Chapter 8

How marketing communications might work

Understanding how marketing communications might work with its rich mosaic of perceptions, emotions, attitudes, information and patterns of behaviour is challenging in itself. Any attempt to understand how marketing communications might work must be cautioned by an appreciation of the complexity and contradictions inherent in this complicated commercial activity.

Aims and learning objectives

The aims of this chapter are to explore some of the theoretical concepts associated with ideas about how marketing communications might work and to consider the complexities associated with understanding how clients can best use marketing communications.

The learning objectives of this chapter are to:

1. explore ideas concerning the strategic context of marketing communications;
2. explain how marketing communications has emerged;
3. discuss the role and tasks of marketing communications;
4. suggest ways in which marketing communications might work;
5. examine the concept of significant value;
6. consider the strengths and weaknesses of a model explaining of how marketing communications might work.

For an applied interpretation see Andrew Turnbull's MiniCase entitled *'Get on your bike!' Mountain biking tourism in the Cairngorms National Park (CNP)* at the end of this chapter.

Introduction

This chapter considers ways in which marketing communications might work and introduces a number of concepts and frameworks that have contributed to our understanding. This chapter should be read prior to Chapters 9 and 16 which explore ideas about integrated marketing communications and ways in which advertising are considered to work. In addition, Chapter 17 complements this chapter as it considers the content of advertising messages, or what is to be conveyed.

Ideas about how advertising works dominate the literature whereas ideas about how marketing communications are thought to work are often regarded as of secondary consideration. Although it is recognised that both these approaches are important it is necessary to change this priority, if only in recognition of the principles of integrated marketing communications. This chapter therefore, deals with ideas concerning ways to explain and interpret how marketing communications might work.

The strategic context

For a long time many considered marketing communications to be a purely operational issue, one which worked by delivering messages about products, to audiences who then, if the communication was effective, purchased the product. No real consideration was given to combining and synchronising the tools, reinforcing messages, understanding the target audience or keying the communications into an overall organisational strategy.

This silo approach has changed. Propelled by the emerging focus on a wider range of stakeholders, the excitement about relationship marketing (Chapter 7), surging developments in digital technology and media applications (Chapter 25) and the emerging controversy over integrated marketing communications (Chapter 9), have raised the profile and importance of a strategic orientation for marketing communications.

The corporate strategy that organisations pursue should be supported by business, operational and functional level strategies. Therefore, to be effective marketing communications should be used to complement the marketing, business and corporate strategies. Such complementarity serves to reinforce core messages, reflect the mission and provide a means of using resources efficiently yet at the same time provide reinforcement for the whole business strategy.

> To be effective marketing communications should be used to complement the marketing, business and corporate strategies.

ViewPoint 8.1   AA's friendly strategy

The relationship between corporate strategy and marketing communications can be observed quite clearly at the UK market leader for roadside assistance, the AA.

The AA used to position itself as the 'fourth emergency service' and in doing so conveyed very clearly its main business activity and key values for audiences. Centrica, whose core business rests with providing a range of household services, bought the organisation partly because it saw value in the 14.8 million members and the opportunities to cross-sell their products. This strategy was reflected in the new strapline 'Just AAsk', introduced in 2002 (see Exhibit 8.1). This drew attention not just to the breakdown facilities, but to insurance, publishing, driving lessons, retailing and other travel-related services.

However, CVC Capital Partners, in partnership with Permira, bought the AA out of Centrica, partly because they could see opportunities to exploit unrealised value. Their business strategy was about

splitting the company into independent businesses, and selling off parts because they are not core to road-side assistance. As a result the 'Just AAsk' strategy was abandoned and the centralised marketing department collapsed.

Following research that identified that it was the perception of the quality of the patrols that acted as a key decision criterion for customers, the AA decided to refocus its communications on its core breakdown business. By putting the AA patrol at the very heart of the brand and its communication strategy, the AA repositioned itself as the customers' 'friend', that is someone who can be relied on to help whenever and wherever they are called upon. Carole King's classic song' 'You've Got A Friend', was used to reinforce the emotionally laden message. Here it is possible to interpret a relationship marketing orientation in the shift of

Exhibit 8.1   AA Poster 'Learn to Drive' demonstrates the Just AAsk Strapline and its invitation to solve the problems of a particular target audience
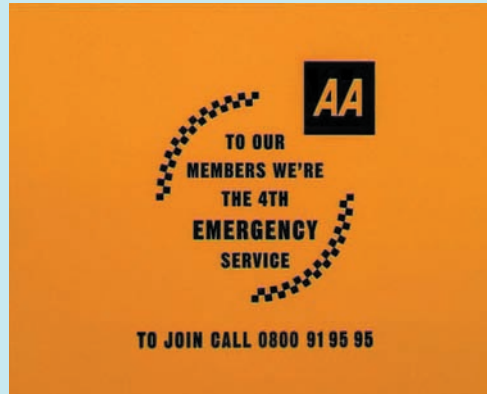
Exhibit 8.2   'Fourth emergency service'
National Motor Museum, Beaulieu and The AA.

emphasis in the AA's communications, and a move away from pure attribute performance. This new campaign is in use at the time of writing and incorporates a wide range of media including television, press, cinema, radio and online for brand-building and a complete range of direct media channels on- and offline for acquisition.

Sources: Bold (2004); Anon. (2008); www.theAA.com.

Question

What might be the consequence for the AA's marketing communications if its business strategy changed to a value-for-money orientation?

Task

Identify another road-side breakdown organisation and determine its business strategy and marketing communications. Are they compatible?

Marketing communications works when it effectively reflects the corporate level strategy and supports the marketing plan.

It could be argued that marketing communications works when it effectively reflects the corporate level strategy and supports the marketing plan and other related activities. It does not work simply because it complements strategy but it certainly will not work unless it does reflect the marketing and business imperatives.

The emergence of marketing communications

It is important to appreciate how marketing communications has developed in order to understand how it might work. Before marketing communications there was promotion and before that separate individual promotional tools, and one overriding tool, advertising. The broad task of advertising was to deliver the unique selling proposition (USPs) that all products were considered to have. These USPs were based on product features and related to particular attributes that differentiated one product from another. If this uniqueness was of value to a consumer then the USP alone was thought sufficient to persuade consumers to purchase.

However, the reign of the USP was short lived when technology enabled me-too and own label brands to be brought to market very quickly and product lifecycles became increasingly

shorter. The power of the USP was eroded and with it the basis of product differentiation as it was known then. In addition, the power and purpose of advertising's role to differentiate was challenged.

$ViewPoint$ 8.2   USP with Ronseal

Ronseal have a range of products in the specialist paint sector. One of their major products is called No Rust, which, unlike other paints, can be applied directly to rust and its 3 in 1 formulation means – no primer, no undercoat, no fuss.

They claim that the unique formulation contains 'anti-rust agents, anti-sag agents and advanced silicone technology to create a paint that locks out moisture to give superior, long lasting protection'.

This USP is reflected in their hard-hitting advertising and universally applied message: RONSEAL – Does exactly what it says on the tin® (see Exhibit 8.3).

Question

Is the role of the USP strong in all markets?

Task

Find another brand, in any category, and determine whether it uses USPs.

$Exhibit$ 8.3   Ronseal USP

What emerged were emotional selling propositions or ESPs. Advertising's role became more focused on developing brand values, ones that were based on emotion and imagery. This approach to communication builds brand awareness, desire and aspirational involvement.

However, it often fails to provide customers with a rationale or explicit reason to purchase, what is often referred to as a 'call to action'.

Other tools were required to provide customers with an impetus to act and sales promotions, event marketing, roadshows and, later, direct marketing evolved to fulfil this need. These tools are known collectively as below-the-line communication tools and their common characteristic is that they are all capable of driving action or creating behavioural change. For example, sales promotions can be used to accelerate customer behaviour by bringing forward sales that might otherwise have been made at some point in the future. Methods such as price deals, premiums and bonus packs are all designed to change behaviour by calling customers into action. This may be in the form of converting or switching users of competitive products, creating trial use of newly introduced products or encouraging existing customers to increase their usage of the product.

ViewPoint 8.3   Dental ESPs

Toothpaste, the biggest part of the oral hygiene market (including dental floss, mouthwashes, dental gum and dental cleaners and fixatives) has experienced declining sales. This is due in part to competitive price deals, bonus packs and the increasing use of electronic toothbrushes that require less toothpaste.

Toothpaste has traditionally been presented on an attribute basis with each brand focusing on a particular USP. For example, Sensodyne for sensitive teeth and gums and Colgate for decay prevention and tartar control.

In the 1990s manufacturers started to move towards using ESPs, principally whitening agents with cosmetic benefits. The use of ESPs in this market is becoming increasingly common as products are launched for smokers, children and, for example, Crest's 'Revitalise' that is targeted at women and used celebrities such as Ulrika Jonsson in their advertising. The focus is now about lifestyle and how teeth contribute to an individual's overall beauty, appearance and feelings about oneself. Growing interest in the cosmetic benefits of toothpaste has led Crest's owners, Procter & Gamble, to move the brand from the oral care to the beauty division.

Source: Bainbridge (2004).

Question

Discuss the notion that to be really effective messages should include both USPs and ESPs.

Task

Find out the USPs or ESPs used in the cosmetics, fruit juice, digital cameras and PDA categories

The shift in focus away from mass communications towards more personalised messages delivered though different media has been demonstrated by the increased use of direct marketing by organisations over the past ten years. It can also be argued that the development of direct marketing is a response to some of the weaknesses, to do with cost and effectiveness of the other tools, most notably advertising.

> The communication mix has expanded and become a more complex managerial instrument.

The communication mix has expanded and become a more complex managerial instrument, but essentially it is now capable of delivering two main solutions. On the one hand it can be used to develop and maintain brand values, and on the other it could be used to change behaviour through the delivery of calls to action. From a strategic perspective, the former is oriented to the long term and the latter to the short term. It is also apparent that the significant rise of the below-the-line tools within the mix is partly a reflection of the demise of the USP, but it is also a reflection of the

increasing financial pressures experienced by organisations to improve performance and improve returns on investment.

Organisations, therefore, are faced with a dilemma. On the one hand they need to create brands that are perceived to be of value, but on the other they need to prompt or encourage customers into purchase behaviour. To put it another way, marketing communications should be used to encourage buyers along the purchase decision path but how many resources should be used to create brand values and how many should be used to prompt behaviour?

Role of marketing communications

Extending these ideas about values and action leads to a consideration of the role of marketing communications. In Chapter 1 the notion of engagement was introduced to explain the different forms of marketing communication. Engagement, or buy-in as referred to by Thomson and Hecker (2000), when considering employee-oriented communications, consists of two main components, an intellectual and an emotional element. The intellectual element is concerned with audiences engaging with a brand on the basis of processing rational, functional information. The emotional element is concerned with audiences engaging and aligning themselves with a brand's values on the basis of emotional and expressive information. It follows that communication strategies should be based on the information processing styles of audiences and their access to preferred media. Communications should reflect a suitable balance between the need for rational information to meet intellectual needs and expressive types of communication to meet emotional needs in an organisation's different audiences. The better the quality of communication, the higher the level of engagement.

> Communications should reflect a suitable balance between the need for rational information to meet intellectual needs and expressive types of communication to meet emotional needs.

The DRIP tasks of marketing communications were also introduced in Chapter 1. The idea that marketing communications can be used to differentiate, reinforce, inform or persuade audiences to think or behave in a particular way reveals not only the inherent complexity in this subject but also the wide expectation associated with the use of this aspect of marketing.

Table 8.1   Aspects of DRIP

Role	Tasks	Explanation
Differentiate	Attribute Whole product	To make a product or service stand out in the category
Reinforce	Remind Reassure	To consolidate and strengthen previous messages and experiences
Inform	Make aware Educate	To make known and advise of availability and features
Persuade	Purchase Further enquiry	To encourage further positive purchase-related behaviour

Marketing communications are used extensively to enable individuals to progress through the decision-making process. The first task is to *inform* or make potential customers aware of a product's availability, of its new attributes or its revised facilities. However, this element has other tasks that may need implementing. Indeed, information may be necessary to instruct audiences about *how* to use products, or to advise *when* a product should be used or to

suggest *who* might be the optimal users. In other words, marketing communications is used to engage audiences intellectually.

In addition to informing, customers need to know how a product differs from other competitor brands. This differentiation task of marketing communications has two sub-tasks attached to it. The first task is to clarify for audiences, either directly or indirectly, the degree to which certain attributes are unique or superior to other competing brands. The second task is to convey how the product (service) as a whole is superior to other brands in the category. When customers perceive and believe in the strength of both of these claims, a sense of conviction and preference can develop.

One of the more popular perceptions of marketing communications is that it can be used to *persuade* customers to purchase products or to behave in new ways. Packard (1958) wrote about the 'Hidden Persuaders' and regarded advertising as an undesirable force that relentlessly drove customers to buy products they did not want or need. Echos of this are to be found in a more recent book by Klein (2005). However, although this is no longer a widespread or popular view, there can be no doubt that marketing communications has a task to *persuade* current and potential customers to act in particular, desirable ways. Readers should remember that product purchase is just one of several tasks that marketing communications might persuade individuals to undertake. For example, new behaviour might be to visit a web site, engage in word-of-mouth (or mouse) communications, send for a brochure, phone a number or download wallpaper or ringtones. Persuasion might be achieved intellectually or emotionally depending on the product offering and the degree of uncertainty felt by the audience towards the purchase.

> Persuasion might be achieved intellectually or emotionally.

ViewPoint 8.4   Changing the times for consumption

Many seasonal products try to deseasonalise their sales by reminding markets of their products and demonstrating new ways or fresh occasions when their customers can buy and consume their brands. For a long time ice-cream was a summer food but Walls and then the super premium brands such as Haagen Dazs and Ben and Jerry's used communications to extend consumption across the year.

Liqueur brands are heavily oriented to the Christmas market but summer barbecues, parties and Father's Day have been used by liqueur brands to stimulate new reasons to buy (Solley, 2004). Baileys have made extensive use of television to show younger age groups enjoying the brand and have also sponsored the Channel 4 series *Sex in the City*, in order to reinforce the repositioning and develop new brand associations.

Camelot seek to remind players of the benefits of playing the National Lottery, both personal and social. As if to demonstrate this neatly, one recent campaign was based on the good causes that lottery money has been used to fund and this was replaced at the end of 2004 with an umbrella theme called 'Be lucky': from the social to the individual.

Question

Discuss the idea that by changing the time for consumption, competitor brands are given a cost-free chance to expand to their market.

Task

Find one other category in which a brand has attempted to deseasonalise consumption.

> A further task is to reassure audiences.

In an era when customer retention and loyalty are dominant marketing goals, the use of planned and coordinated communications to reinforce previous messages and product experiences is of vital importance. The two main sub-tasks are to remind people of a need they might have or to remind them of the benefits of past transactions and so convince them that they should enter into a similar exchange. A further task is to reassure audiences, to comfort them by reaffirming the correctness

of their original thoughts or purchase decisions. Through reassurance in particular, marketing communications can be used to retain current customers. This approach to business is much more cost-effective than constantly striving to lure new customers.

How does marketing communications work?

For a message to be communicated successfully, it should be meaningful to the recipient. Messages need to be targeted at the right audience, be capable of gaining attention, be understandable, relevant and acceptable. For effective communication to occur, messages should be designed that fit the cognitive capability of the target audience and follow the 'model' of how marketing communications works.

Unfortunately, there is no such single model, despite years of research and speculation by a great many people. However, from all the work undertaken in this area, mainly with regard to advertising, a number of views have been expressed, and the following sections attempt to present some of the more influential perspectives. For an interpretation of how advertising might work, this chapter should be read in conjunction with Chapter 16.

Sequential models

Various models have been developed to assist our understanding of how these promotional tasks are segregated and organised effectively. Table 8.2 shows some of the better-known models. These models were developed primarily to explain how advertising worked. However, the principle of these hierarchical models also applies to marketing communications.

AIDA

Developed by Strong (1925), the AIDA model was designed to represent the stages that a salesperson must take a prospect through in the personal selling process. This model shows the prospect passing through successive stages of attention, interest, desire and action. This expression of the process was later adopted, very loosely, as the basic framework to explain how persuasive communication, and advertising in particular, was thought to work.

Table 8.2 Sequential models of advertising

Processing	AIDA sequence[a]	Hierarchy of effects sequence[b]	Information sequence[c]
		Awareness	Presentation
			↓
Cognitive			Attention
		↓	↓
	Attention	Knowledge	Comprehension
	↓	↓	↓
	Interest	Liking	Yielding
		↓	
Affective		Preference	
	↓	↓	↓
	Desire	Conviction	Retention
Conative	↓	↓	↓
	Action	Purchase	Behaviour

Sources: [a] Strong (1925); [b] Lavidge and Steiner (1961); [c] McGuire (1978).

Hierarchy of effects models

An extension of the progressive, staged approach advocated by Strong emerged in the early 1960s. Developed most notably by Lavidge and Steiner (1961), the hierarchy of effects models represent the process by which advertising was thought to work and assume that there is a series of steps a prospect must pass through, in succession, from unawareness to actual purchase. Advertising, it is assumed, cannot induce immediate behavioural responses; rather, a series of mental effects must occur with fulfilment at each stage necessary before progress to the next stage is possible.

The information processing model

McGuire (1978) contends that the appropriate view of the receiver of persuasive advertising is as an information processor or cognitive problem solver. This cognitive perspective becomes subsumed as the stages presented reflect similarities with the other hierarchical models, except that McGuire includes a retention stage. This refers to the ability of the receiver to retain and understand information that is valid and relevant. This is important, because it recognises that marketing communication messages are designed to provide information for use by a prospective buyer when a purchase decision is to be made at some time in the future.

Difficulties with the sequential approach

For a long time the sequential approach was accepted as the model upon which advertising was to be developed. However, questions arose about what actually constitute adequate levels of awareness, comprehension and conviction and how it can be determined which stage the majority of the target audience has reached at any one point in time.

The model is based on the logical sequential movement of consumers towards a purchase via specified stages. The major criticism is that it assumes that the consumer moves through the stages in a logical, rational manner: learn, then feel and then do. This is obviously not the case, as anyone who has taken a child into a sweet shop can confirm. There has been a lot of research that attempts to offer an empirical validation for some of the hierarchy propositions, the results of which are inconclusive and at times ambiguous (Barry and Howard, 1990). Among these researchers is Palda (1966), who found that the learn–feel–do sequence cannot be upheld as a reflection of general buying behaviour and provided empirical data to reject the notion of sequential models as an interpretation of the way advertising works.

> There is evidence that a positive attitude is not necessarily a good predictor of purchase behaviour.

The sequential approach sees attitude towards the product as a prerequisite to purchase, but, as discussed earlier (Chapter 5), there is evidence that a positive attitude is not necessarily a good predictor of purchase behaviour. What is important, or more relevant, is the relationship between attitude change and an individual's intention to act in a particular way (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980). Therefore, it seems reasonable to suggest that what is of potentially greater benefit is a specific measure of attitude *towards* purchasing or *intentions* to buy a specific product. Despite measurement difficulties, attitude change is considered a valid objective, particularly in high-involvement situations.

A great deal of time and money must be spent on research, determining what needs to be measured. As a result, only large organisations can utilise the model properly: those with the resources and the expertise to generate the data necessary to exploit this approach fully.

All of these models share the similar view that the purchase decision process is one in which individuals move through a series of sequential stages. Each of the stages from the different models can be grouped in such a way that they are a representation of the three attitude components, these being cognitive (learn), affective (feel) and conative (do) orientations. This could be seen to reflect the various stages in the buying process, especially those that induce high involvement in the decision process but do not reflect the reality of low-involvement decisions.

Cognitive processing

Reference has already been made to whether buyers actively or passively process information. In an attempt to understand how information is used, cognitive processing tries to determine 'how external information is transformed into meanings or patterns of thought and how these meanings are combined to form judgements' (Olsen and Peter, 1987).

> Cognitive processing tries to determine 'how external information is transformed into meanings or patterns of thought'.

By assessing the thoughts (cognitive processes) that occur to people as they read, view or hear a message, an understanding of their interpretation of a message can be useful in campaign development and evaluation (Greenwald, 1968; Wright, 1973). These thoughts are usually measured by asking consumers to write down or verbally report the thoughts they have in response to such a message. Thoughts are believed to be a reflection of the cognitive processes or responses that receivers experience and they help shape or reject a communication.

Researchers have identified three types of cognitive response and have determined how these relate to attitudes and intentions. Figure 8.1 shows these three types of response, but readers should appreciate that these types are not discrete; they overlap each other and blend together, often invisibly.
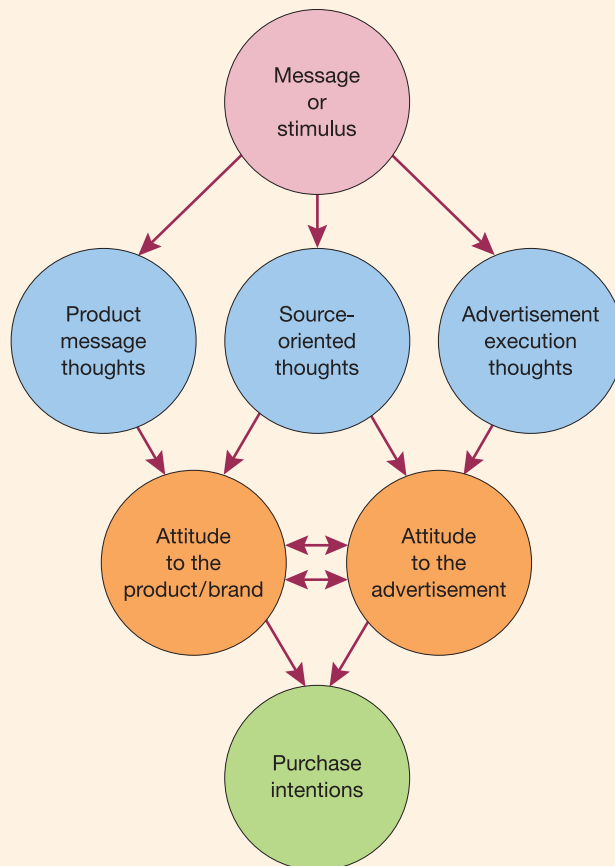

Figure 8.1 A cognitive processing model

Source: *Advances in Consumer Research* by J. Lutz, S.B. Mackenzie, G.E. Belch. Copyright 1983 by Association for Consumer Research. Reproduced with permission of Association for Consumer Research in the format Textbook via Copyright Clearance Center.

Product/message thoughts

These are thoughts that are directed to the product or communication itself. Much attention has been focused on the thoughts that are related to the message content. Two particular types of response have been considered: counter-arguments and support arguments.

A counter-argument occurs when the receiver disagrees with the content of a message. According to Belch and Belch (2004),

The likelihood of counter-argument is greater when the message makes claims that oppose the beliefs or perceptions held by the receiver. Not surprisingly, the greater the degree of counter-argument, the less likely the message will be accepted. Conversely, support-arguments reflect acceptance and concurrence with a message. Support-arguments, therefore, are positively related to message acceptance.

Advertisements and general communications should encourage the generation of support arguments.

Source-oriented thoughts

A further set of cognitive responses is aimed at the source of the communication. This concept is closely allied to that of source credibility, where, if the source of the message is seen as annoying or distrustful, there is a lower probability of message acceptance. Such a situation is referred to as source derogation; the converse as a source bolster. Those responsible for communications should ensure, during the context analysis, that receivers experience bolster effects to improve the likelihood of message acceptance.

Message execution thoughts

This relates to the thoughts an individual may have about the overall design and impact of the message. Many of the thoughts that receivers have are not always product-related but are emotionally related towards the message itself. Understanding these feelings and emotions is important because of their impact upon attitudes towards the message, most often an advertisement, and the offering.

Attitudes towards the message

> People make judgements about the quality of advertisement.

It is clear that people make judgements about the quality of advertisements and the creativity, tone and style in which an advertisement (or web site, promotion or direct mail piece) has been executed. As a result of their experiences, perception and degree to which they like an advertisement, they form an attitude towards the advertisement (message) itself. From this base an important stream of thought has developed about cognitive processing. Lutz's work led to the attitude-toward-the-ad concept which has become an important foundation for much of the related marketing communications literature. As Goldsmith and Lafferty (2002: 319) argue, there is a substantial amount of research that clearly indicates that advertising that promotes a 'positive emotional response of liking an ad is positively related to subsequent brand-related cognitions (knowledge), brand attitudes and purchase intentions'. Similar work by Chen and Wells (1999) shows that this attitude-towards-the-ad concept applies equally well with new media and ecommerce in particular. They refer to an attitude-toward-the-site concept and similar ideas developed by Bruner and Kumar (2000) conclude that the more a web site is liked, the more attitudes improve to the brand and purchase intentions.

> Attitudes-towards-the-message impact on brand attitudes, which in turn influence consumers' propensity to purchase.

It seems highly reasonable therefore, to conclude that attitudes-towards-the-message (and delivery mechanism) impact on brand attitudes, which in turn influence consumers' propensity to purchase. It is also known that an increasing proportion of advertisements attempt to appeal to feelings and emotions, simply because many researchers believe that attitudes towards both the advertisement and

the product should be encouraged and are positively correlated with purchase intention. Similarly, time and effort is placed with the design of sales promotion instruments, increasing attention is given to the design of packaging in terms of a pack's communication effectiveness and care is taken about the wording in advatorials and press releases. Perhaps above all else, more and more effort is being made to research and develop web sites with the goal of designing them so that they are strategically compatible, user-friendly and functional, or to put it another way – liked. Any model developed to explain how marketing communications works should therefore be based around the important concept, attitude-towards-the-message.

Elaboration likelihood model

What should be clear from the preceding sections is that neither the purely cognitive nor the purely emotional interpretation of how marketing communication works is realistic. In effect, it is probable that both have an important part to play in the way the various tools, and advertising in particular, works. However, the degree of emphasis should swing according to the context within which the marketing communication message is expected to work.

One approach to utilise both these elements has been developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1983). The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) has helped to explain how cognitive processing, persuasion and attitude change occur when different levels of involvement are present. Elaboration refers to the extent to which an individual needs to develop and refine information necessary for decision-making to occur. If an individual has a high level of motivation or ability to process information, elaboration is said to be high. If an individual's motivation or ability to process information is poor, then their level of elaboration is said to be low. The ELM distinguishes two main cognitive processes, as depicted in Figure 8.2
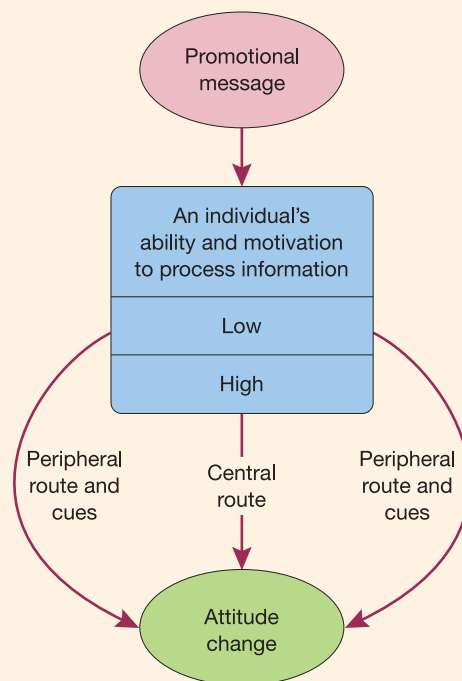

Figure 8.2   The elaboration likelihood model
Source: Based on Aaker *et al.* (1992).

> Under the central route the receiver is viewed as very active and involved.

Under the central route the receiver is viewed as very active and involved. As the level of cognitive response is high, the ability of the message (advertisement) to persuade will depend on the quality of the argument rather than executional factors. For example, the purchase of a consumer durable such as a car or washing machine normally requires a high level of involvement. Consequently, potential customers would be expected to be highly involved and willing to read brochures and information about the proposed car or washing machine prior to demonstration or purchase. Their decision to act would depend on the arguments used to justify the model as suitable for the individual. For the car purchase these might include the quiet and environmentally friendly engine, the relatively excellent fuel consumption and other safety and performance indicators, together with the comfort of the interior and the effortless driving experience. Whether the car is shown as part of a business executive's essential 'kit' or the commercial is flamboyant and rich will be immaterial for those in the central route.

ViewPoint 8.5   Peripheral tea

Consumers tend to stay with their preferred brands of food and drink and will only switch if their preferred brand fails to reach threshold levels of satisfaction or a new brand offers sufficient curiosity and engagement that trial is induced. Many brands in the tea market for example, use peripheral cues in order to get the brand noticed, remembered and enjoyed. Twinings used a Jack-in-the Box to symbolise the stimulating effects of their breakfast tea and as an easy means for customers to make associations with the Twinings brand.
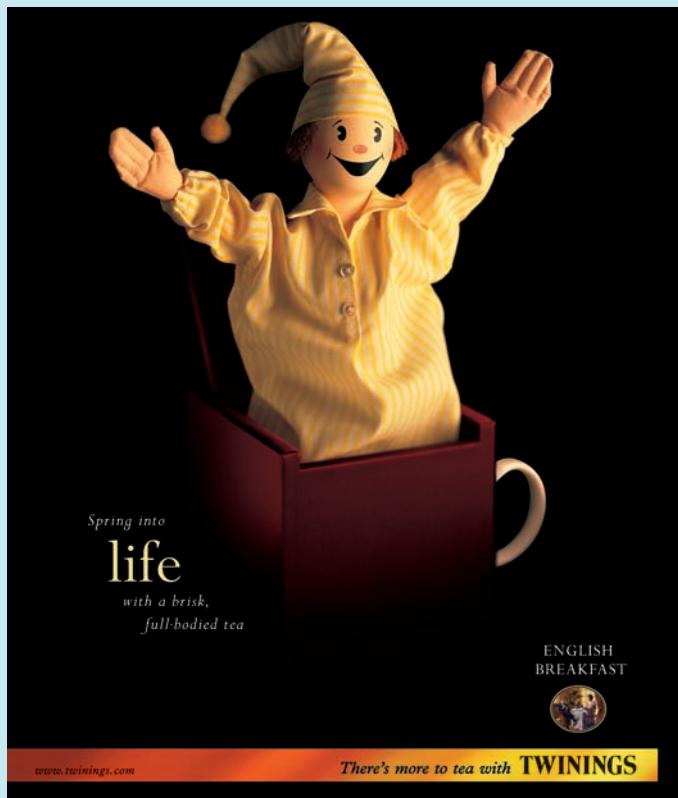

Spring into
life
*with a brisk,
full-bodied tea*

ENGLISH
BREAKFAST

www.twinings.com   *There's more to tea with* **TWININGS**

Exhibit 8.4   Through the use of peripheral cues, Twinings have been able to enrich the way their brand is perceived while at the same time improve the level of awareness

The Brooke Bond tea brand, PG Tips, used chimpanzees in what was one of the longest running ad campaigns, 45 years. The chimpanzees were used to bring humour to a brand of tea and in doing so helped consumers associate the brand with fun. The chimps were used to parody James Bond, removal men trying to get a piano downstairs, Tour de France cyclists and even housewives doing the ironing and they all (pretended) to drink their favourite cup of tea. After their introduction PG became the number one brand and sales fluctuated according to whether the ads featuring the chimps were on air.

However, complaints by animal welfare groups eventually saw the demise of the Chimps. They have been replaced with Monkey, a knitted version, who appears with Al (Johnny Vegas). The subsequent success of this pairing continues to emphasise the importance of peripheral cues in particular product categories.

Sources: Blackstock (2002); Carter (2008).

Question

To what extent is the use of peripheral cues a positive or negative comment on the intellectual capacity of the target audience?

Task

Find a brand that you like that uses peripheral cues.

Exhibit 8.5   PG Tips – chimpanzees perform as peripheral cues
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives.

Exhibit 8.6   PG Tips now with Monkey as a peripheral cue
Image courtesy of The Advertising Archives.

> Under the peripheral route, the receiver is seen to lack the ability to process information and is not likely to engage cognitive processing.

Under the peripheral route, the receiver is seen to lack the ability to process information and is not likely to engage cognitive processing. Rather than thinking about and evaluating the message content, the receiver tends to rely on what have been referred to as 'peripheral cues', which may be incidental to the message content. Twinings use peripheral cues to attract attention to their brand (see Exhibit 8.5).

In low-involvement situations, a celebrity may serve to influence attitudes positively. This is based upon the creation of favourable attitudes towards the source rather than engaging the viewer in the processing of the message content. For example, Gary Lineker was the celebrity spokesperson used to endorse Walkers crisps for many years. Gary Lineker, former Tottenham and England football hero and now BBC sports presenter, was an important peripheral cue for Walkers crisps (more so than the nature of the product), in eventually persuading a consumer to try the brand or retaining current users. Think crisps, think Gary Lineker, think Walkers. Where high involvement is present, any celebrity endorsement is of minor significance to the quality of the message claims.

> Communication strategy should be based upon the level of cognitive processing that the target audience is expected to engage in and the route taken to affect attitudinal change.

Communication strategy should be based upon the level of cognitive processing that the target audience is expected to engage in and the route taken to affect attitudinal change. If the processing level is low (low motivation and involvement), the peripheral route should dominate and emphasis needs to be placed on the way the messages are executed and on the emotions of the target audience (Heath, 2000). If the central route is expected, the content of the messages should be dominant and the executional aspects need only be adequate.

Interaction, dialogue and relationships

Marketing communications is traditionally perceived and developed as a planned managerial activity. This in itself is perfectly fine, to be encouraged and is a central platform for the development of integrated marketing communications (see Chapter 9). However, much of marketing practice and theory has moved towards a more relational rather than transactional perspective (see Chapter 7). Marketing communications is in transition as it adapts in order to complement this new approach. Therefore, any explanation about how it works should be articulated in the light of relationship marketing principles.

> Digital media offer opportunities for audiences to respond to the messages they receive.

As a generalisation, mass media-based communications generate one-way communication and is based on informing, telling and educating audiences with a view to persuading them to act in a particular way, ultimately to purchase a product (Ballantyne, 2004). Digital media and digital technologies have given organisations radically different methods to communicate with audiences. Digital media offer opportunities for audiences to respond to the messages they receive and give rise to opportunities for people to interact with those organisations with whom they wish to be involved and to whom they grant permission to continue sending messages. One-way communication begins to look like two-way communication.

Interaction is about actions that lead to a response, and in the 1990s direct marketing helped make significant inroads in the transition from one-way to two-way and then interactive-based

> Digital technology has further enabled the interaction process.

communication. Digital technology has further enabled this interaction process. However, interaction alone is not a sufficient goal simply because the content of the interaction could be about a radical disagreement of views, an exchange of opinion or a social encounter.

Table 8.3	Communication matrix		
Direction	**Mass markets**	**Portfolio/mass-customised**	**Networks**
One-way Planned communications designed to inform and persuade Medium to high wastage	*Communication 'to'* Planned persuasive messages aimed at securing brand awareness and loyalty; e.g. *communication of USPs and ESPs*	*Communication 'for'* Planned persuasive messages with augmented offerings for target markets; e.g. *communicating targeted lifecycle products, guarantees, loyalty programmes*	
Two-way Formal and informal with a view to listening and learning Minimal wastage		*Communication 'with'* Integrated mix of planned and interactively shared knowledge; e.g. *face to face, direct (database), contact centres, interactive b2b Internet portals*	*Communication 'between'* Dialogue between participants based on trust, learning and adaptation with co-created outcomes; e.g. *key account liaison, expansion of communities, staff teamwork*

Source: Ballantyne (2004). © Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. All rights reserved.

Dialogue occurs through mutual understanding and a reasoning approach to interactions, one based on listening and adaptive behaviour. Dialogue is concerned with the development of knowledge that is specific to the relationship of the parties involved. Ballantyne refers to this as 'learning together' (Ballantyne, 2004: 119) and it is referred to by Gronroos (2004) as a critical aspect of marketing communication's role within relationship marketing (see Chapter 7).

Ballantyne refers to two-way communication with audiences in two ways. First, as a '*with*' experience, as manifest in face-to-face encounters and contact centres. He also distinguishes a higher order of two-way communication based on communication '*between*' parties. It is this latter stage that embodies true dialogue where trust, listening and adaptive behaviour are typical. These are represented diagrammatically in Table 8.3.

The adoption of dialogue as the basis for communication changes an organisation's perspective of its audiences. Being willing and able to enter into a dialogue indicates that there is a new emphasis on the relationships organisations hold with their stakeholders. Kent and Taylor (2002) argue that there are five main features of a dialogical orientation. These are presented in Table 8.4.

Table 8.4	The five features of a dialogical orientation
Role	**Explanation**
Mutuality	The recognition of the presence of organisational stakeholder relationships
Propinquity	The temporality and spontaneity of organisation–stakeholder interactions
Empathy	Support for stakeholder interests and their goals
Risk	Willingness to interact with others on their terms
Commitment	The extent to which an organisation actually interprets, listens to and practises dialogical communications

Source: Kent and Taylor (2002). Used with permission.

It can be seen in Table 8.4 that many aspects of dialogue require interaction as a precursor. In other words, for dialogue to occur there must first be interaction and it is the development and depth of the interaction that leads to meaningful dialogue.

Ideas about how marketing communication works must be founded, in part, on the notion and significance of the level of interaction and dialogue that the organisation and their stakeholders desire. One-way communication, as reflected in traditional, planned, mass media-based communication still plays a significant role, especially for audiences who prefer transactional exchanges. Two-way communication based on interaction with audiences who desire continuing contact, or dialogue for those who desire a deeper more meaningful relationship, will form an increasingly important aspect of marketing communications strategy in the future.

Developing significant value

> The message proclaims something that is personally significant to the individual in their current context.

Marketing communications consists of a set of tools and media that are used in varying ways to convey messages to audiences. Depending upon the context in which the message is created, delivered and interpreted, the brand and the individual have an opportunity to interact. Marketing communication messages normally pass individuals unobserved. Those that are remembered contain particular characteristics (Brown, 1991; Fletcher, 1994). These would appear to be that the product must be different or new, that the way the message is executed is different or interesting and that the message proclaims something that is personally significant to the individual in their current context. The term 'significance' means that the message is meaningful, relevant (e.g. the individual is actually looking to buy a new car or breakfast cereals tomorrow or is planning to gather information on a new project) and is perceived to be suitably credible. These three characteristics can be tracked from the concept of ad likeability (Chapter 16), which many researchers believe is the only meaningful indicator of the effectiveness of an advertisement.

To be successful therefore, it is necessary for marketing communication messages to:

- present an object that is new to the receiver;
- be interesting and stimulating;
- be personally significant.

The object referred to in the first element refers to both products and services (or an offering that is substantially different from others in the category) and to organisations as brands. The net effect of all these characteristics might be that any one message may be *significantly valuable* to an individual.

Messages announcing new brands or new attributes may convey information that is perceived to be significantly different. As a result, individuals may be intrigued and interested enough to want to try the brand at the next purchase opportunity. For these people there is a high level of personal relevance derived from the message, and attitude change can be induced to convince them that it is right to make a purchase. For them the message is significantly valuable and as a result may well generate a purchase decision, which will, from a market perspective, drive a discernible sales increase.

> The vast majority of marketing communications are about products that are not new.

However, the vast majority of marketing communications are about products that are not new or that are unable to proclaim or offer anything substantially different. These messages are either ignored or, if interest is aroused, certain parts of the message are filed away in memory for use at a later date. The question is, if parts are filed away, which parts are filed and why and how are they retrieved?

Marketing communications can provide a rationale or explanation for why individuals (cognitive processors) have bought a brand and why they should continue buying it. Normally,

advertising alone does not persuade – it simply reminds and reassures individuals. Or, to put it another way, individuals use advertising and public relations to remind themselves of preferred brands or to reassure themselves of their previous (and hence correct) purchase behaviour. Sales promotions, personal selling and direct marketing are then used by organisations to help consumers behave in particular ways.

Consumers, particularly in fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) markets, practise repertoire buying based on habit, security, speed of decision-making and to some extent self-expression. The brands present in any single individual repertoire normally provide interest and satisfaction. Indeed, advertising needs to ensure that the brand remains in the repertoire or is sufficiently interesting to the individual that it is included in a future repertoire. Just consider the variety of messages used by mobile phone operators, such as O_2, T-Mobile, Vodafone, 3 and Orange. These are continually updated and refreshed using particular themes all of which are intended to be visually and cognitively engaging.

ViewPoint 8.6   Remembering Flaky ads

Work undertaken through the research agency Millward Brown attempted to understand how much and which parts of an ad individuals perceive and remember. Part of their work concerned ads for Cadbury's Flake. This chocolate bar crumbles easily when bitten and this feature has been developed as a point of differentiation for the brand.

An advertisement was devised that depicted the bar being eaten by three different people in three different contexts. The first was a secretary, who collected the crumbs in the wrapping paper. The second was a man on a train, who collected the crumbs on a plate, and the third was a small boy, who used a straw to suck up the crumbs. Each character was shown for 10 seconds, but in the tracking studies that followed it was the small boy who was recalled most, in disproportion to the time of the message exposure (see Figure 8.3 and Exhibit 8.7).

Source: Brown (1991).

Question

The message is clear, successful ads are interesting ads . . . true?

Task

Ask a group of friends which ad they remember and then ask them why they think they remember that particular one.


Exhibit 8.7   Cadbury's Flake bar

Messages, in particular advertising messages, that are interesting, immediately relevant or interpreted as possessing a deep set of personal meanings (all subsequently referred to as 'likeable' (see Chapter 16) will be stored in long-term memory (Chapter 5).

Research shows repeatedly that only parts of an advertisement are ever remembered – those parts that are of intrinsic value to the recipient and are sometimes referred to as 'the take-out'. The Brown (1991) example provided at Viewpoint 8.5 provides suitable evidence of this phenomenon. This selectivity, or message take-out, is referred to as the *creative magnifier* effect. Figure 8.3 illustrates the effect that parts of a message might have on the way a message is remembered.

𝓕igure 8.3   The creative magnifier
Source: Brown (1991).
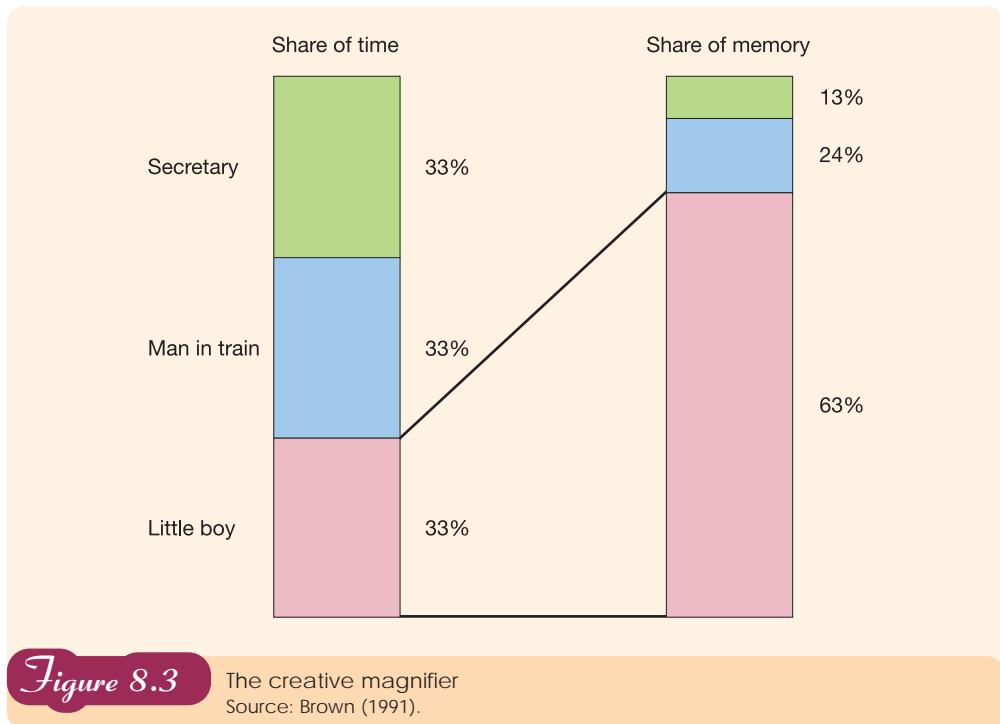
The implication of this is that messages work best through the creation of interest and like-able moments, from which extracts are taken by individuals and stored away in memory. However, it might also be reasonable to suggest that the other tools of the mix are also cap-able of enabling individuals to take extracts. For example, the size of a sales promotion offer, or the tone of a sales presentation, the professionalism of a direct mail piece or the immediacy of an online promotion might all give due reason for an individual to generate a take-out. Interest is generated through fresh relevant ideas where the brand and the messages are linked together in a meaningful and relevant way. This in turn allows for future associations to be made, link-ing brands and marketing communication messages in a positive and experiential way.

Advertising is used to trigger brand associations and experiences.

Advertising is used to trigger brand associations and experiences for people, not only when seated in front of a television, or PC, when reading a magazine or reading text messages but also when faced with product purchase decisions. Seventy per cent of low-value FMCG purchase decisions are said to be made at the point of purchase. All forms of marketing communication, but principally advertising, can be used to generate brand associations, which in turn are used to trigger advertising messages or, rather, 'likeable' extracts. The other tools of the mix can benefit from the prior use of advertising to create awareness so that the call-to-action brought about through below-the-line communi-cations can occur naturally, unhindered by brand confusion or uncertainty.

This last point is of particular importance because advertising alone may not be sufficient to trigger complete recall of brand and communication experiences. The brand, its packaging, sales promotion, digital media, POP and outdoor media all have an important role to play in providing consistency and interest and prompting recall and recognition. Integrated market-ing communications is important, not just for message take-out or likeable extracts, but also for triggering recall and recognition and stimulating relevant brand associations.

Messages that customers perceive as being of significant value to them as individuals, are key to developing effective marketing communications. In order to create such messages, a complex array of disciplines, media, people, technology and intuition need to be coordinated

and deployed. These principles apply equally to consumer and business markets, it is just that the mix of marketing communication elements changes with each context.

Towards a model of marketing communications

Marketing communications is a complex subject, if only because of the large number of variables, the nature of customer and stakeholder behaviour and the dynamic nature of markets, organisations and information processing. So far in this chapter, a number of issues have been presented which, taken independently, are interesting but lack overall coherence and direction and do not necessarily deal with the complexity or advance our understanding about how marketing communications works. The following represents an attempt to bring these different elements together and to offer a general framework to depict how marketing communications might work.

Any descriptive model of a process should be considered as a generalisation and intended only to represent the key elements, the flow between them and the outcomes and possible consequences. The model that follows is intended to bring together the key elements associated with the way in which the marketing communications process works.

The starting point for any model or framework depicting how marketing communications may work, should be the audience or individual person receiving messages. The context therefore, is an important aspect of marketing communications not the message itself, the media or the tools used.

> The context is an important aspect of marketing communications, not the message itself, the media or the tools used.

This model seeks to accommodate marketing communications in both consumer and b2b markets. It attempts to reflect the different marketing communications needs of those individuals who are engaged in both transactional and relationship exchanges, although it does not indicate how marketing communications might assist transition from the former to the latter.

The task of marketing communications is to present key messages in such a way that the meanings that people (the target audience) ascribe to them are relevant and capable of being memorised, acted upon and recalled at some point in the future. Advertising can be regarded as a potentially powerful means of enabling buyers to attribute meanings to messages they receive about brands. Messages conveyed through the below-the-line communications enable people to decide if and *how* they should respond to the message. Lannon (1992) argues that we should be concerned with what people do *with* advertising, how they assign meaning and Gronstedt (1997) echoes this thought with respect to public relations. He suggests that the focus should be on what stakeholders do with messages as opposed to what the message does to the stakeholder.

Customers are problem solvers and their capability is partly determined by their level of elaboration. They can be regarded as active information processors (to varying degrees) in all product categories. Advertising is a convenient and often cost-effective way of conveying information about brands to people, who then have an opportunity to reappraise their understanding of the brand and its related elements. Advertising can either make people aware or promote interest in a new brand or remind buyers of the values and experiences of previous usage. More direct forms of communication may enable people to make brand associations but are more likely to pose challenges with regard to persuasion and how they should act in response to a message. These marketing communication messages are processed internally and are used to achieve two main outcomes: one is to update an individual's knowledge about a brand and/or the generic category of products as they see it ('Oh, that is a different type of ice cream'). The second is to prompt individuals into further action, either to seek more information or to purchase.

> One of the main outcomes is to prompt individuals into further action, either to seek more information or to purchase.

Our understanding of perception suggests that people organise filtered and selected stimuli according to the context of their current situation and past experiences. Therefore, marketing communication messages need to be consistent in order that people can organise information about a brand in the same way as they processed the information the last time they perceived the stimuli. As suggested above, the stimulus need not be just an advertisement – it could be any element of the promotional or marketing mix, or indeed the brand itself. Therefore, the presence of either the product or the communication event may act as a stimulus. It is not surprising that integrated marketing communications require that, whatever the contact with a brand, the message should be the same and be expected in the context with which information was processed previously.

The model presented in Figure 8.4 attempts to bring together those elements that influence the way in which marketing communications might be considered to work. Stimuli are considered in the context of the probable exchange environment that will reflect a transactional or relational emphasis. These stimuli will act upon levels of elaboration, which in turn determine levels of cognitive processing. Likeable extracts are taken out of the messages and stored for future use. Marketing communication messages and/or brand experiences then allow for these extracts to be recalled. This impacts on the attitude to the brand and towards the message, which affects purchase intentions. Therefore, brands and all the tools of the marketing communication mix work together – each is capable of reinforcing the other and triggers are required to establish or recall brand values and then prompt the action processes and reinforce previous behaviour.

> For marketing communications to work and for messages to be effective, they must be likeable and must be contextually compatible.

For marketing communications to work and for messages to be effective, they must be likeable (interesting, meaningful and relevant to the brand and the target audience) and must therefore be contextually compatible with the target audience and the
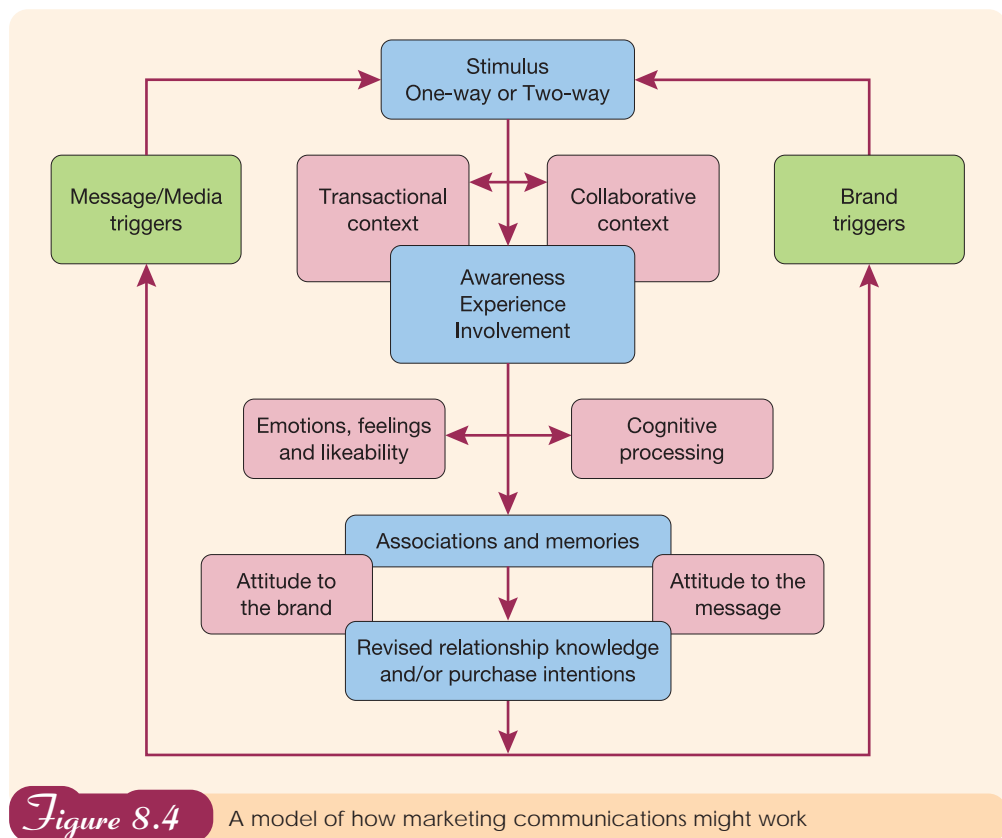

Figure 8.4   A model of how marketing communications might work

brand. If these twin factors (likeability and contextual compatibility) are established then positive emotional attitudes towards the message may form, which in turn lead to positive influences on purchase intentions.

Summary

In order to help consolidate your understanding of the ideas concerning how marketing communications might work, here are the key points summarised against each of the learning objectives:

1. Explore ideas concerning the strategic context of marketing communications.

The corporate strategy that organisations pursue should be supported by business-, operational- and functional-level strategies. To be effective, marketing communications should be used to complement the marketing, business and corporate strategies. Such complementarity serves to reinforce core messages, reflect the mission and provide a means of using resources efficiently, while at the same time providing reinforcement for the whole business strategy.

2. Explain how marketing communications has emerged.

The communication mix has expanded and become a more complex managerial instrument, but essentially it is now capable of delivering two main solutions. On the one hand, it can be used to develop and maintain brand values and on the other, it can be used to change behaviour through the delivery of calls-to-action. From a strategic perspective, the former is oriented to the long term and the latter to the short term. It is also apparent that the significant rise of the below-the-line tools within the mix is partly a reflection of the demise of the USP but it is also a reflection of the increasing financial pressures experienced by organisations to improve performance and improve returns on investment.

USPs have given way to ESPs and industry and commerce have shifted the focus of marketing spend away from above- to below-the-line activities, as if to emphasise the need to affect behavioural change. Therefore, it is now more important to understand the way marketing communications works rather than just the way advertising works.

3. Discuss the role and tasks of marketing communications.

The role of marketing communications is to engage audiences, and this can be achieved principally through the use of intellectual and/or emotional messages. Marketing communications can achieve particular tasks. These are to differentiate, reinforce, inform and persuade audiences to think or behave in particular ways.

4. Suggest ways in which marketing communications might work.

For a message to be communicated successfully, it should be meaningful to the recipient. Messages need to be targeted at the right audience, be capable of gaining attention, be understandable, relevant and acceptable. For effective communication to occur, messages should be designed that fit the cognitive capability and relationship orientation of the target audience.

There is no single model that explains how marketing communications might work, despite years of research and speculation by a great many people. Several sequential models have been proposed but these are no longer deemed applicable. Ideas involving cognitive processing, the elaboration likelihood model and interactive and dialogic forms of communication provide a basis for considering ways in which marketing communication works.

5. Examine the concept of significant value.

Marketing communication messages normally pass individuals unobserved. Those that are remembered contain particular characteristics. These would appear to be that the product must be different or new, that the way the message is executed is different or interesting and that the message proclaims something that is personally significant to the individual in their current context. The term 'significance' means that the message is meaningful, relevant and is perceived to be suitably credible. These three characteristics can be tracked from the concept of ad likeability (Chapter 16), which many researchers believe is the only meaningful indicator of the effectiveness of an advertisement.

6. Consider the strengths and weaknesses of a model explaining how marketing communications might work.

The starting point for any model or framework depicting how marketing communications may work, should be the audience or individual person receiving messages. The context therefore, is an important aspect of marketing communications, rather than the message itself, the media or the tools used.

For marketing communications to work and for messages to be effective, they must be likeable (interesting, meaningful and relevant to the brand and the target audience) and must therefore be contextually compatible with the target audience and the brand. If these twin factors (likeability and contextual compatibility) are established, then positive emotional attitudes towards the message may form which in turn lead to positive influences on purchase intentions.

Review questions

1. Explain the role that marketing communications plays within relationship marketing.
2. Write brief notes outlining the difference between three sequential models and evaluate the ways in which they are considered to work.
3. Which element in McGuire's model separates it from other similar models?
4. Explain the concepts of USPs and ESPs.
5. Discuss the primary roles of marketing communications.
6. Cognitive processing consists of three main elements. Name them.
7. Give examples of peripheral and central route cues to attitude change using the elaboration likelihood model.
8. Describe the creative magnifier effect. Why is it important?
9. What is the likely impact of triggers and brand associations in determining how advertising works?
10. Evaluate the concept of significant value.

MiniCase

'Get on your bike!'
Mountain biking tourism in the Cairngorms National Park (CNP)

Andrew Turnbull: Aberdeen Business School, Robert Gordon University

Interest in mountain biking is currently undergoing rapid growth in Scotland and mountain biking tourism offers a means to use the Scottish landscape to attract several, largely untapped, target audiences, including thrill seekers, mountaineers, mountain bike owners, holidaymakers and families. These groups represent a small but growing proportion of the nearly 20 million visitors each year to Scotland from the UK, as well as those from abroad. The question is, however, how can these audiences, with their differing requirements, be engaged and what communications strategies might be employed to reach them most cost effectively?

Areas in Scotland such as the CNP can potentially benefit significantly from successful diversification and provision of facilities for the sport, but a number of stakeholders will need to be satisfied in the process, not least those concerned about the effects on the environment. Certainly mountain biking fits in well with some of the principal aims of the park, for example to promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area and to contribute to the social development of the area's communities. The issue is whether this can be successfully linked to the promotion of sustainable use of the park's natural resources. For the long term, it is critical that any new mountain biking facilities do not have a detrimental impact upon fragile landscapes or rare wildlife.

Before considering how to communicate, profiles of the receivers must be drawn up. The interest groups here can be summarised as users, divided into the sub-segments above, environmentalists, the media and both local authorities and the Scottish Executive. It is not enough simply to communicate with actual and potential customers when considering such a high profile and environmentally sensitive location. A clear conflict in each group's desires and objectives represents a major obstacle to a successful communications plan.

So the strategy put forward, which stems from primary research activity, included a mix of communications tools taking into account potential resources, the complexity of the messages to be conveyed and the diversity of the audiences, as well as the nature, size and location of the market. Above all, it should be realised that mountain biking trails in the Cairngorms are in their infancy, so awareness creation is the key.

To start with however, advertising will be limited, in part because the audiences are geographically spread and in part because of the expense. Specialist publications such as *Cycling World* and *Men's Health* can be used, however, and other titles will be considered in or immediately pre-season, including local press in the CNP area. Inserts, as a form of direct marketing, also represent an option and information leaflets, including sales promotional offers, will be distributed to all visitor centres, attractions and accommodation outlets, including Guest Houses, B&Bs, hostels and hotels. These can be targeted not just within the CNP area, but in any location within a two-hour drive time.

Cinema, in all the major cities in Scotland, is a medium that has potential when the right films are on screen, as the cost is significantly lower than broadcast media, the impact is high and audiences can be easily matched to the mountain biker user profiles identified above. The disadvantage, of course, is that unlike press ads and leaflets, no direct response is possible, only the inclusion of a web address.

The importance of new media, in particular the Internet, cannot be underestimated given the young, educated and well-off customer profile. Dialogue allows interactivity and feedback can give competitive advantage! Web sites (such as http://cycling.visitscotland.com/mountain_biking/mb_centre/mountain_biking_cairngorms) providing maps and giving information regarding the newest facilities, the latest trails and access routes will be vital too, in encouraging word-of-mouth among a close-knit group who will frequently communicate between themselves. Receivers in such a market will be easily influenced by opinion and style leaders.

Inevitably, in a campaign with limited finances, publicity gained through public relations activities are expected to form the central part of the communications strategy involving traditional media. Apart from the use of press releases concerning events such as mountain biking championships, advertorials and competitions will be placed in relevant press titles and stands reserved at selected UK exhibitions. Costs can be shared by entering alliances with bike manufacturers and other joint promotional activities are potentially available with equipment and clothing providers, retail outlets and even the ordnance survey map producers.

All these organisations are in a position to help each other and combined activity through the pooling of resources will prove mutually beneficial.

Joining forces with other businesses looking to serve the mountain bike community will also assist with presenting a united front to the environmental lobby and the authorities. A socially responsible, environmentally aware message that nevertheless emphasises the financial benefits to the area, allows the media too to support mountain biking initiatives, rather than seek to find fault and take issue with the influx of new people and new activities that potentially conflict with more traditional pursuits such as hill walking and climbing.

An evaluation focus is always critical when measuring the reaction to initiatives targeted so precisely at niche audiences. As with all communications activities, measurement involves both 'hard' factors, which can be precisely quantified, and 'soft' factors, that must then be interpreted to assess their value.

So, for example, the number of new mountain bike trails is known exactly, the number of visitors using them can be estimated and expenditure associated with each visitor group can also be calculated from market research. The share of visits that mountain bikers represent to the area can also be determined as can uplift of, and response to, leaflets left in accommodation establishments and 'hits' on web sites, together with pages viewed and time spent browsing. Visitors to exhibition stands, as well as numbers leaving contact details, are further measures of success. Where media are utilised, then cover, reach and frequency, as well as a profile of the media user, give a good indication of who has been reached and how often.

Nevertheless, it is not just quantifiable measures that demonstrate effectiveness of a campaign. Qualitative measures, including attitudes towards the messages conveyed, the imagery associated with the creative execution, and values expressed, will all contribute to the overall impact.

The way is clear to allow CNP to diversify into mountain biking tourism. Given a good product, with the establishment of trails and facilities, then a focused communications campaign should overcome conservative values and capitalise on the opportunities this relatively new sport provides. The region's economy will benefit, Scotland's reputation will grow and a country that breathes history will further embrace the modern tourist market place.

MiniCase questions

1. For any marketing communications programme to work, it is essential that the messages sent reach the target audience(s). Summarise all the audiences identified in the case and consider the segmentation criteria that have been applied.
2. Critically analyse the communications process in the case, in the context of at least two models identified earlier in the text book. For example, the process of adoption model and the original Schramm *et al.* linear model.
3. Identify and critically examine the choice and balance of communications activities and media planned and determine first, the reasons for their selection and second, how well you believe they will work together.

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