

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND PROMOTION

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ABSTRACT

Integrated Marketing Communication emerges as a powerful tool that guides practitioners in developing and implementing marketing communications more consistently and effectively. Despite its continuing appeal little is known about its physical or visible form in marketing communication process, but the emergence of this concept has become one of the most significant examples of development in the marketing discipline. It is the most innovative function of marketing endorsed by advertising and marketing practitioners. Integrated Marketing Communication has moved beyond communication to the process of using promotional elements in a unified way so that a synergistic communication effect is created and achieved. The present study explore on the purpose of drawing out whether Integrated Marketing Communication could indeed be seen as an effort towards promotion in practice and also find out some challenges and future of integrated marketing communications for business.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Information Technology, Promotional Mix, Stakeholders.

INTRODUCTION:

Integrated Marketing Communication is a step towards an integrated approach in achieving efficiency by synergy. By definition, It involves the merging of distinct communication functions in a way that allows an organization to speak with “one voice, one look” (Fitzerpatrik.K.R. 2005).

Marketing communication represents the “voice” of the company and its brands and is the means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationship with customers. By integrated marketing communication consumers learn who makes the product, for what purpose or benefit it stands and links the brand to people, place, events, experiences, feelings, etc. Integrated Marketing Communication enhances companies’ ability to reach the right customer with right message at the right time and in the right place.

Integrated Marketing Communication is the planning and execution of all types of marketing communication needed for a product, brand, idea, company or place in order to satisfy a common set of objectives and support the positioning of promotion. The concept of integrated marketing communication has evolved over four fundamental stages, starting from tactical coordination of promotional elements, redefinition of the scope of marketing communication and application of information and communication technology to the financial and strategic integration (panda. T. k., 2009).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

We are sure to see innovations in communications research during the next several years, the like of which have never been before seen in the field (Lavidge,1999).

Integrated Marketing Communication has recognized all the trends by which firms touch customers must be related, aligned and coordinated making it more than advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing programmes (Schultz.D.E.,2003).

Let us assume that the ultimate process of marketing is to deliver higher standard of living through communications (Kotler.P.,2003).

The marketers of twenty-first century should utilize an IMC program, which goes beyond usual marketing concepts of 4p’s, trying in addition to generate new ways of creating customers by database (Johnson and Schultz, 2004).

If companies disregard IMC and different messages are not delivered in unison, it may lead to an incoherent brand image, which can negatively influence consumer behavior (McGrrath ,2005).

To draw the benefits from IMC approach, it is imperative that whole organization, cross functional and subsidiaries understands how IMC works and how IMC plans can be put into action if this is not the case integration will be lost which will inturn weaken both corporate brand and relationship (Reid, et.al., 2005).

The primary goal of IMC is to affect the perception of value and behavior through communication (Holm.D.,2006).

The greater utilization of marketing communication tools within an IMC approach can lead to a better overall outcome and may also deliver a more holistic picture (Smith, et.al., 2006).

Integrated Marketing Communication approaches have become the accepted norm for agencies offering services to clients (Eagle.L.,Kitchen.J.p.,et.al.,2007).

The psychological continuity is a consistent attitude towards a brand or firm. It is reference for company’s voice and personality for the consumers. This can be achieved but Integrated Marketing Communication with them (panda. T. k., 2009).

Marketing communication activities must be integrated to deliver a consistent message and strategic positioning (Kotler.P.,Keller.K.L.,et.al.,2009).

BACKGROUND AND CONCEPT OF IMC:

As a customer centered process integrated marketing communication is the first step in developing a common understanding of its purpose and value. Integrated marketing communication integrates everything that helps a company to promote its business and position its product in the market. An integrated marketing communication program must be continuous and strategic oriented. Some early attempts appeared in academic literature (Dyer, 1982; coulson-thomas, 1983; Schultz, 1996). Integrated marketing communication began to be practiced and became a hot topic throughout (caywood et.al. 1991; mile and rose,1994; kitchen and Schultz,1999).

Caywood(1997) suggest that background for the emergence of integrated marketing communication is from three areas first from corporate or client side , an increasing competition and higher risk in markets brought by merging and acquisitions have been required to meet the consumer changing needs more successfully through new marketing strategies. Second from media and market side weakening the traditional trends of advertising

and marketing, due to exposure of information technology has increased the search for more effective and cost efficient methods in communications among marketers. Third from, the consumer, as ongoing changes in his life style have made advertisers to develop more elaborate and quicker response communication formats.

Today's business environment demands a well managed and equally planned relational customer data-base, a focused and customer-oriented approach to customers and clients, and a psychological-driven prospecting approach to Sales. Reich then insists that marketers should combine proven marketing techniques with new integrated marketing communication methods to ensure success (Reich, 1998).

It begins with the product development and includes packaging, pricing, selection of distribution channels, channel management, customer relationship management, total quality management etc. it involves the multidimensional, interactive, continuously measured communication that connects the brand or product and the customer (Lauterborn, 2003). The allocation of communication budget, away from mass media and traditional advertising has obviously promoted integrated marketing communication in recognition and effective marketing.

The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines integrated marketing communication as "a concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact".

Apparently in just a short period, the concept of integrated marketing communication became a watch-cry not only of marketing communications, but also an integral part of corporate communication strategies of many companies.(Kitchen.J.P., et.al.,2004).it has increased communication impact, made creative ties more effective and provide consistency in communication.

Integrated Marketing Communication has evolved over a period of time from awareness level of integration to image level integration to functional integration to coordinated integration to consumer based integration to stakeholder based integration to relationship management integration (panda. T. k., 2009).

It is a promotional tool along with other marketing mix components to gain advantage over competitors using to reach highest level of consumer satisfaction by knowing the right touch-points. It is a data driven approach using outside-in thinking focused on identifying consumer insights using both on and off –line channel strategy to develop a stronger brand-consumer relationship (Surrender. S., and Telrandhe.N.,2010). Integrated marketing communication is thus the voice of marketing creating brand awareness, deliver information, educate the market and make a positive image of the company.

KEY CHALLENGES OF IMC:

Across the globe, there is continuity in market deregulation and emergence of individualized segmentation of consumer tastes and preferences. So IMC being not an easy process has to face internal as well as external challenges. As some markets flee traditional media they still come across some communication clutter. The challenges of IMC are.

- A shift in market place power from manufacturer to wholesaler to retailer/shift in channel power.
- A movement away from relying on advertising focused approach.
- Rapid growth of data base marketing.
- A shift in traditional promotions.
- Change in the way the advertising agencies compensated.
- Rapid growth of internet marketing.
- Growing competition in relationship marketing.
- Change from mere information delivery to value delivery.
- Consumer empowerment.
- Fragmentation of media.
- Increasing advertising clutter.
- Desire for greater accountability.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Integrated Marketing Communication is the boost for promotional mix elements, whether it is advertising; direct marketing, interactive/internet marketing, sales promotion, publicity/public relations or personal selling, combining these disciplines to provide consistently and clearly a maximum communication impact. Promotion has been defined as the coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to set up channels of information and persuasion to sell goods and services or promote an idea.

Promotion is the systematic attempt to move forward step by step prospects from a state of unawareness to

awareness then to knowledge and liking, then to preference and conviction and finally to action (purchase) or a positive behavioral response. The communication accomplishes its objectives in a series of mental stages as the receiver or audience moves from unawareness to actual deal. The purpose of integrated marketing communication should be to maximize customer delivered value. Integrated marketing communication plays a very important role in the ability and capacity of firm to innovate and success fully delivers competitive response through value added offerings to their customers. The various steps commonly followed in an integrated marketing communication process are:

- Identify the audience to be targeted.
- Determine objectives of your communication.
- Design the message of communication.
- Select your media channel.
- Decide the budget.
- Decide the marketing communication mix.
- Measuring your results.
- Managing and coordinating IMC.

So a centralized strategic planning is the very heart of integrated marketing communication. The use of various options should be centrally planned and coordinated utilizing a systematic strategic planning. Strategy lays down the broad principles by which a company hopes to secure an advantage over the competitors, exhibit attractiveness to buyers and lead to efficient utilization of resources and promote company image.

Moreover a successful Integrated Marketing Communication program must have the right combination of promotional tools and techniques that must help companies to identify appropriate and efficient methods for communicating and building relationship with customers as well as other stakeholders, such as employees, suppliers, investors, interest groups and the general public.

DIFFUSION OF IMC:

In future, Integrated Marketing Communication will become a requirement and not mere a choice for clients and agencies in the world. Integrated marketing communication process is highly dynamic from a holistic point of view. The changing environment of markets and marketing is the driving force for integrated marketing communication implementation. Further with the development of information and communication technology, marketing communications must transform towards new information-driven interactive consumer focused approach. Integrated marketing communication as a general concept would be acceptable as effective marketing departments and advertising agencies are developing new pipelines of new talented innovations, media buyers, promotions managers, data base web masters and others in order to succeed in the long run. Moreover the methods of integrated marketing communication operation and deployment path must be different based on certain socio-cultural and institutional factors of certain masses.

CONCLUSION:

Hopefully coming to the point that business is not about changing the people but about changing yourself and your reactions for them. Success comes when one learns to control and coordinate. So integrated marketing communication plan should not be considered an end goal but rather a continuous approach. This is the most exciting, most challenging time in history of communication research. The diffusion of integrated marketing communication program should closely be associated with changes in consumption pattern, technical advancement and competition. Integrated marketing communication study provides practice based and grounded insights as well as concrete suggestions for organizing communication campaigns. Integrated marketing communication must not be just communication with present and prospect customers, but also with employees, vendors, related industries and external environment either directly or indirectly involved within. Moreover in marketing effective communication is absolutely necessary even though one is having a superb product best package and offer a fair price, people will not come to buy it unless they might have heard of it or are aware of it. So without integrated marketing communication promotion of a brand or product or generally your business is impossible and without promotion nothing can be sold in this competitive global market.

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