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BRANDS AND PROMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The brand is the central concept of consumer marketing, and integration of promotional campaigns across different media channels, both on and offline, is the key theme of contemporary advertising in the convergence era. This chapter explores the notion of the brand in relation to the promotional communication upon which many brands depend for their continuing salience. The chapter focuses on the management task of conceiving, planning and communicating brands, it touches on the theme of integrated marketing communication and explores distinctions between marketing strategy and advertising strategy in a broad examination of the ways in which advertising and promotional communication can support brand marketing objectives.

KEY CHAPTER CONTENT

Branding basics – origins and conceptualisation

What advertising and promotional communication can do for brands

The strategic brand management process and communication planning

IMC planning

Limitations to IMC

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1 *Strategic Branding* **to learn**
How you define brands, their impact and importance, the reasons brands are created and the advantages of having a strong brand

2 *Brands as Broadcasters* **to learn**
How the relationship between brands and advertising has changed

3 *Strategic Brand Management* **to learn**
The elements and factors that go into the strategic brand management process

… to tackle the video questions at the end of the chapter.

BRANDING BASICS: ORIGINS AND CONCEPTUALISATION

In Chapter 3 we turn from the complexities of theorising advertising and promotion campaigns to the underlying purpose of most campaigns – the promotion of a brand. We note that the idea of a brand has become extended from a product, to services, to non-profit, entertainment, government, health and almost anything else. In Chapter 2, we noted a number of theoretical perspectives on advertising that illustrated how difficult it is to impose meaning on an individual consumer through an advertisement. Part of the enigma of the advertising business is that we may not fully understand how it works, but it does, nevertheless, seem to do so and there are many striking examples. Indeed, it is hardly possible to conceive of the world's most prominent brands without advertising. In this chapter we focus on the management task of conceiving, planning and communicating brands. Firstly, it is important to reflect a little on the central concept of integrated advertising and promotion – the brand.

Brands and branding, like most areas of marketing, are not short of definitions, few of which are helpful in capturing the nebulous entity they seek to describe. The American Marketing Association (AMA) offers numerous definitions in its website dictionary resource, including this one: A brand is a name, term, sign, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. As Keller (2012) points out, this definition ignores something that marketing practitioners regard as very important – a brand is nothing until it is recognised as such by a meaningful number of consumers. In other words, a brand is more than the name or symbol, but is a reputation, a set of recognised values, a presence in the marketplace, what Keller calls the industry's concept of a brand with a capital B. The capital B is often generated through advertising and promotional communication, but service, quality and reliability are also indispensable in generating WOM endorsements that build reputation. De Chernatony et al. (2010) also emphasise the augmented aspect of the essential brand as something that adds customer value to the name, symbols and basic functionality. Lury (2011: 137) cites Wang (2008) suggesting that a product is made in a factory, but a brand is bought by a consumer. The perception of the brand is what appears to be the key notion here – it matters little if Daz soap powder really does 'wash whiter', as the strapline insisted – what matters is that the consumer remembers the strapline and, by association, the brand name.

Rosenbaum-Elliott et al. (2015) draw attention to the brand as a sign that is rich in potential signification, alluding to the semiotics of signs and symbolism (Umiker-Sebeok, 1987; Danesi, 2006). It is implied in the work of management theorists such as Keller that brand management can, in principle, design the desired signification into the brand and impose it on the perceptions of consumers. Advertising is a rich vehicle for signification in juxtaposition with brands and the suggestive power of brand communication invests products with the potential to act as resources for identity projects (Belk, 1988; Goldman and Papson, 1994). But, as we saw in Chapter 2, the fact that communication may be crafted by the brand owner does not necessarily mean that the meaning of the brand can be injected unproblematically into the mentality of the consumer. Brands are considered to be co-creations of organisations and consumer culture (Zwick et al., 2008). This possibility poses a

PHOTO 7 Daz Soap

Image Courtesy of the Advertising Archives

This 1950s magazine ad for Daz detergent played on the USP (unique selling proposition) formula in a simple but economi-cal creative execution. It told readers that Daz washes clothes whiter than any other detergent (a claim which, in the best advertising tradition, was impossible either to prove or to refute). It used a bright cartoon image that anthropomorphised the grateful shirt to give energy and appeal to the message. The commodity is named, and brought to life with an anthro-pomorphic image and a slogan that make it irresistibly memorable, whatever its qualities.

problem for the hypodermic model of brand management. Holt (2004) goes further in proposing that brands are constituted by the stories that are circulated about them. These stories emanate from companies, from culture, from intermediaries such as trade press and salespeople, and from consumers. Holt notes that the idea of brands as psychological phenomena based on perceptions is a popular one, but he suggests that, 'what makes a brand powerful is the collective nature of these perceptions; the stories have become conventional and so are continually reinforced because they are treated as truths in everyday interactions' (Holt, 2004: 3). The notion of brand storytelling has become a prominent theme in marketing practice, especially in the world of branded content, and it plays neatly into the related ideas of brands as cultural constructions that can be sustained through iterations of their stories. Or, as Feldwick (2015) suggests, the brand is a circus, and the task of brand management is to keep the audience in their seats. What better way to do this than to articulate compelling stories around the brand. For Holt brand stories can be culturally encoded through OOH promotion, advertising, store design, brand names, design, and many other consumer touch points.
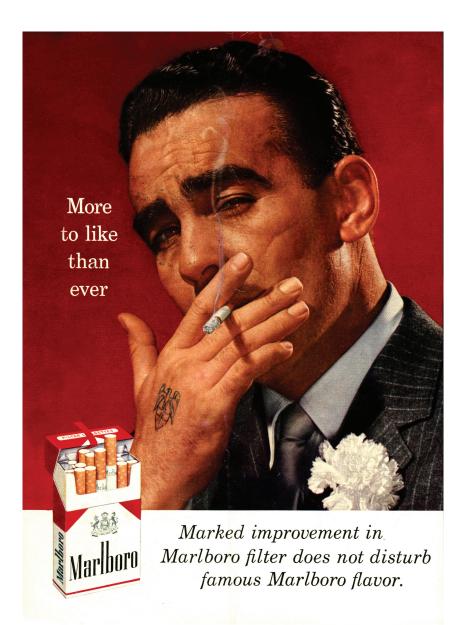
Branding as a metaphor originates from the physical process of burning identification marks into livestock, but the modern understanding of branding has a shorter history. In 1867 Harvey Proctor re-named his white soap Ivory Soap in one of the earliest examples of branding as we understand it today. Proctor's imagery of the distinctive branded packaging, and the slogan that went with the posters ('99 and 44/100 % pure') was soon recognised as a powerful aid to recalling and recognising the brand (Danesi, 2006). It was quickly learned that named products outsold generic products. Others soon followed with some, like Parker Pens, converting their trademark into a brand name. Among the first named brands in the UK grocery market at the turn of the twentieth century were Hovis, Bovril, Cadbury, Fry and Kellogg. Brand names were soon extended from groceries to technical products such as Singer sewing machines and Raleigh bicycles, and by around the 1920s brands had become the focus of advertising. Branding, evidently, is central to the emergence of consumer culture as brands can be conceived in different ways. For example, Holt and Cameron (2010) argue that brands are essentially ideological entities that draw on cultural myths to resolve identity dilemmas. They are ideological in the sense that they entail a number of beliefs and values that do not necessarily have a material basis. For example, Holt and Cameron cite Marlboro as an example of a brand that was rather unremarkable as a women's cigarette, but was transformed through advertising in a symbol that drew on myths of American masculinity. As American men felt that their power in society was waning, the cigarette brand symbolically restored it. Rosenbaum-Elliott et al. (2015), in contrast, emphasise the extent to which brands can be understood as psychological perceptions that are overlaid with emotional and symbolic elements. Keller (2012) goes further to argue that these perceptions can be imposed on consumers through managerial action because, he suggests, branding is a science of management control.

While conceptualisations of the brand differ, it can hardly be denied that what constitutes a brand has changed radically. The early branded grocery and machine products

were manufactured innovations that had a material basis – sewing machines sewed clothes, soap cleansed, bicycles moved people from A to B. Later on, branding moved into more abstract entities such as services (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) and experiences (Gilmore and Pine, 2011), particularly, experiences of entertainment (Wolf, 2003; Lehu, 2007; Sayre, 2007). Today, the notion of the brand has been altered along with the economics of branding. Iconic social network Facebook has about 2 billion active users, yet it produces no media content of its own. The world's biggest taxi firm, Uber, is based on an owner-driver business model and therefore owns few cars of its own, other than the driverless ones it is reported to be trialling at the time of writing, in March 2017. Alibaba, the world's biggest retailer, owns no stock. Twitter is credited with fomenting revolutions, fuelling regime changes and driving political populism, yet it remains a resolutely loss-making business enterprise. The internet has changed business models and, with them, the very nature of branding.

Traditionally, the brand can be described as a badge of origin, a promise of performance, a reassurance of quality, and a transformation of experience (Feldwick, 2002: 4–9; de Chernatony et al., 2010). Brands trigger recognition which, if accompanied by a sense of reassurance about the value the brand brings to a consumption practice, enables consumers to avoid a lengthy and time-consuming search every time we wish to buy something. This recognition can be loaded with cultural values that ostensibly differentiate the brand from alternatives and make it more meaningful to particular consumer groups. What is more, brands transform experience through these cultural values. Drinking a Coke, for example, is far more culturally loaded than merely slaking thirst, since the brand evokes echoes of many advertising campaigns promoting it in juxtaposition with its American provenance and a sense of friendship, joy and togetherness. Similarly, drinking a coffee with Coffemate, washing one's hair with L'Oréal, driving a BMW or drinking PG Tips tea all transform the prosaic acts themselves by layering them with second order meanings (Schroeder and Salzer-Morling, 2005; Danesi, 2006). Advertising and promotion are key to these meanings.

Brand strategy is often conceived in terms of what Holt and Cameron (2010) call a 'mind share' model, the psychological model we touch upon above. Attributing this type of approach to authors such as Aaker (e.g. 1995, 2004), the brand is said to have a personality (an idea originally attributed to advertising man David Ogilvy, 1983), which is created by the brand management and then communicated to the target market through advertising and promotion. The brand personality (sometimes referred to as its identity in similar models) should have values and attributes that distinguish it from alternatives in the market, and therefore it should occupy a distinctive place in the consumer's mind (hence, 'mindshare'). The brand is essentially seen as a psychological construct. All the aspects of the brand that might impact on its identity or personality are referred to as brand equity, and the management task is said to be to manipulate these elements in order to maintain the brand's distinctive positioning in the consumer's mind. As Keller has suggested, there is no universally agreed definition of brand equity, but it has become a much-used if nebulous term. Rosenbaum-Elliott et al. (2015) state that brand equity has been described variously as 'the value of the brand to the customer', 'the additional cash flow achieved by

PHOTO 8 Marlboro Man

Image Courtesy of the Advertising Archives

The Tattooed Marlboro Man in this 1955 print ad was a predecessor of the iconic cowboy Marlboro Man. Marlboro was regarded as a woman's cigarette when manufacturers Phillip Morris hired Chicago agency Leo Burnett to reposition the brand to men. They tried images of cattle ranchers, sailors and working men such as Mr Hand Tattoo above before settling on the cowboy. The Marlboro Man tapped into a powerful myth of American masculinity. The campaign is a fine example of how advertising, as a cultural intermediary, is capable of taking symbols and ideologies from consumer culture and combining them in new and novel ways.

associating a brand with the underlying product or service', 'the value that resides in a brand name, trade mark or product', 'the beliefs consumers associate with the brand', and 'the net value of the brand image', among other definitions (2015: 89–90). The risk of the notion of brand equity is that it reifies the brand into a fixed entity that must be preserved, and this can lead to a loss of market salience for the brand.

Holt and Cameron critique this approach for being too one-sided. They suggest that brands are cultural constructions that subsist not in individual psychology but in wider culture. Holt suggests that marketers and brand managers often think of brands as 'psychological phenomena which stem from the perceptions of individual consumers. But what makes a brand powerful is the collective nature of these perceptions; the stories have become conventional and so are continually reinforced because they are treated as truths in everyday interactions' (Holt, 2004: 3). Hence, in order to succeed, brands must tap into cultural currents and mobilise identity myths. Crucially, the implication is that brands cannot simply inject a desired brand identity or personality into the consumers' mind as if advertising and promotion were some kind of hypodermic. Instead, they must earn a deep anthropologically inspired understanding of what the brand means to the target consumers (McCracken, 1990; 2005).

On this reasoning, the brand is not a fixed entity created by brand management and inserted into the consumer's psychology but a cultural construction that subsists in the social spaces between people (Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2015). There is a concrete materiality in what the brand represents, whether that is the tangible elements of a service or a physical product, but the symbolic extension of the brand is a fluid entity. Brands tap into identity myths and, sometimes, mobilise a sense of shared experience among otherwise divergent members of brand communities (Belk, 1988; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Holt, 2002, 2004; Brodie et al., 2013). Brands are able to do this because their communicative meaning is not confined to their material functionality but extends to the meaning they are able to symbolise (Gardner and Levy, 1955). So, for example, the Marlboro Man became one of the most iconic symbols in American consumer culture through the advertising in which he symbolised a myth of American masculinity. The cigarettes, which were previously known as a women's brand, became a powerful symbol of this masculinity myth by association.

Brands are valuable (see Snapshot 3.1) because consumers seek them out, recognise them and buy them instead of alternatives. In effect, a successful brand acts as a quasi monopoly, because a proportion of consumers will seek out a particular brand, while ignoring the claims of other brands. As a result, brands allow companies to charge higher prices and make higher profits. They also enable the same companies to sell longer production runs and therefore produce at lower marginal costs. In competitive markets, this can mean lower consumer prices. Branding, marketing and advertising are not necessarily costs borne by the consumer. They can underpin economies of scale by improving productive efficiency. Put simply, brands earn greater revenue by doing one of three things: getting existing customers to pay more, getting them to buy more often, or getting more people to buy (Sharp, 2010). Brand management is about more than advertising and promotion, but the communication elements of brand strategy can be central to achieving any of these aims.

SNAPSHOT 3.1

The world's top brands by global revenue

Brand consultant Interbrand compiles a list of the top global brands each year by value.[1] In 2016 they placed Apple and Google at number 1 and number 2, with values of $178,000 million and $133,000 million respectively. The rest of the top ten were Coca-Cola, Microsoft, Toyota, IBM, Samsung, Amazon, Mercedes Benz and GE. Amazon and Facebook (at number 15) were the fastest growing brands in the top 50 by value. *Forbes*[2] magazine produces its own list with a different methodology, and also puts Apple at number 1, with Microsoft at number 2. Few would claim that advertising and promotion alone built these companies. Clearly, there have been important and essential elements of technical innovation, ownership of intellectual property and historical accident – Western brands seem to have an advantage because of its economic dominance. Most of the world's top brands are less than 50 years old but brands can be highly enduring over time. Nestlé's KitKat has been the market leading countline in the UK for over 50 years, while many European luxury brands have histories in excess of 100 years (Lu, 2008). Sharp (2010) has suggested that brand loyalty is less important in building and maintaining market share than often supposed. Instead, he argues that occasional, and fickle, purchasers are key to market share, provided the brand can attract enough of them. One implication of this is that target marketing might be over-rated, since the large periphery of consumers who shift from one brand to another are more important to the overall value of the brand than the hard core repeat customers. The revenues of the top global brand exceed the GNPs of some entire countries. For example, Apple's global revenue exceeds $200 billion. The stakes are high and advertising and promotional communication can make the difference.

Brands communicate values, attitudes, identity positioning and discernment, and hence they constitute a shared symbolic cultural vocabulary. We would get little out of owning and displaying brands as symbolic objects if we did not know that others also speak the same vocabulary. Advertising and promotion are key parts of this cultural vocabulary. For example, in Spotify's 2016 campaign, the company took social media comments that consumers had left and incorporated them into their advertising, thus leveraging (reflecting and also amplifying) the social media conversation that was already taking place. This reflects a growing awareness among brands that consumers are deeply invested in the brand and their stories can usefully be incorporated into the brand stories via social media (Gensler et al., 2013).

The notion of brand personality reflects the attempt to generate a sense of affinity between consumers and brands by anthropomorphising the brand, giving it human characteristics (a 'personality') in order to stimulate affective and emotional responses from consumers towards the brand. Many brands are anthropomorphised through fictional characters while others use celebrity spokespeople to give the brand a human face (Brown and Ponsonby-McCabe, 2013; Hackley and Hackley, 2015). The goal overall is to make it easier for a consumer to respond affectively to the brand as

if it were human, by liking, not liking, being loyal to, being fond of or even loving, the brand. Some brand consultants even speak of a brand having a 'soul', but this is really further entrenching the idea of the brand personality in a silo. The notion that a brand has some essential soul or essence that can potentially be revealed, or perhaps just intuitively understood, is very misleading. The brand does not exist at all on a brand-planning document – it exists only in the social spaces occupied by consumers and as such there is no 'soul' or 'essence'. The brand is a relation and its cultural meaning will shift along with the cultural worlds of its consumers.

In keeping with the importance of brand anthropomorphism, social media and convergence mean that brands can respond in a dialogue with consumers in order to reinforce the sense of an interactive, two-way communication between consumer and brand (Ashley and Tuten, 2015; Armstrong et al., 2016). Some brand communication, such as advertising and promotion aired on bought media spots, can be controlled from one side, even if the ways it might be interpreted by consumers cannot necessarily be controlled. Other elements of brand communication, such as social media sentiment and press coverage, are, in principle, beyond the control of brand management. Brands have to react and respond to social media and other communications that emanate from the consumer side. Brands have to ride cultural currents and respond creatively to shifts in the popular sentiment or to topical events, in order to try to maintain their cultural resonance and remain relevant to their target audiences. The key issue for brand management is for managers and their advertising agencies to continuously work to understand the cultural milieu of their consumers so that their brand communications are cast in the same cultural idiom used by their consumers, so that they can make a connection with their consumers' cultural experience.

For some, advertising that encourages us to think that our choice of detergent is important to our sense of social status, our identity, even our happiness, is ridiculous. It may be absurd, but through advertising, brands acquire this strange power to transform an everyday activity into something more meaningful that connects it to the wider symbolic world, at least if we suspend our scepticism for a little while. The brands themselves are often competing with similar commodities for our attention and our repeat purchases, and they will try to be as alluring as possible to us in order to be able to compete with their market rivals. Advertising and promotion are central to the realisation of the cultural resonance and market potential of brands. In a fundamental sense, communication doesn't simply pass on messages about the brand – it constitutes the brand.

SNAPSHOT 3.2

IMC and B2B: Slideshare and B2B content

Integrated marketing communications remains discussed in academic texts but it has long been regarded as a default position in the marketing industries. In order to achieve the necessary audience reach and salience brands have to be prepared to use

multiple channels, and somehow they have to co-ordinate their channel communications, creatively and strategically. This is not confined to consumer marketing. As Dr Owen Matson of Texas company MarketScale has pointed out, social media for business-to-business (B2B) has moved beyond LinkedIn and Slideshare is one of the means through which B2B brands are sharing content. Matson (2017) points out that Slideshare is one of the top 120 websites in the world with some 60 million unique visitors per month. Slideshare is free to use, including its data analytic tools, and it has video functionality, which means better SEO. Video is key to content and the astonishing potential reach of video sharing (as we saw in Chapter 1 with the multiple million audience reach of some YouTube influencers) can be added to Slideshare presentations to enhance engagement. B2B content is a different genre to consumer-based content, but nonetheless it too is transformed in the convergence era. Some strategic skills, though, remain as old as advertising itself. The most resonant creative ideas are founded on genuinely penetrating consumer and market insight.

WHAT ADVERTISING AND PROMOTIONAL COMMUNICATION CAN DO FOR BRANDS

Advertising's role in marketing is often under-emphasised. It is easy to see why. Advertising and promotion are, too often, the very last things marketing or brand managers think about, after product development, market testing, business analysis, production planning, material sourcing, distribution and so on. Yet it is a mistake to assume that the sequence of managerial activities involved in bringing a market offering to the consuming public reflects their relative importance. Advertising and other forms of marketing communication are not in themselves sufficient for successful consumer brand marketing, but in most cases they are necessary to the success of the venture. From a managerial perspective, advertising and promotion are the final step in bringing an offering to market. From a consumer perspective, advertising is often the only visible aspect of the marketing chain, and, via social media, it is often seamlessly linked to purchase and delivery. Of course, few consumers will concede that we are susceptible to the suggestions of advertising. We prefer to think of ourselves as heroically resisting the manipulative intent of brand marketing. To be sure, consumers are not dupes and we engage critically with the marketing we encounter. The issue is that the key decisions have already been made when we engage with marketing. Financial and other barriers to market entry meant that our choices are framed by our consumer cultural environment (Hackley, 2013a). Advertising is often our point of entry into the long chain of brand marketing planning and co-ordination, and it is inherently a narrow one. We are presented with limited sets of choices and our wellbeing is framed in terms of consumption. The advertising helps to establish a set of assumptions that the consumer will bring to all other aspects of their engagement with a given brand.

Advertising and promotion are not only produced for the benefit of consumers and, concomitantly, shareholders. They are also important for the confidence and morale of

other parties who have a stake in the a brand, such as sales staff and other employees, intermediaries, suppliers, regulators, business and consumer journalists, and investors. Advertising provides tangible evidence of the financial credibility and competitive presence of an organisation. Corporate communication is a distinct discipline in itself. But in a broader sense every ad is a reflection on the corporation that sponsored it because of the cumulative influence on its commercial credibility. Tangible benefits from this credibility might include longer supplier credit periods, greater influence over suppliers' prices, better employee retention and more effective recruitment, and greater confidence among stock market players.

Advertising's corporate influence can spread far beyond the brand. As a device of marketing strategy, advertising and promotion can also be both subtle and precise. The UK Institute for Practitioners in Advertising (IPA)[3] claims that among other business aims, advertising can:

- defend brands against own-label growth
- effect change internally as well as externally to the company
- increase the efficiency of recruitment
- transform entire businesses by generating new markets for a brand
- revitalise a declining brand
- reinvigorate a market
- stop line extensions cannibalising existing sales
- change behaviour
- influence share price
- make other communications more cost-effective
- generate rapid sales increases
- increase growth of a mature brand in a declining market
- address crises in public relations.

With creative ingenuity and careful targeting, advertising can support many kinds of marketing objective. It must be remembered that advertising itself is communication: ads cannot sell anything as such, because they cannot answer 'objections' to purchase as a personal salesperson can although advertising on social media certainly has interactive properties that traditional mass media advertising before social media did not (Gensler et al., 2013; Armstrong et al., 2016). What they can do is place particular ideas in the public realm to publicise offers in juxtaposition with a brand name, values and images. Advertising can support marketing strategies such as positioning and repositioning, market **segmentation**, launch and relaunch, raising brand **awareness** or rebranding, and fulfilling corporate communication objectives.

NON-COMMERCIAL BRANDING

Consumer marketing is by no means alone in using integrated marketing communication planning. For example, while political parties have long deployed techniques

from marketing, including market research, advertising, targeting, branding and PR (O'Shaughnessy, 2001; Peng and Hackley, 2007; Ormrod et al., 2013) in recent years social media marketing has now become central to political marketing (Cogburn and Espinoza-Vasquez, 2011; Towner and Dulio, 2012). Many other organisations have adopted marketing and advertising for ostensibly socially beneficial outcomes such as, for example, health departments of governments who deploy advertising and other marketing tools to try to encourage healthier alcohol consumption practices (Kotler and Roberto, 1989; Hackley et al., 2015).

The uses of political advertising and marketing in the UK date from the late 1970s. Initially, there was some resistance to it. For example, the UK Labour Party and the trade unions were historically unsympathetic to advertising because they associated it with a sell-out to capitalism. As a result, such organisations were unable to promote themselves effectively. A change of viewpoint eventually emerged, significantly because of the involvement of the DDB London chairman at the time, Chris Powell (Peng and Hackley, 2009). This change of view about using advertising to promote left-wing politics and issues coincided with the political revival of the Labour Party. One poster campaign called 'Labour Isn't Working' produced by Saatchi & Saatchi for the UK Conservative Party for the 1979 general election has been described as the most successful political advertisement of all time,[4] since it was credited with winning the election for the Conservatives.

Non-profit advertising including charities, public sector, health services and public safety and information campaigns have collectively become a significant sector of the advertising business. For a time, under the Labour government of 1997–2010, the government through its Central Office of Information was the largest single spender on advertising in the UK, out-spending even the largest consumer goods conglomerates. The use of advertising in public service campaigns, though, can be seen as problematic, and it is questionable how effective it is in public health issues such as alcohol consumption (Szmigin et al., 2011). Campaigns in these areas are subject to similar planning processes as commercial advertising and promotion. The differences lie in the fact that each sector serves different stakeholders and, therefore, has different objectives to fulfil and different expectations to meet.

ADVERTISING AND SEGMENTATION

Marketing management texts have popularised the term 'segmentation' to refer to the need for categories of consumer to be broken down for easy identification, surveillance (through consumer research) and targeting (Kotler and Keller, 2015). Consumers are often complicit in this categorisation, since we eagerly seek out ads and images that we feel cohere with our sense of social identity and resonate with our individual aspirations and fantasies (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Belk, 1988; Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). Most importantly, this entails creating a sense of otherness towards categories of consumer that are not us. In a given TV or poster ad, the casting, the set, the scene props and the dialogue are all powerful signifiers of the kind of human that is supposed to favour a given brand. Through advertising and

promotional communication we are offered resources from which to produce a sense of identity through consumption (or through resisting consumption) (O'Donohoe, 1994, 1997; Ritson and Elliott, 1999). This sense of identity through consumption is liminal in the sense that it can give us a sense of social and personal change, even if the change is symbolic and illusory (Olsen, 2016).

It is a cliché in advertising that half the budget is wasted, but no one knows which half. The value of segmentation to organisations is that it is designed to improve marketing ROI by reducing the amount of the marketing budget that is misdirected at undesired consumer groups. Clearly there is a potential drawback to targeting a given segment. If the target group is wrongly identified then there is a risk that the entire marketing budget might be misdirected, instead of only half of it. What is more, many brands have a cultural resonance that leverages their presence among many people who do not and will never buy the brand, such as car brands Mercedes, BMW and Jaguar (see Chapter 1 case study). As we have seen, brand planners might see sales increases as a long-term consequence of a strongly sustained brand personality. An over-emphasis on targeting might neglect to project the brand personality to non-consumers. This could be an important omission given that the brand personality depends as much on the perceptions of non-consumers as of consumers.

ADVERTISING, BRANDS AND DIFFERENTIAL ADVANTAGE

Competitive brand management demands differentiation, however that is achieved. The emphasis might be placed on managing brand 'equity' through a carefully constructed brand 'architecture', or it could be placed on a 'mindspace' positioning designed to create a sense of differential in the consumers' perceptions (Keller, 2012; Rosenbaum-Elliott et al., 2015). Or, indeed, it might entail both. Arguably, the decisive source of differential advantage for brands in competitive markets is often communication. This is not to suggest that product and service design, innovation, quality, access to distribution channels, merchandising, service, and so on cannot each be decisive in particular cases. However, these can potentially be matched by competitors given the relative ease of international technology transfer, deregulated markets, rising affluence across developing markets, international trade in raw materials, the ease of information access via the internet, the popularity of international payment systems, global distribution and the difficulty of enforcing intellectual copyright. Not only this, but even brands with an apparent advantage in technology, design or cost are not necessarily perceived as being of a better quality or value than competitors. Furthermore, in developed economies consumer markets are increasingly sensitive to the actual or perceived links between public events, personalities and news stories, and brands. This makes the brand vulnerable to unexpected changes in public taste. In short, it can be argued that communication is the single most important element in the creation of sustainable competitive advantage (Schultz et al., 1993, 1996; Shimp, 2009).

It is important to note that most consumers will gain their knowledge of most brands through communication, and probably from advertising and promotion in some form, since most consumers do not buy most brands. To put it another way, markets for even

popular brands consist of relatively small proportions of populations. For example, car maker BMW sold about 150,000 new cars in the UK each year between 2014 and 2017. The population of the UK is about 65 million, roughly 52 million of whom are of driving age. Therefore, most UK drivers do not own a BMW. They are likely to be quite familiar with the brand because of its long history and prominence in the worlds of motor racing, rallying and Hollywood movies, not to mention the branded content movies discussed in Chapter 1. Many citizens are likely to be able to recognise a BMW in the street. Nonetheless, the great majority of people in the UK do not own one and may never have ridden in one. The task of BMW marketing and communication, then, is not to make potential owners aware of the brand, nor to make claims about the performance of the car or the quality of the service. Major global car brands tend to be very competitive on quality, reliability and service, and earning a clear sense of differentiation on those bases is difficult. Rather, the task is to communicate a sense of the distinctiveness of the brand in creatively compelling ways so that next time a driver is considering replacing their car, they might consider test driving a BMW.

Consider the oft-repeated taste tests that place Pepsi ahead of Coca-Cola, yet Coca-Cola consistently outperforms Pepsi in market share (Yglesias, 2013). Leaving aside the fallibility of consumer research, advertising communication is an essential component of brand marketing. A brand lives on through consumer perceptions that are formed in engagement with advertising communication. The distinctive positioning, segmentation and targeting that is so difficult to achieve and sustain through other means can be achieved symbolically through advertising and promotional communication. The point that communication is integral to how consumers understand and engage with marketed brands does not necessarily imply that a brand is all about superficial 'puffery' and short-term publicity. 'Puffery' is the name given to advertising copy that is so clearly hyperbolic that no reasonable person would take it literally. It is also sometimes used as a derogatory term for advertising in general. Most advertising conveys something about a brand's values and characteristics, but this is not all there is to brand marketing. Brand managers will normally argue that communications are like the tip of an iceberg, just visible above the waterline with a far more substantial structure, unseen, beneath. This invisible structure includes production, staffing, training, operations, logistics, supply and material sourcing, and all the other activities without which a branded product or service could not reach a marketplace. The communications dimension, the tip of the iceberg, is all that the general public can see and that is why it is so important.

Most brands have a concrete existence as businesses with plant, machinery and personnel, but they also have another existence as an idea in the collective public mind. Some brands, such as Virgin,[5] exist primarily as an abstract entity covering many diverse businesses (an airline, a cable TV and phone supplier, music production company, tourism and space travel operator and many more). In some cases, such as Virgin, corporate brands act as a family branding system, even if there may be no connection between those different businesses, other than the corporate branding. In other cases, such as Unilever or P&G, the corporate branding may often be invisible and individual product market offers are branded as distinct entities.

Brand advertising and communication, then, should not be thought of as a trivial or superficial activity in a marketing context. It is central to success in consumer, and increasingly industrial, B2B and services marketing. For consumers the brand image or personality, the values and associations linked with the brand, the way the brand is talked about by friends and acquaintances, the way the brand is represented in press editorial and TV coverage, and the memory of personal experience of consuming the brand, are all aspects of a holistic engagement with this entity, the brand. A consumer brand is a fine exemplar of the notion of social construction since a brand is more than the sum of its parts, it is the ways in which it is understood, perceived and talked about (Berger and Luckman, 1966). What is more, the perceptions of the brand become reality in the world of mediated communication, just as, in Berger and Luckman's (1966) example, a book can assume a separate but parallel existence through the way it is perceived and talked about. Influencing the way this abstraction is thought and spoken of is clearly a task in which communication is a primary tool.

SNAPSHOT 3.3

Brand positioning and integrated communication

Positioning refers broadly to the values and associations, both tangible and intangible, that are linked with a given brand in relation to its competition (Kotler and Keller, 2015). Positioning can be described with concrete qualities of the brand, price differentials, service enhancements, but consumer perceptions of these elements are what matter. Hence, positioning is often described as a psychological notion that differentiates the brand from its rivals in the perception of consumers. Positioning can be conceived graphically, as a positioning 'map' in which competitors are mapped according to two dimensions, say, price and quality. Positioning can also be conceived linguistically in terms of metaphors that connect the brand to its values and associations (De Chernatony et al., 2010). Brand marketing organisations take great care to articulate the positioning of brands so that the necessary values and associations can be reproduced through all levels of communications and marketing. Some, such as Unilever, who market some 1,000 brands globally, undertake detailed analysis of some of their brands to delineate its 'essence'. The components of this essence include: an analysis of the competitive environment; the target consumers; the key insight that makes the brand distinctive; the consumer benefits (tangible or intangible) conferred by the brand; the values and personality of the brand; the way the brand supports those values and why consumers should believe them; the features that differentiate the brand from its competitors; and the single concept that sums up the brand 'essence'. Unilever would need to draw out these issues for brands such as Colman's mustard, Pot Noodle snack food, Birds Eye processed foods, Surf detergent, Domestos bleach and numerous others. Each would differ depending on the brand positioning and the competitive conditions in each particular market. All major brand organisations use brand planning conceptual frameworks to emphasise the distinctive characteristics of each brand they market, and to enable them to maintain the same brand values and positioning through all their integrated communications.

BRAND POSITIONING

'Positioning' (see Snapshot 3.3) normally refers to the abstract psychological attributes and associations that a brand may evoke for consumers. It is inherently a relational concept since the positioning is relative to other brands in that marketspace. Positioning can also refer to more tangible characteristics of a brand that ostensibly differentiate it from others, such as the logo, packaging colour, frequency of and reason for use, and any other characteristic. Positioning is linked to the benefit, tangible or intangible, the manufacturer wishes to associate with consumption of the brand. For example, the chocolate countline KitKat has been positioned for many years through its advertising as a reward for hard work, epitomised in the famous strapline, 'Have a break – have a KitKat'. In contrast, rival countline brands such as Bounty bars or Cadbury's Flake are positioned as sensuous indulgences, not rewards for hard work but rewards for just being you. The differentiation is echoed in all advertising and brand communication since it is this differentiation that is essential to maintaining the brand's market share.

Positioning can also refer to the usage occasions appropriate for a brand. For example, advertising can be used to signal to consumers that a brand can be used in an alternative way or by different people in relation to the previous norm. The chocolate snack Mars Bar was advertised for many years with the strapline, 'A Mars a Day Helps You Work, Rest and Play'. This reflected the brand's positioning as a tasty snack that gave one energy to cope with a busy life. Like many chocolate snack ads it was presented as a solitary pleasure rather than a social one. A later advertising campaign showed a group of happy-go-lucky young people pushing a broken-down car to a garage, cheerfully chomping on Mars Bars, thus repositioning the brand's somewhat dated image for a younger and more socially oriented consumer. Mars Bar consumption was now positioned as a social event and re-positioned to a younger audience. The breakfast cereal Kellogg's Cornflakes was the subject of an ad campaign that showed people enjoying cornflakes in non-breakfast scenarios. A couple enjoyed a romantic late-night bowl of cornflakes, and another consumer used the brand as a TV dinner. The aim was to increase sales to existing consumers by showing that you can eat cornflakes at any time. The brand was thus re-positioned as an anytime snack as well as a breakfast cereal.

THE STRATEGIC BRAND MANAGEMENT PROCESS AND COMMUNICATION PLANNING

For Keller (2012: 58), the strategic brand management process entails four main stages:

1. Identifying and developing brand plans.

2. Designing and implementing brand marketing programmes.

3. Measuring and interpreting brand performance.

4. Growing and sustaining brand equity.

Step one might entail, for example, developing a positioning based on a perceived gap in the market. Once this positioning is established and delineated, it must be

clearly signified to consumers. The core brand associations are designed and the points of brand competitive differential established. Keller (2012) infers that these elements can be designed and imposed top-down on consumers by organisational management, while Holt and Cameron (2010) suggest that the process is rather different and entails identifying cultural disruptions that brands can exploit. Step 2 entails designing creative marketing programmes (especially advertising and promotion) that will articulate the desired values and positioning to the target audience. Step 3 is the business process of evaluating and auditing brand performance, while Step 4 distils the key points of brand differentiation in order to extend them across the other offers of the organisation in a co-ordinated way. Keller (2012) refers to this broadly as designing the brand architecture for long-term management of brand equity.

It is in this process that major confusion can occur between brand management and communication agencies, because the brand management objectives and goals need to be translated coherently into communication objectives and goals. There can be confusion between brand clients and advertising agencies about what, exactly, can be achieved through advertising communication. There is certainly some overlap between marketing and communication, but they are not the same. For example, a marketing plan might set an objective of achieving a 3% increase in market share over two months. A communication cannot deliver market share, because it is a communication. What it can do is to support the marketing objective by, for example, motivating consumers by giving them a reason to buy the desired brand instead of its rivals. This distinction may be nuanced but it is important. Exactly how a communication might motivate consumers would depend on the consumer target group characteristics, the product or service market in which the brand is operating, the distribution channels, the current competitive conditions, and so on. The relation between a marketing objective and a marketing communication objective is important and closely linked, but it can be subtle.

As an example, in one long-running campaign for car manufacturer Volkswagen, a London agency, then known as DDB Needham, devised a campaign based on the creative idea that Volkswagen cars were not as expensive as people thought. The **qualitative research** revealed that consumers perceived VW as high quality, and high price. In fact, the prices of the models were competitive with rivals in each car class. The marketing objectives were to increase market share by 3% in each class (family saloon, small car and executive saloon) across Europe, and to refresh the brand. The communication objective was to persuade consumers that they could have VW reliability and prestige without having to pay a high price. The **advertising strategy** had to put across the idea that VWs were not as expensive as people thought. The agency found amusing and low-key creative executions that informed consumers that, in fact, VWs were indeed less expensive than they thought. One ad showed an audience at a tennis match, losing focus on the ball when they see a VW poster. Another showed workmen wrapping up a lamp-post with a rubber cover because a distracting VW billboard has been placed by it, just as a man is about to walk into the lamp-post because he's looking at the billboard.[6] The market share increase was indeed achieved and the campaign ran for many years, winning many industry awards for creativity

and for effectiveness. In this case, the marketing objectives, the communication objective and the advertising strategy were not exactly the same but they were mutually supportive. Naturally, the objectives would not have been achieved if the other elements of the marketing mix, the product (including service and after-sales, warranties, reliability, image and performance) and the distribution through the service centres, had not been up to scratch.

There is a great deal of scope for confusion and misunderstanding between the marketing plan and the marketing communication plan. This is one reason why the client–agency relationship is such a fraught advertising area. The problems can be managed if there is frequent dialogue and a mutual appreciation of the differences between marketing and communication. One of the key elements of integration in marketing communication is to ensure that all communications portray consistent and coherent brand values through all media and across all product ranges. So it is essential that the marketing planning and the communications planning do not conflict. For example, if an advertising campaign builds a high level of awareness and anticipation for a new brand launch in the chewing gum market, all that effort and those resources will be wasted if the chewing gum has not made it into the stores by the time the campaign is launched, as happened in one instance. As another example, if the brand is positioned at the low cost, low quality end of the market, it would not be useful for the advertising to imply that the quality is excellent.

STRATEGIC AND TACTICAL PLANNING

It is useful to note a semantic distinction that can be important in brand planning. This is the distinction between strategic and tactical planning. Broadly, strategy refers to longer-term objectives that demand significant resources, while tactics refer to shorter medium-term objectives demanding fewer resources. However, the distinction between strategy and tactics is not always so clear-cut. Promotion is one quarter of the marketing mix, along with physical distribution, price and product, but it can command extensive resources and can also be the most important element of competitive success in some circumstances. Management is, after all, as much art as science and the use of terms is far from precise or universally agreed (Brown, 1996, 1997). In the VW example above, the use of advertising clearly had a strategic implication since it represented a major and long-term investment (the campaign helped achieve strategic corporate goals in European market share). The distinction between strategy and tactics is typically based on timescale and importance to the overall profitability of the organisation. It is a mistake to assume, as some marketing texts do, that all promotional effort is merely tactical just because it is promotion (Holt and Cameron, 2010). Advertising and promotional campaigns have, in many cases, attracted substantial resources and achieved strategic objectives for brands and for whole companies.

For example, a marketing strategy might be to achieve market leadership by being the most innovative and high-quality supplier, and the promotional communications would have to find a way of supporting that. A marketing tactic might be to spoil a rival's promotional campaign by having a short-term, 10% price discount offer.

Again, the communications would have to support the price-based promotion. In many organisations, the ideal plan would have strategic aims and objectives operating at the level of the corporation, with operational plans designed for each individual product market. The various levels of business and marketing objective would, ideally, dovetail into each other. So, for example, if the corporation was dealing in motor cars and positioned itself as the innovator in the market, then the various car brands it sold in each motor car segment (family saloon, small car, utility sports vehicle, etc.) would have different plans tailored to their particular target market and competitive conditions, though all would need to have a degree of fit with the overall corporate strategy. Honda and electronics giant Sony have become known for expensive, entertaining and high profile advertising campaigns that focus on the corporate brand values of quality and innovation, while they also have individual campaigns for particular models. The corporate level of communication sets the tone for the product–brand level of communication in advertising.

IMC PLANNING

The phrase **integrated marketing communications** or IMC reflects managerial interest in co-ordinating different media channels to optimise the effectiveness of brand marketing communications programmes (Schultz et al., 1993, 1996). If brand communications reflect coherent values, themes and imagery that have a connecting thread through differing media channels, then the hope is that these might act in a mutually reinforcing way. Not only that, but using different media channels in a co-ordinated campaign might also reach much larger potential audiences. A third perceived advantage is control. The portrayal of the brand has become the dominant issue in marketing communication, and IMC holds out the hope that brand representatives might be able to control the way the brand is portrayed from the centre of communication strategy, instead of having to cede some of that control to different media specialists. In practice, IMC is far from realised for reasons that we will discuss below, but it remains a useful descriptive tool for marketing education.

As we have noted, brand clients typically want to see the brand values communicated across several platforms simultaneously in **through-the-line** or 'integrated' campaigns (although these terms are frankly becoming redundant as integration becomes the default approach in the digital era). Above-the-line (ATL) media are mass media: TV, radio, press, etc. Below-the-line (BTL) refers to media that did not attract commission payments from media owners, such as sales promotions, logo-bedecked balloons, pens, direct mail, OOH, etc. Through-the-line (TTL) campaigns use both, in an integrated way. Interest in IMC has developed partly because of the view (noted above) that marketing communication offers the 'only sustainable competitive advantage of marketing organizations' (Schultz et al., 1993: 47). IMC places the brand at the centre of strategy, rather than on the periphery as an afterthought. Once, advertising and promotional communication was conceived on a linear model as an effort to create one-way communication that would influence the attitudes and behaviour of target audiences (Shimp, 2009). In the convergent media environment, in contrast, brands are considered in relational terms as nodes of interaction between brand owners,

consumers and other stakeholders. IMC represents the attempt to co-ordinate brand stories and content through all media channels, especially social media.

There have been pressures in the industry pushing ad agencies towards integration. Advertising agencies consider traditional advertising to be their core activity, but the larger, full-service agencies are increasingly finding that clients expect them to offer expertise across the marketing communication disciplines. Consumers, moreover, do not generally make a strong distinction between the differing media that carry advertising. As Percy et al. point out, 'people generally look at all marketing communications as "advertising"' (2001: v). The rise of brand marketing makes the advertising medium secondary to the brand personality (to use ad man David Ogilvy's expression), an entity that can be expressed through many differing forms of creative execution and communicated through different media. Integrated advertising campaigns utilise the qualities of different media in a communications effort designed to maintain consistent brand values regardless of whatever communication source the consumer encounters.

The blurring of the lines between marketing communications disciplines is part of a radical change in the media infrastructure coming from developments in electronic communications technology and the rise of global business. Global brands now cross borders and resonate with the consumers in many countries. Mass media, above-the-line advertising is often regarded as the strategic element of marketing communications, the one communication technique that can transform the fortunes of corporations, create brands and change entire markets. Although there are still good reasons for holding this view, there is also a strong case for managers to consider advertising from a strategic, integrated and media-neutral perspective, which acknowledges that the rationale for brand communications drives the pragmatic development of integrated creative executions and media strategies. On this logic, mass media advertising is not necessarily the centrepiece of every campaign.

The idea of integrated marketing communications, then, reflects the need to take a global view of the brand and to ensure that brand communications across all media are consistent in terms of the brand image, values and personality, and that the media channels used are complementary with regard to segmentation, positioning and targeting. IMC has become more popular because of various factors, notably the **fragmentation of media audiences** and changes in the media consumption patterns of these audiences in the light of an explosion of new media channels and vehicles. Concomitantly, IMC reflects a shift in power from manufacturers to consumers, a shift from mass to niche media channels and vehicles, the emphasis on data-driven marketing and the move to 24/7 consumption.

Integration of media implies the use of online and offline media channels. Offline media channels could include the traditional 'old media' of television, print (newspapers, magazines), radio, cinema advertising and also outdoor advertising, direct marketing, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion. Online channels could include dedicated websites, optimisation of search engine results, email, banner and click-through advertising, podcasts, blogs and other web-based exposure.

SNAPSHOT 3.4

Advertising creativity and the dramatic portrayal of consumption
A major challenge for IMC is to devise a creative approach, the creative execution, that will translate across different media channels. Many creative approaches are channel-specific in the sense that they will work best on a particular medium. For example, one of the major creative movements in advertising since the 1960s has been dramatic realism (Marchand, 1985). Ad agencies use imagery and metaphors from classical art and literature to create aesthetically inspiring dramatic portrayals of the product along with 'an account of … the social benefit that the consumer could be expected to derive' (Leiss et al., 1997: 79). Demonstrating the social benefit is most effective if the consumer can be portrayed in their everyday circumstances, but with the heightened dramatic effect contributed by portrayal in a medium with high production values such as a glossy magazine or TV ad. This takes consumers' daily activities and portrays them in an altogether more dramatically interesting light. For example, an everyday situation such as dirt on clothes might be portrayed as a problem that the model housewife solves with the help of a branded detergent. The picture accompanying the advertising text would be carefully drawn as graphic art, perhaps with an attractive model in a striking pose, in juxtaposition with the brand logo and packaging. Dramatic realism helps the consumer identify with the creative themes in the ad. Advertising agencies recognised consumers' needs for aesthetic stimulation and symbolic self-expression and bridged the gap between manufacturers and creative artists. In this way the design of American advertising and the products themselves were improved (Leiss et al., 1997: 81). Consumers were treated to advertising that was aesthetically attractive and a product that could express something about consumer personality and social identity. Mass media were especially suited to this kind of execution, so part of the challenge for IMC has been to adapt the creative logic of mass media advertising into new media channels.

TWO DIMENSIONS OF INTEGRATION FOR BRAND COMMUNICATION: THEMES AND CHANNELS

It is important to understand the rationale behind integration of marketing communications. One key issue has been noted above: that is, the primacy of the brand as the concept that drives marketing activity. All marketing activity is designed to support, enhance and reflect the brand as a symbol of certain values and characteristics that differentiate it in the market. Consumers seek out brands, we recognise them and we pay more for the reassurance that quality brands offer. The brand may comprise many tangible things, and consumer preferences may be developed through the direct experience of buying it. But there is also a powerful element of communication involved since brand image is built up not only through direct personal experience of the brand's utility but also through less tangible attitudes and perceptions, which are influenced by the communication we read, hear, see and express about the brand.

The management effort to ensure a co-ordinated and coherent approach to integrated brand planning rests on two overlapping and connected dimensions: (1) brand themes, and (2) media channels.

The first dimension, the themes, concerns the need to manage the distinctive brand values and personality as they are expressed through all communication, from corporate to product–market communication. This focuses on the visible elements of the brand, including its colours, logo, typeface, and other aspects of the visual representation. So there should be particular themes that reflect and portray the brand positioning, which can run through all marketing communication for a given brand and ensure that the brand is recognised and its positioning is distinctive. This is no easy task when campaigns may have many parts, perhaps designed by different sub-contracted agency specialists. Nevertheless, it is the key task of brand planning to ensure that the brand retains its integrity whatever the medium or creative execution may be. The second dimension concerns channel integration. We live in a world of integrated and interlocking media. If we have a favourite TV show we don't just watch the show. We can read weblogs posted by fans or critics, we can go to the show website for stories about the characters and the actors or to buy merchandise. We can even download episodes via the internet, to listen to by podcast or on a mobile device. We can buy magazines that carry articles for fans of the show, follow the show's Twitter feed and like its Facebook page. And so it goes, a given brand, whether it be a car, a watch, or a clothing range of a movie or syndicated TV show, can be exposed on many different media channels. It is therefore incumbent on the brand management to utilise these different media channels in promotion of the brand, and to try to manage the brand image through these channels.

THE INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

There is no definitive formula for planning or implementing IMC. The precise composition of an IMC plan will differ according to the particular market and communication context, and according to the custom and practice of particular organisations. A plan is not a prescription nor is it a checklist. It is a guide for action. Typically, an IMC plan would have the following general elements. There are many possible variations on the IMC plan (see, for example, this useful example of one from Coca-Cola):[7]

- executive summary
- brand research and competition analysis
- target audience
- communication objectives
- advertising strategy
- creative approach and creative brief
- media plan
- action plan and tactics
- budget estimates
- effectiveness evaluation.

Brand research and competition analysis

It is rare for brands to require a radical re-positioning that distances the brand from its earlier manifestations. In most cases, the brand needs some continuity from one campaign to the next to reflect the coherence and stability of the brand personality. This is why it is so important for the agency to research the brand and the client organisation in order to try to fully understand its history and values (Holt and Cameron, 2010). This includes looking at previous promotional campaigns. In addition, it is important to thoroughly understand the competitive context in which the brand is operating. Brand values and personalities must be understood in the context of alternatives – the reason for the brand is to differentiate the offer from competitors, so it must be understood in relation to competitors. This differentiation expresses the brand's positioning, and it reflects the attitudes and values that consumers project onto the brand. So for integration in brand communication to be achievable, it is a prerequisite that the advertising agency has a deep understanding of the brand.

In many cases, the agency will take two or three weeks over this research and analysis stage. The account team will rely mainly on secondary sources but they may also make use of primary sources in the form of **focus groups** with consumers and in-depth discussions with the client staff. After all, if a client thinks its brand values are different from those the consumers thinks it has then there is a fundamental communication problem to address. Advertising agency staff are fond of relating stories about clients who didn't understand their own brand. It is easy to understand that internal organisational values and politics might make it difficult to face reality if, for example, consumer perception of a brand personality has been distorted through negative media coverage. Sometimes a dispassionate agency view can highlight incoherence between the brand values as envisaged by the client and those as perceived by the consumer. Whether the client can accept such advice is another matter. Either way, the first element in the process of creating an integrated marketing communications campaign is for the agency to gain a thorough and insightful understanding of the brand, its history and values, and its competitive context.

Target audience

Advertising agencies need to know to whom the client wants them to speak. This refers to the tasks of segmentation and targeting. But knowing who the target audience is, is not enough. A conscientious agency will also want to understand the lifestyle preferences, consumption habits, media consumption patterns, values, attitudes, drives, aspirations, income, priorities and influential **peer groups** of its target segment. Qualitative research in the form of discussion or focus groups, or surveys, can be of assistance in this stage of the process. Secondary data sources detailing demographic and other information important to segmentation and targeting can also be invaluable. If the mentality, lifestyle, demographic characteristics and buying preferences of the target group are understood, then this can form the basis for a creative execution that speaks to its members in a way they will recognise. Defining the target audience is a difficult task with major implications. Once the audience is defined, this will drive the media plan and advertising schedule. It will also heavily influence the

advertising strategy and creative execution. Get it wrong, and all the effort is wasted. If the defined audience is too narrow then opportunities for consumer engagement will be lost and the campaign will not yield the desired return on investment. If the target group definition is too wide, then impact may be lost or the campaign might be scheduled on a medium that the real targets don't use.

Communication objectives

Building on the above information and insights, the account team will be ready to formulate communication objectives. These will guide the overall approach and should dovetail into the client's marketing plan objectives. Communication objectives are key because they will form the bridge between the marketing plan and the integrated marketing communications campaign. They will clarify how communication can support the marketing objectives. Life in brand marketing and advertising agencies consists of a lot of meetings at which every step in the planning process is debated and discussed. Each element of the IMC plan will be interrogated for coherence and viability. The elements of the brand personality and its 'essence' are so difficult to pin down that this kind of process is necessary in order to keep attention focused on the key brand values and personality and to ensure that they are superimposed throughout all communication channels and mix elements. Communication objectives might, for example, be to engage the interest of the target audience and inform them about the kinds of problem-solving challenges entailed in active army service. Whatever the objectives are, they should be something that can be achieved through communication and which supports the marketing objectives.

Advertising strategy

Advertising has to have a purpose in order to succeed. If no one knows what they want to achieve by a campaign, then success is not possible because there will be no yardstick by which to measure it. The advertising strategy is important because it guides the creative team and encourages them to produce creative work that can motivate the desired consumers in a way that supports the overall communication objectives. To be effective, the advertising strategy should be expressed in simple terms without jargon, so that creatives (who have no patience with marketing jargon) can understand it (Hackley, 2000; Percy and Elliott, 2009).

The advertising strategy should explain what the ad is to do. For example, should it motivate an immediate response? Does the client want people who engage with the ad to contact the company? Or is the aim to encourage an emotional response from the viewer in the interests of building long-term brand equity? Is it to persuade the consumer to trial the product, as the Korean Dunkin' Donuts campaign did in the Chapter 3 case study below, or to convince consumers that the brand is better value/cooler/higher quality than competitors? Is the strategy to change consumer attitudes or buying habits? The advertising strategy will inform the creative brief, which is the document the creative team has to work from. It is therefore essential that the advertising strategy, the reason for advertising, is clear, coherent and consistent with the overall brand personality and communication objectives.

Creative approach and creative brief

We discuss this element of the advertising development process in greater detail in Chapters 5 and 6. For the present, it is important to introduce the process in order to set the broader context for the brand communication strategy. Once the marketing and communication objectives have been decided and the advertising strategy devised, arguably the most important part of the whole process is undertaken – this is the creative approach (also called the creative execution). The creative approach can undo all the careful planning and waste the budget, or it can leverage the brand and generate the benefits of positive publicity far in excess of expectations. A campaign that is talked about and shared on social media will receive unsolicited attention that spreads the brand values and reinforces the brand presence. A creative execution that is ignored because it's regarded as boring might lack impact and resonance for the target group. On the other hand, with some campaigns and some brands it is more important to portray the brand values in a clear and coherent way than it is to be creatively striking. As with all other elements of the IMC plan, the precise marketing and communication objectives in the context of the brand's values, positioning and competitive position, inform the creative approach.

The creative approach is decided with reference to the creative brief. The creative brief is an important document that is discussed in detail in Chapter 5. It is the guide from which the creative team will work and it represents an agreement between the agency and the client regarding what the advertising should achieve. The brief disciplines the creative work to ensure that the creativity is not over-indulged simply because it looks great or because it's so funny. The aim of advertising is not to win awards for creatives or to gratify their creative urges but to generate business for clients. The creative brief is the document that represents the client and agency interest in the campaign. It is the creative expression of the communication strategy.

The creative team must express the brand values and the advertising strategy in a way that attracts the right kind of attention from the target group. The creative approach also needs to consider practical issues such as the budget, length or size of ad, medium or channel. Most importantly, it needs to be focused according to the particular type(s) of person to whom the advertisement must speak. Creatives tend to claim that if they know their audience, whatever kind of person that is, they can produce a piece of work which motivates that audience. So the brief has to be based on careful research and clear commercial reasoning.

Media plan

In any advertising campaign there are important decisions to take regarding media, and many issues to consider. Most media buying agencies are now independent of advertising agencies, but media should have been kept in mind from the beginning of the IMC process because media and creative execution are interdependent. How can the target group be reached most efficiently and with the greatest impact? Do media choices have to accommodate a direct response element? Does the budget allow for broadcast media, or does it confine the campaign to local print media?

The media plan (discussed more extensively in Chapter 6) is an important document that directs the campaign to the right target audience with the maximum impact and reach, at the lowest possible cost per thousand consumers reached. Some campaigns burst onto the scene saturating all media channels for a week, and then disappear. Others are planned to drip the communication into consumers' consciousness in short exposures at longer intervals over a protracted period of time. Still others are focused on seasonal demand issues, such as where chocolate manufacturers spend a large proportion of their advertising budget in the UK over the Christmas period because of the high concentration of chocolate sales at that time. The media schedule depends not only on the budget but also on the brand, the market, the target audience or segment, and the campaign objectives.

Budget and effectiveness

In reality, in many cases, the budget has been set by the client before the first stage in the IMC planning process has begun. Where the agency does have scope for action is in accounting for the success, or the failure, of the campaign. Any campaign can be assessed against the objectives set for it, though doing so is not always a simple task. Calculating ROI is a difficult but important task in marketing and advertising since it reflects the effectiveness of different kinds of marketing intervention and the implications go straight to the bottom line of profitability. The ROI is also important in deciding in the future what budget to allocate to particular forms of advertising.

As noted above, well-planned campaigns have clear and achievable objectives precisely so that their achievement (or lack of it) can be judged. For example, if the communication objective of a campaign were to change attitudes towards eating a brand of breakfast cereal so that consumers would start to eat it in the evening as a snack, it would be relatively easy to conduct a street survey asking respondents when they ate this brand of breakfast cereal before and after the campaign. Before and after surveys of attitudes or behaviours are common methods of measuring campaign effectiveness. Another common approach is to use internal company records to look at sales patterns or new customer enquiries that might be linked in principle to advertising exposures. Many measures of effectiveness rely on long-term data regarding market share or sales volume, so the true effect of an advertising campaign can often not be fairly judged until many months after the campaign.

SNAPSHOT 3.5

Tracking the effectiveness of BT's 'It's Good to Talk' campaign
An example of effective campaign tracking involves the use of a statistical technique called multivariate analysis to try to establish a strong correlation between a campaign and a change in customer behaviour. A famous UK campaign (called 'It's Good to Talk') conducted for British Telecom (BT) attempted to change the telephone usage habits of domestic British

customers. The advertising agency's consumer research had established that the average length of British domestic telephone conversations was significantly shorter than those in other countries such as the USA, Italy and Germany. It seemed that there was a British mentality that saw talking on the telephone as a cost that should be minimised. In fact the cost was and is small as a proportion of household income. In many other countries (such as Germany, Italy and the USA) domestic telephone users seemed to regard telephone conversation as a necessary expense and spoke for far longer on average on each call. This consumer research insight formed the basis for the campaign. A series of TV ads dramatically portrayed the typically succinct British phone user as someone lacking in empathy and warmth. The message was that it was kinder to talk at greater length, especially when talking to loved ones. The ads also suggested that telephone communication could strengthen bonds of family and friendship if people used it generously. It was claimed that the campaign resulted in a major social change: domestic telephone usage habits in the UK were substantially altered. A near 60% increase in call revenues to BT was claimed. The agency used multivariate analysis to correlate the electronic data on telephone conversation length with the exposure of the TV ads.

LIMITATIONS TO IMC

IMC has made a big splash in academic journals but its resonance for practitioners is variable (Eagle et al., 2007). The idea that all brand communication can emerge from a single strategic platform remains powerful for the potential benefits to ROI and the advantage of centralised control over the brand image. On the one hand, practitioners tend to agree that integration is a given in contemporary advertising planning. The use of new media is essential if clients are to fully leverage the promotional budget. On the other hand, many professionals dispute whether it is possible or desirable to formalise IMC. This intersects debates within strategy and marketing on the virtues and practical difficulties of planning per se. In many cases, business plans are created through an internal process that focuses minds and helps to disburse resources, but often departs to some extent from what actually takes place. Plans tend to rest on assumptions, the full implications of which only become apparent when the action is under way. This is not to argue that planning is irrelevant in business and administration, it is merely to point out that while planning is a necessary and fundamental part of managerial processes it does have its limitations.

With regard to IMC, many industry professionals ask whether it can ever be more than partially achievable. Media integration is something that depends very much on the circumstances of the brief, on the creativity and lateral thinking of the teams involved, and on the objectives for the campaign. How can there be general theories or principles of IMC if each brief is so very different? What is more, from a practical perspective, should there be an assumption that IMC is a necessary virtue for any campaign?

It is by no means clear that integration will benefit every brief. Some 20 years after IMC became a popular **buzz word** in marketing, some leading ad agencies still handle

a large proportion of business in which they are asked to produce an advertising campaign without any digital component. It is a standard part of advertising planning that there is an evaluation of media channels in terms of segmentation and targeting, audience reach, resonance and cost per thousand target consumers. In this regard, some practitioners argue that IMC is nothing new. The media channels have changed and the media vehicles have multiplied, but advertising has always been subject to such changes and has adapted accordingly. It has always been conventional wisdom in advertising that media channels are used selectively: why use every channel just because they are there?

One reason might be that media consumption patterns have changed in such a way that reaching a target consumer through all possible channels is now feasible, where it wasn't before. But even this is dubious. The ideal of controlling the message through every medium through which the target audience might access brand communication is all very well in principle, but there are many barriers. Firstly, absolute control of brand communication is not possible – there will always be leakage between media, say through media editorial coverage. User-generated content such as blogs and wikis, twittering, and so forth, occupies much internet space and neither this, nor everyday news stories connecting with the brand, can be controlled. They can be reacted to and incorporated into communication plans, but this is a reactive process largely charged to the media relations function.

Furthermore, absolute control over brand communications on every medium may not even be desirable, even if it were possible. Brands are products of culture. They result from the interactions of consumers in the social context in which they are seen and used. They are not entirely the creation of the brand owner. Many brands, indeed, are building user-generated content into their strategies through social media consumer engagement initiatives. For example, in 2011 Coca-Cola posted a video demonstrating their content marketing strategy through 2020 on YouTube, and a central part of this is to engage consumers in brand storytelling and to incorporate consumer ideas into future strategies.[8] Arguably, this is less about a top-down, one-way model of brand communication control and more about a collaborative style of opening up the brand to consumer engagement, which, in turn, feeds back into brand and communications planning.

Where there is less argument is around the need for advertising and promotional planning to integrate creative themes across different media platforms. This is dictated by the logic of branding – a brand must represent distinctive values and these are linked with certain conventions of visual and auditory representation. Put more simply, a brand ought to be distinguished by the same colour scheme or signature tune whatever the medium, so that consumers recognise it as that brand. But many professionals regard this as a given, a default position, and no more than professional commonsense, rather than a theoretical or formal planning principle. IMC is undoubtedly an area that professionals in communication cannot ignore. It is perhaps not surprising that academic and scholarly research focuses around trying to gather general principles or theories, while professionals are focused more pragmatically on **client briefs** that can be utterly different from day to day.

Naturally, if academics can generate a theory of IMC that helps practitioners get more out of their clients' budgets then there would be less scepticism and much applause from the industry. But like so much research and theory in business and management, the ambition of IMC scholarship and research isn't yet realised in terms of its relevance and effectiveness for practice. Nonetheless, several factors will ensure that IMC as an idea continues to receive attention from all sides. One factor concerns the possibilities for greater efficiency and accountability opened up by digital advertising media applications and the increasing advertising potential of mobile. While this area may not be accessible to a general theory, it is certainly one in which practitioners will be open to any useful general insights or principles. In particular, the economic recession and the consequent squeeze on promotional budgets will mean that greater attention will be paid to **cost-per-thousand** (CPT) and return on investment criteria. These returns can be measured most effectively through new media.

Another important factor driving integration of campaign planning concerns the fragmentation of media audiences and changes in media consumption patterns, which mean that advertising and promotional planners often have to deploy integrated campaigns simply in order to reach sufficient numbers of their desired market segment. Finally, the increased attention being paid to consumer engagement with brand communications also pushes planners towards new media that facilitate such engagement in cost-efficient and user-appealing ways.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has introduced the integrated marketing communication process. It discussed the central role of the brand in this process, and explained the distinctions between marketing objectives, communication objectives and advertising strategy. It also discussed distinctions between marketing strategy and tactics, and noted that advertising and promotion can be strategic as well as tactical. The two main dimensions of integration were explained, these being integration of brand theme across channels, and integration of media channels in advertising campaigns. The chapter then listed the basic stages in a typical IMC plan. Each stage in the plan has been outlined in Chapter 3 while many of them are developed in greater detail in other parts of the book. Finally, limitations and caveats around the somewhat fashionable notion of IMC were discussed. Chapter 4 will move on to discuss the internal processes and roles of advertising agencies engaged in this process.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1   Collect ten video, radio or print advertisements and divide them between two groups. Each group should try to ascertain what each of their ads was intended to accomplish. In other words, what was the planning rationale behind the ads? Then the two

groups should swap ads and perform the same exercise on the other group of ads. The two groups combined should discuss their respective analysis of each ad and decide which analysis seems the most likely to be accurate. The intention behind the ads should be considered in the light of such issues as: (a) the likely target audience for the brand; (b) other possible stakeholders; (c) the apparent brand positioning indicated by the ad's creative approach; (d) the choice of medium; and (e) other marketing issues concerning this brand.

2   List as many examples as you can of marketing objectives that might be supported with advertising and promotion. Be prepared to justify your choice with examples or reasoning.

3   Is the role of communication in marketing primarily tactical or strategic? Give reasons for your answer.

4   Develop a scenario in which your group has been asked to outline creative ideas for the launch of a new brand of chocolate confection called 'Slick'. Focus on the segmentation, targeting (especially media) and positioning issues.

VIDEO QUESTIONS

1   How would you define brand?
What is the impact and importance of brand?
What are the reasons that brands are created? What are the advantages of having a strong brand?

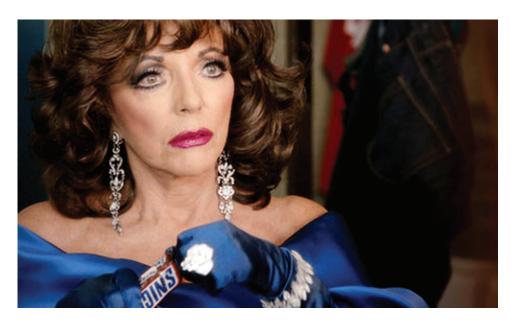**2**   How has the relationship between advertisng and brands changed?

3   What elements and factors go into the strategic brand management process?

CASE STUDY

Channel integration in action
Integrated campaigns that operate across media platforms still need to satisfy the basic rules of successful creative advertising. That is, they need a creative execution that resonates with the target audience. One questionable example was the launch campaign for the eleventh generation Toyota Corolla, the biggest selling car brand in the world. It was launched in 2014 with an integrated marketing communication campaign called 'Elevate' from Saatchi & Saatchi Los Angeles, targeted at the 'Millennial generation, while still appealing to Baby Boomers', according to the press release.[9] The key broadcast ad was a 60 second spot called 'Style Never Goes Out of Style', shown on TV and in cinemas.

PHOTO 9 Snickers

Image Courtesy of the Advertising Archives

This TV ad for Snickers (formerly known as Marathon) chocolate and nut snack used actresses Joan Collins and Stephanie Beacham in a 2012 comedy sketch as part of the You're Not You When You're Hungry campaign. The campaign, targeted mainly at men, used laddish humour to bring wit and camaraderie to the brand. Humour is a reliable advertising appeal, but clients are sometimes suspicious that creatives are making funny ads to feature in TV shows and to be shared on social media, rather than to sell the brand. Of course, ads can be funny and effective if the strategy is clearly conceived.

The ad placed the Corolla at the hub of pop culture since its launch in 1968. The print campaign showed crowds of people cheering the car, while content clips of battling DJs and a hip-hop music producer were shown on digital. LED highlighted OOH signs and billboards in major US cities had a built-in chip that enabled consumers to go on a virtual test drive via their smartphone. An advergame mobile app added to the excitement, while 6 second Vine videos and 15 second Instagram videos showed dance styles including the signature 'Elevated' dance from the broadcast commercial. The agency hoped that viewers would share content via the hashtag CorollaStyle.[10] Experiential and activation included events and games at cinema showings of the ad, and opportunities for test drives. Some industry bloggers[11] were unconvinced about the youth-oriented street style of the campaign. The Toyota Corolla was known, said the bloggers, as a reliable, trustworthy workhorse of a car – not a cool style leader. In contrast, the Nike 'Find Your Greatness' campaign was hailed as a strong creative idea grounded in a powerful consumer insight,[12] as was the Snickers 'You're Not Quite You When You're Hungry' campaign and another campaign for Foster's lager that played on laddish humour. In each case, the writer claimed that the foundation was a great idea based on a consumer insight.

A campaign that was less creative but highly effective for Dunkin' Donuts in South Korea took the activation element one step further with 'flavor radio'. Every time the brand's jingle was played on the radio in public buses in Seoul, a flavoursome artificial coffee smell was released in the bus. Sure enough, Dunkin' Donuts stores near bus stops grew sales by 16% while the chain as a whole saw a 29% sales increase, according to the Huffington Post.[13] Koreans are coffee aficionados and coffee shops abound in Seoul. The brand was associated more with donuts than with coffee, so there was plenty of competition. The campaign began with radio ads that told commuters about Dunkin' Donuts stores that were near bus stops. The commuters then heard the ads while travelling on the bus, and smelt the coffee aroma. On alighting the bus, they found the bus stops peppered with outdoor ads pointing to the nearest store. The seamless alignment of integration with activation led a proportion of the estimated 350,000 consumers who were exposed to the campaign on a short journey from exposure to the radio ads, all the way to the store via their daily commute.

With thanks to Dr Henri A. Weijo of Bentley University, for additional material.

Case questions

1   In a small group, design an IMC campaign for a new brand of car. The name, brand positioning and target market are your choice. Try to integrate as many media channels as possible, and unite them with a key idea. What are the key problems that emerged in this task?

2   Does IMC re-write the rules of marketing, or merely offer increased opportunities for good marketing practice to reap rewards?

3   Does IMC change the game of advertising and promotional communication, or does the tension between creativity and effectiveness still remain just as it does for mass media advertising?

4   List all the circumstances you can think of in which an IMC campaign would not be appropriate for a brand. Give reasons to justify your list.

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(These Sage articles can be accessed on the companion website.)

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