

CHAPTER 11

The IMC planning process

In this chapter we shall be looking at the specific steps involved in the strategic planning process for integrated marketing communications (IMC). Before a manager can begin to think of specific marketing communications issue, it is very important to carefully analyze what is known about the market. This means that the first step in the IMC strategic planning process is to outline the relevant market issues that are likely to effect a brand's communications. The best source of information will be the marketing plan, since all marketing communication efforts should be in support of the marketing plan. (If for some reason a marketing plan is not available, answers to the questions posed below will need to be based upon the best available management judgment.)

After a review of the marketing plan, it is time to begin the five-step strategic planning process introduced in Chapter 1. First, target audience action objectives will need to be carefully considered. Most markets have multiple target groups, and as a result, there may be a number of communication objectives required to reach them. In fact, it is for this very reason that a brand generally needs more than one level of communication, occasioning the necessity of IMC. After identifying the appropriate target audience, it will be time to think about overall marketing communication strategy. This begins at the second step in the strategic planning process by considering how purchase decisions are made in the category. Then the manager must optimize message development to facilitate that process, which involves steps three and four, establishing the positioning and setting communication objectives. Finally, in step five, the manager must decide how to best deliver the message. We shall now look into each of these three areas in some detail.

■ Reviewing the marketing plan

The first step in strategic planning for IMC is to review the marketing plan in order to understand the market in general and where a brand fits relative to its competition. What is it about the brand, company, or service that might bear upon what is said to the target audience? There are at least six broad questions that a manager should answer before beginning to think specifically about the IMC plan. (See Figure 11.1)

What is being marketed? The manager should write out a description of the brand so that anyone will immediately understand what it is and what specific need it satisfies. Taking time to focus one's attention like this on the details of a brand often enables the manager to see it in a clearer light. This is also very important, because it is just this information that will serve as a background for the people who will be creating and executing the brands' marketing communication.

What is known about the market where the brand will compete? This is information that must be current. If it comes from a marketing plan, one must be sure nothing has occurred since it was written that could possibly be outdated. What one is looking for here is knowledge about the market

Figure 11.1
Marketing
background
questions

Key consideration	Question
Product description	What is being marketed?
Market assessment	What is known about the market where the brand competes?
Competitive evaluation	What is known about major competitors?
Source of business	Where will sales and usage come from?
Marketing objective	What are the brand's marketing objectives?
Marketing communication	How is marketing communication expected to contribute to the marketing objective?

that is going to influence how successful the brand is likely to be. Is the market growing, are there new entries, have there been recent innovations, bad publicity? While enough information must be provided for a good understanding of the market, the description should be simple and highlight only the most relevant points.

What is known about major competitors? What are the key claims made in the category? What are the creative strategies being used, what types of executional approaches and themes? Here it is helpful to collect actual examples. Something else to consider here is an evaluation of the media tactics being used by competitors. What seems to be their mix of marketing communication options, and how do they use them? All of this provides a picture of the communications environment within which the IMC program will operate.

Where will sales and usage come from? The manager needs to look at this question both in terms of competitive brands and the consumer. Again, this reflects the increasing complexity of markets. To what extent is the brand looking to make inroads against key competitors? Will the brand compete outside the category? Where specifically will customers or users of the brand come from? What, if anything, will they be giving up? Will they be changing their behaviour patterns? This is really the first step toward defining a target audience (which is dealt with in detail in the next section), and begins to hint at how a better understanding of the target will lead to the most suitable IMC options to reach them.

What are the brand's marketing objectives? This should include not only a general overview of the marketing objective, but specific share or financial goals as well. When available, the marketing plan should provide these figures. Otherwise, it is important to estimate the financial expectations for the brand. If the IMC program is successful, what will happen? This is critical because it will provide a realistic idea of how much marketing money can reasonably be made available for the marketing communication program.

How is marketing communication expected to contribute to the marketing objective? As we now know from the previous chapters, the answer is much more than ‘increase sales.’ It is likely that marketing communication will be expected to make a number of contributions toward meeting the marketing objectives. This is where the manager begins to get an idea of just how much will be expected from the IMC program, and the extent to which multiple messages and different types of marketing communication might be required.

■ Selecting a target audience

Once the manager has thought through the market generally, it is time to take the first step in the strategic planning process and focus more particularly upon whom it is that should be addressed with marketing communications. When thinking about the target audience one must look well beyond traditional demographic considerations. It is also important to ‘think ahead’. What type of person will be important to the future of the business? In this stage of the planning process there are three questions that should be addressed. (See Figure 11.2)

- What are the relevant target buyer groups?
- What are the target group’s demographic, lifestyle, and psychographic profile?
- How is the trade involved?

Figure 11.2
Key questions in target audience selection

What are the relevant target buyer groups? While one always hopes business will be broadly based, realistically one must set a primary objective concentrating on either existing customers or non-customers, what are known as trial versus repeat purchase action objectives.

Following a useful designation of buyer groups introduced by Rossiter and Percy (1987), one may think about customers in terms of being either brand loyalists (BL) or favourable brand switchers (FBS). Some customers buy a brand almost exclusively, others buy the brand along with others in the category. Non-customers too may be loyal to one brand (OBL, other brand loyalists) or switch among other brands (OBS, other brand switchers); or, they may not buy any brands in the category now, offering potential for the future (NCU, non-category users).

It is useful to consider the potential target audience in these terms because it *reflects* brand attitude. Ideally, one would select a target audience in terms of their attitudes. Unfortunately, it is not possible to find people profiled in terms of their attitudes in media buying databases.

However, brand purchase behaviour is available. Although not a perfect substitute, these buyer groups do reflect a certain degree of brand attitude. BL and OBL should have strong positive attitudes toward the brands they buy. FBS and OBS too will hold generally positive attitudes toward the brands they buy. Interestingly, in fact, most consumers actually prefer two or three brands in a category, primarily for variety or because of slightly different end uses (vanTripp et al., 1996). Brand attitudes, however, cannot be inferred for NCU. They may indeed have rejected the brands in the category, or they may simply see such products as inappropriate for them at the time (for example, baby products if you do not have a baby).

Communication strategies will differ significantly, depending upon which of these target groups is selected; and could differ within groups of customers or non-customers. If the target is primarily BL or FBS who use the brand along with competitors, promotional tactics would clearly differ between these two groups. The brand is looking to retain BL, but to increase the frequency with which the brand is purchased by FBS. Among non-customers OBL would be very difficult to attract. On the other hand, those who switch among several brands (but not the company's) are at least behaviourally susceptible to trying the brand because they already buy several brands, and should be open to trial promotions. It is very important to think about various alternative buyer groups, and where it makes the most sense to place the primary communications effort.

What are the target groups' profile? Traditionally, target audiences have been described in demographic terms: women, 18–34 years, with some university training. Sometimes efforts have been made to include so-called 'psychographic' or life-style descriptions (Antonides and vanRaaij, 1998). All of this is important, but it is not enough when considering IMC programs. As already suggested one must understand the target audience(s) in terms of behaviour and attitude, but also in terms of patterns that are relevant to communication and media strategies. This means how they now behave or are likely to behave in relationship to the brand and competition, what their differing information needs or motivations might be, and how they 'use' various media. This is important information for IMC strategy, and should be gained through research, and regularly updated.

How is the trade involved? It is important to think about the trade in the broadest possible terms, including all those who are involved in the distribution and sale of the brand without necessarily buying, stocking, or using it themselves. What one needs to think about here is whether or not people not directly concerned with the purchase and use of the brand might nevertheless be an important part of the target audience. For example, one may need to pre-sell a new product to distribution channels or inform possible sources of recommendations about the brand (e.g. doctors or consultants). Where the trade might fit should be considered when thinking about how purchase and brand decisions are made, which we cover next.

In selecting the target audience, at this point the manager is identifying the primary target for the brand. As we shall see in the next section, in determining how decisions are made in the category this selection will

be refined, looking at the roles played by the primary target group at different points in the decision process, as well as secondary targets that may be involved.

■ Determining how decisions are made

If IMC is to positively affect brand purchase, it is essential to understand just how purchases in the category are made by the target audience, and this is what is involved at step two in the strategic planning process. In consumer behaviour, decisions are often described in terms of need arousal leading to consideration, then action. While this does provide a general idea of how decisions are made, for IMC planning purposes, it is not specific enough. A very good way to look at how brand purchase decisions are made has been offered by Rossiter and Percy (1997) with something they call a behavioural sequence model (BSM). A generic BSM is illustrated in Figure 11.3.

Consideration at each stage	Decision stages			
	Need arousal	Brand consideration	Purchase	Usage
Whom all is involved and what role(s) do they play?				
Where does the stage occur?				
What is the timing?				
How is it likely to occur?				

Figure 11.3
Generic BSM

It asks six fundamental questions: What are the stages consumers go through in making a decision; Whom all is involved in the decision and what roles do they play; Where do the stages occur; What is the timing; and How is it likely to occur? This results in a flow chart that identifies where members of the target audience are taking action or making decisions that will ultimately affect purchases. Each of these questions are addressed next.

What stages do consumers go through? A BSM first asks the manager to think about the major decision stages a brand's target audience goes through prior, during, and following actual purchase or use of a product or service. A generic decision model may be built upon the general consumer behaviour model mentioned above: need arousal, brand consideration, purchase, and usage. Notice that *usage* is included as part of the purchase decision here because it provides an opportunity to communicate with the consumer in anticipation of future purchase or use. Also, it helps reinforce the purchase decision. It has been found, for example, that people continue to pay attention to advertising for brands that have been purchase (Ehrlich et al., 1957). Additionally, especially for high-involvement decisions, attending to advertising for the brand purchased reduces dissonance as Festinger (1957) pointed out in his theory of cognitive dissonance.

While the generic model of decision stages can be very useful, and can generally be adapted to almost any situation, always remember that the *best* model is the one that comes closest to how decisions are actually made in the brand's specific category. For example, in many business situations, distribution or trade hurdles must be surmounted before there is any thought of need arousal in the target audience. Other decisions may be even more complicated; or quite simple. The idea is to capture the essence of the decision process, and use this as the basis for planning. Qualitative research can be helpful here in providing specific details unique to particular categories.

Two examples will help illustrate this. First, consider a retailer that has a chain of lamp stores. A hypothetical model of the decision stages involved in a lamp purchase, might be as follows. The first stage in the decision to buy a new lamp probably involves a decision to redecorate. One of the most popular ways to redecorate is to buy a new lamp. These two stages would constitute *need arousal*. Next, one must decide *where* to shop for the lamp, shop the store (or stores) and make a choice. These three steps would be a modification of *brand consideration*. Once the lamp has been chosen, the *purchase* is made and the lamp is taken home and *used*. The decisions stages would then be: decide to redecorate→consider new lamp→look for places to buy lamp→shop→select lamp→purchase→replace old lamp with new. (Figure 11.4)

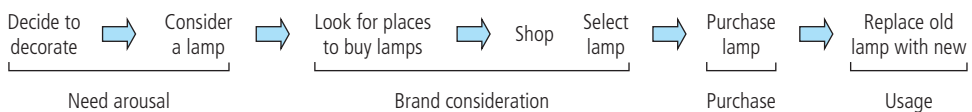


Figure 11.4
Decision stages involved in a lamp purchase

It should be apparent just how helpful this discipline can be for IMC planning. Even with a simple example such as this, you can see how thinking about the decision process suggests a number of possible ways to communicate with potential lamp purchasers. The most obvious insight here is that a lamp purchase is unlikely to take place outside the context of 'redecorating' (and research has indeed suggested this). This means to interest people in lamps one must first awaken an interest in redecorating or changing the look of a room.

As a second example, consider a manufacturer of commercial kitchen equipment that is distributed through restaurant supply companies. How does a restaurant supply company go about deciding what items and brands they will distribute? A probable decision model might begin with keeping an eye out for better items to stock in order to maintain a competitive edge. This could lead to an awareness of a potential new line or item to stock. These two stages would correspond to *need arousal* in the generic model. Once interest is aroused, the new item will then be compared with what is now carried; the *brand consideration* stage. If the evaluation is positive, it will be ordered and added to inventory; *purchase*. Once stocked, sales will be monitored, and if positive, the item or line will be reordered. These last two stages would correspond to the generic model's *usage* stage. The decision stages for a restaurant supply company then might be: monitor new items→identify potential items to carry→compare with current items stocked→if positive, add to stock→monitor sales→if good, reorder.

Here is a good example of where the decision process suggests it might make sense to pay a lot of attention to the *usage* stages. An important question for a manufacturer of a new kitchen product would be: how much end-user 'pull' would be necessary to insure sufficient sales for their customer, the restaurant supply company, to reorder? If initial sales are anticipated to be slow, it might make sense to offer a reorder incentive. These are the kinds of questions a good understanding of the stages in a decision process stimulates.

Who is involved and what roles do they play? Once the specific stages of the decision process have been established, one must assign the roles individual members of the potential target audience are likely to play at each stage. Those who study consumer behaviour generally identify five potential roles involved in making a decision: initiator, influencer, decider, purchaser, and user (Figure 11.5). Let us consider as an example the roles that might be involved in a simplified illustration of a cruise vacation decision, using the four generic decision stages.

What role or roles are most likely to be involved during the *need arousal* stage? Since those who play the role of an initiator in the decision get the whole process started, it is the initiators that will be included under *need arousal* in the BSM model. This could include family members, friends who have been on a cruise, potential cruisers, travel agents, and cruise fairs. Notice that the trade is considered here in terms of travel agents and cruise fairs. Since influencers recommend and deciders choose what to do, both roles will be influential during the *brand consideration* stage

Initiator	Proposes the purchase or usage
Influences	Recommends,(or discourages) the purchase or use
Decider	Actually makes the choice
Purchaser	Actually makes the purchase
User	Uses the product or service

Figure 11.5
Decision roles

of the decision process. The influencers may include family members, friends who have been on a cruise, and travel agents. The decider is either an individual adult potential cruiser or a couple. The actual *purchase* is made by the purchaser, whom is likely to be an individual adult potential cruiser, while the *usage* stage is experienced by all those who go on the cruise.

Understanding the roles people play in the decision process can lead to messages in an IMC campaign addressed to very specific target segments. McDonald's understood the importance of mothers as both influencers and deciders when it comes to what fast food restaurants the family visits. Recognizing the concern over child obesity, to help overcome potential negative associations with fat content in much fast food, McDonald's in Sweden ran a series of inserts in magazines oriented to mothers specifically addressing their role as influencers and deciders in matters of family health and eating habits, positioned to build more positive brand attitude through increasing trust in McDonald's food (see Figure 11.6).

This may be a good point to deal with the issue of individual versus group decisions. It is certainly true that many family decisions are made through a husband/wife or family consensus, and many business purchase decision are the result of a group effort. However, when it comes to IMC, we are interested in the *individual* and the role they are playing in the overall decision process. Communication efforts must first persuade the individual *prior* to their participation in any group decision. So, while many actual decisions are the result of group action, specific advertising or promotion must address individuals in the roles they are playing in the decision process.

Where do the stages occur? Locating opportunities for marketing communication is vital to successful IMC, and a BSM can help pinpoint likely places. In fact, as one considers a BSM, the first thing one notices is that different stages in the decision process occur at different times, and as a result where individuals may be reached as they play their role at each stage can certainly vary. There are exceptions of course. For example, someone could be shopping and given a sample of a new cookie to taste along with a coupon. They like it, and decide to buy some. They see the special end-aisle display, pick up a box, open it, and enjoy a few



Figure 11.6

An excellent example of advertising specifically addressing the target audience in the role they play, here mothers in their role as influencer and decider in matters of family health and eating habits. *Courtesy: OMD and McDonald's*

while they finish shopping. In this case all of the stages occur at one location – the store. However, this is not likely to be the case very often. And because potential locations can vary widely under different circumstances, unusual media might be appropriate.

Building upon situation theory (Belk, 1975) in buyer behaviour and Foxall's (1992) work on selling and consumption situations in marketing, Rossiter and Percy (1997) offer four points for marketing communications managers to consider for each location identified:

- 1 *How accessible is the location to marketing communication?* This could range from no accessibility to too much, in the sense of a lot of clutter from other marketing communication or competition from other things.

- 2 *How many role-players are present?* Is the message directed to an individual or are several people participating at this stage of the decision at that location.
- 3 *How much time pressure exists?* This could range from none to a great deal and the greater the time pressure the less opportunity there will be to process the message. The difference between relaxing at home and dashing in and out of a store will seriously effect the likelihood of a message being processed.
- 4 *What is the physical and emotional state of the individual?* Certain personality states can seriously effect message processing. For example, is someone in a doctor's waiting room there for a routine check-up and generally relaxed (assuming they haven't been kept waiting too long) or because of symptoms of a serious illness and therefore upset and anxious.

As you can see, it is important to think about what is going on at each location where part of the decisions is made. Some locations are going to be better than others as potential place to reach the target audience.

What is the timing? The timing of decision stages should reflect the general purchase cycle or pattern for the category. Understanding when each stage of the decision process occurs, and the relationship between the stages, is important for media scheduling. Obvious examples would be seasonal decision such as back-to-school shopping or holiday purchases. But understanding the timing of even such routine behaviour as meal planning is important.

A good example of this is the decision process for choosing a dessert. Obviously, for the average day, what to buy and serve for dessert is a low-involvement decision. In fact, most dessert decisions are made *after the meal*. This means that whatever is to be served must be in inventory, and even more importantly, *must be ready to serve*. This is no problem for such things as cookies, ice cream, and fruit. But what if you are selling cake mix or something like Jell-O brand gelatin? If all you do is 'sell' the end product, all you will do is move the product from the store shelf to the pantry shelf. This will *not* move it from the pantry to the table. For a cake or Jell-O to be served for dessert it must have been made some time *before dinner*. This suggests advertising to homemakers in the morning to make the dessert so it will be ready *after dinner*.

This example underscores the fact that even the simplest seeming decision process can have hidden traps if it is not fully understood. This is also why we talk about both purchase *and* usage in the decision stages.

How is each stage likely to occur? The last thing to consider in the BSM is *how* each of the stages is likely to occur. What is it that arouses need? How is the target audience likely to go about getting information? What are they likely to be doing at the point-of-purchase? In what way will the product or service be used? These are questions managers will want to have answers to prior to thinking about message development and delivery.

The usefulness of the BSM for IMC planning is that it forces the manager to think about what is likely to be going on when various stages of a

decision occur, and this will provide a perspective on marketing communication options that are likely to be effective under those circumstances. Figure 11.7 illustrates a BSM for a cruise vacation using the generic decision stages. An actual BSM for a cruise vacation would require many more specific stages, but this will provide an example of how everything fits together.

Considerations at each stage	Decision stages			
	Need arousal	Brand consideration	Purchase	Usage
<i>Decision roles involved</i>	Family members, friends who have been on a cruise, potential cruiser as <i>Initiator</i> Travel agents and cruise 'fairs' as <i>Initiator</i>	Family members, friends who have been on cruise, and potential cruiser as <i>Influencer</i> Individual adult potential cruiser or couple as <i>Decider</i> Travel agents as <i>Influencer</i>	Individual adult potential cruiser as <i>Purchaser</i>	All adults traveling on cruise as <i>Users</i>
<i>Where stage is likely to occur</i>	At home, travel agent's office or cruise 'fair' for consumers At office for travel agent or cruise 'fair' operator	At home, talking with friends, travel agent's office or cruise 'fair' for consumers At office, trade shows or actual cruises for travel agents or cruise fair operators	At home or travel agent's office	On cruise
<i>Timing of stage</i>	Special trip or vacation holiday planning, or word-of-mouth	3–6 months following need arousal	Shortly after completing information search and evaluation	1–3 months after purchase
<i>How it is likely to occur</i>	Looking for something special	Ask, call, write for brochure, visit cruise 'fair,' talk with experienced cruiser of travel agent	Call or visit travel agent	Enjoy cruise

Figure 11.7
BSM for cruise holiday

■ Message development

Up to this point in the strategic planning process we have been dealing with broader issues linked to the market where the brand competes, and the target audience. This helps the manager understand the marketing objectives for the brand, and where the brand is looking for business. Now it is time to address how specific marketing communication messages can best contribute to the brand's overall marketing objectives. It must be remembered that IMC is *always* in aid of the marketing plan.

In this section we will be looking at message development from a strategic standpoint. This involves steps three and four of the strategic planning process where the manager must make decisions in order to ensure that IMC messages will positively affect brand choice. First, how should the brand be positioned within its marketing communication? This provides the foundation for the development of effective benefit claims to be used in the messages. Then, the manager must set specific communication objectives.

Establishing brand positioning

It is important to remember that what is involved here is how the brand is positioned *within* its marketing communication. The brand will already have been generally positioned as a part of the overall marketing strategy. It may be a niche brand, a 'price' brand, broadly based, etc. How it is positioned within marketing communication addresses the best way to link the brand to category need and a benefit. In Chapter 2 the importance of positioning in IMC was introduced and discussed. Now, it shall be considered within the context of the planning process and its role in message development. In the strategic planning process for IMC, the manager must first establish whether the brand assumes a central versus differentiated position. To be centrally positioned, the brand must be seen by the target audience as being able to deliver all of the benefits associated with its *product category*. Otherwise, a differentiated position must be used, which is almost always the case.

Once this initial decision is made, the manager must then determine if the benefit claim for the brand should be about specific benefits associated with the brand, or about the brand's users. Again in almost every case, the positioning will reflect a product-oriented rather than user-oriented benefit. There are only two situations where a user-oriented positioning could be considered. These are when the target audience represents a specific market segment or niche, or when the underlying motivation driving purchase behaviour is social approval. But even in these cases, one could still adapt a product-oriented positioning. All of this was dealt with in some detail in Chapter 2.

Having addressed these two issues, the manager must then deal specifically with developing the benefit claims; that is, how the benefit will be dealt with in the creative executions. This means addressing the links between the brand and category need in order to optimize brand awareness, and the links between the brand and benefit in order to maximize positive brand attitude. In terms of the planning process, this must be determined before considering the more creative issues involved in message development.

For effective IMC, awareness for a brand must be quickly and easily linked in memory with the category need, reflecting the way in which the brand choice decision is made. This requires a positioning where the need for the product reflects how the target audience perceives that need. This is not always so straightforward as it may seem. The manager must

know how the consumer refers to the need that products in the category satisfy, which is a function of how they define the market. For example, is a household cleaner brand seen as a general cleaner, or as a heavy-duty cleaner? Is a television made by B & O simply a television or is it seen as part of a home entertainment system? These differences are critical, because they inform how the brand is stored in memory. Long ago in his classic article 'Marketing Myopia', Levitt (1960) pointed out the need to understand a brand's market in terms of how the *consumer* sees it. This is what establishes the true competitive set.

If a brand is seen as a heavy-duty cleaner, its marketing communication should position it as such, linking the brand to heavy-duty cleaning needs and *not* general household cleaning. If the brand talked about itself in terms of a household cleaner, it would be inconsistent with how the target audience sees the brand, and unlikely to tap into the relevant associations in memory. This assumes, of course, the brand is not trying to *re-position* itself as a more general household cleaner. The question the manager must answer here is: How does the target audience think about the brand?

Ramlösa offers an excellent example of this. They wanted to introduce a line of taste-varied waters to challenge LOKA, who dominated the market, especially among young women. Unfortunately, consumers perceived the brand as something for older, more serious people. Clearly, the brand needed to be re-positioned in the consumer's mind. They did this by running a saturation campaign emulating a movie launch or rock concert announcement, using outdoor media in a very unique way (see Figure 11.8). After only 3 weeks Ramlösa had passed LOKA in the scented waters category.

If a brand is centrally positioned, the benefit to the category are assumed, and must be reinforced. If a user-oriented positioning is adopted, the benefit is subsumed by an identification with brand usage. In all other cases, which again is most of the time, the manager must select the benefit most likely to maximize positive brand attitude in differentiating the brand from competitors in the eyes of the target audience, and to determine the best way in which to focus upon that benefit with the executions. The benefit selection will provide the basis for the benefit claim made about the brand in its marketing communication. In effect, it will let the consumer know what the brand offers and why they should want it.

Benefit selection and focus

Most people who study consumer behaviour feel that attitudes result from a summary judgement of everything one knows about something, weighted by how important those things are to them. This is usually expressed in terms of something known as the expectancy-value model of attitude (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), as discussed in Chapter 2. For brands, this means a person's attitude toward a brand will be made up of the summation of those things they know about it, weighted by how important those things are to them. In selecting a benefit for positioning, the manager should look for a potential benefit that is *important* to



Figure 11.8

An example of creatively using an IMC campaign to emulate a movie launch or rock concert promotion to reposition a brand toward young women.
Courtesy: OMD and Ramlöso

the target audience; that the target audience feel the brand either *delivers* now or could believably deliver; and ideally, do it *better* than competing brands. What one is looking for here is the perception of *uniqueness* for the brand, and this must come from the way in which the benefit claim is made in the creative execution (Boulding et al., 1994).

A brand benefit may be expressed in terms of either an objective *attribute*, a subjective *characteristic*, or an *emotion*. As an example, a benefit associated with a sports car might be related to the engine. One could create a message where the benefit claim talked about a 5.8-litre engine (an attribute), a 'powerful' engine (a subjective characteristic), or about it being 'exhilarating' (an emotion). However, the way in which a benefit is expressed in a message must be informed by the underlying motivation driving behaviour in the category.

When the underlying motive is positive (transformational brand attitude strategies), the benefit claim should be built upon a positive emotion. For products such as food, beverages, or fashion that are driven by a positive motive, the benefit should be a positive feeling associated with the brand. For example, this means creating a sense of sensual pleasure for food or sexual allure with fashion. The focus in the execution can be on the emotion alone, or perhaps associated with a subjective characteristic along the lines of 'our decadent flavors will leave you in ecstasy'. The emotion 'ecstasy' in this case is stimulated by the brand's 'decadent flavors'.

If the underlying motive is negative (informational brand attitude strategies), positive emotions are not appropriate as *benefits*. This does not mean that one should not create a positive emotional response to the message, only that the benefit claim should be built upon either a subjective characteristic of the brand, an attribute supporting the subjective characteristic, or the subjective characteristic resolving a problem. Such a focus is more in line with the need for the benefit to provide information that will help mediate the underlying negative motivation. For a cold remedy, for example, the benefit claim might be built around a subjective characteristic such as 'long-lasting relief', an attribute in support of the subjective characteristic such as 'our time-released capsules ensure long-lasting relief', or resolving a problem with the subjective characteristic, 'why take four capsules a day when one of ours gives you long-lasting relief?'

Of course, these illustrations are not meant to be an example of what the actual *creative* content of the message would be, but rather to provide a sense of the strategic possibilities associated with benefit focus in positioning. The point is that benefit selection must not only be based upon an important, uniquely delivered benefit, but also the appropriate motivation. The benefit focus for informational brand attitude strategies will be different from transformational brand attitude strategies, and these must be considered by the manager as part of positioning before moving on to setting communication objectives and specific brand attitude strategies. This means that the final question the manager must consider in terms of positioning is: What is the appropriate benefit focus?

Setting communication objectives

In earlier chapters we talked about the four basic communication effects of category need, brand awareness, brand attitude, and brand purchase intention, and saw in the last chapter how communication objectives follow directly from them. Since these are the possible effects of marketing communication, the manager must establish the importance of each to the overall communications strategy. As already emphasized, an important point to remember is that communication effects result from all forms of marketing communication. In other words, regardless of which type of marketing communication is considered, it will have the ability to stimulate any of the major communication effects. However, as we have seen, all types of marketing communication are not necessarily equally effective in creating particular effects.

Communication objectives are quite simply the communication *effects* one is looking for. Next, we will summarize how the four communication effects are likely to translate into communication objectives in the IMC plan.

Category need

If there is little demand for a category, or people seem less aware of it, establishing or reminding people of it becomes a communication objective. For example, one could not really do much of a job advertising or promoting a specific brand of a new product such as when Blackberries were introduced until people learned just what they were. Market share leaders can sometimes benefit from category need advertising when category demands slackens. A not too long ago example of reminding people of a category need was when in the US Campbell Soup ran a 'soup is good food' campaign. By stimulating category need for soup they generated differentially high sales for Campbell's because of their overwhelming share in the category.

Brand awareness

Brand (including trade) awareness is *always* an objective of any marketing communication program, whether advertising or promotion. We know that based upon how people make purchase decisions this awareness will occur via recognition or recall. As we have seen, recognition brand awareness is when the brand is seen in the store and remembered from advertising or promotion. Recall brand awareness is when one must remember the brand or store name first, prior to buying or using a product (e.g. when deciding to have lunch at a fast food restaurant, or when an industrial buyer decides to call several suppliers for a quotation). A principal communication objective of all advertising is to create or maintain brand awareness.

While brand awareness is usually seen as a traditional strength of advertising, as pointed out in the last chapter promotion can make a significant contribution. Generally, promotion is best utilized for increasing

brand recognition. Merchandising promotions do this by drawing more attention to a brand at the point-of-purchase (e.g., with coupons or special displays).

An excellent and innovative use of advertising and promotion together to raise awareness won for OMD a Medallion Award at Cannes in 2003 for their work for a small bank, SBAB. In a direct challenge to larger banks, an IMC campaign was launched to raise awareness of SBAB and increase loan applications. Under the umbrella positioning of 'loans in a jar' a variety of media were used to deliver both advertising-like and promotion-like messages.

The key to the program was an innovative use of outdoor and the Internet for the promotion-like messages encouraging loan applications, supported by awareness-building messages in print and television. Messages were tailored to specific apartment buildings pointing out how much owners of flats in the building could save by switching to SBAB (see Figure 11.9). Promotion-like messages on the Internet provided an opportunity for individuals to calculate how much they would personally save if they switched. (This is a promotion because its objective was to stimulate an immediate intention to switch.) The results were an immediate increase in brand awareness and a 46% increase in loan applications during the campaign period.

Brand attitude

Brand attitude too is *always* a communication objective, again as we have discussed. What is meant by brand attitude is the information or feeling the brand wishes to impart through its marketing communication. Information about a brand or emotional associations with it that are transmitted by consistent advertising over time build's brand equity.

We have dealt with brand attitude a great deal in this book because it is really at the heart of marketing communication. Strategies for implementing the brand attitude objective are derived from one of the four quadrants of the Rossiter–Percy Grid. Reviewing, the manager must consider whether the target audience sees the purchase of a brand as low or high risk (involvement), and whether the underlying motivation to buy or use the brand is positive or negative. Where the brand falls in relation to this will determine the appropriate brand attitude strategy:

- Low Involvement informational is the strategy for products or services that involve little or no risk, and where the underlying motivation for behaviour in the category is one of the three negative motives. (You may want to look back at Figure 4.10 to refresh your memory of these motives.) Typical examples would include pain relievers, detergents, and routinely purchased industrial products.
- Low Involvement transformational is the strategy for products or services that involve little or no risk, but when the underlying motivation in the category is positive. Typical examples would include most food products, soft drinks, and beer.



Figure 11.9

A unique and effective use of outdoor, tailored to residents of specific apartment buildings.
Courtesy: OMD and SBAB

- High Involvement informational is the strategy for products or services where the decision involves risk (either in terms of price or for psycho-social reasons), and where the underlying behaviour is negatively motivated. Typical examples would include financial investments, insurance, heavy-duty household goods, and new industrial products.
- High Involvement transformational is the strategy for products or services where the decision involves risk, and where the underlying behaviour is positively motivated. Typical examples would include high-fashion clothing or cosmetics, automobiles, and corporate image.

Whereas traditionally one thinks of advertising for building brand attitude, as suggested in the last chapter the best promotions will also work

on building brand attitude. While the immediate aim of a promotion is a short-term increase in sales, they can also create more long-term communication effects, maximizing full-value purchase once the promotion is withdrawn. For example, free trial periods or free samples help create a positive feeling for a brand, as do coupons seen as a small gift from the manufacturer. Promotions can also provide useful information to ensure a continued favourable attitude after trial as well, for example with such things as regional training programs for businesses, cookbooks, on-package usage suggestions, and the like.

Brand purchase intention

Brand (or trade) purchase intention is a communication objective when the primary thrust of the message is to *commit now* to buying the brand or using a service. Note that purchase-related behavioural intentions are also included in this communication objective, things like dealer visits, direct mail inquiries, and referrals.

Along with brand awareness, stimulation of brand purchase intention is the real strength of promotion. All promotions are aimed at 'moving sales forward' immediately, and they do this by stimulating immediate brand purchase intentions, or other purchase-related intentions such as a visit to a showroom or a call for a sales demonstration. For consumer target audiences, the potential power of promotion is underscored by research that has shown that purchase intention can be influenced at the point-of-purchase in about two out of every three supermarket decisions (Haven, 1995).

■ Matching media options

The fifth step in the strategic planning process involves identifying appropriate media options for delivering the brand's message. IMC media strategy is not a simple matter of finding media that reach the target audience, or satisfying particular reach and frequency objectives. While this is important to media planning, it is *not* the first step. In considering the wide range of media options available for delivering IMC messages, the critical concern is to first identify those media that will facilitate the type of processing necessary to satisfy the communication objectives.

There are three areas in which media differ that will have a direct bearing on this: the ability to effectively deliver visual content, the time available to process the message, and the ability to deliver high frequency (the number of times the target audience will be exposed to a message through a particular media). Each of these media characteristics has particular significance for both brand awareness and brand attitude strategy, as we shall see below. Additionally, managers must also consider media options in terms of the size and type of their business. This too will inform what IMC media options will make the most sense given the markets within which they operate.

In this section we will be addressing three questions the manager should consider in developing an IMC media strategy. First, what media options are appropriate for recognition versus recall brand awareness strategies? Then, what media options help facilitate the brand attitude strategy? Finally, from this set of media options, what media make the most sense, given the size and type of business?

Appropriate media for brand awareness

Visual content and frequency are issues for brand awareness processing. When the brand awareness strategy is *recognition*, one must be able to see the package. This means that almost any visual media should do, but not radio. Newspaper, while able to show a package, should be considered with caution because of potential limitations in colour reproduction. If correct colour is essential for brand package recognition (e.g. because of similarity of package colour among brands in the category), newspaper may not be a good option. An exception to these restrictions for recognition awareness would be where brand recognition is verbal, not visual. This could be the case for companies that rely upon telemarketing, when the target audience must recognize the brand name when they hear it.

When a recall brand awareness strategy is used, frequency is a concern. Media selected must be able to deliver a high frequency in order to seed the category need-brand name link in memory. Certain media like monthly magazines and direct mail have obvious frequency limitations. Posters have potential frequency limitations, unless they are positioned in an area of high target audience traffic.

A very good example of using IMC to build the link between category need and the brand for recall brand awareness is a campaign run in Sweden for Apoteket. Integrating advertising and public relations, a bus tour was carried out across Sweden to educate people about pain (the category need), providing booklets about pain and how to avoid it. The bus tour was supported with advertising and public relations in local newspapers and radio announcing when the bus would be stopping in various towns and cities. As a result of the tour, when people experienced pain, Apoteket was firmly linked in memory as the solution; someone caring and in position to determine the best medical care. Figure 11.10 illustrates the tour bus and some of the support collateral.

Appropriate media for brand attitude

The four brand attitude strategies that follow from the Rossiter–Percy Grid are a function of the level of involvement in the decision and the underlying motivation driving behaviour, as we have seen. If the brand attitude is *low involvement informational*, almost any media will work. This is because these are the easiest messages to process, needing only to communicate a single, simply presented benefit that is easily grasped, not requiring repeated exposure. There may, however, be creative constraints

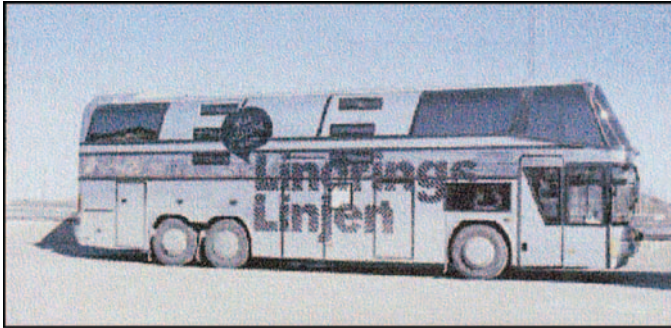


Figure 11.10

A good example of using IMC to build a link in memory between category need and a brand, integrating traditional advertising and public relations. *Courtesy: OMD and Apoteket*

that might limit media choice. This would be the case, for example, if the product must be demonstrated in order to effectively communicate its benefit. For *low-involvement transformational* strategies, good visual content capability is critical, and high frequency is needed to build the positive effect associated with the benefit.

When the brand attitude strategy is *high involvement informational*, the key requirement is enough time to process and consider the message since it must be accepted. This means that broadcast media (radio and television) should not be considered because the target audience is not

able to control the pace at which they process the message. For *high-involvement transformational* strategies, it is important to ensure the ability to provide strong visual content. For some products falling in this category, especially high-priced luxury goods, a strong visual image will immediately stimulate a strong emotional response and positive attitude (if the target audience identifies with the image), and higher frequency may not be necessary. But this is something the manager must carefully consider, based upon research.

A number of IMC media options appropriate for brand attitude strategies are summarized in Figure 11.11. An important consideration in putting together the media strategy is to remember that while one medium may be appropriate for brand awareness, it may not be for the brand attitude strategy. This does *not* mean that it should not be used, but it does mean that the manager must keep firmly in mind that the message may be building brand awareness but not doing much for brand attitude. In such a case, make sure to also use appropriate brand attitude media. A good example here would be high-involvement informational strategies. Broadcast is inappropriate for this brand attitude strategy, but could be perfect for brand awareness. The brand might use television to build awareness and introduce the key benefit, while delivering a more detailed message in print where there is more time to process.

Mass media options	Brand attitude strategy			
	Low-involvement informational	Low-involvement transformational	High-involvement informational	High-involvement transformational
Television	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Cable television	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Radio	Yes	No	No	No
Newspaper	Yes	Colour limitation	Yes	Colour limitation
Magazines	Yes	Frequency limitation	Yes	Yes
Posters	Yes	Frequency limitation	Processing time limitation	Yes
Internet	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Direct mail	Yes	Frequency limitation	Yes	Yes

Figure 11.11
Appropriate media for brand attitude strategies

Appropriate media for the size and type of business

Depending upon the size of a business and its market, the primary media used will be different. Rossiter and Bellman (2005) have made

this important point, and define four groups to consider: large-audience advertisers, including both business-to-business and consumer; small-audience local retail advertisers; small-audience business-to-business advertisers; and direct-response advertisers.

Most marketers with large audiences will select from among appropriate major mass media for the brand awareness and brand attitude strategies. This will generally include television, radio, newspapers, magazines, posters, and the Internet. Notice that we are talking about large *audiences* or markets, not necessarily large businesses. Airbus is a very big company, but with very few potential buyers. Small-audience local retailers will not usually use mass media because of the expense and wasted coverage. Unless there are enough stores in an area covered by local mass media, it makes no sense. Rather, they are more likely to use local print and direct mail, as well as event marketing and sponsorships. Whatever media is used, however, it must be appropriate for the communication objective. Small-audience business-to-business marketers will be likely to use print almost exclusively as their primary media, especially trade publications and direct mail.

Direct-response businesses tend to use direct marketing, and as discussed in Chapter 7, this primarily means direct mail and telemarketing. But some direct-response is not database driven, and as such not direct marketing. These businesses will be likely to use telemarketing and print, or even television. But direct-response advertising is different from traditional advertising in that its primary communication objective is brand purchase intention, and *immediate* response. This means there is no time to build brand awareness, and very little time to build positive brand attitude for all but low-involvement informational strategies. In using television, say to demonstrate a product (especially a high-involvement product), the message will require more than 30 or 60 seconds. In fact, it is not unusual for direct-response marketers to use a *30-minute* television 'program', so-called infomercials. The rules for effective processing still hold, but the media is used differently.

Summary

The first step in the IMC planning process is a careful review of the marketing plan. This is what provides the necessary background for understanding a brand's overall marketing objectives, which the IMC program will support. Beyond these marketing objectives and how marketing communication is expected to support them, key issues to address in this review are the specifics of the brand itself and the market within which it will compete, with special emphasis on its competition. Finally, the marketing plan will outline where sales are expected to come from.

Once the marketing plan has been reviewed, the actual IMC planning begins with target audience selection. This will have been informed by what the marketing plan has to say about where the brand is looking for business. If trial is the objective, brand switchers who switch among other brands (OBS) are the key buyer group because they already exhibit

switching behaviour and will be the easiest group to attract. Those loyal to other brands (OBL) or non-categories users (NCU) offer potential for trial, but are much more difficult to attract. If increased repeat purchase is the objective, brand switchers who include the brand in their set (FBS) will be encouraged to select the brand more often; BL will be encouraged to buy more, or more often.

Having identified the target audience it is important to gain an understanding of how they go about making purchase decisions in the category. The BSM is a good way of looking at this, identifying the stages involved in the decision, and for each stage whom all is involved and the roles they play, where it is likely to occur, the timing, and how it happens. With the target audience selected and an understanding of how they make purchase decisions in the category, is time to begin planning message development.

The first step in message development is to determine the appropriate positioning for the brand within its marketing communication. For most brands, this will mean a differentiated positioning rather than a central positioning, which is only appropriate if the brand is seen as delivering on all of the benefits associated with the category. It will also almost always mean a benefit-oriented rather than user-oriented positioning, which is only appropriate for very specific market niches or when social approval is the motivation involved. Once these two basic issues are addressed, a benefit must be selected around which to base the message. This could be a specific attribute of the product, a subjective characteristic of the brand, or an emotional response, alone or in some combination depending upon the underlying motivation. This benefit must be seen by the target audience as important, something the brand delivers (or could deliver), and ideally delivers it better than other brands.

Having positioned the brand, the next step is to set the communication objectives. These objectives are selected from the set of four communication effects: category need, brand awareness, brand attitude, and brand purchase intention. Brand awareness and brand attitude will always be objectives, and must reflect the type of awareness needed (recognition or recall) and the appropriate strategic brand attitude quadrant of the Rossiter–Percy Grid.

After the message development section of the plan is complete, the final step in the IMC planning process is to identify an appropriate set of media options that are consistent with the communication objectives.

■ Review questions

- 1 Why is it important to review the marketing plan at the start of the IMC planning process?
- 2 What are the important considerations in target audience selection?
- 3 Why is it important to IMC planning to understand how the target audience goes about making brand decisions?
- 4 What are the decision stages likely to be in choosing a mobile phone?
- 5 Why is it important to IMC planning to understand the roles people play in the purchase decision process?
- 6 Discuss the importance of positioning in IMC planning.
- 7 Find examples of advertising where the brand is well positioned and examples where it is not and discuss why.

- 8 How is brand attitude related to positioning and benefit selection?
- 9 Find an example of advertising that has category need as a communication objective.
- 10 What is the key to selecting media for the IMC plan?
- 11 Discuss the criteria for making media selection decisions for the different brand attitude communication objectives associated with the Rossiter–Percy Grid.
- 12 Why is it important to look at the size and type of business in selecting the primary media for an IMC plan?

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