as to obtain both immediate and customized sale and to consolidate a long-term relationship. Under the circumstances, they offer the interested customers the possibility of company feedback using efficient techniques such as: using mail, phone electronic mail fax or the Internet.

Integrated marketing communication mix

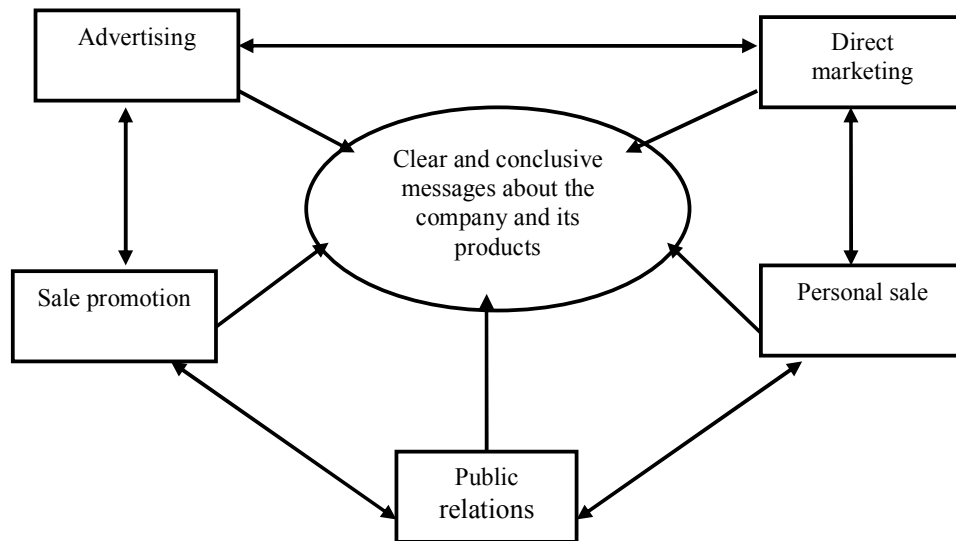


Fig. no. 1 – Integrated marketing communications

This concept is related to the “growth of internet which created a new metric system and resulted in a more transparent marketing. The companies were able to directly interact with a larger number of final individual consumers and assess marketing strategies offered by the marketing researches. Now, most companies are aware that it is necessary, for the success of a corporation, to gather information from such interactions, not only to assess the change in the conducts, but also to grow the profitability” (<http://www.russellreynolds.com/practices.asp?functionId=98&industryId=1> September, 2009, (www.russellreynolds.com/pdf/.../Integr_Marketing_Comm_WhitePaper_5.pdf))

Marketing communication

Presently, marketing communication has five integrated levels, such as: horizontal, vertical, internal, external and data integration. They include a series of specific actions:

1. horizontal integration – is based on the instruments of the marketing mix and the business functions, e.g.: the production department, finance, distribution and communication shall be aware of the team work aiming at sending messages to the customer;
2. vertical integration – supposes that the marketing objectives and communications support the highest level of the corporate objectives;
3. internal integration – consists of preparing and motivating all employees as far as new services, new business partners, new communication strategies, respectively new identities as principle and basic units of the company organization and operation;
4. external integration – supposes external partners through the collaboration between advertising and public relation agencies in order to send a clear message;
5. data integration – means an information marketing system between different departments, such as: sale, direct marketing and advertising collecting the relevant data from the customers.

In order to enter the market, a company shall use the integrated marketing communication elements through a campaign with positive results and sending it through electronic platforms. To select this communication needs it is necessary to elaborate the objectives characterizing this concept, to be defined in three dimensions:

- Increasing the brand capital;
- Satisfying the consumer's needs;
- Communicating the main benefits.

In the strategic dimension, the existence of mutations in the advertising industry resulted in the evolution of the integrated marketing. Most of the companies wanting to promote their products can see a favorable opportunity in any change. Thus, on the conditions of the evolution of the communication process, the specific literature mentions seven such mutations:

- The mutation from the advertising to the more complex communication media aimed towards the target segment;
- The mutation from the general marketing to the database marketing;
- The mutation from the producer controlled market to the consumer oriented market;
- The mutation from the limited Internet users to the larger Internet availability in order to gather as much information about potential consumers as necessary;
- The mutation from the traditional payment means to the action to motivate employees resulting from their performance though maximizing sales;
- The mutations to the advertising agencies represent nowadays a key-element as far as advertising;

Such mutations contributed to superior quality focused on marketing communication consisting of messages and corresponding media for a better market relation.

In order for the communication process to have the wanted purpose, in designing the contents and choosing the used techniques and means it is necessary to follow the ten principles:

- a. assistance from the superior management for initiative making sure that they understand the advantages of this concept;
- b. the managers, regardless of their level, shall give major importance to the integrated marketing communication. This is possible especially through understanding the message about the quality of the offered products and services. Once the message is understood, they shall follow an efficient internal marketing policy;

c. in order to keep a brand in the attention of the consumers it is necessary to provide a Brand Chart used for the common visual standards for the use of logos and colors;

d. set the advertising budget according to the company's needs. First of all, build up a new communication plan mentioning the techniques to reach the objectives. Then, the attention shall aim at communication activities, actually, the companies have a lesser budget than they need in order to invest in promotion, as it is the most difficult marketing decision the company shall make;

e. all the communication instruments play a very important part in building long-term relations with the customers. Also, keeping the customers, corresponding to the third stage of the life cycle of the product, i.e. maturity, is as important as the customer's purchase corresponding to the launching stage of the lifecycle of the product;

f. develop a marketing information system to describe: who in the company needs information, what type of (primary or secondary) information and when to use it. "The companies who know their customers at the individual level may adjust their product, offer, message, delivery means and payment terms to maximize the attractiveness for the customer"; (Ph. Kotler, 2003)

g. share Artwork and other Media. Take into consideration the most efficient means to use the advertising images so as to have a large impact among the consumers in mail shots, exhibitions, press communications, websites;

h. send a real message to consumers which is possible only through efficient information. The message shall be renewed and improved whenever necessary so as to be ever more convincing for the consumer;

i. Be prepared to change everything based on experience.

An especially important element of the human resources department is the leader of the integrated marketing communications shall have a series of knowledge and characteristic skills of this activity. In order to adjust to the environment they depend upon ever more, they comply with the following tasks:

- they play an important part in implementing strategies and innovating integrated marketing programs;

- looking to the future, such a leader shall contribute to the development of the strategic points in the organization;

- they partake in advertising, packaging actions, consumers' promotions, marketing, media and public relations. The organizations that take such actions have a large benefit since they can attract customers of other companies, benefiting from the consumer's feedback;

- they have both a strategic and an active function in the company marketing activities;

- they manage, lead and offer the unconditional support to direct subordinates;

- they work with the representatives of all the departments in the company aiming at adding up and maximizing the efforts of the brand portfolio;

- they work with the managers of different companies to conceive, develop, assess and make programs so as each of the purposes and strategic objectives are justified;

- as a probable substitute of the marketing manager, the leader shall be aware of all the details of the company internal marketing in order thereon to make essential changes;

- pursuant to the experience they have, the leader assesses, recruits, develops and holds a motivated marketing team.

Conclusions

In conclusion, one shall retain that the salespeople play not only the part of that sells but also the part that convinces the customer to buy their products, which is possible only with the help of professionals. A different very important aspect is that that quality means the satisfaction of the

customers' needs and expectations representing the ideal solution to defend from competitors, the only way to maximize the profit and, last but not least, a way to secure the customers' loyalty.

Most companies consider that the customers are the most important investment. This investment may be acquired through product, quality, after sale services and the product, before being sold shall be presented to the customers by experienced people. All these aspects depend on the need of the company to communicate as a whole, and of the salesman, as individual.

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