

Integrated Marketing Communications

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Abstract

Promotion is one of the four major elements of the marketing mix. Therefore, an integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategy consisting of a combination of promotional tools could be an essential element of the businesses' overall marketing strategy. Different promotional tools could foster an increased awareness of a company's products or services, inform people about features and benefits, and move them to make a purchase. In this light, this chapter examines these promotional tools, individually. It suggests that effective IMC plans promote the companies' products and services, by sending clear, consistent and complementary messages that are ultimately intended to turn prospects into customers. In conclusion, it posits that the marketing managers must consider the 6Ms (including the market, the mission, the message, the media, money and measurement) when they are preparing an IMC plan.

5.1 Introduction

The rationale behind integrated marketing communications (IMC) is to achieve the promotional objectives in reaching target markets and to raise awareness of the companies' products and services. Therefore, IMC may involve the combination of different promotional

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tools, including; advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, direct marketing, interactive marketing, publicity and public relations. This chapter describes the IMC tools which make up the promotional mix. It explains the characteristics of each marketing communications tool. It also considers the various factors which could influence the successful implementation of an IMC plan, including the measurement of its effectiveness.

5.2 Selecting the Right Communication Vehicles

Everyone is exposed to commercial messages during a typical day: radio and TV commercials, ads in the morning newspaper, billboards along the highway, solicitations in the mail, calls from telemarketers, web page banners, among others. The magnitude of the contemporary communications clutter is such that consumers have often learned to tune out from promotional messages. Today's businesses want to distinguish themselves through the clutter as they strive in their endeavours to generate leads and convert prospective customers.

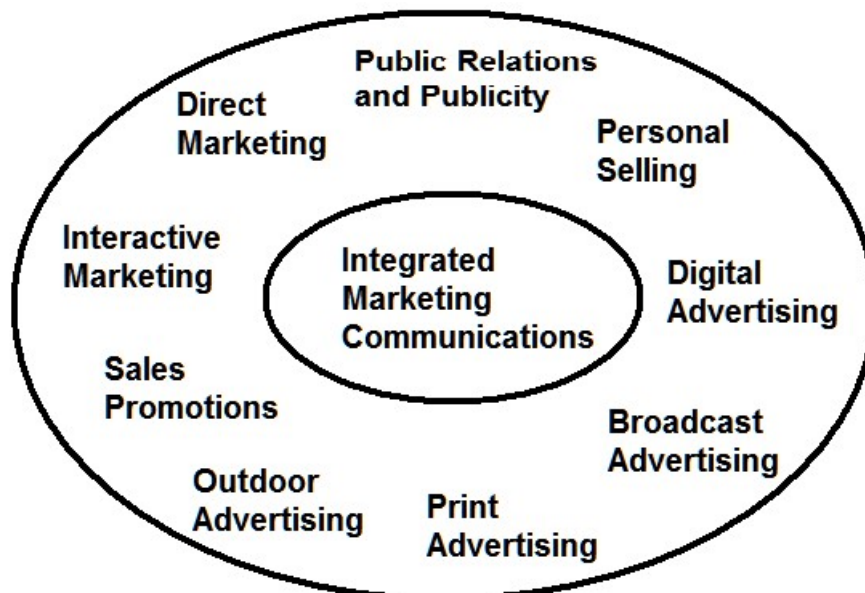
The marketers who possess a generous budget may have access to an arsenal of communication options, including electronic media (TV and radio), print media (newspapers and magazines), direct-mail solicitations, telemarketing, personal selling, public relations and the web, among others. The choice of the relevant marketing tools and the identification of the right messages to target different market segments; could prove to be a difficult task. Very often business may not convey the same message across channels. This may usually happen if the marketing communication efforts are not integrated. Instead, there may be a disparate and dispersed group of activities.

The smaller organisations, in particular, might focus on just one or two promotional elements due to financial constraints. Their marketing communications may include a website and some print advertisements. In fact, the Advertising Research Foundation (2016) revealed that that 60% of promotional campaigns relied on two or fewer media. Sometimes, even larger organisations may not integrate marketing tools to reach wider audiences. For some reason, these organisations may not consider a coordinated and integrated strategy to marketing communications. In this case, they will risk wasting their time and resources on activities that could not reap the desired goals and objectives.

Certain communication vehicles, along with their characteristics may be suitable for tourism products and services. However, businesses should evaluate whether their customers or prospects are (or are not) considering a purchase decision. They need to know if their customers are aware of their products or services? If they are, how much are they appreciating their benefits? What are the customer perceptions of the business? What position does the business occupy in their mind?

The chances are that the businesses will find out that prospective customers may (or may not) know certain aspects of their products. Therefore, businesses should use communication vehicles that are intended to send relevant messages to them. Their integrated communication approaches should provide consistent, persuasive messages that are specifically crafted for their selected target audiences. These corporate messages could be coordinated through precise channels to maximise impact. Hence, multi-channels, multi-audience approaches to message creation could produce synergies that will increase the potential to influence target customers. The multi-channels include; advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, direct marketing, internet marketing, publicity and public relations, as illustrated in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 The Marketing Communications Mix



5.3 Advertising

Advertising is an extremely important element of the promotional mix. It is a non-personal communications tool that is paid for by a specific sponsor. Advertising is a mass-marketing communication tool that is designed to inform and persuade a large number of people. Therefore, this medium requires some type of media platform to deliver the message. Advertising messages are required for all promotional elements, which is why the process of creating advertisements could be an essential first step in IMC. The goals of advertising may include: to create awareness of a new product; to describe the attributes and features of the product; to suggest usage situations; to distinguish the product from competitors' products; to direct buyers to the point-of-purchase, and; to creating or enhancing a brand image, among other things. However, advertising may be limited in its ability to actually close the sale and to finalise a transaction.

Advertising objectives must be successful in reaching the businesses' target markets. For instance, airlines may use this medium to inform their customers about new or improved product features, new routes being served and so on. The advertisements may also remind the customers of existing product features, routes served, et cetera. There are several advertising media options, including; print advertising, broadcast advertising, digital or mobile advertising, and outdoor advertising, among others.

- Print Advertising, includes; newspapers, magazines, inflight magazine, printed flyers, brochures, posters, backs of tickets and supermarket receipts;
- Broadcast Advertising, includes; radio, television and cinema.
- Digital or Mobile Advertising includes; Online streaming channels, online banners, web pop-ups, the opening section of streaming audio and video, et cetera.
- Outdoor Advertising, includes; Wall paintings, billboards, street furniture including infrastructure, sky writing, human billboards, town criers, sides of buses, banners attached to airplanes ("logo jets"), seatback tray tables or overhead storage bins, taxicab doors, roof mounts and passenger screens, musical stage shows, subway platforms and trains, elastic bands on disposable diapers, doors of bathroom stalls, stickers on apples in supermarkets, shopping cart handles, sporting venues, and the like.
- Any place an "identified" sponsor pays to deliver their message through a medium is advertising.

The media that is used to advertise a business and its services must be carefully selected. The choice of media depends on a number of factors, including: (i) the markets which are being targeted; (ii) the combination of media which will be the most effective (and the media habits of the target markets); (iii) the amount of money that is dedicated to the advertising budget, which can be affected by the decisions made in (i) and (ii).

5.3.1 The Advertising Campaigns

Businesses ought to set advertising objectives and determine their budget before choosing relevant media for the promotion of their products and services. They may also decide to contract a specialised advertising agency or to organise the advertising campaign in-house. The market managers are entrusted to make timing decisions. They need to consider the best time period to place their campaign to achieve the desired results. For instance, they could organise an all-year-round campaign or a seasonal campaign. It is important to note that such decisions must be linked with the companies' overall marketing strategies, plans and tactics.

The advertising budget may be affected by several factors. The marketing managers need to consider their businesses' objectives before allocating resources to advertising. They may want to advertise their products and services to maintain their profitability and market share. In this case, they will have to dedicate specific financial resources to advertising. The three most common methods that are used to calculate the advertising budget are as follows:

5.3.1.1 The Percentage of Sales Method

This method assumes that the level of sales should determine the amount spent on advertising. Its methodology is based upon an arbitrarily chosen percentage of sales (either past or forecast). For example, if 5% of sales may be the chosen percentage. If last year's sales amounted to \$10,000,000, this year's advertising budget would be \$500,000. The percentage of sales method is adopted by many businesses, however it should not be recommended.

5.3.1.2 The Competitive Parity Method

This method is based on the idea that the businesses should spend the same discretionary amount as their competitors on advertising. However, there may be a possibility that the competitors may have miscalculated their advertising budget. Consequently, the company will allocate excessive or insufficient resources toward advertising. This methodology ignores the

other factors which should be taken into account when determining the advertising budget, for instance; ‘Who is being targeted?’; ‘What media will be used?’ ‘What are the advertising objectives?’. This method of calculating the advertising budget is erratic and should never be recommended.

5.3.1.3 The Task and Investment Method

This method assumes that the advertising budget should be related to the organisation’s objectives and its advertising goals. The more ambitious and far reaching these objectives are, the more money will be allocated to the advertising budget to achieve them. This approach involves asking the questions; ‘What is the business trying to achieve?’ and ‘What form of promotion will help the business to reach its advertising objectives?’ The task and investment method is the best method to calculate the advertising budget as it is based on the return on investment principle.

5.3.2 Outsourcing Marketing Communications to an Advertising Agency

The selection of an advertising agency is very important and must be considered carefully. Using a specialised agency may be quite expensive. However, the benefits of having advertising experts working on the campaign should outweigh these costs. Very often advertising agencies may use different marketing communication techniques. Their strategies and tactics could involve traditional media and digital marketing tactics, as they use data and analytics to track their online performance. Hence, the outsourcing of advertising campaigns may ultimately prove to be feasible, transparent and an affordable option for the following reasons:

- Outsourcing allows the commissioning business to improve its capacity without adding staff. The business could capitalise on the experience of experts, who will execute advertising campaigns from strategy through to setup, management and reporting.
- The specialised agency could easily access every marketing channel. They may be in a better position to customise their content to target segments, whether they are local, international or geographically-dispersed.
- The contracted agency will be efficient in the compilation and interpretation of data to determine the effectiveness of their marketing communications.

5.3.2.1 The Advertising Brief

It is advisable that commissioning businesses prepare an advertising brief before they engage the services of advertising agencies. The success of the campaign will usually rely on the brief's content. Ideally, the brief should be approved by the higher echelons in the organisations' strategic management before it is sent to the advertising agency. This will prevent any misgivings which might arise after the campaign has been planned and designed by the selected advertising agency. This way, there will be clearer communication strategies, which will be in line with the corporate objectives. Therefore, the brief must answer the following questions:

- a) What are the objectives of the campaign?
- b) What is the message to be communicated?
- c) What is the target market?

5.3.3 Evaluating Advertising Success

The commissioning business managers need to determine whether the advertising campaign has satisfied its objectives. The evaluation of the campaign involves measuring its effect on the organisational performance, in terms of; return on investment, market share, brand equity, corporate reputation, et cetera. The business or its advertising agency should measure the campaign's effectiveness, before, during and after its execution: They will investigate their consumers' perceptions, and gauge their response to the campaign. They may want to know whether people are being influenced by the businesses' advertisements. If they do, what elements of the advert are they recalling? Did their attitude change toward the businesses' products and services? It is imperative that the businesses notice any differences in their consumers' attitudes. If the campaign is successful, the consumers will become increasingly aware and interested in what is being advertised to them. The scope of the campaign is to stimulate customers to purchase products and services from the business.

Advertising is one of the most important promotional tools in the tourism industry. This promotional tool could be effective if the business (or the advertising agency) formulate specific communication objectives. These objectives will have to define which market segments will be targeted by the businesses' advertising. The selection of media and the choice of advertising agency must be carefully considered. Moreover, the advertising campaign must be closely monitored and evaluated before, during and after the placement.

5.4 Public Relations and Publicity

The public relations (PR) is a management function that helps an organisation to establish and maintain communication with the public. PR promotes a favourable opinion of a company, its products, and its services. The traditional perspective of PR is about building mutually-beneficial relationships, and earning public understanding and acceptance from others. Therefore, it is a very useful tool, which, if used effectively can help to improve the businesses' corporate image, boost its reputation, and stimulate demand. PR tools include press releases, speeches by executives and public service activities. Unlike other forms of communication, PR operates through unpaid channels. Consequently, the business may have less control over how the PR efforts will play out.

The primary virtue of PR in marketing communications is to put the company in a favourable image, usually via the use of broadcast, print and digital media. At times, PR efforts may entail certain costs to the firm, but generally, PR is clearly distinguished from advertising as the firm does not pay for space in the media vehicle. The output of public relations activities is somewhat less controllable than is the case with either advertising or sales promotion. For instance, a TV advertisement guarantees that a business reaches its audiences, as prospective customers are frequently exposed to a particular message. This level of control may not be attainable with PR, as other parties decide whether or not to feature a media release. As a result, publicity is often referred to as public relations; in terms of providing favourable information to media and third-party outlets. Publicity may originate from bloggers, mainstream media, as well as from new media forms, including podcasts. All this is done to provide a message to consumers without having to pay for direct time or space. Therefore, publicity creates awareness and carries out more credibility than other promotional vehicles. After the message has been distributed, the publicist will lose control on how the message will be used and interpreted by others.

The advantages of publicity are low-cost and credibility (particularly if the publicity is aired in between news stories like evening TV news-casts). New technologies such as blogs, web cameras, web affiliates, and convergence (phone-camera posting of pictures and videos to websites) are changing the cost-structure of publicity. The use of publicity is also known to be an important strategic element due to its effect of intentional exposure over a prospective consumer. Favourable publicity is also created through reputation management in which

organisations strive to control via the web. Furthermore, despite the fact that publicity, both good or bad, can be beneficial for a company, much of it is paid for, despite claims that publicity is free of charge. Despite publicity being an influential benefit within the marketing sector, one disadvantage which highly affects publicity, is the lack of ability in which publicity cannot be repeated. The use of publicity, the acquisition of free space or time in the media, can potentially be extremely beneficial to the businesses. This does not happen by accident, though. It must be well thought-out.

A very important function of public relations and publicity is to promote the corporate image and reputation of a business. The “image” is the total sum of impressions of a company. For instance, a casual act by an employee can appraise or damage the corporate image in the eyes of a single customer, or caller on the phone. However, the major elements of corporate image include; the core business and the financial performance of the company, the reputation and performance of its brands (i.e. brand equity); its reputation for innovation or technological processes; policies toward employees; external relations with customers, shareholders, and the community, at large, and; the perceived trends in the markets in which the business operates.

Public relations and publicity support other marketing tools, and could be seen as the backbone of the promotional mix. The success achieved by the other elements of the mix could easily be damaged or reduced by bad public relations or negative publicity, something which is undesirable to businesses. Very often, the businesses cannot control the favourable or unfavourable messages about products or services that appear in online reviews and referrals. If for some reason, the business receives bad publicity, its role in this area is the limitation of damage. For example, many airlines and large hotel chains may have a section within their PR department to engage with online communities. This section will usually handle publicity issues, including negative reviews.

Recently, we are increasingly witnessing a surge in the businesses’ engagement with online communities, including consumers. User-generated ratings and reviews provide relevant information on the businesses’ products, and their levels of customer service. For instance, many prospective customers read reviews before choosing which places to visit, to stay or to eat. Very often, the online ratings and reviews will have an effect on consumer behaviours. It is likely that prospective customers will be mainly influenced by negative reviews, rather than by positive ones. Many studies indicate that individuals will read consumer reviews before shopping.

5.4.1 Reviews and Ratings

Presently, there are millions of online reviews that are related to travel and tourism. Digital platforms which provide travel-related content concerning destinations, attractions and businesses (these are generated by users, themselves). For instance, TripAdvisor provides travel-related reviews and opinions on accommodation establishments, restaurants and attractions. In addition, many websites, which are traditionally known as booking engines, including; Booking.com, Airbnb.com, et cetera, also provide reviews that are integrated in their presentation of properties, restaurants and other amenities. A distinction should be made between reviews and ratings: Reviews will generally include qualitative comments and descriptions, whilst ratings usually feature quantitative rankings, corresponding to degrees of user satisfaction. The ratings may be part of a review.

Sometimes, internet users may notice that there may be controversial reviews and unverified negative criticism. In a similar vein, the tourism service providers may also claim that they were subject to unfounded negative ratings. At times, businesses have even been blackmailed by consumers, who have threatened them that they will write negative reviews unless their demands are not met. On the other hand, consumers have also reported cases of unfounded positive ratings of services. As a result, online users are increasingly paying more attention to these contentious issues.

Recently, The World Committee on Tourism Ethics has elaborated its recommendations for the responsible use of ratings and reviews on digital platforms. Their recommendations are addressed to three main groups of stakeholders, namely: online platforms (operators like TripAdvisor or Yelp) service providers (businesses that are listed on these platforms); and users (consumers).

Digital platforms that incorporate reviews and ratings for their products and services need to ensure the accuracy, reliability and credibility of their content. Online platforms should undertake all reasonable measures to ensure that the individual reviews reflect the real users' opinions, findings and experiences. The provision of publicly available information through digital media involves a certain degree of trust; therefore the veracity of the reviews is essential for their integrity, reputation and good functioning of the review platforms. Whilst it is not always easy to verify the authenticity of user generated content, the digital platform should

have quality control mechanisms and processes to ensure that their reviews are clear, accurate and truthful, for the benefit of the service providers as well as prospective consumers.

5.5 Sales Promotions

Sales promotions are marketing activities that provide an incentive to stimulate immediate action. There are two types of sales promotions: consumer-oriented and trade-oriented. Consumer-oriented sales promotions can be considered as a pull strategy that creates demand.

Consumer promotions may include; samples, redeemable coupons, special offers, freebies, complementary upgrades, contests, competitions, sweep stakes, et cetera. Retail promotions are used by the trade and may be addressed to the end consumer; for instance, they may include offering; point of purchase pricing, point of purchase displays, like discounted items and loyalty programmes. These tactics are usually more effective when used as a short-term inducement to generate purchase behaviours.

Conversely, the trade-oriented sales promotions are aimed at intermediaries. These are used to incentivise an intermediary to promote (and supply) products and services to the intended audience(s). The trade promotions may include; temporary off-invoice price discounts or cooperative advertising allowances, et cetera. Trade-oriented applications may also include; trade shows, exhibitions and other public relations events.

Sales promotion consists of those promotional activities which supplement other market activities, especially advertising, sponsorships of events, personal selling, et cetera. For example, it is very common for tourism businesses to sponsor, not just the event, but also individual sports people and teams. Very often, the sales promotional activities could support the launching of a new service. Therefore, such promotions are usually of a short-term nature. They are designed to both stimulate and induce the customer into buying from the business. However, it should be noted that certain sales promotional tactics may not be suitable for all kinds of businesses, particularly those who are offering differentiated services.

5.6 Personal Selling

Personal selling is an important marketing communications tool as the organisations' representatives interact and engage in two-way communication with potential customers. Therefore, members of staff can develop a good understanding of their particular customers' perceptions and preferences. This will allow them to adapt their communications message to individual customers. Personal selling is an interactive, conversational method of promotion. One of its advantages is that it targets precise market segments. Therefore, it is usually very expensive as it is based on a per-contact basis.

Very often, the other elements of the promotions mix are used to support the personal selling effort. For example, without direct marketing and database support, personal selling efforts cannot be fully-optimised. Without advertising that creates awareness and knowledge about the businesses' products and services, personal selling could not exist. In addition, personal selling is essential for trade-oriented sales promotions to work. Trade shows and conference marketing require strong personal selling skills, as they rely on person-to-person communications. A very useful application of this IMC element is related to lobbying activities. However, a great deal of marketing messages containing relevant content must be created before lobbyist activities become effective.

The sales representatives are expected to generate demand from customers. Therefore, their duty is to convert prospects into customers. Effective sales individuals have the ability to keep existing customers and to encourage new ones. On the other hand, ineffective front line employees can, over time, erode the businesses' customer base. The sales representatives are influential to the businesses as their role is to acquire and retain customers. They are also responsible for the delivery of after-sales services, and they could provide technical support to customers with their queries. They may also need to know how to handle consumer complaints.

Complaints provide a good opportunity to businesses to strengthen relationships with customers. The businesses' front office employees should listen to customers with an open mind. They have to hear what customers have to say without prejudging the situations. Once the front office employees understand the complaint they have to empathise with customers and assure them that something will be done to resolve the matter. The business should follow-up this incident with a report on what went wrong, and steps should be taken to rectify the situation. The goal of this process is to show customers that the business cares about them.

Crucially, management must ensure that all of their front office employees will know how to approach complaints and criticism with openness, empathy, and with a sincere desire to help. This way, they could create lasting and satisfying relationships with customers.

Personal selling can be very advantageous in the airline industry, particularly when used in the high-value end of the market. For example, the sale persons can highlight an airline's differentiated services to business travellers. Very often, airlines employ competent individuals whose primary role is to 'service' corporate accounts, leisure groups and intermediaries. In a sense, the main function of personal selling is to fill in the gaps where advertising and other methods of non-personal selling will fall short.

5.6.1 Evaluating Sales Representatives

The tourism businesses operate in a highly competitive market place which are characterised by their product complexity and increasingly sophisticated buyers. It is inevitable that emotional influences from positive or negative word-of-mouth publicity could affect the customers' purchasing decisions. Therefore, proficient sales persons would be in an excellent position to engage with customers and to influence their purchase decision. If sales people are monitored and evaluated on a regular basis, they will be capable of doing a better job. Any successes or failures in terms of their provision of customer service will be pointed out to them. This will enable them to refine and improve their selling techniques. The sales people can be evaluated in quantitative terms, on their sales volume, sales revenue, number of sales calls made, number of new accounts placed on record and level of expenses that is expressed as a percentage of sales turnover. Their qualitative evaluation could involve assessing their product knowledge, quality of sales presentations, personality traits and characteristics, customer awareness of the product, the promotional content they articulate in digital or in print media, et cetera.

5.7 Direct Marketing

Direct marketing tactics allow businesses to communicate directly with customers through a variety of media, including; by electronic newsletters, mobile messaging apps, websites, online

adverts, fliers, online and offline catalogues, promotional letters, targeted television, newspaper and magazine advertisements, as well as outdoor advertising, among others. Direct marketing often relies on the proposition, offer, communication, choice of channel and the target customer. While advertising is comprised of non-personal communications, direct marketing seeks to create one-to-one personal relationships with customers. Again, the goal is to generate a response.

Direct marketing is attractive to many marketers because it is a communications tool that provides a direct response from customers. Its positive results can be measured directly. For example, if a marketer sends out 1,000 solicitations by mail and 100 respond to the promotion, the marketer can say with confidence that the campaign led to 10% direct responses. This metric is known as the 'response rate,' and it is one of many clearly quantifiable success metrics that are employed by direct marketers. In contrast, general advertising uses indirect measurements, such as awareness or engagement, since there is no direct response from the consumer. The measurement of results is a fundamental aspect for the successful implementation of direct marketing.

In this day and age, the engine behind direct marketing is usually a sophisticated database. The collection of data is growing at an exponential rate as it is continuously stored, in massive amounts, by search engines, including; Google, Bing and Yahoo. In addition, more information is being gathered by social media giants, like; Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, SnapChat, Instagram, et cetera. The advances in technology are increasingly allowing marketers to know more about their audiences. For instance, marketing are benefiting from the growth of geolocation data services like satellites, near-field communication and global positioning systems that track users' movements that measure traffic and other real-time phenomena. New anonymous cookie-less data capture methods are connecting consumer data with matching geolocation-based data. In the past; businesses did not have these means to capture, store and analyse such data. Now, companies can economically gather and store all data from each and every customer transaction. These methods are increasingly empowering marketers to hyper-target consumers with real-time mobile ad campaigns; before, during and after in-store activity, as they drive conversions. Geolocation capabilities not only enable advertisers to capitalise on a lead, at the right time, but they can also offer valuable insights into shopping habits and consumer behaviours. As a result, customers are continuously being targeted with relevant content.

Evidently, the internet has made it even easier for marketing managers to measure the results of their direct marketing campaigns. This is often achieved by using a specific website landing page which is directly related to the promotional material. A call to action will ask the customer to visit the landing page, and the effectiveness of the campaign can be measured by taking the number of promotional messages distributed and dividing it into the number of responses. Another way to measure the results is to compare the projected sales or the generation of leads with the actual sales or leads after a direct advertising campaign.

5.8 Interactive Marketing

Interactive marketing is a marketing communications strategy that enables two-way communications between sellers and individual buyers. This exchange takes place online through email, social media, and blogs. The advantages of interactive marketing include the ability to precisely communicate to individuals with addressable messages that can be customised in ways that make the messages more relevant to consumers.

The interactive marketing tools rely on an open engagement with customers. One of the most noteworthy advantages of utilising digital media, including websites, blogs, micro-blogs is their two-way, interactive nature. Today, Web 2.0, also referred to as “Travel 2.0” in tourism, includes a range of new technological applications such as media and content syndication, mash-ups, tagging, wikis, web fora and message boards, customer ratings and evaluation systems, virtual worlds, podcasting, blogs, and online videos (vlogs). Moreover, the development of social media channels has also been crucial for the successful execution of this communication strategy. Interactive marketing is also linked to content marketing, so companies can produce relevant content that is shared many times through social networks. Such content may "go viral" among social media users. In addition, consumers may trust those who may be considered as thought leaders in their industry, so this strategy can bring in many inbound leads, coming through download pages. On the other hand, internet users can choose what content they wish to be exposed to, respond to, and share.

Direct and interactive marketing techniques typically include response mechanisms that allow consumers to respond directly to a communication and to potentially make a purchase. Compared to mass media communications, direct and interactive marketing is much more

precise and measurable. The ability to measure direct and interactive marketing effects allow marketers to design communication programmes that target consumers, based on; recency – the amount of time since last purchase, frequency – the number of previous purchases, and monetary value – the total expenditures a customer makes over time, et cetera.

For example, Google may have access to consumer profiles more than any other company, because it knows when consumers view ads in Google Search, Gmail, YouTube, Google Maps, and Android apps. It also knows where consumers go, both online and in the physical world, based on cookies and location data from their phones. The company will shortly be in a position to track credit and debit card transactions and link them to online consumer behaviour. Google's moves will bring significant marketing opportunities to advertisers. It may appear that businesses could leverage themselves if Google provides them with relevant data on the customers' needs and wants. Google could also indicate when prospects need products or services, and what price they are willing to pay. These answers allow marketers to better target individual consumers. However, these advances will also raise privacy concerns. There may be wary consumers who may want to separate the greater personalisation of content from advertising. For this reason, they may install ad blockers, tracking blockers, and they could decide to switch off their phone's location services

The strategies, methods, and metrics of direct and interactive marketing are becoming more central to the businesses' marketing strategies as digital technologies are also allowing interactive marketing communications to take place through television and mobile devices. Recently, many individuals are using their mobile devices to construct new experiences by attaching personal meanings to their tourist experiences. Whereas the use of social networks allows them to engage, communicate and co-create in the online world. The tourism organisations' websites are using social media networks as well as interactive communications to enable tourists to personalise their sites with their experiences. They empower tourists and facilitate the co-creation of content for the benefit of other prospective tourists. Therefore, social media might contribute to the branding of tourist destinations. Very often, potential tourists rely on the experiences of others for their decision-making, due to the experiential nature of the tourism products. Therefore, social media could have an impact on the travellers' holiday plans.

Different types of tourists may have different attitudes toward using online tools, including; social media in their travel management. For instance, travellers may use price comparison sites, or may avail themselves of online travel search engines to learn about available hotels. Given their important role in facilitating the travellers' access to online tourism domains, social media has become an important interactive tool for prospective tourists who search for travel information. Moreover, social media users and their reviews may impact on tourism marketing. For example, independent reviews and ratings may often be considered as trustworthy sources for prospective tourists, as they provide objective information on tourism products and services.

5.9 Planning the Integrated Marketing Communications Campaign

The integrated marketing communications campaigns are drawn from all of the elements of the promotional mix which have been discussed in this chapter. The businesses' communications objectives may not change much over time. However, the promotional campaigns may run for a few weeks, sometimes even for a few years. Consequently, it is usual for the overall promotional campaigns to be based on clear strategies that will help the respective business to achieve its goals and objectives. The different marketing tools are distinct from each other in terms of their purpose. However, they may be used together in unison – something which is easier said than done. Therefore, marketing managers are faced with important decisions with respect to their IMC planning, organisation, implementation and control. They need to coordinate the various promotional activities into a concerted, organised, promotional campaign. They will have to allocate financial resources in support of every marketing tool; and coordinate their spending so that all customer touch points are getting consistent messages. The marketing communications activities will be planned according to specified timescales, which outline the dates by which the business hopes to achieve all or some of its promotional objectives.

There are many marketing communications tools, including digital media and traditional channels. Managers must also ensure that each of their promotional activities will truly represent their product or services, in a consistent manner. The worst thing that can happen is to have different media conveying conflicting marketing messages. Such discrepancies may confuse customers and undermine brands. One practical way to avoid inconsistency is to review the IMC programme on a regular basis.

The job of specifying the right communications mix has grown more complex simply due to the number of options, variations and combinations to be considered. Usually, a large chunk of the IMC budget is dedicated to an advertising or media agency. For instance, a TV commercial is strictly a one-way message; it can create awareness, and it may impart information about the features and benefits of the product. Personal selling, involves a two-way conversation where the salespersons can describe the features and attributes of their products or services. At the same time, customers may ask for specific information, or may voice their concerns on certain issues. The salespersons and the buyers can negotiate and perhaps conclude with a transaction. Therefore, two-way communication methods are effective in moving the buyer along the final steps of the marketing funnel. In a similar vein, direct marketing and interactive communications, offer some of the advantages of two-way communications.

In sum, the marketers' challenge is to communicate with customers in a way which triggers their purchase decision. At the same time, they must optimise their resource allocation among all promotional activities, as effectively as possible. They may have to consider the following 6Ms whenever they use their marketing communications tools:

5.9.1 The Market

The market comprises customers, including other intermediaries; such as retailers or wholesalers, as well as consumers.

5.9.2 The Mission

The marketing objectives may include increasing sales volumes, market share, return on investment, and profitability. The communication objectives may include; raising awareness of a product or service, increasing the consumer knowledge of the product features and attributes, improving the consumers' preferences and convictions toward the product, entice customers to make their purchase decisions. These latter objectives are related with the hierarchy of effects model, which map out the response process of prospective customers before their actual purchase. One premise of this process is that communications take time to yield results. Another aspect of this model is that; different elements of IMC can be very effective and specifically targeted at integral steps in the response process. For example, advertising is an excellent tool to raise awareness and to convey information on a product or service. Public relations may be used to generate interest and desire. Personal selling (which

necessitates face-to-face interactions) may be used to convert preference and conviction into purchase behaviours.

5.9.3 The Message

The consumers may be interested in the features and benefits of products or services. Whilst the intermediaries (if any) may want to know more on the terms of trade, the reliability of delivery, volume discounts, and about the businesses' efforts to generate demand through advertising.

5.9.4 The Media

Which communication tools should be used to promote the businesses' products or services? One medium is seldom enough to reach segments.

5.9.5 The Money

How much will be budgeted for every marketing tool?

5.9.6 Measurement

How will the business assess the impact of its integrated marketing communications?

In many cases, the corporate communications are usually aimed at more than one market segment, and will probably involve more than one communication vehicle. In fact, the businesses are expected to use consistent messages across different marketing tools to target their chosen consumer segments. Specifically, the steps involved in planning the integrated marketing campaign are illustrated in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 The Integrated Marketing Communications Plan

Executive Summary

Table of Contents

I. Situation Analysis

An overview of the marketplace, competition, environmental factors (as they relate to IMC issues) and the customers / prospects

II. Strategic Objectives & Strategy

IMC / Communication objectives, specify target market(s) for communications, product positioning / brand image

III. Integrated Marketing Communications Programme

Marketing tools include: Advertising, Direct Marketing, Interactive Marketing, Sales Promotion, Public Relations and Personal Selling (if relevant)
Set objectives, develop a message and a media strategy

IV. Determine the Budget (for each marketing tool)

V. Implementation Timetable

V. Measuring Effectiveness

Firstly, the business must carry out a situation analysis in order to have a good overview of the marketplace, competition, environmental factors (as they relate to IMC issues) and the customers / prospects. This way, the business can identify any opportunities and threats in the marketing environment (Kotler et al., 1990)

Once this research has been carried out, the strategic objectives will be laid out, and the IMC / communication objectives will specify target market(s). The product positioning / brand image can be spelled out and communicated to all marketing employees.

Afterwards the marketing managers must decide what combination of promotional tools will be the most successful in achieving the promotional objectives. In other words, they must decide upon the most suitable communications mix. Marketing tools include: Advertising, Direct Marketing, Interactive Marketing, Sales Promotion, Public Relations and Personal Selling (if relevant). A budget should be determined for each marketing tool.

The business must be very clear about how much it can afford and how much it wants to spend on promotion. The task and investment method is generally considered the most appropriate for a promotional budget. This method is related to the IMC objectives and the corporate

strategies. Therefore, the promotional budget is based on specific objectives, rather than choosing an arbitrary amount or basing the marketing budget on sales revenues or projections alone. In conclusion, business should measure the effectiveness of each marketing tool, by using quantitative and qualitative metrics.

5.10 Questions

- *Outline three possible advertising objectives*
- *Outline the importance of the advertising brief.*
- *Briefly discuss the main features of personal selling.*
- *How can direct and interactive marketing be used in an airline context?*

5.11 Summary

Promotion is one of the four major elements of the marketing mix. There are several marketing tools that may be used to promote a product or a service. A combination of these tools may be used; depending on the promotional objectives, the target market(s) and the promotional budget, among other issues. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is a strategic process that is required to produce a consistent brand message that is aimed at each customer touch point. Its goal is to use multiple modes of communications, including; advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, direct marketing, interactive marketing, publicity and public relations. These promotional tools foster awareness of a company's products or services, inform people about features and benefits, and move them to make a purchase.

There are several advertising media options, including; print advertising, broadcast advertising, digital or mobile advertising, and outdoor advertising, among others.

Personal selling may be used to target the precise market segments (including intermediaries). Certain customers may deserve more attention than others, particularly those which are the most profitable customers. The most successful sales representatives are customer-centric, as they adapt to their offerings to customers.

Sales promotions may be consumer-oriented, retail-oriented or trade-oriented. The promotional activities are designed to stimulate and induce customers (including other business customers) into buying from the business.

Direct marketing seeks to create one-to-one personal relationships with customers. The sophisticated databases are increasingly allowing many businesses to communicate directly with consumers through a variety of media, including; electronic newsletters, mobile messaging apps, websites, online adverts, fliers, online and offline catalogues, promotional letters and targeted advertisements.

Interactive marketing enables two-way communications between the businesses and their customers. This exchange takes place online through email, social media, and blogs. Both direct and interactive marketing techniques can be used to target consumers with personalised messages.

The traditional perspective of public relations (PR) is about building mutually-beneficial relationships and earning public understanding and acceptance. Therefore, it is a very useful tool which if used effectively can help to improve the businesses' corporate image, boost reputation and stimulate demand. PR tools include press releases, speeches by executives and public service activities. Unlike other forms of communication, PR operates through unpaid channels. Therefore, the businesses may have less control over how the PR efforts will play out.

Publicity also has the considerable advantage of reaching out to audience members who might normally resist other promotional tools. An advantage of publicity, including online reviews, is that customers often perceive the word-of-mouth marketing (and referrals) as being more credible than other forms of promotion. However, as in the case of PR, the businesses cannot control the favourable or unfavourable messages about products or services, particularly those that may appear in online reviews.

Effective IMC plans are aimed to provide relevant, consistent and complimentary messages to customers. Hence, the objective of marketing communications is to create awareness, provide knowledge, and create favourable impressions to attain a preferred position in the customers' minds. Ultimately, they are intended to move prospects through the purchasing funnel, to close the sale. It is useful to think of communication vehicles along two dimensions: targeted versus

scattered, and one-way versus two-way. In choosing communication vehicles, it is necessary to consider where potential customers are in the purchasing process.

The marketing managers should (1) find the best way to allocate financial resources in support of their IMC strategy and (2) coordinate their spending so that all customer touch points receive consistent messages. They also need to consider the 6Ms (including; market, mission, message, media, money and measurement) when they are preparing an IMC plan.