



A study on the effectiveness of online marketing on integrated marketing communication

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Abstract

Integrated Marketing Communication is a marketing concept that ensures all forms of communication and messages are carefully linked together. At its most basic level, Integrated Marketing Communication or IMC means integrating all the promotional tools, so that they work together in harmony. Promotion is one of the Ps in the marketing mix. Promotion has its own mix of communication tools. All of these communication tools work better if they work together in harmony rather than in isolation. Their sum is greater than their parts - providing they speak consistently with one voice all the time, every time. Integrated Marketing Communication is the concept that makes all the marketing tools to work together as a unified force rather than work in isolation. It makes the use of entire marketing efforts in the form of advertising, public relation, personal selling, sales promotion, internet marketing, direct marketing in order to generate maximum impact on the target audience at the minimum cost. IMC is ultimately achieved through concise and consistent messaging that fosters familiarity and consumer affinity. Effective IMC messages and images are meaningful and useful to consumers, and messaging and branding consistency - a proven IMC concept - yield customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Keywords: Integrated marketing, communication, marketing mix and promotion

Introduction

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is an approach used by organizations to brand and coordinate their communication efforts. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as "a concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact." The primary idea behind an IMC strategy is to create a seamless experience for consumers across different aspects of the marketing mix. The brand's core image and messaging are reinforced as each marketing communication channel works together in unity, rather than in isolation.

According to William Stanton, "IMC is an element in organization's marketing mix that is used to inform, persuade and remind the market regarding the organisation and / or its products." IMC blends various promotional tools and communication/marketing/advertising services and techniques to maximize profit. IMC is ultimately achieved through concise and consistent messaging that fosters familiarity and consumer affinity. Effective IMC messages and images are meaningful and useful to consumers, messaging and branding consistency - a proven IMC concept - yield customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Online marketing uses internet to deliver promotional marketing messages to consumers. It includes email marketing, search engine marketing, social media marketing, many types of display advertising (including web banner advertising), and mobile advertising. Like other advertising media, online advertising frequently involves both a publisher, who integrates advertisements into its online content, and an advertiser, who provides the advertisements to be displayed on the publisher's

Content. Other potential participants include advertising agencies that help generate and place the ad copy, an ad server who technologically delivers the ad and tracks statistics, and advertising affiliates who do independent promotional work for the advertiser.

The research objectives are

1. To understand the importance of Integrated Marketing Communication.
2. To understand the importance of Online advertising in changing market scenario.
3. To understand the reasons for growing popularity of online marketing.
4. To analyze the effectiveness of online marketing as compared to traditional marketing tools.
5. To identify the limitations of online marketing as IMC tool.

Research Methodology

The first step is to formulate a research design. This means planning a strategy of conducting research. It is a detailed plan of how the goals of research will be achieved. Research design is exploratory, descriptive and/or experimental in nature. It is helping the investigator in providing answers to various kinds of social/economic questions. After collecting and analysis of the data, the researcher has to accomplish the task of drawing inferences. Only through interpretation researcher can expose relations and processes that underlie his findings and ultimately conclusions. Interpretation refers to the task of drawing inferences from the collected facts after an analytical study.

Sampling methods

Sample selection is undertaken for practical impossibility to survey entire population by applying rationality in selection of samples we generalize the findings of our research. A complete enumeration of all items of the population is known as census enquiry. But practically considerations of time and cost almost invariably lead to a selection of respondents called sampling techniques.

ICM & Online marketing

Generally marketing starts from “Marketing Mix”. Promotion is one element of Marketing Mix. Promotional activities include Advertising (by using different medium), sales promotion (sales and trades promotion), and personal selling activities. It also includes internet marketing, sponsorship marketing, direct marketing, database marketing and public relations. And integration of all these promotional tools along with other components of marketing mix to gain edge over competitor is called Integrated Marketing Communication. There are other levels of integration such as Horizontal, Vertical, Internal, External and Data integration. Here is how they help to strengthen Integrated Communication. Horizontal Integration occurs across the marketing mix and across business functions – for example, production, finance, distribution and communication should work together and be conscious that their decisions and actions send messages to customers. Vertical Integration means marketing and communication objectives must support the higher level corporate objectives and corporate missions. Internal Integration requires internal marketing – keeping all staff informed and motivated about any new developments from new advertisements, to new corporate identities, new service standards, new strategic partners and so on. External Integration, on the other hand, requires external partners such as advertising and PR agencies to work closely together to deliver a single seamless solution – a cohesive message – an integrated message.

Tools for integrated marketing communication

1. Advertising: Advertising can be used to build up a long term image for a product or trigger quick sales. Advertising can efficiently reach geographically dispersed buyers. Certain forms of advertising (TV) can require a large budget, whereas other forms (newspaper) do not. Just the presence of advertising might have an effect on sales; consumers might believe that a heavily advertised brand must offer good value.
2. Personal Selling: Personal selling is the most effective tool at later stage of the buying process, particularly in building up buyer preference, conviction & action
3. Sales Promotion: Companies use sales promotion tools – coupons, contests, premiums etc. to draw a stronger & quicker buyer response. Sales promotion can be used for short run effects such as to highlight product offers & boost sagging sales.
4. Public Relations: Marketers tend to underuse public relations, yet a well-thought-out program coordinate with the other communication mix elements can be extremely effective.
5. Direct Marketing: The forms of direct marketing – direct mail, telemarketing, internet marketing – share three distinctive characteristics

Participants in the integrated marketing communication process

1. Advertiser or Client: They have the product, service or causes to be marketed and they provide the funds that pay for the advertising and promotions.
2. Advertising Agency: This is an outside firm that specializes in the creation, production, and/or placement of the communication message and that may provide other services to facilitate the marketing and promotions process. Many large advertisers retain the services of a number of agencies when they market a number of products.
3. Media Organizations: The primary function of media organizations is to provide information or entertainment to their subscribers, viewers or readers but from the point of view of the promotion planner, the purpose of the media is to provide an environment for the firm’s marketing communication programs.
4. Specialist Marketing Communication Specialist organizations are of different categories: i. Direct-response agencies. ii. Sales Promotion agencies. iii. Interactive Agencies. iv. Public Relation firms.

Reasons for the growing importance of integrated marketing communication

Several shifts in the advertising and media industry have caused IMC to develop into a primary strategy for marketers:

1. From media advertising to multiple forms of communication.
2. From mass media to more specialized (niche) media, which are centered on specific or target audiences.
3. From a manufacturer-dominated market to Online Marketing

Today, virtually every aspect of our culture has an Internet counterpart; people work online, bank online, check mail online, even make friends online, So it only makes sense that, online shopping has become an increasingly integral part of our society, exceeding \$200 billion in sales are expanding by leaps and bounds at a rate of 20% to 80 25% growth each year, indicating a momentous shift in consumer spending habits. Those who don't change with the time will become obsolete. Shoppers are turning to the internet rather than phone directories for convenience, product reviews, and up-to-the-date information. A business owner simply cannot rely on an advertisement in a phone book. In fact, customers are fifteen times more likely to look on the Internet than they are to flip through a phone book to call a company.

Forms of online marketing

Display advertising
Web banner advertisements
Frame ad (traditional banner)
Pop-ups/pop-under
Floating ad

Data analysis

1. Graphical representation of responses related to knowledge about the use of Internet

Today, Internet is one of the most important parts of our daily lives. There are large numbers of activities that can be done using internet and so it is very important. Most of the traditional

communication media including telephone, music, film, and television are being reshaped or redefined by the internet. It has

enabled and accelerated new forms of human interactions through instant messaging, internet forums, and social networking.

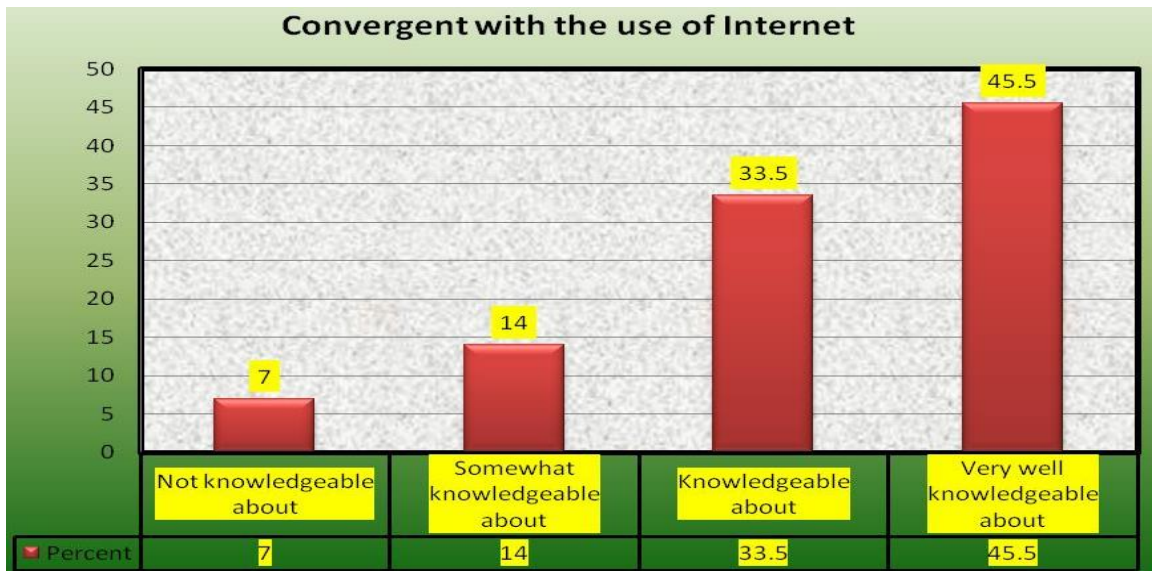


Fig 1

2. Purpose of using internet

Internet can be used for various purposes out of which the major purposes are social networking – Facebook, orkut, linkedin are few examples of social networking sites which help the users to enjoy their social life by allowing the scope to find new & old friends and share views with them; media sharing sites helps users to download the enticing material such as songs, photos, video clips etc.; blogs have introduced a new system of

interaction. Blogs - It is a discussion informational site published on the World Wide Web. It can be proved as the best way to one’s voice among online crowd; podcasts & RSS – Podcast is a digital medium consisting of an episodic series of audio, video, PDF files downloaded through web syndication to computer or mobile device, collaborative website can be developed by small or big businesses through web developers.

Table 1

	Social networks		Media sharing sites		Blogs		Podcasts & RSS		Collaborat-ive websites		Other content sharing websites		Online shopping	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Mostimportant	73	36.5	50	25	26	13	33	16.5	32	16.0	43	21.5	60	30.0
2.00	65	32.5	48	24	42	21	32	16.0	43	21.5	43	21.5	42	21.0
3.00	20	10	22	11	45	22.5	25	12.5	25	12.5	29	14.5	21	10.5
4.00	20	10	34	17	40	20	47	23.5	38	19.0	37	18.5	40	20.0
Least important	22	11	46	23	47	23.5	63	31.5	62	31.0	48	24.0	37	18.5
Total	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100	200	100

Importance of Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is an approach used by organizations to create brand awareness and coordinate their communication efforts. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as "a concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, and

combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact." The primary idea behind an IMC strategy is to create a seamless experience for consumers across different aspects of the marketing mix. Marketing mix include the combination of various promotion tools such as print ads, outdoor ads, television commercials, direct mailers, public relations personal selling, sales promotion etc.

Table 2: Number of medium to get knowledge about any brand

	Frequency	Percent
No	82	41.0
Somewhat	47	23.5
Yes	71	35.5
Total	200	100.0

2. Sources of awareness of various brands

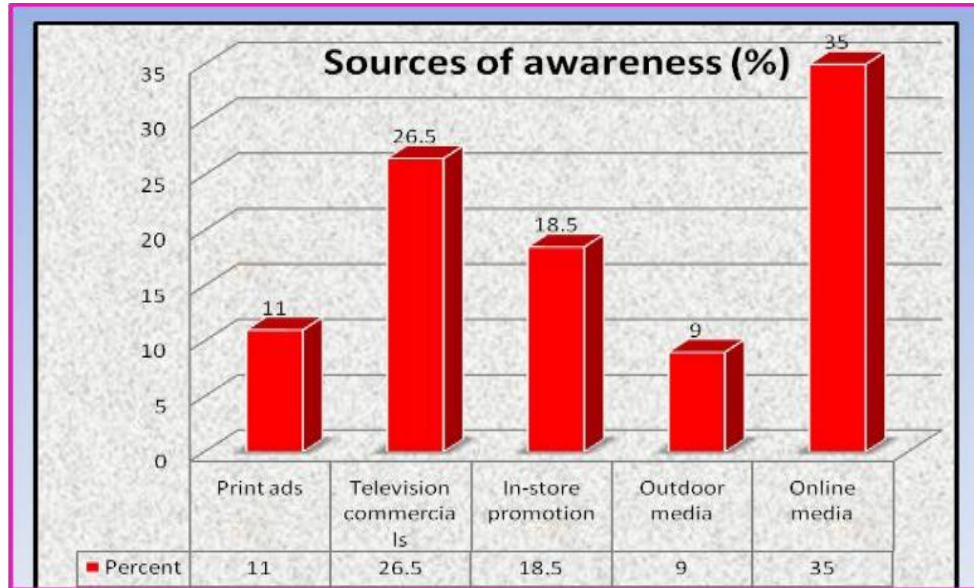


Fig 2

Conclusion

The study concludes that consumers rely upon more than one medium in order to enhance their brand related knowledge. It means that they use the combination of various sources for making final purchase decision. Along with the traditional sources, they heavily rely on modern marketing tool i.e. online advertising. Consumers do require detailed information about the brand so as to evaluate its strengths & weaknesses; this ample amount of information then saves their time by allowing them to make the purchase decision quickly. The study also reveals that main reason for growing importance of online marketing is the increasing literacy about internet among people. They have identified that internet is truly advantageous through which they can serve their various purposes mainly social networking, online shopping & media sharing (photo, music, video). This efficacy of internet has intensified their tendency of being online. Today's consumers strongly feel that every company must use this efficacy to strengthen its marketing efforts. So that they will get motivated to use online. Marketing with the intent of getting access to exclusive content about the brand and getting discount and sharing their feedback about brand with the advertiser. With the advent of internet technology, consumers' preference towards traditional marketing tools has decreased. Most popular traditional marketing tools are television & print media. The major benefits of online marketing are its capability of interaction between consumers and advertisers followed by availability of wide range of information & ease of shopping. These benefits make online marketing superior than traditional marketing. But at the same time consumers are susceptible about the user-safety side of internet. They feel that online marketing is unsafe as it may lead to increase in frauds & privacy issue.

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