

The image features two black silhouettes of people in profile, facing each other as if in conversation. The person on the left has a white earpiece. The person on the right has large hoop earrings and a belt with a white circular buckle. The background is a vibrant green with stylized floral and leaf patterns in various shades of green. The text is overlaid on the silhouettes in a white, elegant script font.

Part 3

Managing marketing communications

Chapters 9–15

The main theme of this part of the book concerns the management of marketing communications.

This part opens with a consideration of a core concept, integrated marketing communications (IMC). It explores ideas concerning the nature and validity of this concept and suggests that the concept is used in a number of ways by both academics and practitioners. This chapter adopts a strategic perspective, one that is extended into the following chapter. Here, in Chapter 10, issues about strategy and planning are discussed and readers are encouraged to consider the interaction between the two elements. The marketing communications planning framework is introduced at this point.

Chapter 11 examines the nature and role of objectives in marketing communications and then considers the importance of positioning activities. This is an important strategic aspect of this subject and one that is supported by product and corporate branding issues that are the focus of the following two chapters. The main point within these chapters is not branding itself but the role marketing communications plays in the branding process.

The final two chapters in this part review matters concerning the allocation of financial resources and how communications and campaigns should be evaluated. Chapter 14 looks at the various techniques used by organisations to develop suitable budgets for marketing communications and debates the efficiency and effectiveness of these approaches. Chapter 15 is important because it looks at the evaluation of marketing communications activities from both a campaign and promotional tool perspective. It is important because evaluation is often overlooked in terms of its impact and contribution to the overall process.

Video Insight Part 3

Part 3 of the book is concerned with the issues associated with managing marketing communications. This includes developing marketing communications strategy, planning and integrating campaigns, devising and managing budgets and evaluating the effectiveness of marketing communications activities. In addition to these aspects, marketing communications plays an important role in developing and maintaining brands.

Marketing India is a demanding task considering the diversity of potential tourist experiences. The Video Insight shows how understanding target markets and adopting a planned approach can lead to effective communications. It refers to India as a brand and brands need to be managed if they are to be developed successfully. In a similar way the interview with Canon Precentor, Lucy Winkett provides an interesting perspective on the way St. Paul's Cathedral can be considered a brand.

The Land Rover contribution considers some of the strategic issues and responds to criticisms that this brand is essentially an environmental hazard. Issues concerning CSR are critical aspects of an organisation's communications and these are demonstrated well in this Video Insight.

Marketing communications can be used to reflect the prevailing or dominant corporate or country/region culture, especially if it can be used to provide an emotional selling point or a means of sustainable differentiation. The strength of the Swedish culture and its influence on purchasing and customer experiences is examined by the interview with Ikea.

Most marketing professionals will recognise the importance of measuring marketing activities. Research shows that some organisations are reluctant to invest in this activity, at least to the extent they should. Here, Dave Hodgson, Marketing Manager for Marketing Birmingham advocates the need to evaluate marketing communications activities on the basis that if it is not measurable (an activity) then it is not worth doing in the first place.

Go to www.pearsoned.co.uk/fill to watch the Video Insight, and then answer the following questions:

1. What are the difficulties associated with branding India?
2. How do Ikea segment their markets and how do they use push, pull and profile strategies?
3. How do Birmingham measure their marketing communications?





Chapter 9

Integrated marketing communications

Integrated marketing communications are more likely to occur when organisations attempt to interact with their various internal and external audiences. The communication mix used in any interaction should be audience-centred and internally consistent with the organisation's objectives and strategies. Target audiences should perceive these communications and associated cues as relevant, likeable, timely and of value.

Aims and learning objectives

The aims of this chapter are to explore the nature and characteristics of integrated marketing communications and to understand the complexities associated with developing and implementing this form of marketing communications.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:

1. introduce the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) and explore what it is that is integrated;
2. understand the different perspectives of IMC;
3. consider the background and reasons for the development and interest in IMC;
4. explore some of the issues associated with managing and implementing IMC;
5. explain variants of the IMC concept: media-neutral planning and open planning approaches;
6. consider how the structures and frameworks of advertising and communication agencies might need to change so that they are better able to work with IMC;
7. examine ideas concerning an incremental approach to IMC.

For an applied interpretation see J. Graham Spickett-Jones' MiniCase entitled *IMC – richer consumer engagement* at the end of this chapter.

Introduction

To appreciate the essence of integrated marketing communications (IMC) it is helpful to understand its origins and the key factors that have helped shape its development. For many years agencies and clients believed that to deliver messages to particular audiences it was necessary to use specific tools of the communications mix. At the time it was a common belief that to achieve specific communication effects *on* buyers it was necessary to use particular tools. So for example, clients were recommended to use advertising to create awareness, sales promotions to generate immediate sales uplifts and public relations to create interest and goodwill towards a brand. This view held that each tool has specific characteristics and particular communication abilities. As a result clients were required to deal with a variety of functionally different and independent agencies in order to complete their communication requirements with their various audiences.

It was a common belief that to achieve specific communication effects *on* buyers it was necessary to use particular tools.

This 'specialisation' resulted in a proliferation of advertising agencies and the development of sales promotion houses. Public relations specialists stood off from any direct association with marketing. Personal selling had already evolved as a discrete function within organisations. This approach was also legitimised by the development of trade associations and professional management groups (for example, the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (UK) and the Institute of Sales Promotion (UK)) that seek to endorse, advance, protect and legitimise the actions of their professions and members. One of the outcomes of this silo perspective and functional development of the marketing communications industry has been entrenchment and the inevitable opposition to change.

Now that clients have begun to re-orient their communications away from mass media approaches to increased levels of interaction with customers, the structural inadequacies of the marketing communication industry have served to constrain them. IMC has emerged partially as a reaction to this structural inadequacy and the realisation by clients that their communication needs can (and should) be achieved more efficiently and effectively than previously. In other words, just as power has moved from brand manufacturers to multiple retailers and now to consumers, so power is moving from agencies to clients.

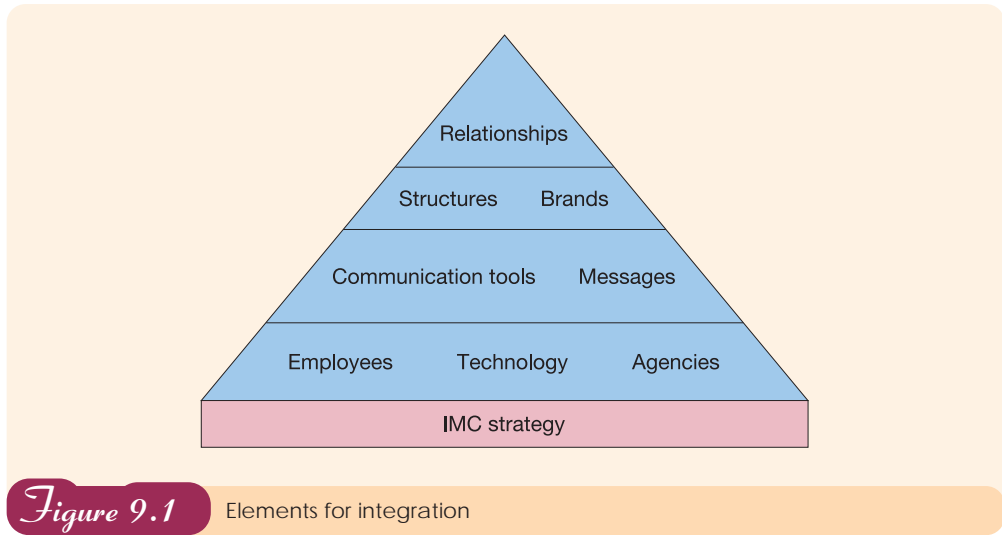
This trend away from traditional communication strategies based on mass communications, directing generalised messages to huge segmented audiences has played a part in the development of IMC. Contemporary strategies are based more on personalised, customer-oriented and technology-driven approaches, and are often referred to as integrated marketing communications (IMC). Duncan and Everett (1993) recall that this new, largely media-oriented approach, has been referred to variously as *orchestration*, *whole egg* and *seamless communication*. More recent notions involve the explicit incorporation of corporate communications, reflected in titles such as integrated marketing and integrated communications (see Cornelissen (2000)).

More recent notions involve the explicit incorporation of corporate communications.

It is interesting that the rapid development of direct marketing initiatives since the second half of the 1980s and the impact the Internet has made have coincided with a move towards what has become regarded as integrated marketing communications. A further significant development has been the shift in marketing philosophies, from transaction to relationship marketing, as introduced in Chapter 1 and considered in more detail in Chapter 7.

What is to be integrated?

The notion that some aspects of marketing communications should be integrated begs the question, what is it that needs to be integrated? While the origins of IMC might be found in



the prevailing structural conditions and the needs of particular industry participants, an understanding of what elements should be integrated in order to achieve IMC needs to be established.

The problem with answering this question is that unless there is an agreement about what IMC is then identifying appropriate elements is far from easy, practical or in any one's best interests. Figure 9.1 shows some of the elements that need integrating.

The following represents some of the fundamental elements, but readers are advised to consider some of the other issues that have been raised in this chapter before confirming their views about this stimulating yet relatively young concept.

Communication tools

The key visual triggers used in advertising should be replicated across the range of promotional tools used.

One of the early and more popular views of IMC was that the messages conveyed by each of the 'promotional' tools should be harmonised in order that audiences perceive a consistent set of meanings within the messages they receive. One interpretation of this perspective, is that the key visual triggers (design, colours, form and tag line) used in advertising should be replicated across the range of promotional tools used, including POP and the sales force. At another level, integration is about bringing together the communication tools (Pitta *et al.* 2006). One such combination is the closer alliance of advertising with public relations. Increasing audience fragmentation means that it is more difficult to locate target audiences and communicate with them in a meaningful way. By utilising the power of public relations to get advertisements talked about, what the trade refer to as media equivalents, so a form of communications consistency, or integration to some, becomes possible.

The rapid development of direct marketing approaches has helped some organisations bring together the different tools such that they undertake more precise roles and reinforce each other. For example, the use of direct mail and telemarketing to follow through on an ad campaign is common place, but now web-enabled communications, customer care centres and sales promotions can be linked together through database applications, and all are designed to communicate the same core message.

ViewPoint 9.1

Integrated crumbs

Two of McVitie's core brands are Hobnobs and Milk Chocolate Digestives and a campaign was required to reinforce the credentials of the McVitie's umbrella brand with consumers and to convey the message that their biscuits are made 100 per cent from UK wheat and oats.

To deliver this message they developed an integrated campaign based around the core message 'share the goodness'.

The campaign, which was advertising-led, consisted primarily of a £2m poster. In addition they used direct marketing to reinforce brand values. Public relations were used to support the campaign. Here the goal was to create media interest and comment about the brand. This was achieved through an art exhibition held at Leeds, Bristol and Birmingham city centres. The exhibition featured two 5ft bales of wheat covered with Milk Chocolate Digestives wrappers.

The events drew extensive broadcast and print media interest and the whole campaign saw sales rise a massive 9 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year.

Source: Cowlett (2007).

Question

Is this an example of integrated marketing communications or just good practice?

Task

Which other tools and media could have been used in the McVitie's campaign?

Messages

A further interpretation, at a deeper level, is that the theme and set of core messages used in any campaign should first be determined and then deployed as an integrated whole across the communication mix (sometimes referred to as synergy). One of the differences is the recognition that mass media advertising is not always the only way to launch consumer or business-to-business promotional activities, and that a consideration of the most appropriate mix of communication tools and media might be a better starting point when formulating campaigns.

Another perspective of IMC, provided by Duncan and Moriarty (1998), is that stakeholders (including customers) automatically integrate brand messages. This suggests that as long as the gap between the different messages (in content and meaning) are acceptable, then management's task is to manage the process and seek to narrow these gaps that may be perceived.

What runs through both these approaches is the belief that above-the-line and below-the-line communications need to be moulded into one cohesive bundle, from which tools can be selected and deployed as conditions require.

The theme and set of core messages used in any campaign should first be determined and then deployed as an integrated whole across the communication mix.

Marketing mix

The elements of the marketing mix, however configured, also need to be integrated because they also communicate (Smith, 1996). The price and associated values, the product, in terms of the quality, design and tangible attributes, the manner and efficiency of the service delivery people and where and how it is made available, for example the location, web site, customer contact centres, retailer/dealer reputation and overall service quality need to be perceived by customers as a coordinated and consistent whole. These touch points with brands are aspects of a consumer's brand experience and are used to develop images that through

The elements of the marketing mix, however configured, need to be integrated.

time may shape brand reputations. Traditionally the marketing mix was expected to deliver the brand proposition. Now it is expected that all these elements will be coordinated to maximise impact and enable customers to experience the brand through pre-, actual and post-product use.

Branding

Brands are themselves a form of integration.

Brands are themselves a form of integration. This means that internally organisations need to be sufficiently coordinated so that the brand is perceived externally as consistent and uniform. However, this proposition is based on the view that a brand is prepared and delivered for a single target audience but audience and media fragmentation make this task more challenging. Audience sizes are shrinking, which means that in many situations a single audience is no longer economically viable. Brands therefore, need to appeal to a number of different audiences (White, 2000) and to do this it is necessary to develop brands that appeal to diverse consumer groups. White refers to these new brands as ‘chameleon’ brands. They are characterised by their ability to adapt to different situations (audiences and media) yet retain a core proposition that provides a form of continuity and recognition. For example, a top of the range music system may be seen by the owner as prestigious and technically superb, by a guest at a party as ostentatiously outrageous and overpriced and by a friend as a product of clever design and marketing. All three might have developed their attitudes through different sources (e.g. different print media, exhibitions, the Internet, retail stores, word-of-mouth) but all agree that the brand has a common set of values and associations that are important to each of them.

ViewPoint 9.2

Integration to promote conservation

When ZSL London Zoo launched Gorilla Kingdom in 2007 it used a wide range of communication tools and media and had to integrate their use if their sales and communication objectives were to be achieved.

Advertising, for example, outdoor such as billboards and London Underground poster sites.

Sales promotion, for example, included train promotion offers to encourage visitors from outside London.

Direct marketing, for example, direct mail to groups within the travel trade industry.

Public relations, for example, press releases, events, receptions for journalists and sponsorship of radio programme Magic FM.

Personal selling, for example, to people in the travel trade.

By integrating them within the new ZSL London Zoo brand and by timing and coordinating with each other, this marketing communications achieved significant impact and achieved its goals.

Question

How do we know a campaign is integrated?

Task

ZSL London Zoo subsequently launched the new Blackburn Aviary. Make brief notes about how would you use marketing communications to assist the launch?

The presentation of chameleon brands requires high levels of integration, a need to develop a series of innovative messages based around a core proposition. The use of a single ad execution needs to be replaced by multiple executions delivered through a variety of media, each complementing and reinforcing the core brand proposition. This means that the audience is more likely to be surprised or reminded of the brand (and its essence) through a series of

refreshingly interesting messages, thereby raising the probability that the likeability factor (see Chapter 17) will be strengthened, along with the brand and all relevant associations.

A further dimension of the branding factor concerns the role of corporate brands and issues of corporate communications. Should these be integrated with product brand communications, and if so what are the branding strategies that should be followed?

Strategy

IMC is regarded by some as a means of using the tools of the communication mix in a more efficient and synergistic manner. At some level this can be true but IMC requires a deeper understanding of how and where messages are created. At a strategic level, IMC has its roots in the overall business strategy of an organisation. Using Porter's (1980) generic strategies, if a low-cost strategy (e.g. Asda) is being pursued, it makes sense to complement the strategy by using messages that either stress any price advantage that customers might benefit from or at least do not suggest extravagance or luxury. If using a differentiation focus strategy (e.g. Waitrose), price should not figure in any of the messages and greater emphasis should be placed on particular attributes that convey the added value and enable clear positioning. There is no right way (or formula) to establish IMC but there is a need to recognise that it is a developmental exercise and that it should have a strategic orientation as well as strategic outputs.

There is no right way (or formula) to establish IMC.

Employees

The next element that should be integrated concerns the recognition that IMC cannot be sustained unless it is supported by all customer-facing employees. It is generally agreed that all employees should adopt a customer focus and 'live' the brand. While this can be achieved partially through the use of training courses and in-house documentation (including electronic forms), this usually requires a change of culture and that means a longer-term period of readjustment and the adoption of new techniques, procedures and ways of thinking and behaving.

Once the internal reorientation has begun (not completed), it is possible to take the message to external audiences. As long as they can see that employees are starting to act in different ways and do care about them as customers and do know what they are talking about in support of the products and services offered, then it is likely that customers (and other stakeholders) will be supportive. IMC should be concerned with blending internal and external messages so that there is clarity, consistency and reinforcement of the organisation's (or brand's) core proposition.

ViewPoint 9.3

'Try something integrated today'

The development and launch of Sainsbury's highly successful 'Try something new today' campaign, is regarded by many as a good example of a form of integrated marketing communications. The root of the campaign was in the business strategy, one which aimed to boost sales by £2.5bn by March 2008. At a store level this was translated into getting shoppers to put an extra £1.40 into their shopping baskets on each visit to a Sainsbury's store.

From this strategic goal the communications strategy took shape. From a positioning based on 'Making life taste better' to one which read, 'Try something new today', the £10m campaign, led by Jamie Oliver, sought to awake shoppers from what Sainsbury's referred to as 'Sleep Shopping', where people tend to buy the same products on a routine basis, to one where they are prepared to experiment a little.

The strength of the basic idea enabled the message to be used in various media, across channels and adapted for different target segments. Not only was the campaign rooted in business strategy but it also encouraged staff participation.

Staff were given two days' training and then provided with various ingredients and recipes so that they could try them out at home. The thinking was that they could pass ideas onto customers and in doing so provide credibility and enhance the in-store experience for shoppers.

Sources: Adapted from Anon. (2005); Brook (2005); Reed (2006); www.sainsburys.co.uk.

Question

Can IMC be achieved without having to incorporate a strategic orientation?

Task

Find out what each of the other main supermarkets regard as IMC.



Exhibit 9.1

Celebrity chef Jamie Oliver working with Sainsbury's to help us all 'try something new today'

Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives.

Technology

The interest and debate about IMC has been accelerated by developments in technology. The use of technology, and in particular database technologies, has enabled marketing managers a vastly improved view of customer behaviour, attitudes and feelings towards brands. This has allowed more precise and insightful communications to be generated and the subsequent feedback and measurement facilities have further developed the overall quality of customer communications. However, the mere presence of technology does not result in effective marketing communications. Technology needs to be integrated into not just the overall information systems strategy but also the marketing strategies of organisations. Technology is an enabler and to use it effectively requires integration. The effective use of technology can touch a number of areas within the IMC orbit. For example, technology can be used to develop effective

Technology needs to be integrated into not just the overall information systems strategy but also the marketing strategies of organisations.

web sites, extranets and intranets, customer contact centres, databases, advertising campaigns, fulfilment processes, CRM and sales force automation. If each of these applications is deployed independently of the others their impact will be limited. Developed within an integrated framework the potential for marketing and customer service can be tremendous.

Associated with the use of technology are issues concerning the measurement and evaluation of IMC activities. One of the criticisms of IMC is that no evaluation system has yet been proposed or implemented so that the claims made about IMC delivering superior returns can be validated (Swain, 2004). This is part of the planning process and so integration of all aspects of the campaign planning process is necessary.

Agencies

Reference has been made earlier and in Chapter 3 to some of the structural issues involving agencies in the marketing communications industry and with the development of IMC. Agencies play a critical role in marketing communications and if IMC is to be established it cannot be accomplished without the explicit involvement of all those working on the supply side.

Apart from questions concerning the range of promotional services offered by individual agencies and whether these are all delivered by a single agency or through a network of interacting agencies, two particular issues arise. The first concerns leadership and the other remuneration.

With regard to leadership should the agency or the client lead the process of developing IMC? The consensus appears to be that this is the client's role (Swain, 2004), mainly because clients are better positioned to make integration happen across their own organisation. However, Swain then points out that there is no agreement about who in the client organisation should be responsible for implementing IMC. Indeed, Kitchen *et al.* (2007) confirm the reluctance of both advertising and public relations agencies to provide for integrative working practices.

A similar question concerns the implementation of integrated campaigns. Most major brands operate with several agencies, each providing different skills. These are known as roster agencies simply because different agencies can be brought into different campaigns to provide support when necessary. Herein lies the problem for clients implementing an integrative programme: how best to manage an integrative approach? One way is to appoint a lead agency that assumes responsibility for integration. Another way, used by AOL, who work with 12 agencies, is for the client to drive the programme forward and to involve the roster agencies (Gray, 2007). However, many client organisations, such as Shell, prefer to appoint a lead agency and very often it is the generalist ad agency that is appointed.

The second issue, remuneration, should be regarded as inter-related to the measurement factor (Swain, 2004). This is because clients see reward as a derivative of performance. The traditional remuneration system is based on activities (Spake *et al.* (1999) cited by Swain). Commission earned from the use of media to gain

A move to IMC requires a change in agency performance measures.

awareness or change attitudes is not measured against revenue or profit performance, and is referred to as 'an activity'. Results- or 'outcome'-based systems are considered a performance measure. A move to IMC requires a change in agency performance measures and consequently, a change in their method of remuneration. Closer integration of agencies within the IMC process will, among other things, bring changes in structure, operations, performance measures, remuneration and new responsibilities within the client relationship.

This list of elements that need to be integrated is not exclusive. There are other influences that are particular to individual organisations that could have been included. However, consideration of these various elements suggests strongly that what is being integrated is far more than just the communication tools. Indeed, viewed holistically integration is a strategic concept that strikes at the heart of an organisation's marketing and business orientation.

The development of IMC

The word integration has been used in various ways and it is the interpretation of the word integration that determines whether integrated marketing communications is real, achievable or even practised. In many ways, reality suggests that the claims many organisations and the

communications industry make in the name of IMC are simply a reflection of improved management and coordination of the communication tools. The recent interest in media-neutral planning (MNP) may be a good thing for the cause of improved communications and relationship development but MNP does not address the wider strategic issues, the importance of internal communications or the structural issues of IMC on both the client and agency sides.

As established above, early interpretations of IMC were constructed around the idea that what was to be integrated were the promotional tools and media. Scholars such as Shultz (1993) and Duncan and Everett (1993) led much of the IMC activity and many organisations were enthusiastic about the new ideas, driven by the desire to restructure internally, reduce costs and deliver consistent messages. Kitchen *et al.* (2004) refer to this as the inside-out IMC approach.

The next phase was characterised by an exploration of the nature, direction and content typified by definitions that introduced management, strategy and brand development into the IMC process. Shimp (2000) among others, supported the explicit introduction of these aspects to IMC.

The current interpretation has moved the IMC concept forward, this time as an audience- or customer-driven process, one that incorporates ideas concerning relationship marketing. Duncan and Mulhern (2004) cited by Reid (2005), Gronroos (2004) and Duncan (2002) have provided valuable insights into this dimension of IMC, one which Kitchen *et al.* (2004) refer to as the outside-in IMC approach.

It should be noted that while many writers, such as Kitchen and Shultz (1997 and 1998) and Duncan (2002), have written positively and consistently promoting ideas about IMC, other authors such as Cornelissen and Lock (2000), Percy *et al.* (2001) and Spotts *et al.* (1998), to name but a few, have been critical of the concept and have doubted the merits inherent in the concept. This dichotomy of views reveals the inherent instability of the IMC concept. Readers interested in a fuller appraisal of IMC are referred to Kitchen *et al.* (2004) and Cornelissen (2003).

As part of his critique Cornelissen (2003) distinguishes two different themes running through the IMC literature. The first is that IMC is regarded as a predominantly *process*-oriented concept and the second is that it is a *content*-oriented concept. These are examined in the following section.

Unsurprisingly, there is no agreement about what IMC is, what it encompasses or how it should be measured.

IMC is not a proven marketing theory – there is no empirical evidence to support the concept.

Unsurprisingly therefore, there is no agreement about what IMC is, what it encompasses or how it should be measured. Indeed, there is no universally agreed definition and, apart from some anecdotal comment, there is little practical evidence of the application of a strategic, customer-oriented IMC programme. There are numerous claims of IMC practice but these are little more than coordinated promotional mix activities using themed messages (inside-out).

IMC is not a proven marketing theory (Cornelissen, 2003). There is no empirical evidence to support the concept, yet the ideas inherent in the overall approach appear to hold value. Although Cornelissen refers to the IMC concept as only worthy of symbolic value, a view later refuted by Kitchen, it does appear that what is integration to one person (or agency) may be coordination or simply good professional practice to another.

Perspectives on IMC

Cornelissen argues that the literature indicates that there are two main interpretations of IMC: a content and a process perspective respectively.

The *content* perspective assumes that message consistency is the major goal in order to achieve the 'one voice, one look' position. IMC works when there is consistency throughout the various materials and messages. However, this is not a new practice as Cornelissen points out that practitioners having been doing this long before the term IMC surfaced. This view is also associated with the zero-based planning approach that holds that the choice of tools and media should be based on effectiveness criteria rather than the specialist functions for which the planners and managers are responsible. This means that the various agencies and personnel responsible for campaign design and deployment do so without prejudice or bias towards a preferred tool or media. This approach is discussed later in this chapter.

The *content* perspective assumes that message consistency is the major goal in order to achieve the 'one voice, one look' position.

ViewPoint 9.4

Integrated toilet tissue

Velvet is a major toilet tissue brand bought by SCA Hygiene from Procter & Gamble. When SCA launched their Triple Velvet brand they referred to their integrated campaign. The £15m television campaign was supported with direct mail, sampling and touch-test panels in shopping centres, designed to help customers feel the softness of the brand.

Later that year SCA launched an interactive web site accompanied by an online campaign. This campaign extended the theme of the television ad as it features a virtual Velvet factory in which 'Baby MD' advises consumers about various product developments and promotions, while encouraging visitors to download various branded games. Aimed at mothers and children, the site is reported to replicate social networking experiences whose goal is to encourage return visits.

Source: Jones (2007).

Question

Are these primarily a process or content perspective of IMC?

Task

Visit the Velvet web site and comment on whether you believe the site appears to be part of an integrated approach. www.velvet-tissues.co.uk/.

The second interpretation offered by Cornelissen is referred to as a *process* perspective. Here the emphasis is on a structural realignment of the communication disciplines within organisations, even to the point of collapsing all communications into a single department. Even if this extreme interpretation is not a valid goal for an organisation, cross-functional systems and processes are regarded as necessary to enable integrated marketing communications.

The process perspective of IMC is rooted in the belief that real IMC can only be generated through an organisational structure that brings the various communication disciplines together in a single body or unit. By creating a single department out of which advertising, public relations and the other disciplines operate, so cross-functional coordination between the disciplines is enabled. Some argue that the process view needs to incorporate a series of intervening stages as systems, processes and procedures are brought together incrementally to enable the cross-functionality to work.

The process perspective of IMC is rooted in the belief that real IMC can only be generated through an organisational structure that brings the various communication disciplines together.

Research suggests that organisations have made little attempt to restructure their marketing communications disciplines and that public relations and marketing remain as a clear divide. What has happened, however, is that there are much closer cross-functional relationships and systems and processes to support them. Some organisations are moving incrementally towards a process perspective of IMC.

ViewPoint 9.5

Integrated cigarettes

Imperial Tobacco Ltd (ITL) is Canada's largest tobacco manufacturer and its leading brand, Player's has experienced a growth in market share from 37 per cent in 1973 to over 68 per cent in 1998. The brand was targeted at males under 25 years old and used messages set in mountainous or aquatic settings using sports themes.

What is interesting about ITL is that they abandoned the brand management structure and adopted a brand planning process structure. This involves a cross-functional approach that is regarded as a more strategic approach to brand development and brand defence. The company also developed a detailed insight into product and image positioning.

The brand strategy was clearly articulated internally and it was used to provide a platform for a consistent approach to messages and media selection. Consistency across their marketing communications and brand imagery was also achieved through the division head of brand marketing who considered activities across all brands and functional areas.

Source: Dewhirst and Davis (2005).

Question

Is this primarily a process or content perspective of IMC?

Task

Read the paper by Dewhirst and Davis (2005) and learn more about ITL's approach to IMC.

In an attempt to develop our understanding of IMC, Lee and Park (2007) proposed a multidimensional model of IMC based on four key dimensions. These have been drawn from the literature and, unlike Cornelissen's work, represent an attempt to measure IMC. Their four dimensions are concerned with a single message, multiple customer groups, database marketing and the need to use IMC to build customer relationships. A fuller account of these dimensions can be seen in Chapter 15.

Kliatchko (2008) suggests that IMC has several distinctive attributes and he refers to them as the 'four pillars of IMC'. These are stakeholders, content, channels and results. Figure 9.2 sets out the constituent elements within each of the pillars.

His argument is that these four elements can be observed at different levels of IMC and that at each level one of the elements tends to dominate.

It may be that a suitable theoretical basis upon which to develop IMC is emerging through the relationship marketing literature. We know that a relationship orientation requires a multidisciplinary approach to trigger interaction and dialogue (Gronroos, 2004). So, it may be

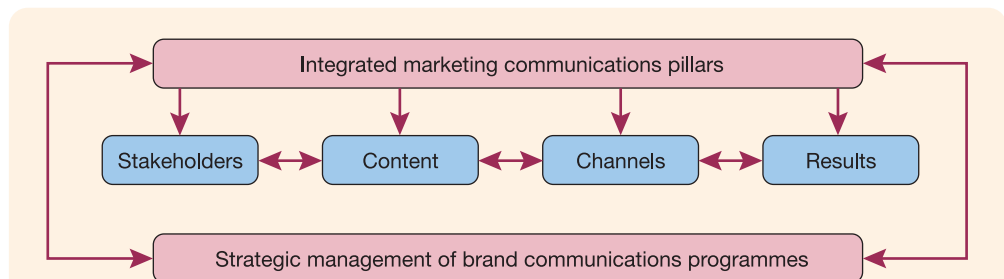


Figure 9.2

The Elements of the four pillars of IMC

Source: Kliatchko (2008). Used with permission from WARC.

that a deeper understanding of relational theory will help to advance the IMC concept and provide researchers with a surer footing upon which to explore the topic.

However, whether a content or process perspective is adopted, the position remains that until there is empirical evidence to support a theoretical base upon which to build IMC strategy and operations, the phrase will probably continue to be misused, misunderstood and used in a haphazard and inconsistent way.

From this review and bearing in mind that no single form of IMC can be identified, the following general definition of IMC is offered:

IMC can represent both a strategic and tactic approach to the planned management of an organisation's communications. IMC requires that organisations coordinate their various strategies, resources and messages in order that they enable meaningful engagement with target audiences. The main purposes are to develop a clear positioning and encourage stakeholder relationships that are of mutual value.

This definition serves to link IMC with business-level strategies and relationships. The importance of coherence within the organisation is made, whether this be through systems or structural change. Implicit is the underpinning notion that IMC is necessary for the development of effective relationships and that not all relationships need be collaborative and fully relational, as so often assumed to be the case in many contemporary interpretations.

Implicit is the underpinning notion that IMC is necessary for the development of effective relationships.

Reasons for the developing interest in IMC

The explosion of interest in IMC has resulted from a variety of drivers. Generally they can be grouped into three main categories: those drivers (or opportunities) that are market-based, those that arise from changing communications, and those that are driven from opportunities arising from within the organisation itself. These are set out in Table 9.1.

The opportunities offered to organisations that contemplate moving to IMC are considerable and it is somewhat surprising that so few organisations have been either willing or able to embrace the approach. One of the main organisational drivers for IMC is the need to become increasingly efficient. Driving down the cost base enables managers to improve profits and levels of productivity. By seeking synergistic advantages through its communications and associated activities and by expecting managers to be able to account for the way in which they consume marketing communication resources, so integrated marketing communications becomes increasingly attractive. At the same time, organisation structures are changing more frequently and the need to integrate across functional areas reflects the efficiency drive.

From a market perspective, the predominant driver is the reorientation from transaction-based marketing to relationship marketing. The extension of the brand personality concept into brand relationships (Hutton, 1996) requires a customer consideration in terms of asking not only 'What do our customers want?', but also 'What are their values, do they trust us and are we loyal to them?' By adopting a position designed to enhance trust and commitment, an organisation's external communications need to be consistent and coordinated, if only to avoid information overload and misunderstanding.

From a market perspective, the predominant driver is the reorientation from transaction-based marketing to relationship marketing.

From a communication perspective, the key driver is to provide a series of triggers by which buyers can understand the values a brand stands for and a means by which they can use certain messages to influence their activities within the relationships they wish to develop. By differentiating the marketing communications, often by providing clarity and simplicity, advantages can be attained.

Table 9.1 Drivers for IMC**Organisational drivers for IMC**

- Increasing profits through improved efficiency
- Increasing need for greater levels of accountability
- Rapid move towards cross-border marketing and the need for changing structures and communications
- Coordinated brand development and competitive advantage
- Opportunities to utilise management time more productively
- Provide direction and purpose for employees

Market-based drivers for IMC

- Greater levels of audience communications literacy
- Media cost inflation
- Media and audience fragmentation
- Stakeholders' need for increasing amounts and diversity of information
- Greater amounts of message clutter
- Competitor activity and low levels of brand differentiation
- Move towards relationship marketing from transaction-based marketing
- Development of networks, collaboration and alliances

Communication-based drivers for IMC

- Technological advances (Internet, databases, segmentation techniques)
- Increased message effectiveness through consistency and reinforcement of core messages
- More effective triggers for brand and message recall
- More consistent and less confusing brand images
- Need to build brand reputations and to provide clear identity cues

An integrated approach should attempt to provide a uniform or consistent set of messages. These should be relatively easy to interpret and to assign meaning. This enables target audiences to think about and perceive brands within a relational context and so encourages behaviour as expected by the source. Those organisations that try to practise IMC understand that buyers refer to and receive messages about brands and companies from a wide range of information sources. Harnessing this knowledge is a fundamental step towards enhancing marketing communications.

It seems useful to itemise the advantages and disadvantages associated with IMC. These are set out in Table 9.2. General opinion suggests that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages and that increasing numbers of organisations are seeking to improve their IMC resource. As stated earlier, database technology and the Internet have provided great impetus for organisations to review their communications and to implement moves to install a more integrated communication strategy.

Managing IMC

The development and establishment of IMC by organisations has not been as widespread as the amount of discussion around the subject has suggested. Recent technological advances and

The development of IMC requires change, a change in thinking, a change in actions and a change in expectations.

the benefits of the Internet and related technologies have meant that organisations have had a reason to reconsider their marketing communications and have re-evaluated their approach. Whatever route taken, the development of IMC requires change, a change in thinking, a change in actions and a change in expectations. The changes required to achieve IMC are large and the barriers are strong. What can be

Table 9.2 Advantages and disadvantages of IMC

Advantages of IMC

Provides opportunities to cut communication costs and/or reassign budgets
 Has the potential to produce synergistic and more effective communications
 Can deliver competitive advantage through clearer positioning
 Encourages coordinated brand development with internal and external participants
 Provides for increased employee participation and motivation
 Has the potential to cause management to review its communication strategy
 Requires a change in culture and fosters a customer focus
 Provides a benchmark for the development of communication activities
 Can lead to a cut in the number of agencies supporting a brand

Disadvantages of IMC

Encourages centralisation and formal/bureaucratic procedures
 Can require increased management time seeking agreement from all involved parties
 Suggests uniformity and single message
 Tendency to standardisation might negate or dilute creative opportunities
 Global brands restricted in terms of local adaptation
 Normally requires cultural change from employees and encourages resistance
 Has the potential to severely damage a brand's reputation if incorrectly managed
 Can lead to mediocrity as no single agency network has access to all sources of communications

observed are formative approaches to IMC and that organisations have experimented and tried out various ideas within their resource and cultural contexts.

As with many aspects of change, there is nearly always resistance to the incorporation of IMC, and, if sanctioned, only partial integration has been achieved. This is not to say that integration is not possible or has not been achieved, but the path to IMC is far from easy and the outcomes are difficult to gauge with great confidence. However, it is the expectation (what level of IMC) that really matters, as it signals the degree of change that is required.

Resistance to integration

Resistance to change is partly a reflection of the experiences and needs of individuals for stability and the understanding of their environments. However, it is also a reflection, again, of the structural conditions in organisations and industry, which have helped determine the expectations of managers and employees.

Eagle and Kitchen (2000) set out four principal areas or themes concerned with barriers to IMC programmes:

- power, coordination and control issues;
- client skills, centralisation/organisation and cultural issues;
- agency skills/talent and overall time/resource issues;
- flexibility/modification issues.

While these provide a useful general overview, the following represent some of the more common, more focused reasons for the resistance to the incorporation of IMC.

Financial structures and frameworks

Resistance through finance-led corporate goals, which have dominated industry performance and expectations, has been particularly significant. The parameters set around it and the extent to which marketing communications is often perceived as a cost rather than an investment, have provided a corporate environment where the act of preparing for and establishing

integrative activities is perceived negatively. Furthermore, the period in which communication activities are expected to generate returns is often too short and works against the principles of IMC and the time needed for the effects to take place.

Opposition/reluctance to change

The attitudes and opinions of staff are often predictable in the sense that any move away from tried and proven methods to areas that are unknown and potentially threatening is usually rejected. Change has long been regarded with hostility and fear, and as such is normally resisted. Our apparent need for stability and general security has been a potent form of resistance to the introduction of IMC. This is changing as change itself becomes a familiar aspect of working life. Any move towards IMC therefore, represents a significantly different approach to work, as not only are the expectations of employees changed but so also are the working practices and the associated roles with internal customers and, more importantly, those providing outsourcing facilities.

Traditional hierarchical and brand management structures

Part of the reluctance to change is linked with the structure and systems inherent in many organisations. Traditional hierarchical structures and systems are inflexible and slow to cope with developments in their fast-adapting environments. These structures can stifle the use of individual initiative, can slow the decision-making process and encourage inertia. The brand management system, so popular and appropriate in the 1970s and early 1980s, focuses upon functional specialisms, which is reflected in the horizontally and vertically specialised areas of responsibility. Brands now need to be managed by flexible teams of specialists, who are charged with responsibilities and the resources necessary to coordinate activities across organisations in the name of integration.

Attitudes and structure of suppliers and agencies

Advertising agencies have maintained their traditional structures and methods of operating, while their clients have begun to adapt and reform themselves.

One of the principal reasons often cited as a barrier to integration is the relationship that clients have with their agencies, and in particular their advertising agencies. Generally, advertising agencies have maintained their traditional structures and methods of operating, while their clients have begun to adapt and reform themselves. The thinking behind this is that

for a long time advertising agencies have tried to maintain their dominance of mass advertising as the principal means of brand development. In doing so they seek to retain the largest proportion of agency fee income, rather than having these fees diluted as work is allocated below the line (to other organisations).

The establishment of IMC threatens the current role of the main advertising agencies. This is not to say that all agencies think and act in this way. They do not, as witnessed by the innovative approaches to restructuring and the provision of integrated resources for their clients by agencies such as St Lukes. So, while clients have seen the benefits of integrated marketing communications, their attempts to achieve them have often been thwarted by the structures of the agencies they need to work with and by the attitudes of their main agencies.

Perceived complexity of planning and coordination

The complexity associated with integrating any combination of activities is often cited as a means for delaying or postponing action. Of greater significance are the difficulties associated with coordinating actions across departments and geographic boundaries. IMC requires the cooperation and coordination of internal and external stakeholder groups. Each group has an agenda that contains goals that may well differ from or conflict with those of other participants.

For example, an advertising agency might propose the use of mass media to address a client's needs, if only because that is where its specialist skills lie. However, direct marketing might be a more appropriate approach to solving the client's problem, but because there is no established mechanism to coordinate and discuss openly the problem/solution, the lead agency is likely to have its approach adopted in preference to others.

Implementing IMC

The restraints that prevent the development of IMC need to be overcome. Indeed, many organisations that have made significant progress in developing IMC have done so by instigating approaches and measures that aim to reduce or negate the impact of the barriers that people put up to prevent change. The main approaches to overcoming the barriers are as follows.

Adopting a customer-focused philosophy

The adoption of a customer-focused approach is quite well established within marketing departments. However, this approach needs to be adopted as an organisation-wide approach, a philosophy that spans all departments and results in unified cues to all stakeholders. In many cases, agencies need to adopt a more customer-oriented approach and be able and willing to work with other agencies, including those below the line.

Training and staff development programmes

A move towards IMC cannot be made without changes in the expectations held by employees within the client and agency sectors. Some of the key processes necessary for change need to be used. For example, the involvement and participation of all staff in the process is in itself a step towards providing motivation and acceptance of change when it is agreed and delivered.

A move towards IMC cannot be made without changes in the expectations held by employees.

Appointing change agents

The use of change agents, people who can positively affect the reception and implementation of change programmes, is important. As IMC should span an entire organisation, the change agent should be a senior manager, or preferably director, in order to signal the importance and speed at which the new perspective is to be adopted.

Some organisations have experimented with the appointment of a single senior manager who is responsible for all internal and external communications.

Planning to achieve sustainable competitive advantage

In order to develop competitive advantages, some organisations have restructured by removing levels of management, introduced business reprocessing procedures and even set up outsourcing in order that they achieve cost efficiencies and effectiveness targets. Prior to the implementation of these delayering processes, many organisations were (and many still are) organised hierarchically.

Back in 1997 Brown foresaw that the emergence and establishment of IMC would only be successful once the industry matures, becomes market-oriented and leaves behind issues concerning client–agency complications. In addition, traditional brand management systems, most of which were designed to prevent the development of synergies or shared knowledge, need to be overhauled. These issues have not yet been fully resolved and IMC in practice remains ill-defined, and superficial. What is required therefore, is a restructuring and re-designation of who manages communications and this requires a planned approach. It is evident that current systems, processes, procedures and structures are not suitable to support and sustain a planned approach to enable the full development and delivery of IMC.

IMC in practice remains ill-defined, and superficial.

Media-neutral planning

The media-neutral planning (MNP) approach emerged partly as a response to criticism of IMC and partly as an attempt to articulate the potential practice of IMC. For many MNP is integration under a different guise but one of the strengths of the concept is that it openly focuses on the needs of clients and agencies. It attempts to stimulate the use of a communication mix that is driven by the needs of a target audience and not those of the communication industry. This means that rather than keep recommending that clients use mass media communications, which have traditionally rewarded agencies through a more than generous commission system, a more balanced mix of tools and media should be adopted in order to be more effective and efficient.

One of the main reasons for the interest in IMC is the potential to reduce costs. The rise in some media costs, most notably television through the 1990s, the specialised and independent nature of the agency side of the industry, the proliferation of media opportunities and the splintering of audiences, the increasing clamour for measures of return on investment in communications have led to a reappraisal of the role and nature of marketing communications and the emergence of MNP ideas. As clients have tried to reduce costs they have made greater use of both through and below-the-line tools.

Agencies interested in preserving margins have attempted to maintain the prominence of advertising in their media plans but have reduced the emphasis on television advertising or have sought better deals through use of multiple television channel mixes, improved negotiation and more alliances. Some client organisations (e.g. Kraft, Kellogg's, Unilever and Procter & Gamble) have moved, if unintentionally, towards a form of coordinated marketing communication activity. These organisations have reduced their reliance on above-the-line media and have attempted to move towards the use of below-the-line tools in order to reduce costs and deliver consistent messages in an attempt to cut through the increasing clutter. Ray (2002) refers to organisations such as Nike, Reebok and Alliance & Leicester who have practiced MNP, however, he also refers to some of the problems, such as structures, areas of expertise and attitudes, faced by agencies attempting to offer a more neutral media approach for their clients.

ViewPoint 9.6

Boots use MNP

The launch by Boots of their Intelligent Colour Foundation was an important opportunity to support the contemporary, fashionable image of the No. 7 brand. The revolutionary product blends to the colour of an individual's skin and only requires the user to decide between three shades of light, medium and dark.

As part of the planning process, Boots decided to explore the use of MNP and formed a cross-disciplinary team to improve the level of interaction between departments and to optimise planning. The MNP team consisted of representatives of the brand, consumer insight, direct and relationship marketing (through the Advantage Card), PR and communication channel planning.

It was generally accepted that PR would play a critical role but rather than rely on television and magazine advertising, it was decided to augment the plan with direct mail using the Boots Advantage Card database. It was thought this would be more cost-effective than to invest further in other media, particularly television.

In order to measure the impact of this neutral approach, the planning team used two key measurement tools to avoid the misleading sales and awareness measures.

The first of these was a store-based model that could identify sales effect on a store-by-store basis thereby enabling the identification of stores by campaign area, e.g. with/without television, with/without mail, with/without in-store promotions etc. The second was a tracking study that would identify actual exposure to different media by means of a combination of viewing/reading questions together with the establishment

of two matched samples to enable real comparisons of mailed versus non-mailed respondents. The tracking study measured awareness, product understanding, interest and image.

The detailed results are confidential but showed clearly that by including mail in the mix it also added value and Boots became more supportive of integrated communications and a media neutral approach.

For more information about this case readers should visit www.brandrepublic.com/think/.

Question

Is MNP just IMC under another name?

Task

Visit the www.brandrepublic.com/think/ and make a note of the key issues and MNP.



Exhibit 9.2

Boots Intelligent Colour foundation
Courtesy of Boots.

The drive behind the development of MNP appears to be concerned more with reducing the emphasis that television advertising plays in media plans, rather than the formulation of distinct media plans that deliver advertising messages in the most effective way, regardless of media selection. Many of those that support media-neutral approaches are often quoted using examples that involve a mix of tools and media.

MNP recognises that mass media advertising is not always the most appropriate way to launch or develop consumer or business-to-business promotional activities, and that a consideration of the most suitable mix of communication tools might be a better starting point when formulating campaigns. Advertising alone cannot carry the weight of a brand necessary

The drive behind the development of MNP appears to be concerned more with reducing the emphasis that television advertising plays in media plans.

to build and sustain the desired associations. Public relations, sales promotions and field marketing (merchandising) for example, have increasingly important roles to play in establishing and sustaining a brand. However, where advertising is used, the changing media landscape and the increasing penetration of new technology means that a greater use of cross-media planning approaches is likely to enhance the effectiveness of a campaign and reduce costs, especially if previous campaigns used television as the primary medium. The traditional model of media planning, whereby a primary medium and perhaps two or three secondary media are scheduled over a five-week campaign has now to be surpassed by a more contemporary mix that uses a cross-media plan combining new and old media and that is appropriate to target audience preferences and the context of the marketing communications activities.

Therefore, it might be interpreted that media-neutral mixes represent the response of the agency side of the marketing communications industry while IMC represents the client side approach to managing their marketing communications in a more effective and strategic manner. MNP should not be about mixing tools and media but should be regarded as an integral part of IMC. However, IMC is not the same as MNP.

The development and delivery of a marketing communications programme that repeatedly delivers significant value cannot be based solely on media-neutral planning or loose notions of IMC. What is necessary is the development of a strategic marketing communications approach that delivers a total brand experience (Tobaccowala and Kugel, 2001). This requires a co-ordinated approach to the selection and implementation of the right promotional tools and media that will deliver messages that are of significant value to the target audience. However, it also requires the integration of a cross-functional, multi-audience strategic approach to marketing communications, one that delivers a brand experience for the target audience.

What is necessary is the development of a strategic marketing communications approach that delivers a total brand experience.

Open planning

In many ways media-neutral planning is an approach to planning where all media have equal probability of selection and those that are chosen are deemed the best vehicles to achieve the media plan's objectives. Although there are many benefits, such as changing attitudes and perhaps reducing some costs, the neutrality perspective seeks to address industry issues about the planning process and the thinking the incumbents undertake, rather than demonstrate direct concern with audience issues.

The main goal was to reappraise the way organisations consider their processes and thinking about marketing communication activities with a view to optimising their communication potential.

In an attempt to move thinking a step forward the open planning concept was developed by Jenkinson, who in 2002/03 coordinated a panel of leading marketers who shared a goal to simplify the media-neutral planning concept. The main goal was to reappraise the way organisations consider their processes and thinking about marketing communication activities with a view to optimising their communication potential. The MNP group argue that this requires rethinking

the way communication disciplines (tools) and media are used, to develop new methods of evaluating communication activity and to accelerate the speed at which organisations are able to integrate their communications with their business and marketing strategies.

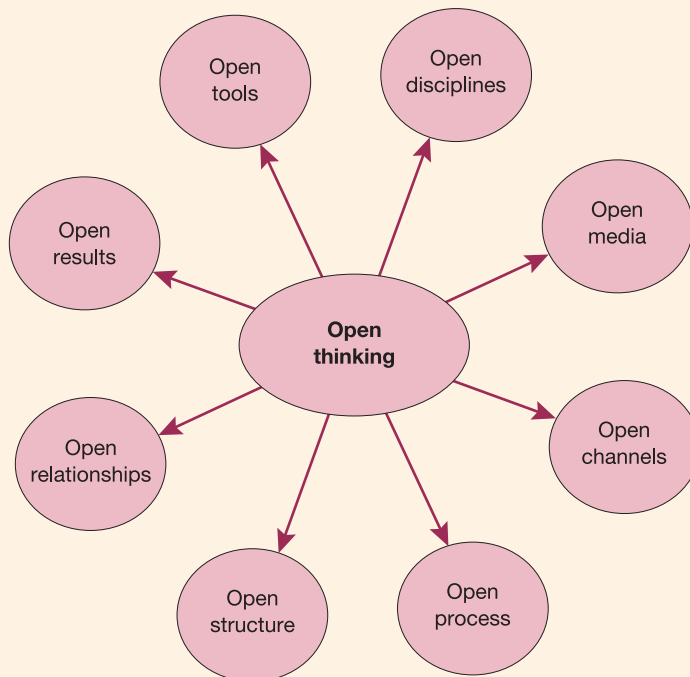
The MNP group have proposed a series of new approaches based mainly on ideas concerning open planning. Open planning is concerned with eight action areas, each of which contributes to the process of MNP. These action areas are set out in Table 9.3. Readers wishing to know more should visit www.openplanning.org.uk.

Thinking in terms of these action areas should promote marketing communications that are audience-centred rather than promulgate the previous model that focused on the needs of the communication industry (see Figure 9.3).

Table 9.3 Action areas within the Open Planning approach

Action area	Explanation
Disciplines	Any promotional tool (i.e. discipline) can be used with any medium to achieve stated business and marketing objectives.
Media	Any medium can be used, by any tool (i.e. discipline), in almost all mixes. This means redefining media to mean anything that conveys a message to an audience. A salesperson becomes a medium.
Channels	Any mix of disciplines within a single medium becomes an open channel.
Process	All agencies (and others) should be involved with the thinking and planning process at the outset, to determine the message and goals before any resources are allocated (i.e. budgets).
Structure	The communication process should be driven by the communication preferences of a target audience (or community) rather than the silo structure-based functional specialisation present in much of the industry today.
Relationships	The relationship between client and agency should be open and functional. Agency remuneration should be based on the achievement of brand goals and not commission based on media choice.
Results	Defining more precise communication goals that enable a level playing field for all disciplines, media and agencies to maximise their contribution.
Tools	Use of media planning tools that embrace all touch points with customers.

Source: Adapted from Jenkinson and Sain (2004).

**Figure 9.3** The eight action areas of open planning

Client structures and IMC

Clients have also embraced IMC and its influence on their structures. The hierarchical structures common in many organisations in the period up to the 1970s have been subject to attack. In search of survival in recession and increasing profits and dividends in times of plenty, organisations have sought to restructure and realign themselves with their environment. Hierarchies delivered a management structure that delegated authority in compartmentalised units. The brand management system that accompanied this structural approach provided a straitjacket and gave only partial authority to incumbents. At the same time, responsibility for pricing, channel management, personal selling and public relations activities was split off and allocated to a number of others. It follows from this that the likelihood of internal integration has been hampered by the structure of the organisation and the way in which structural units were assembled.

The restructuring process has resulted in organisations that are delayed and leaner.

The restructuring process has resulted in organisations that are delayed and leaner. This means that the gap between senior management and those within the operating core (Mintzberg *et al.*, 2003) is both smaller and now capable of sustaining viable internal communications that are truly two-way and supportive.

Increasingly, organisations are operating in overseas or cross-border markets. For a deeper account of the issues concerning international marketing communications, readers are referred to Chapter 28. However, as organisations develop structurally, from international to multinational to global and transnational status, so the need to coordinate internally and to integrate internal communications becomes ever more vital to sustain integrated marketing communications (Grein and Gould, 1996). Internal marketing (Chapter 30) is becoming more popular with clients (and agencies) as it is realised that employees are important contributors to corporate identity programmes and invaluable spokespersons for the products they market. Internal communications can help not only to inform and remind/reassure but also to differentiate employees in the sense that they understand the organisation's direction and purpose, appreciate what the brand values are and so identify closely with the organisation as a whole. This is a form of integration from which marketing communications can benefit.

Reconsidering the IMC concept

The central ideas behind the IMC concept are sound and a logical step forward for marketing communications. IMC helps provide a strategic focus and the level of debate and interest about how best to use marketing communications has been advanced. The development of technology and more importantly, the relationship marketing concept, has given increased impetus to those who advocate the use of IMC. However, concerns about pinning down the exact meaning and interpretation of IMC remain.

IMC and transactional marketing

The discussion so far has been based largely on the assumption that exchanges are (or should be) essentially collaborative in character and that customers are willing and eager to enter into a wide range of relationships. However, it appears that some, if not the majority of exchanges,

Buyers do not always wish to enter into a deep complex relationships with all suppliers.

are essentially transactional in character. Buyers do not always wish to enter into a deep complex relationships with all suppliers, nor do some consumers wish to enter into a relationship with the supplier of their favourite chocolate bar, dishwasher tablets or frozen peas. As a result these convenience-based exchanges are oriented towards a value based on the



Figure 9.4

The marketing mix communicates

product, its price and overall availability and convenience. Depending upon the product category, after-sales and service support will be important but, by definition, customers in transactional mode do not wish to enter into any serious interaction, let alone dialogue.

The target marketing process requires the development and implementation of a distinct marketing mix to meet the requirements of selected target markets. The elements are mixed together in such a way that they should meet the needs of the target segment. Each element of the marketing mix has a variable capacity to communicate (see Figure 9.4).

Therefore, it may be that traditional forms of marketing communications are sufficient to reach transactional customers. Messages that focus mainly on attributes, features and benefits, emotional values, price and availability will continue to be valid and improved if delivered through a coordinated mix of tools and media that are customer-oriented. By using communications that use a coordinated communications mix, which makes greater use of a range of tools and media that are neutral and seek to cut waste and improve efficiency, will be advantageous.

IMC and relationship marketing

As stated already, there is no universally agreed definition of IMC and the development of this relatively new, embryonic concept is strewn with attempts to pin it down and label it. What can be observed however is that the relationship marketing paradigm has developed at the same time as IMC and that there are areas where the two concepts intertwine and reinforce each other. One of the difficulties associated with the IMC view, and with its half-sister, media-neutral planning, is that successful marketing communications results from an entirely planned approach. Planning is an essential aspect of managing marketing communications but customers interact with products and services in different ways. They experience brands through their observation of others consuming them, through their own use, as well as through planned, unplanned and word-of-mouth communications. It is the totality of this communication experience that impacts on relationship development. IMC therefore has a critical role in the development of relationship marketing. This is because it is an important process, one that seeks to generate a response from customers, provoke interaction and then dialogue, which is a key characteristic of relationship marketing (Gronroos, 2004). These ideas are explored in greater depth in Chapter 7.

The relationship marketing paradigm has developed at the same time as IMC.

Table 9.4

Duncan-Moriarty categories of relationship drivers

Relationship drivers	Explanation
Relationship development	Everything an organisation does and says is seen, heard and interpreted by stakeholders. The need is to provide a consistent relational focus through all messages
Processes	The need for a process and system to provide consistent strategic positioning and in doing so help support the identity and reputation
Organisational	Structural and cross-functional cohesion is necessary to support internal marketing and an unbiased use of all communication resources

Source: Derived from Reid (2005).

The Duncan and Moriarty IMC miniaudit has been designed to help assess an organisation's IMC relationship-building practices. It recognises the influence of organisational structure and marketing communication strategies and objectives and attempts to measure the strategic consistency of the brand messages. Many of the elements considered earlier in the section 'what is to be integrated' can be identified in the nine drivers identified by Duncan and Moriarty. These can be grouped into three categories, as presented in Table 9.4.

IMC therefore has a potentially greater role to play within collaborative transactions and with customers who wish to become involved within mutually rewarding relationships. To date IMC has been regarded as a concept that needs to be applied across an organisation's entire marketing communications and customer base. The suggestion is that aspects of IMC should be applied to both transactional and collaborative customers but greater emphasis on interaction and dialogue should be given to communication with current and potential relationship-driven customers and other stakeholders.

Aspects of IMC should be applied to both transactional and collaborative customers.

An incremental approach to IMC

Integrated marketing communications means different things to different people. Opportunities to develop IMC appear to vary according to a variety of factors, including organisation size and development. Low (2000) suggests that IMC is more likely to be successful in smaller rather than large organisations. This is because they have fewer brands to be integrated, lower levels of hierarchical complexity and departmental formalisation and are inherently more adaptive. However, Reid (2005) found that large organisations were more likely to adopt IMC principles, suggesting this was due to their more sophisticated planning systems, greater number of formal mechanisms for managing customer data, and the fact that they are already experienced at managing internal functional groups and external agencies. He also found that the greater the level of market orientation within an organisation the more likely IMC practices would be successful. Both Low and Reid appear to agree that IMC is positively related to the intensity of competitive activity experienced by an organisation.

The successful implementation of IMC needs to be founded on an audience-centred (outside-in) orientation.

It is clear therefore, that the successful implementation of IMC needs to be founded on an audience-centred (outside-in) orientation. However, IMC also means different things to different organisations and the level of IMC implemented and experienced by organisations is bounded by their context. There

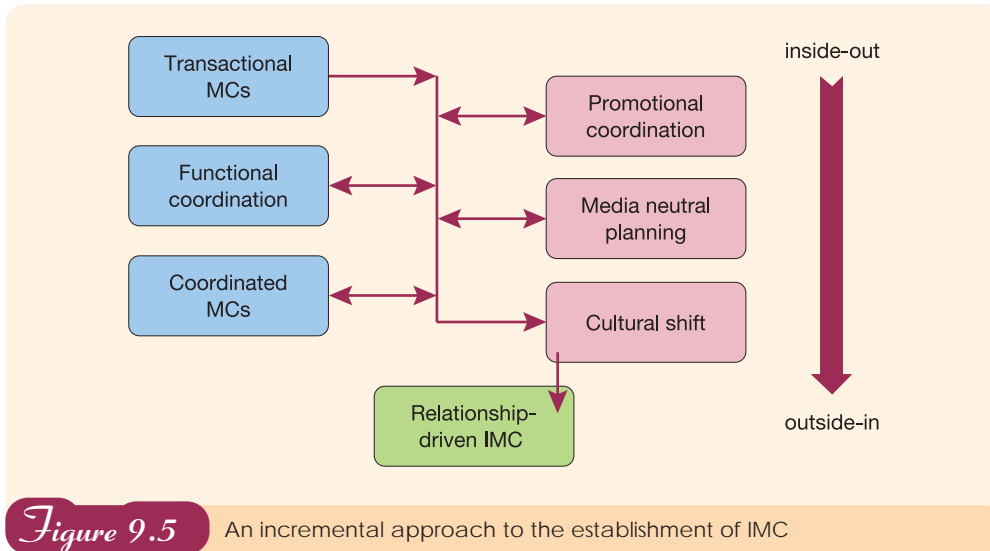


Figure 9.5 An incremental approach to the establishment of IMC

is an emerging belief that although organisations should embrace the marketing mix and the communications mix in the name of IMC they should use cross-functional systems and processes to incorporate internal communications and all those outsourced providers who contribute to the overall marketing communication process. As Figure 9.5 demonstrates, all of these elements should be linked to the overall purpose of the organisation, normally encapsulated and framed in the strategy, philosophy and mission of the organisation.

It seems logical that moves towards the establishment of IMC must be undertaken in steps as it cannot be accomplished overnight, an incremental approach is required (Fill, 2001). Organisations experience an incremental approach to the implementation and establishment of IMC. What they achieve at any one moment is a function of their context, and may be recognised as forms of coordination. Different organisations have coordinated various aspects of their communications activities. Many organisations have focused upon their promotional activities and have tried to bring together their communications to provide consistency and thematic harmonisation. Others have developed more sophisticated systems and procedures to interlink their activities internally.

Organisations experience an incremental approach to the implementation and establishment of IMC.

Stage 1

Therefore, it seems that the starting point in the move towards IMC needs to reflect the context within which exchanges occur. In the majority of cases these will be transactional, where the focus is on product and price. The move from this point will be towards coordinating the tools, media and messages of the mix and this will gradually take place both internally and externally with the organisation's various agencies.

Stage 2

In order to make this work and to move forward, organisations need to create a technology platform necessary to provide a stream of information upon which it is possible to interact coherently with customers. The technology will be used internally to provide an operational tie between the different departments and functional areas. This is an important part of the process as different sections of the organisation are introduced to the ideas of being market-oriented. To support this, the notion that internal marketing relationships and internal marketing communications play an important role in the overall orientation process is also introduced.

Stage 3

Organisations will begin to adopt media-neutral planning principles and/or develop fully coordinated, even integrated marketing communications. This will be characterised by data-driven communications, CRM and meaningful evaluation and measurement techniques. This stage will be complemented by the organisation moving towards a strong(er) customer orientation. This requires a *cultural shift* of values and beliefs, whereby organisational, brand identity and relationship issues become paramount. This can only be implemented at this stage, as the internal systems, procedures and employee mind set need to be in place if the strategy is to be credible to customers and other stakeholders.

The final IMC stage is reached when planned communications and brand experiences encourage continued interaction, dialogue and relationship development.

Stage 4

The final IMC stage is reached when planned communications and brand experiences encourage continued interaction, dialogue and relationship development. At this stage all parties involved in IMC derive an enhanced value over and above the value that would have been achieved without the integration.

In order for these incremental stages to be undertaken and completed satisfactorily, managers must be clear and agreed about what it is they wish to achieve and communicate their intent to all those it involves, both inside and outside the organisation.

This sequential depiction sets out various incremental stages and does not require that they all be followed in strict order, and nor is it intended that all organisations should or do progress to the end. For many, perhaps small and medium-sized organisations, especially those with many transactional customers, promotional coordination or coordinated marketing communications stages may suffice.

One of the key issues encouraging the establishment of IMC has been the willingness of some public relations practitioners to move closer to the marketing department. When IMC began to emerge, Miller and Rose (1994) commented that the previously held opposition to integration by public relations practitioners had begun to dissolve as the more enlightened agencies see it as 'a reality and a necessity'. Although this movement has not surged forward, many public relations agencies now proclaim that they provide IMC, particularly web and direct and database marketing services. Apart from this, the marketing communications industry has yet to come together and provide clients with the fully integrated services they desire.

Summary

In order to help consolidate your understanding of integrated marketing communications, here are the key points summarised against each of the learning objectives:

1. Introduce the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) and explore what it is that is integrated.

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is concerned with the development, coordination and implementation of an organisation's various strategies, resources and messages. The role is to enable coherent and meaningful engagement with target audiences. In an age when consumers can touch brands across a range of channels it is important that each contact reinforces previous messages and facilitates the development of valued relationships. While the concept of IMC is attractive, to date the development of the approach in practical terms has not been very encouraging. There has been a great deal of debate about the meaning and value of an integrated approach and some attempt to coordinate the content and delivery of marketing communication messages. Most organisations have yet to achieve totally integrated

marketing communications; only partial or coordinated levels of activity have so far been achieved.

A wide range of elements needs to be integrated. These include the communication tools, media and messages, plus the elements of the marketing mix, brands, strategy, employees, agencies and technology.

2. Understand the different perspectives of IMC.

Cornelissen identified two main perspectives of IMC running through the literature. He refers to one of these as a predominantly *process*-oriented concept and the second is that IMC is a *content*-oriented concept.

The *content* perspective holds that IMC works when there is a consistency throughout the various materials and messages. The *process* perspective of IMC is rooted in the belief that real IMC can only be generated through an organisational structure that brings the various communication disciplines together in a single body or unit.

3. Consider the background and reasons for the development and interest in IMC.

The interest in IMC has resulted from three main drivers. These include market-based drivers, those that arise from changing communications, and those that are driven from opportunities arising from within the organisation itself.

4. Explore some of the issues associated with managing and implementing IMC.

The management of IMC has been shown to be a challenging task and one that does not always result in a successful outcome. There is much resistance to the development of IMC, again based on a range of factors, some of them found in many situations regardless of what it is that is to be changed. There are several ideas concerning the best way to implement IMC but perhaps the most important point is that IMC can only be achieved by incremental change, not a one-off wholesale change.

5. Explain variants of the IMC concept: media-neutral planning and open planning approaches.

Media-neutral planning is an element of IMC but IMC is not the same as MNP. With increasing levels of fragmentation and rising media (television) costs the need for media-neutrality has increased. The main thrust of MNP is to reduce the emphasis on television and make increased use of other tools and media that are more audience-focused than traditional marketing communications practice has been to date.

Open planning is concerned with eight action areas, each of which contribute to the process of MNP. Working with action areas is designed to promote marketing communications that are audience-centred rather than perpetuate a focus on the communication industry.

6. Consider how the structures and frameworks of advertising and communication agencies might need to change so that they are better able to work with IMC.

Many organisations that have sought to develop IMC have had to restructure their organisations and provide new systems and processes to enable integration at a process level to develop. In much the same way, agencies have been faced with structural change in order to remain competitive to meet the needs of their clients. Their difficulty is that there is not an optimal structure. Agencies need to trade off between the need to provide expertise and the need to control and provide a central source of IMC.

7. Examine ideas concerning an incremental approach to IMC.

Integrated marketing communications means different things to different people. Opportunities to develop IMC appear to vary according to a variety of factors, including organisation size and development.

The development of IMC appears to best achieved when an incremental approach is adopted. *Stage 1* considers the transactional elements and any move forward should be based on coordinating the tools, media and messages of the mix. This will gradually take place both internally and externally with the organisation's various agencies. *Stage 2* requires a technology platform necessary to provide a stream of information upon which it is possible to interact coherently with customers. *Stage 3* is characterised by data-driven communications, CRM and meaningful evaluation and measurement techniques. This stage is often complemented by a strong(er) customer orientation. This requires a *cultural shift* of values and beliefs, whereby organisational, brand identity and relationship issues become paramount. Finally, *Stage 4* is reached when planned communications and brand experiences encourage continued interaction, dialogue and relationship development.

Review questions

1. Discuss the main reasons for the development of IMC.
2. Prepare brief notes explaining four different elements that should be part of the integration process.
3. Explain how various definitions of IMC have evolved.
4. What are the reasons for interest in IMC and is it a valid concept?
5. Appraise the main reasons offered for the failure of organisations to develop IMC.
6. What is the incremental approach to establishing IMC?
7. Explain the ideas concerning media-neutral planning and what is open planning?
8. Explain the meaning of process and content perspectives of IMC.
9. Discuss the view that IMC is essentially the same as relationship marketing.
10. Prepare the outline for an essay arguing whether IMC is a strategic approach or just a means to correct internal operational difficulties and reduce media costs.

MiniCase

IMC – richer consumer engagement

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IMC seeks to optimise the use of resources in the way campaign elements are combined, but it is not new or easy to describe. As communication technologies and agency skills advance, optimum campaign solutions may be both context specific and evolving. As early as the 1970s Stephen King (2007) recognised the power of a *coherent totality* in marketing propositions. He suggested this totality should be traced through the advertising, the pack and even the

physical elements of a product to express an *integrated* brand personality. Back then, advertising was often a primary means of encapsulating this brand personality. So advertising agencies liked to think of themselves as brand guardians, and they used processes that integrated advertising messages across different media platforms. Cost-effective advertising combinations, drawing on the relative strengths of outdoor, print and radio media, were often used to amplify

television campaigns. However, as marketing communication disciplines have expanded and embraced new technology, the challenge of how to manage integration across the communication landscape has grown.

Debate remains over what IMC involves in practise, perhaps because IMC is a moving target. As the range of potential campaign resources expands and the media habits of consumers shift, the judgements about which campaign elements to integrate for optimal effectiveness may also change. One of the challenges of managing IMC remains the measurement of isolated elements within an integrated campaign framework. IMC requires ways to measure campaigns that can combine above-the-line and below-the-line activity and off-line and on-line channels. This is an area Google are keen to develop but their UK Managing Director, Mark Howe, regards this as a distant goal, 'It won't happen this year, but that is the Holy Grail' (McCormick, 2008).

An expanding range of potential campaign elements available to communication planners provides a creative palette for combining a range of contact points with different markets. This offers new and traditional 'touch points' as ways to reach people in different ways and with specific messages that suit each touch point. Intercepting people in ways that understand their responsiveness in different environments and particular media contexts can help to integrate campaign activity. It can help map an optimum *media journey* for different types of target groups so that a combination of touch points can be used to orchestrate the *brand journey* sought by a campaign. The tools may change but the task remains similar to one Stephen King would have recognised 30 years ago, the development of a *coherent totality* in the marketing proposition, and the coordinated effort to make cost-effective and optimal use of promotional resources.

What is different, however, is the growing complexity of the communication landscape, the ever more competitive pressure on organisations and the growing media literacy of the public. This means large IMC programmes may need to employ *communication planning* at an early stage of a campaign cycle to interpret the best type of campaign solution and the sort of communication agencies that might be needed to help. Often this communication planning service has been provided by one of the specialist media agencies but other large communication agencies have started to offer this service too, to try to retain a strong strategic campaign role. Communication planning can help develop a campaign brief, which may prepare to

involve an integrated cocktail of professional communication services well before approaching these other agencies.

An example where communication planning was used early on to help coordinate a major integrated campaign can be seen in the work of the communication planning agency, Naked, for the directory enquiry service, 118 118. The service was launched in Britain in 2003 for the US directory enquiries provider, InfoNXX. The launch campaign involved a wide range of integrated communication activities and Naked worked on the campaign plan from an early stage, well ahead of the launch date, with the advertising agency WCRS, who developed the creative proposition used across the campaign.

The IMC campaign aimed to take people on a brand journey so that 118 118 would become the natural inheritor of the previous number associated with the directory enquiry service in the UK, 192. This was a time of forced market disruption because the telecommunications regulator at the time was keen to weaken the near monopoly on this lucrative service by the previously state-owned company, British Telecom (BT). To do this the established directory enquiry number was to be scrapped and replaced, and a number of companies had decided to enter the market. The challenge for all competitors would be similar, to become a *top of mind* number in a low involvement but potentially large and therefore lucrative market. Naked planned to take the market on a brand journey in stages. *Stage 1, Advertising*, starting to develop recognition of the brand. *Stage 2, Conversations*, planned to develop buzz so people would share information about the brand to give it legitimacy. *Stage 3, Experiential*, was designed to encourage participation and involvement with the brand. While *Stage 4, Personal*, was designed to create a sense of ownership, where the brand became a consumer's own service.

The media journey closely mapped these stages using carefully selected symbols to give continuity, a pair of men as spoof athletes decked out in running vests with the same 'competitor number' repeated on each vest: '118' and '118'. A zany personality for the two athletes was portrayed at Stage 1, using advertising across a wide range of platforms. This was anticipated to resonate with the UK public because of a love of nostalgia, humour and irreverence. The advertising helped established the symbol (two wacky runners, each with a 118 vest) as a potential public icon. With the catch phrase, '*got your number*', this iconography was used as a vehicle to manage the rest of the brand journey. The media landscape employed both

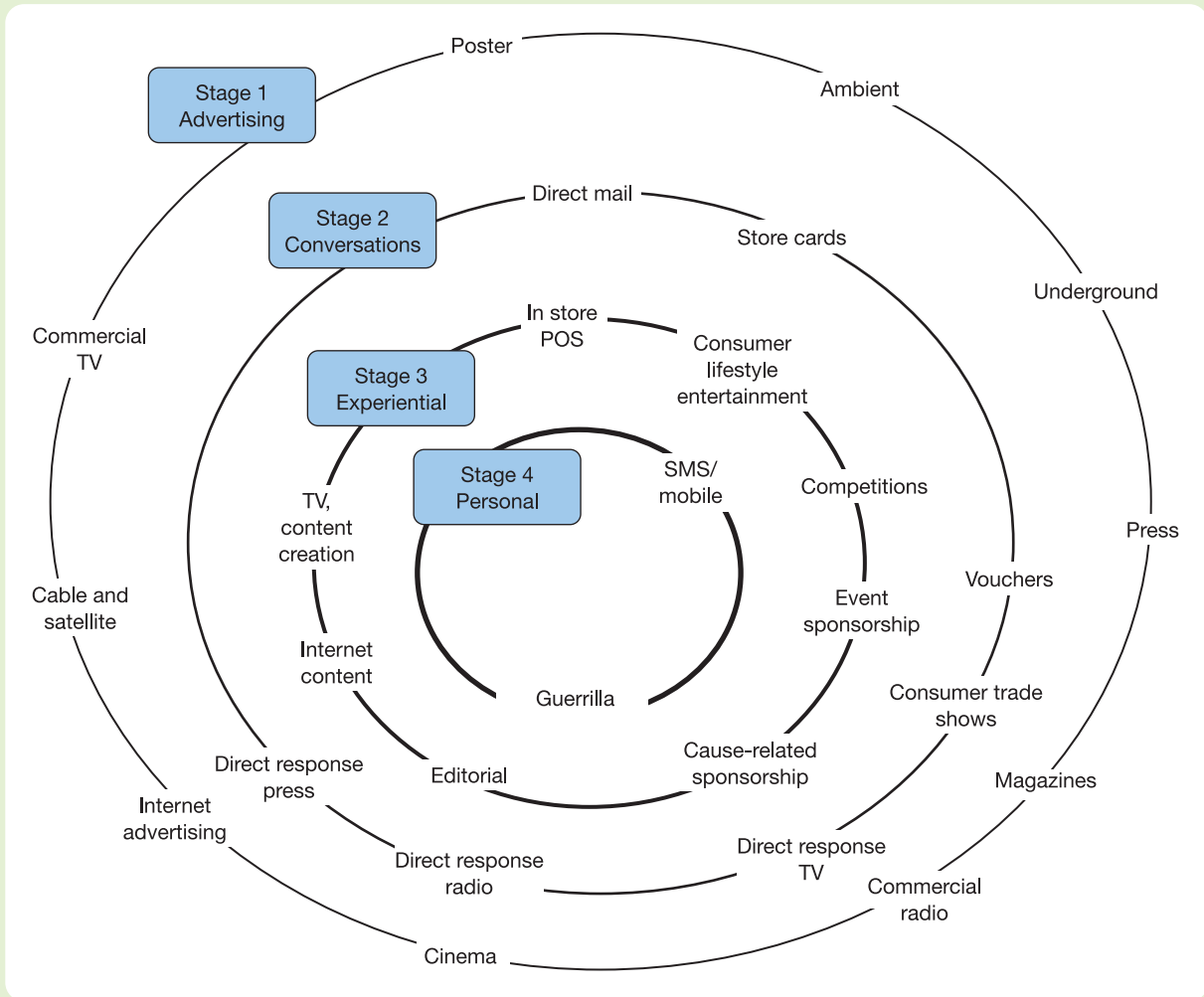


Figure 9.6

A media map of the launch campaign for '118 118'

Source: Adapted from presentation by agencies Naked, WCRS and Huge to D&AD's Xchange (2004) (London School of Fashion, 1 September 2004).

traditional channels and novel media spaces (e.g. fly-posting, street-hawkers [selling 118 shirts in the centre of major UK cities], washing-line stunts using 118 shirts and barber shop window promotions – seeming to advertise hair cuts like the spoof athletes used as brand symbols).

The campaign involved novel experiential elements, especially at Stage 3 of the programme. This made some of the tracking and measurement a particular challenge. However, the nature of the product behind the brand meant that the service requests could be tracked. Therefore the agencies involved agreed to work partly on a performance-based remuneration system, where they were rewarded for the success of the campaign measured

by the volumes of traffic driven to use the directory enquiry service.

Within less than a year of the service going live 118 118 had a close to 50 per cent market share. This was achieved in an otherwise cluttered and competitive market that had been previously dominated by a near monopoly provider.

MiniCase references

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MiniCase questions

1. In the campaign above, what might have been the role for consumer-driven content and social networks web sites?
2. In terms of the use of large-scale IMC, how might a launch campaign differ from the ongoing campaign activity needed to support a brand after launch?
3. Which participants involved in a campaign plan are best placed to coordinate IMC activity and why?
4. In what ways might IMC benefit from a network of service providers found in industry clusters, such as that found in Central London?

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