

The background of the top section features silhouettes of a man on the left and a woman on the right. The man is wearing a headset with a microphone. The woman is wearing large hoop earrings. The background is a vibrant orange and yellow color with stylized, hand-like shapes in various shades of orange and red, suggesting a theme of communication or human interaction.

Chapter 23

Exhibitions, product placement, field marketing and packaging

The five major tools of the communications mix work better if supported by other secondary or support tools and media. Exhibitions are a significant part of b2b promotional work, and packaging is vital to the fast-moving consumer goods sector as the majority of product decisions are made at the point of purchase. Product placement enables brands to be seen in the correct context and used by appropriate celebrities in order to help form brand associations for consumers. Field marketing offers a range of merchandising and brand experience opportunities often necessary to cut through the clutter of competitive and distracting messages.

Aims and learning objectives

The aims of this chapter are to consider a range of marketing communications activities that have no specific designation, yet which can make a major contribution to a promotional campaign. These activities are applied to both the b2b and b2c markets.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:

1. explain the significance of exhibitions and trade shows;
2. consider the main advantages and disadvantages of using exhibitions as part of the communication mix;
3. understand the concept and issues associated with product placement;
4. explore ideas associated with field marketing and related activities;
5. examine the role and key characteristics of packaging as a form of marketing communication.

For an applied interpretation see Jim Blythe's MiniCase entitled *Sustainabilitylive!* at the end of this chapter.

Introduction

The majority of marketing communications presented so far focus on the five primary tools and both traditional and digital media. However, in order to provide a difference and to cut through the noise of competing brands it is necessary to provide additional resources and communications right up to the point when customers make decisions. This chapter considers several other important means of communicating with both customers and distributor: exhibitions, product placement, field marketing and packaging.

Exhibitions fulfil a role for customers by enabling them to become familiar with new developments, new products and leading-edge brands. Very often these customers will be opinion leaders and use word-of-mouth communications to convey their feelings and product experiences to others. In the b2b market, exhibitions and trade shows are very often an integral and important component in the communications mix. Meeting friends, customers, suppliers, competitors and prospective customers is an important sociological and ritualistic event in the communication calendar for many companies. In the consumer sector, and in particular the FMCG market, it is important to provide a point of difference and offer continuity for those people who make the brand choice decisions at the point of purchase.

In the b2b market, exhibitions and trade shows are very often an integral and important component in the communications mix.

Product placement enables a brand to be observed in a more natural environment than if viewed on a shelf. This part of marketing communications is growing and provides income for film producers, authenticity for brand managers and relief from advertising for consumers. Field marketing has emerged out of what was formally referred to as merchandising but now encompasses a wider range of activities, one of which is experiential marketing, again a growing and important aspect of marketing communications for several product categories.

Finally, this chapter considers the impact of packaging as a form of marketing communication. Not only does packaging fulfil the role of protecting a product, it also conveys associations and brand cues, many of which are important means by which consumers make brand choice decisions.

Trade shows and exhibitions

The idea of many suppliers joining together at a particular location in order to set out their products and services so that customers may meet, make comparisons and place orders is far from new. Indeed, not only does this form of promotional activity stretch back many centuries, it has also been used to explain the way the Internet works (Bertheron *et al.*, 1996). They refer to the Internet as a virtual flea circus, a forum where buyers and sellers can meet, browse, discuss, find out more information and buy products and services if appropriate.

At a basic level, trade fairs can be oriented for industrial users or consumers and the content or purpose might be to consider general or specialised products/markets. According to Boukersi (2000), consumer-oriented general fairs tend to be larger and last longer than the more specialised industrial fairs and it is clear that this more highly segmented and focused approach is proving more successful, based on the increasing number of these types of exhibitions.

Trade fairs can be oriented for industrial users or consumers.

Reasons to use exhibitions

There are many reasons to use exhibitions, but the primary reasons appear not to be 'to make sales' or 'because the competition is there' but because these events provide opportunities to meet potential and established customers and to create and sustain a series of relational exchanges. The main aim, therefore, is to develop long-term partnerships with customers, to build upon or develop the corporate identity and to gather up-to-date market intelligence (Shiple and Wong, 1993). This implies that exhibitions should not be used as isolated events, but that they should be integrated into a series of activities, which serve to develop and sustain buyer relationships.

After a tentative start to the 1990s, the exhibition industry has grown and is now experiencing real growth. With managers increasingly accountable for their promotional spend, a greater number of budgets are now channelled into exhibitions and related events. In 1995, visitors attended 773 exhibitions in the United Kingdom, where venues exceeded 2,000 square feet. By 2005, the number had risen to 944 exhibitions (Advertising Association, 2008).

Costs can be reduced by using private exhibitions.

Costs can be reduced by using private exhibitions. The increased flexibility allows organisations to produce mini or private exhibitions for their clients at local venues (e.g. hotels). This can mean lower costs for the exhibitor and reduced time away from their businesses for those attending. The communication 'noise' and distraction associated with the larger public events can also be avoided by these private showings.

Characteristics of exhibitions and trade shows

Exhibitions and trade fairs enable organisations to meet customers, place/take orders generate leads and gather market information.

The main reasons for attending exhibitions and trade fairs are that they enable organisations to meet customers (and potential customers) in an agreeable environment, one where both have independently volunteered their time to attend; to place/take orders; to generate leads; and to gather market information. The reasons for attending exhibitions are set out in Table 23.1.

From this it is possible to distinguish the following strengths and weaknesses of using exhibitions as part of the marketing communications programme.

Strengths

The costs associated with exhibitions, if controlled properly, can mean that this is an effective and efficient means of communicating with customers. The costs per inquiry need to be calculated, but care needs to be taken over who is classified as an inquirer, as the quality of the audience varies considerably. Costs per order taken are usually the prime means of evaluating the success of an exhibition. This can paint a false picture, as the true success can never really be determined in terms of orders because of the variety of other factors that impinge upon the placement and timing of orders.

Table 23.1 Reasons exhibitors choose to attend exhibitions

To meet existing customers
To take orders/make sales
To get leads and meet prospective new customers
To meet lapsed customers
To meet prospective members of the existing or new marketing channels
To provide market research opportunities and to collect marketing data.

ViewPoint 23.1

Making a fishy exhibition of themselves

Too many exhibitors fail to stand out on their stands, to the extent that staff are very often indistinguishable from visitors. When a new company attended its first two exhibitions it made a deliberate effort to stand out.

No Catch, a supplier of sustainable organic cod, needed to reach retailers of various shapes and sizes and so decided to use two exhibitions to achieve their objectives. One of these was a trade show, the biggest seafood show in the world, namely the Brussels European Seafood Exposition. The other was a consumer show, the BBC Good Food Show.

As there were over 1,800 exhibitors at Brussels it was vital that No Catch stood out. This they achieved by building a stand based on a Caribbean beach shack and dressing staff in surfer clothes. The stand was complemented with graffiti, beach balls, reggae music and a barbecue cooking Caribbean-style organic fish recipes.

The same approach had been used previously at the BBC Food Show and the results from the two exhibitions were quite clear. They made contact with all the European distributors and even won the vote by journalists and consumers as the best product at the BBC Food Show.

Source: Allen (2007).

Question

What do you think is the main reason to attend exhibitions; to make sales or to meet contacts, friends and others in the industry?

Task

Choose a product and then consider how you would present the brand at a consumer or trade show.



Exhibit 23.1

The No Catch exhibition stand
ING MEDIA.

ViewPoint 23.2 Making an exhibition of Ireland

The development of Ireland's tourism market involves attracting both individuals for vacations and also the business market in terms of conferences, events and meetings. One thing that is common to both groups is the opportunity to visit and enjoy the breathtaking scenery and the warmth and friendliness of the people.

Some of Ireland's recent economic changes included an advantageous set of tax breaks designed to encourage investment in the construction industry. One of the results of this initiative has been the development of a huge number of recently completed high quality hotels, many with conference centres. Thus, with a wealth of excellent suppliers, the challenge for Tourism Ireland at the International Confex 2007 exhibition was to stand out among the other 1,075 exhibitors and attract conference organisers to their exhibition platform.

To encourage visitors it was decided to send out mailers to key conference organisers prior to the exhibition and give them a reason to visit the Tourism Ireland stand. These mailers were designed to be personal invitations and included an invitation to experience some genuine Irish hospitality in the form of a Hot Irishman (coffee liqueur) or a Guinness. This was to be symbolic of the opportunities to relax away from a conference. Normally a return of 3 per cent might be expected for a mailer of this type. However, 2.9 per cent responded asking for more information because they were unable to attend the exhibition, while a further 7.1 per cent attended the stand. An overall response rate of 10 per cent was achieved.

Source: UTalk (2007).

Question

Why was direct mail used to reach conference organisers?

Task

How would you attract business people to attend an exhibition on office equipment?

Products can be launched at exhibitions, and when integrated with a good PR campaign a powerful impact can be made. This can also be used to reinforce corporate identity. Exhibitions are an important means of gaining information about competitors, buyers and technical and political developments in the market, and they often serve to facilitate the recruitment process. Above all else, exhibitions provide an opportunity to meet customers on relatively neutral ground and, through personal interaction, develop relationships. Products can be demonstrated, prices agreed, technical problems discussed and trust and credibility enhanced.

Weaknesses

One of the main drawbacks associated with exhibition work is the vast and disproportionate amount of management time that can be tied up with the planning and implementation of exhibitions. However, good planning is essential if the full potential benefits of exhibition work are to be realised.

Taking members of the sales force 'off the road' can also incur large costs. Depending on the nature of the business these opportunity costs can soar. Some pharmaceutical organisations estimate that it can cost approximately £5,000 per person per week to divert salespeople in this way.

The expected visitor profile must be analysed in order that the number of quality buyers visiting an exhibition can be determined. The variety of visitors attending an exhibition can be misleading, as the vast majority may not be serious buyers or, indeed, may not be directly related to the industry or the market in question.

Exhibitions as a form of marketing communications

As a form of marketing communications, exhibitions enable products to be promoted, they can build brands and they can be an effective means of demonstrating products and building industry-wide credibility in a relatively short period of time. Attendance at exhibitions may also be regarded from a political standpoint, in that non-attendance by competitors may be taken as an opportunity by attendees to suggest weaknesses.

In the b2b sector new products and services are often introduced at exhibitions, especially if there are to be public relations activities and events that can be spun off the launch. In other words, exhibitions are not activities independent of the other communication tools. Exhibitions, if used effectively, can be part of an integrated communications campaign. Advertising prior to, during and after a trade show can be dovetailed with public relations, sponsorship and personal selling. Sales promotions can also be incorporated through competitions among customers prior to the show to raise awareness, generate interest and to suggest customer involvement. Competitions during a show can be focused on the sales force to motivate and stimulate commercial activity and among visitors to generate interest in the stand, raise brand name awareness and encourage focus on particular products (new, revised or revolutionary) and generate sales leads and enquiries.

Exhibitions are not activities independent of the other communication tools.

New media and exhibitions

In many ways the use of the Internet and a web site as brochureware represented a first attempt at an online exhibition. In these situations, commercial organisations provided opportunities for people who physically could not get to see a product to gain some appreciation of its size, configuration and capability (through text). However, the development of multimedia technologies has given not only commercial but also not-for-profit organisations the opportunity to showcase their wares on a global basis. One type of organisation to explore the use of this technology has been museums and art collections (static exhibits). Khoon *et al.* (2003) refer to the American History Documents (at www.indiana.edu/liblilly/histy/), Exploring Africa (at www.sc.edu/library/spcoll/sccoll/africa) and SCRAN (at www.scran.ac.uk) (which is a multimedia resource for Scottish history and culture) as examples of previous work and facilities in this area. The use of multimedia technologies enables audiences across the world to access these collections and with the use of audio, video clips and streaming video, in addition to pictures and extensive text, these exhibitions can be brought to life, visited repeatedly, focus given to particular exhibits, materials updated quickly and unobtrusively and links made to other similar facilities. The key difference between this development and previous brochureware-type facilities is the feeling of virtual reality, the sense that a digital visitor is actually in the exhibition, even though seated several thousand miles away.

The use of ecommerce and digital media in the management and presentation of exhibitions is likely to increase. It is unlikely that online exhibitions will ever replace the offline, real-world version, if only because of the need to form relationships and to network with industry members, to touch and feel products and to sense the atmosphere and vitality that exhibitions generate. However, there is huge scope to develop specialised exhibitions, to develop online showcases that incorporate exhibits (products and services) from a variety of geographically dispersed locations.

Marketing management of exhibitions

Good management of exhibitions represents some key aspects of marketing communications in general. Successful events are driven by planning that takes place prior to the exhibition,

Stands should be designed to deliver key messages.

with communications inviting a range of stakeholders, not just customers, in advance of the exhibition event. Stands should be designed to deliver key messages and press releases and press information packs should be prepared and distributed appropriately.

During the event itself staff should be well briefed, trained and knowledgeable about their role in terms of the brand and in the exhibition process. After the exhibition it is vital to follow up on contacts made and discussions or negotiations that have been held. In other words, the exhibition itself is a planned marketing communications activity, one where activities need to be planned prior to, during and after the event. What is key is that these activities are coordinated, themed and supported by brand-oriented staff.

Above all else, exhibitions are an important way of building relationships and signalling corporate identity. Trade shows are an important means of providing corporate hospitality and showing gratitude to all an organisation's customers, but in particular to its key account customers and others of strategic interest. Positive relationships with customers, competitors and suppliers are often reinforced through face-to-face dialogue that happens both formally in the exhibition hall and informally through the variety of social activities that surround and support these events.

Product placement

One way of overcoming the irritation factor associated with advertisements screened in cinemas prior to a film showing is to incorporate the product in the film that is shown. This practice is referred to as product placement, which is the inclusion of products and services in films (or media) for deliberate promotional exposure, often, but not always, in return for an agreed financial sum. It is regarded by some as a form of sales promotion, by others as sponsorship, but for the purposes of this text it is treated as an advertising medium because the 'advertiser' pays a third party for the opportunity to present the product in their channel.

Product placement is the inclusion of products and services in films (or media) for deliberate promotional exposure.

A wide variety of products can be placed in this way, including drinks (both soft and alcoholic), confectionery, newspapers, cars, airlines, perfume and even holiday destinations and sports equipment. However, the development of product placement has inevitably led to new formats and fresh approaches, some of which only serve to muddy the waters.

Hudson and Hudson (2006) set out the development of product placement. Early forms of product placement concerned brand owners making deals with film producers and film stars to openly endorse the brand. The brand owner would fund props and facilities for the film in return for spoken and visual endorsement. Some of the first television programmes were named after the brands that sponsored them, for example, *The Colgate Comedy Hour* and the *Kraft Television Theatre* (Hudson and Hudson, 2006).

The establishment of product placement agencies in the 1980s helped formalise the process and removed much of the barter and haggling that had typified arrangements. The turning point occurred when the film *ET* depicted an alien being lured by Reese's Pieces. Hershey, the manufacturer, saw sales rise 65 per cent following the release of the film and since then product placement has grown year on year.

Two distinct forms of product placement-related activity have emerged.

Two distinct forms of product placement-related activity have emerged, partly as a result of the proliferation of the media, the consequential surge in the production of entertainment programmes and the media industries, need to generate income streams. Rather than place a product within a film, television or radio programme where it assumes a passive role, hoping to get noticed, a new approach sees whole entertainment programmes built around a single product. In contrast to the passivity of product placement, here a brand is actively woven into the theme or the plot of the programme. This latter approach has been labelled 'branded entertainment'. Hudson and Hudson (2006) depict this as a continuum, represented at Figure 23.1.

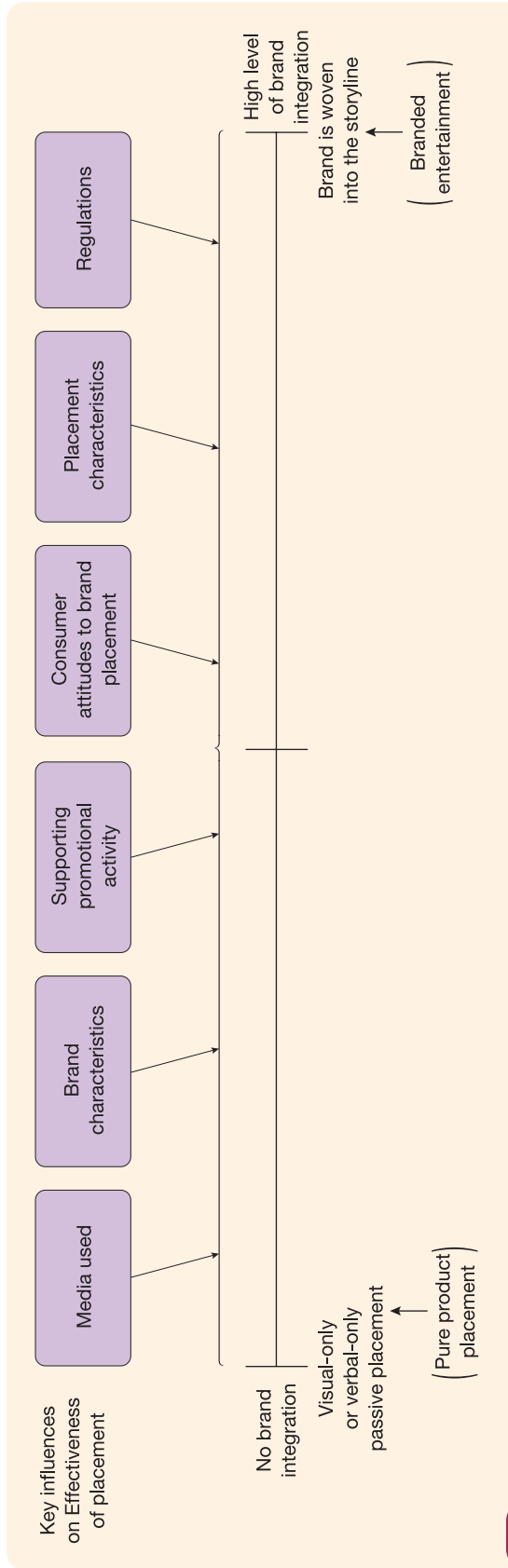


Figure 23.1

The product placement-branded entertainment Continuum
 Source: Hudson and Hudson (2006). Reproduced by permission of Westburn Publishers Ltd.

Characteristics of product placement

Strengths

By presenting the product as part of the film, not only is it possible to build awareness, but source credibility can be improved significantly and brand images reinforced. The audience is assisted to identify and associate itself with the environment depicted in the film or with the celebrity who is using the product.

Levels of impact can be very high, as cinema audiences are very attentive to large-screen presentations. Rates of exposure can be high, particularly now that cinema films are being released through video outlets, satellite and various new regional cable and television organisations.

Perhaps the major advantage is that the majority of audiences appear to approve of this form of marketing communications, if only because it is unobtrusive and integral to the film (Nebenzahl and Secunda, 1993).

Weaknesses

Having achieved a placement in a film, there is still a risk that the product will run unnoticed, especially if the placements coincide with distracting or action-oriented parts of the film. Associated with this is the lack of control the advertiser has over when, where and how the product will be presented. If the product is noticed, a small minority of audiences claim that

The product is seen in use and is hopefully associated with an event, person(s) or objects that provide a source of pleasure, inspiration or aspiration for the individual viewer.

this form of communication is unethical; it is even suggested that it is subliminal advertising, which is, of course, illegal. The absolute costs of product placement in films can be extremely high, counteracting the low relative costs or cost per contact. The final major drawback concerning this form of communication concerns its inability to provide explanation, detail, or indeed any substantive information about the product. The product is seen in use and

ViewPoint 23.3

Placing products for entertainment

Cars are often placed in films, for example, the Ford Mondeo was placed in *Casino Royale* and Audi has placed cars in the films *Ronin*, *The Insider* and *Mission Impossible II*. Audi also developed a futuristic car especially for the film *I, ROBOT* which has been seen by over 55 million people. Aston Martins feature in recent James Bond films, but before that BMWs had been placed in four of these films:

- 1983 – BMW 5 Series and a BMW motorcycle appeared in *Octopussy*;
- 1994 – the Z3 Roadster became James Bond's official car in *GoldenEye*;
- 1997 – following the success of *GoldenEye* a 7 Series saloon and R1200C Cruiser motorcycle appeared in *Tomorrow Never Dies*;
- 1999 – the Z8 sports car featured in *The World is Not Enough*.

Products can also be placed in television game shows (e.g. Coca-Cola in *American Idol*), in books (e.g. *The Bulgari Connection*), in video games (e.g. Pizza Hut and KFC in *Crazy Taxi*) in TV dramas and soaps (Audi in *Silent Witness* and Saab in *Eastenders*).

Sources: Various including Plaut (2004); www.bmw.com/.

Question

Should there be a limit on the number of products placed in a film, if so, how many and why?

Task

Watch *Casino Royale* (again) and note how many placements have been made.

is hopefully associated with an event, person(s) or objects that provide a source of pleasure, inspiration or aspiration for the individual viewer.

Product placement is not confined to cinema films. Music videos, television plays, dramas and soap operas can also use this method to present advertisers' products. The novel *The Sweetest Taboo*, written by novelist Carole Matthews, includes frequent references to various Ford cars, which is not surprising as Ford paid her to mention their cars in her work (Plaut, 2004). Pervan and Martin (2002) found that

Product placement is not confined to cinema films. Music videos, television plays, dramas and soap operas can also use this method.

product placement in television soaps was an effective communications activity. They also concluded that the way a product is used in the soap, i.e. positive and negative outcomes, may well have important implications for the attitudes held towards these brands. In addition, they suggested that organisations should study the consumption imagery associated with placed products as this might yield significant information about the way in which these products are actually consumed. Product placement is not confined to offline communications. For example, the toothpaste brand Pearl Drops has been written into the plotline and integrated into the social network Bebo's interactive drama called *Sofia's Diary*, a teen-targeted programme.

Placement issues

The nature of a placement and the impact it has on the audience appear to be affected by a number of variables. Important issues concern: the placement and its association with the storyline; whether the actors use the product or it remains a background object; if the product fits the plot; the degree to which the product is prominently displayed; and the amount of time that the product is actually exposed. Karrh *et al.* (2003) refer to the relative lack of control that marketers have over product placement activities, but confirm that in comparison to advertising equivalents, product placement can have a far greater impact on audiences and in most cases at a fraction of the cost of a 30-second advertisement. Russell and Belch (2005) refer to difficulties relating to the way the value of product placement is perceived. There is a view, held by creative and media agencies that the 'number of seconds on screen' is a valid measurement of effectiveness. Many do not agree and prefer to consider the context of the placement and the level of continuity within a defined communications strategy as more meaningful measures.

Field marketing

Field marketing is a relatively new sector of the industry and seeks to provide support for the sales force and merchandising personnel along with data collection and research facilities for clients. The sector started as a way of ensuring that products were accessible in retail outlets (McLuhan, 2007). Based on merchandising and shelf-positioning skills, this aspect of field marketing remains important. McLuhan reports that 'at least 4 per cent of an fmcg's product's sales depend on getting this right; the rate is higher for other product types' (p. 9). Although this element remains important, field marketing has evolved so that it now encompasses ways in which people can experience a brand. This reflects an overall shift in marketing communications from one based largely on developing brand values through an emotional proposition, to one that emphasises changes in behaviour and calls-to-action.

The Field Marketing Council (FMC) states that the sector is about the use of people to communicate sales and marketing messages. This is quite an open remit and reflects the wide range of activities that practitioners within the area have recently encompassed. At a basic level, field marketing is concerned with getting free samples of a product into the hands of potential customers. At another level, field marketing is about creating an interaction between

The sector is about the use of people to communicate sales and marketing messages.

the brand and a new customer. At yet another level, it is about creating a personal and memorable brand experience for potential customers. The key to field marketing is the flexibility of services provided to clients. Sales forces can be hired on short-term contracts and promotional teams can be contracted to launch new products, provide samples (both in-store and door-to-door) and undertake a range of other activities that are not part of an organisation's normal promotion activities.

The decision about whether to own or to hire a sales force has to be based on a variety of criteria, such as the degree of control required over not only the salesperson, but also the message to be transmitted. A further criterion is flexibility. Ruckert *et al.* (1985) identified that in environments subject to rapid change, which brings uncertainty (for example because of shortening product lifecycles or major technological developments), the ability to adjust quickly the number of representatives in the distribution channel can be of considerable strategic importance. A further criterion is cost; for some the large fixed costs associated with a sales force can be avoided by using a commission-only team of representatives.

A large number of organisations choose to have their own sales force, but of these many use the services of a manufacturer's agent to supplement their activities. A number of pharmaceutical manufacturers use independent sales forces to supplement the activities of their own sales teams.

Range of FM activities

At the turn of the century, research undertaken by the FMC found that there was a serious misunderstanding by clients and agencies concerning what constitutes field marketing activities (McLuhan, 2000). Since then, this situation has not changed a great deal, although there is now greater acceptance that field marketing should be a part of the marketing communications mix for most organisations. Table 23.2 sets out the range of activities undertaken in the name of field marketing. To some extent it consists of tasks pulled from some of the five main promotional tools, repackaged and presented under a more contemporary title; for example, door-to-door and sales activities from personal selling, merchandising from both personal selling and sales promotion, sampling (which is a straight sales promotions task) and event

Table 23.2 Essential features of field marketing activities

Core activities	Essential features
Sales	Provides sales force personnel on either a temporary or a permanent basis. This is for business-to-business and direct to the public.
Merchandising	Generates awareness and brand visibility through point-of-purchase placement, in-store staff training, product displays and leaflets.
Sampling	Mainly to the public at shopping centres and station concourses but also for business-to-business purposes.
Auditing	Used for checking stock availability, pricing and positioning.
Mystery shopping	Provides feedback on the level and quality of service offered by retail and services-based staff.
Event marketing	Used to create drama and to focus attention at sports events, open-air concerts and festivals. Essentially theatrical or entertainment-based.
Door-to-door (home calls)	A form of selling where relatively uncomplex products and services can be sold through home visits.

Source: Adapted from McLuhan (2000). Reproduced from *Marketing* magazine with the permission of the copyright owner, Haymarket Business Publications Limited.

marketing from public relations. Field marketing is a response to market needs and is a development practitioners have pioneered to fulfil a range of customer needs that presumably had not been adequately satisfied.

Field marketing can take place virtually anywhere, but common locations are in shopping centres and supermarkets where footfall is greatest. Typically these events require agency staff to dress up in an eye-catching way in order to form associations between the clothing and the brand (e.g. dressed in Mexican ponchos and sombreros to give out free samples of Pot Noodle in a supermarket). It is regarded as a cost-effective way of demonstrating a product, getting stand-out and creating opportunities for customers to trial a product with minimum risk. Field marketing is also used to sell relatively complex products where a degree of explanation is required (e.g. computers, hi-fis or mobile phones).

Field marketing can take place virtually anywhere, but common locations are in shopping centres and supermarkets where footfall is greatest.

A key aspect of field marketing concerns the growing interest in what is referred to as experiential marketing or brand experience. Many in the industry see their role as delivering brand experience opportunities for their clients' customers. Others would argue that brand experience occurs through various interactions with a brand, namely purchasing, consumption and consideration. However, the term 'brand experience' appears to be owned by those in the field marketing industry and has evolved through the development of both sampling and event/roadshow activities. Unsurprisingly therefore, mystery shopping has developed as an important aspect of field marketing. Used increasingly by service-based operations, such as airlines, travel agents, restaurants and hotels, the intention is to understand how a customer experiences the service or purchase encounter and then feed the information into training and service improvements.

A key aspect concerns the growing interest in what is referred to as experiential marketing or brand experience.

Whether the brand experience industry lies inside or outside field marketing is not particularly critical. However, what differentiates the experiential aspect from other FM activities is that it requires more precise targeting (not mass market) and it is more emotionally and physically engaging than sampling and many events or roadshows, which in turn Bashford (2004) claims can lead to stronger (positive) memories. She quotes Paul Ephremson, a leading industry practitioner who says that field marketing is 'all about the numbers and not the interaction, and is driven by cost per sample' whereas brand experience is about 'creating an emotional bond between the brand and the consumer'.

The debate about what constitutes field marketing and experiential marketing is explored by Bashford (2007). She provides two definitions, set out in Table 23.3.

Table 23.3 Two aspects of field marketing

Element	Explanation
Field marketing	The use of promotional staff in a marketing campaign to boost sales of a brand. Typically the field force will distribute product samples and carry out non-brand-related tasks that must be in place to maximise sales, such as compliance, auditing and merchandising.
Experiential marketing	The creation is a campaign delivered face-to-face, that engages the target audience in the brand through stimulation of some or all of the senses. This technique strives to forge a deeper connection with individuals and convey a sense of the brand's values.

Source: Bashford (2007). Reproduced from *Marketing* magazine with the permission of the copyright owner, Haymarket Business Publications Limited.

One of the essential tasks of field marketing is to continue to make brand signals available to consumers so that they can make the necessary brand associations that they have developed through advertising, brand and category experience. It is a matter of keeping brand values alive at the point of purchase (Kemp, 2000). Field marketing has undoubtedly expanded its role in recent years and in doing so has begun to establish itself as a core marketing support activity. Indeed, Moyies (2000) claims that field marketing should be cross-fertilised with direct marketing and sales promotion, and in doing so would not only benefit clients but also enhance the credibility of the industry.

ViewPoint 23.4

Enhancing the driving experience

Car manufacturers are fully aware of the benefits of getting prospective customers to test drive a vehicle. The hands-on driving experience has the potential to advance the purchase decision process considerably. Some manufacturers have developed car experience centres where customers can drive a range of vehicles. Here various terrains are available and the experience is a day-long event.

Car dealerships are environments often associated with alienation and pressure. Most are located in the suburbs, if only for cost and access reasons. Experience centres have to be located further away from city centres due to the need for land and resources. Both of these locations mean that customer footfall is limited and that marketing communications are required to drive visitors to these locations.

In an effort to generate footfall and create brand awareness, Fiat have opened a showroom, or experience centre, in central London. The centre has an innovative (non-traditional) design, where visitors view the cars on giant video screens. Visitors interact with the screens through hand motions in order to view particular elements in more detail. There are no sales people. One of the goals is to introduce people to Fiat and to encourage them to talk about their experience at the centre. The centre can also be used for conferences, fashion shows and events, all of which draw consumers closer to Fiat.

Source: McLuhan (2008).

Question

How can service brands develop if experience is a key element in the purchase decision process?

Task

Make a list of three product categories in which it is possible to generate relevant prior experience of the brand.

Packaging

Packaging has long been considered a means of protecting and preserving products during transit and while they remain in store or on the shelf prior to purchase and consumption. As Stewart (1995) aptly suggests, the function of packaging is to 'preserve product integrity'. In this sense, packaging can be regarded as an element of product strategy. To a certain extent this is still true; however, technology has progressed considerably and, with consumer choice continually widening, packaging has become a means by which buyers, particularly in consumer markets, can make significant brand choice decisions. Indeed, recent research by Silayoi and Speece (2007) has found that the way Asian consumers perceive the convenience

of a package can be the most important factor in the decision-making process for some segments. To that extent, because packaging can be used to convey persuasive information and be part of the decision-making process, yet still protect the contents, it is an important means of marketing communications in particular markets, such as FMCG.

Packaging can be used to convey persuasive information and be part of the decision-making process.

Low-involvement, decision-making requires peripheral cues to stimulate buyers into action. It has already been noted that decisions made at the point of purchase, especially those in the FMCG sector, often require buyers to build awareness through recognition. The design of packages and wrappers is important, as continuity of design, combined with the power to attract and hold the attention of prospective buyers, is a vital part of point-of-purchase activity. The degree of importance that manufacturers place upon packaging and design was seen in 1994, when Sainsbury's introduced its own cola. The reaction of the Coca-Cola company to the lookalike design of the own-label product is testimony to the value placed on this aspect of brand personality. There should be no doubt that packaging can provide a strong point of differentiation, one that is increasingly recognised by food manufacturers and producers (Wells *et al.* 2007).

ViewPoint 23.5

Bottling it

Volvic's 'Touch of Fruit' brand had 47 per cent of the UK market, but as part of a strategy to build market share the bottle and labelling were redesigned in 2008. Coloured caps to emphasise product differentiation and bigger labels to attract attention and encourage product and flavour trial were key aspects of the redesign. However, the new packaging was woven into a campaign to highlight the brand. This involved, radio, online and a series of print ads in consumer magazines such as *Marie Claire* and various grocery trade press vehicles.

An innovative approach to bottle design was undertaken by Guinness in Asia. In a region where awareness of the Guinness brand is as high as that of Carlsberg and Heineken, beer drinkers were asked to vote for their favourite bottle design. The campaign featured four different designs, one of which was based on the god of thunder, Thor, to provide a 'witty parody of conventional drinking attitudes'.

To help promote the redesign a campaign involving print ads was run in *Today*, *Shin Min*, *Lianhe Wanbao* and mainstream magazines such as *FHM*, *8 Days*, *Juice*, *Men's Health*, *IS* and *Banter* in Singapore. This was supported with outdoor work in Hong Kong, with the posters carrying a toll-free number inviting consumers to vote for their favourite design. Guinness used mobile billboards, with fully plastered trucks driving through Singapore.

Sales promotions using tent cards, column posters, table standees and coasters were used across the city. The winning bottle design was taken out on the street with promoters dressed in life-sized bottle costumes, pitching themselves to the public as 'the better, more attractive bottle'.

Sources: Hargrave-Silk (2003); Odol (2008a).

Question

To what degree should the design of a bottle be determined by the positioning strategy for the brand?

Task

Using the bottle of a brand you use, make notes about how you could improve its design.

The communication dimensions of packaging

There are a number of dimensions that can affect the power and utility of a package. Colour is influential, as the context of the product class can frame the purchase situation for a buyer. This means that colours should be appropriate to the product class, to the brand and to the prevailing culture if marketing overseas. For example, red is used to stimulate the appetite, white to symbolise purity and cleanliness, blue to signal freshness, and green is increasingly being used to denote an environmental orientation and natural ingredients. From a cultural aspect, colours can be a problem. In China red is used to depict happiness, in Germany bright bold colours are regarded as appropriate for baby products, whereas in the United Kingdom pastel shades are more acceptable.

The shape of the packaging can be a strong form of persuasion.

The shape of the packaging can be a strong form of persuasion. Verebelyi (2000) suggests that this influence may be due to the decorative impact of some brands (see Exhibit 23.2).

Various domestic lavatory cleaners have a twist in the neck or a trigger action, facilitating directable and easier application.

The shape may also provide information about how to open and use the product, while some packages can be used after the product has been consumed for other purposes. For example, some jars can be reused as food containers, thereby providing a means of continual communication for the original brand in the home. Packaging can also be used as a means of brand identification, as a cue by which buyers recognise and differentiate a brand. The supreme example of this is the Coca-Cola contour bottle, with its unique shape and immediate power for brand recognition at the point of purchase (see Exhibit 23.4).

Package size is important, as different target markets may consume varying amounts of product. Toothpaste is available in large-size family tubes and in smaller containers for those households that do not use so much. However, the size of a package can also be important perceptual stimuli. Research by Raghuram and Krishna (1999) found that the height of a container



Exhibit 23.2

A packaging example

Toblerone and the Toblerone Triangular Packaging are the registered trademarks owned and licensed by Kraft Foods.



Exhibit 23.3

Coca-Cola contour bottle

Packaging is an important aspect of marketing communications in many sectors. Depicted here is the Coca-Cola bottle with its unique (and well-protected) shape.

Coca-Cola is a registered trade mark of the Coca-Cola Company. This image has been reproduced with the kind permission of the Coca-Cola Company.

was an important variable that consumers used to make judgements about the volume of the container.

However, Folkes and Matta (2004) counter this by referring to *Gestalt* theory, which is concerned with holistic perspectives, and say that consumers use multiple dimensions to make judgements about objects (packages). Their research suggests that there is a relationship between the attractiveness of a package and the volume of the package. As a broad generalisation, the greater the attractiveness, the greater the perceived volume. The implications of this insight have been implicitly known by marketing management for years, judging by the effort that is given to create attractive packaging and shelf stand-out.

In certain markets packaging can be strategically important as it can affect positioning. Ampuero and Vial (2006) identify colour, typography, graphical forms and images as the key packaging variables from a design perspective. They then consider how these combine to produce optimum positioning conditions. They conclude that dark-coloured cold packaging, which show, the product, is perceived to be associated with products that are elegant and expensive. The packaging for products targeted at customers for whom a low price is important should be light-coloured and show illustrations of people.

Packaging can be strategically important as it can affect positioning.

Washing and dishwasher powder manufacturers now provide plastic refill packs that are designed to provoke brand loyalty. These packs are cheaper than the original pack, partly because some of the packaging expense has been reduced as the customer has been introduced to the product at an earlier time. Purchase of the refill pack is dependent on product quality and customer satisfaction and, as long as the brand name is prominent for identification and reminder purposes, the decision to select the refill is quicker, as most of the risk (financial, physical and social) has been removed through previous satisfactory usage.

ViewPoint 23.6**Beware of men bearing gift trays**

Milk Tray is a well-known brand of chocolate, selling over 8 million packs each year. It was launched by Cadbury in 1915 and its packaging has evolved, often reflecting changing values and brand positioning. The name was derived from the way in which it was originally packed and delivered to shops. Milk Tray chocolates were arranged in five-and-a-half pound boxes, arranged on trays and then sold loose to customers. Since then Milk Tray has been presented in packs and positioned as an assortment for everyday, use not just special occasions. Just as the contents have been regularly updated, so has the packaging in order to maintain its position and modernity. The design is essentially stylish but with no frills or frivolity.

In the period 1980–2000 the advertising used to support the brand featured a James Bond character who undertook various daring stunts in order to deliver a box of Milk Tray. This epitomised the position that Milk Tray was something men gave to women.

In 2003, the brand underwent a makeover to bring it up-to-date as the light-hearted token of affection. The brand was relaunched again in 2008, this time to reposition the brand as a gift for men to give to 35–45-year-old women. Following research, the contents were revised, and updated packaging was introduced. The traditional purple colour was retained but with an embossed typeface, partly in an attempt to provide in-store, stand-out and point-of-purchase attention, to help compete with Terry's All Gold.

Sources: Odol (2008b); www.cadbury.co.uk/.

Question

To what extent is packaging the most important element in the communication mix for grocery and FMCG products?

Task

How would you use colour as a point of differentiation in the gift chocolate market? Choose four different segments (e.g. grannies, mums, dads and girl/boy-friends), and decide which colour you would use for each segment. Justify your selection.

All packages have to carry information concerning the ingredients, nutritional values and safety requirements, including sell-by and use-by dates. Non-food packages must also attempt to be sales agents and provide all the information that a prospective buyer might need, while at the same time providing conviction that this product is the correct one to purchase. Labelling of products offers opportunities to manufacturers to harmonise the in-store presentation of their products in such a way that buyers from different countries can still identify the brand and remain brand loyal. For example, Buckley (1993) reported that Unilever decided not to change its different brands of washing powder in favour of a pan-European brand. It decided instead to retain the existing names (Omo, Skip, Via, Persil and All) and to package them in a similar way, using similar visual devices, typography and colours. This not only allows customers to remain loyal but also presents opportunities to save on advertising and design costs and gain access to satellite and other cross-border media.

The psychological impact that packages can have should not be underestimated.

Packages carry tangible and intangible messages. The psychological impact that packages can have should not be underestimated. They convey information about the product, but they also say something about the quality of the product (Hall, 1991) and how it differs from competitive offerings. In some cases, where there is little to differentiate products, buyers may use the packaging on its own for decision-making purposes.

Gordon and Valentine (1996) argue that the market, competitive and associated products, provide a context within which a brand's packaging communicates. This is achieved by using packaging that conforms to a design code that has been established for the category. This permits consumers to identify quickly the range of brands in the product field, but does not

necessarily allow for the identification of individual brands. They make the important point that it is this process that allows own-label brands to become part of a category without the support of advertising to establish credibility.

Packaging has been termed passive and active (Southgate, 1994). Passive packaging relies on vast amounts of advertising to infuse the design to create interest (e.g. Heinz). This is similar to the above-the-line approach to branding. Active packaging is more demonstrative and tends to work with the other marketing and communication elements. Connolly and Davison (1996) cite Tango as an example of this type of packaging.

Summary

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

1. Explain the significance of exhibitions and trade shows.

The main reasons for attending exhibitions and trade fairs are that: it enables organisations to meet customers (and potential customers) in an agreeable environment, one where both have independently volunteered their time to attend; to place/take orders; to generate leads; and to gather market information.

2. Consider the main advantages and disadvantages of using exhibitions as part of the communication mix.

As a form of marketing communications, exhibitions enable products to be promoted, they can build brands and they can be an effective means of demonstrating products and building industry-wide credibility in a relatively short period of time. Positive relationships with customers, competitors and suppliers are often reinforced through face-to-face dialogue that happens both formally in the exhibition hall and informally through the variety of social activities that surround and support these events.

3. Understand the concept and issues associated with product placement.

Product placement is the inclusion of products and services in films (or media) for deliberate promotional exposure, often, but not always, in return for an agreed financial sum. It is regarded by some as a form of sales promotion, by others as sponsorship, but the most common linkage is with advertising, because the 'advertiser' pays a third party for the opportunity to present the product in their channel.

There are distinct forms of product placement. One involves the passive placement of a product within the media; the other sees whole entertainment programmes built around a single product, one where it is actively woven into the theme or the plot of the programme. This is known as 'branded entertainment'.

4. Explore ideas associated with field marketing and related activities.

Field marketing is a relatively new sector and seeks to provide support for the sales force and merchandising personnel along with data collection and research facilities. A key aspect of field marketing concerns the growing interest in what is referred to as experiential marketing or brand experience.

What differentiates the experiential aspect from other FM activities is that it requires more precise targeting (not mass-market) and it is more emotionally and physically engaging than sampling and many events or road shows.

5. Examine the role and key characteristics of packaging as a form of marketing communication.

Packaging has become a means by which buyers, particularly in consumer markets, can make significant brand-choice decisions and constitutes more than preserving product integrity. Packages carry tangible and intangible messages. The psychological impact that packages can have is important. Packaging conveys information about the product, but it also makes a statement about the quality of the product and how it differs from competitive offerings. In some cases, where there is little to differentiate products, buyers may use the packaging on its own for decision-making purposes.

Review questions

1. Evaluate the differences between consumer- and business-oriented trade shows.
2. As sales manager for a company making plastic mouldings for use in the manufacture of consumer durables, set out the reasons for and against attendance at trade shows and exhibitions.
3. Write brief notes explaining the role exhibitions might play in a company's integrated marketing communications strategy.
4. The development of interorganisational relationships is best undertaken through personal selling rather than through exhibitions and trade shows. Discuss.
5. Explain how packaging can be an integral part of a consumer's brand experience.
6. Find three brands where the shape of a package is an integral part of the product.
7. What is the difference between active and passive packaging?
8. Name two strengths and two weaknesses of product placement.
9. Identify four examples of product placement. Evaluate their effectiveness.
10. Name five core activities associated with field marketing and explain their essential features. Do not refer to Table 23.2 until you have attempted the exercise from memory.

MiniCase

Sustainabilitylive!

Jim Blythe: Visiting Reader at Plymouth Business School

In May 2008, Sustainabilitylive! was held at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham, UK. The exhibition attracted over 7,000 visitors, and 450 exhibitors: it was the largest exhibition on environmental issues in the United Kingdom. Given the current prominence of environmentalism in both business- and public-sector thinking, the exhibition could hardly be more relevant, but the definition of 'environmental issues' had clearly been widely cast by many exhibitors and visitors.

Sustainabilitylive! was actually a combination of four already-successful shows: the National Energy Management Exhibition (NEMEX), the Environmental

Technology and Environmental Services Exhibition (ET&ES), Brownfield Expo and the International Water and Effluent Exhibition (IWEX).

Exhibitors ranged from companies selling water coolers for offices through to government organisations such as the British Geological Survey. A sample of exhibiting companies is as follows:

- CDR Pumps Ltd. This company specialises in pumps for moving toxic waste, as well as other liquids.
- Climate Change Solutions Ltd. This is a non-profit organisation dedicated to facilitating synergies

between companies and public bodies concerned about climate change.

- City University. This university attended with the aim of promoting its new MSc in energy, environmental technology and economics. This degree is aimed at middle managers in industry. Cranfield University also exhibited, promoting their environmental consultancy services as well as their range of degrees.
- The Environment Agency. This is the government department charged with responsibility for environmental issues, in particular, the agency has recently been interested in flood defences.
- Executive Futures. An employment agency, Executive Futures exhibited on the basis that they can locate people with specific environmental credentials.
- Lighting Solutions UK Ltd. This company provides energy-efficient lighting systems.
- Meteo France. The French government weather-forecasting service, this agency seeks to provide weather-forecasting services for industry. For some industries (notably airlines and shipping) weather forecasting is crucial, but it is certainly also useful in predicting demand for some products and services.

Some companies, perhaps surprisingly, provided few details about their activities for the exhibition web site. Global Water Intelligence, Gazprom and Kingspan Renewables were all reticent about what they actually do. This was despite exhortations from the exhibition organisers to provide as much information as possible – obviously information provided on the web site would be used by potential visitors to decide whether or not to attend. Other companies provided extremely detailed information, including contact details and links to their own web sites.

Exhibitors were encouraged to attend on the basis that they would increase their networking possibilities, would meet potential buyers and broaden their client base, would be able to launch new products, and would be able to reach new sectors due to cross-marketing between the four exhibitions making up *Sustainability/live!* The emphasis was thus firmly on selling activities – finding new buyers, launching new products and reaching new sectors. In fact, the organisers' PR agents (Mistral Public Relations) even sent out a press release promoting the 'Meet the Buyer' event, at which buyers from over 35 countries were present to discuss their needs and purchasing processes. For this event, the UK Department of Trade and Industry sent advisers along to provide information about foreign business cultures and assistance that could be made available for exporting firms.

Exhibition organisers Faversham House Group established partnerships with several trade organisations: the British Pump Manufacturers' Association, the Chemical Industries Association and the Environmental Services Association were just 3 of the 30 associations and organisations who sponsored the exhibition. Forming a partnership with Faversham House meant that these organisations could have some input into the running and promotion of the exhibition, as well as the fact that activities such as promoting exhibitions form part of their reason for existing – trade associations are all about networking and promoting their industries. However, on the downside, Faversham House were obliged to issue a warning to potential exhibitors as a result of an Austrian publishing firm approaching exhibitors with an offer to be included in a 'directory' about the exhibition. This directory purported to offer free publicity, but in fact concealed a charge of €971. Such scams are not uncommon at exhibitions, and are, obviously, potentially damaging for the reputation of the exhibition organisers.

Faversham House Group encouraged visitors to attend by promoting the benefits of attendance – specifically, their publicity referred to the networking opportunities, the free seminar and masterclass presentations, the opportunities to discuss specific requirements (i.e. to meet potential suppliers) and (perhaps controversially) the opportunity to meet prospective clients. This last opportunity is controversial because it implies that visitors might attend in order to sell to exhibitors – something that exhibitors might resent, since they were paying for stand space and visitors were not. Visitors were offered the opportunity to register on-line for the show, thus flagging up their specific interests and reasons for attending: failing this, they could register on arrival, thus adding their names to a mailing list and ensuring that exhibitors could contact them with specific advice and solutions.

A notable feature for adding value to the visitor experience was the wide range of free seminars on offer. These included subjects such as environmental law changes, waste-to-energy conversion technology, recycling of industrial waste, and human health issues arising from exposure to toxins. Over 80 seminars were run over the three days of the exhibition, mainly offered free by exhibiting companies as a way of promoting their own products and services, but at the same time offering visitors the latest information on sustainability.

Adding value for visitors was a key feature of the exhibition. For an exhibition organiser, the first priority was to ensure that as many visitors as possible attend: the next priority was that they should be the right kind of visitors, but this was harder to achieve. If there are plenty

of visitors, exhibitors will want to book stand space, and in many cases will not be aware of the types of visitor attending. The only restriction the organisers placed on visitors was that under-16s were refused entry: all others were welcomed. Obviously, screening of visitors is extremely difficult to achieve in practice – so organisers simply allow everyone in, and accept that some at least are less than truthful when filling in the registration forms.

Despite the problems, however, the vast majority of exhibitors and visitors came away satisfied with their time at the exhibition. Approached with the right attitude and objectives, *SustainabilityLive!* proved to be an excellent showcase for a variety of industries involved

in environmental areas of activity: it also proved to be an excellent source of information for visitors.

MiniCase questions

1. What was the role of public relations in the exhibition?
2. What do you conclude from the fact that some firms did not provide much detail about themselves for the exhibition web site?
3. How might a company maximise the effectiveness of its activities at the exhibition?

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