

**TITLE: INTERGRATING MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS,  
AN EVALUATION OF THE ADVANTAGES AND  
PITFALLS.**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The shift from mass marketing to targeted marketing, and the corresponding use of a richer mixture of communications channels and promotions tools, poses a problem for marketers. (Kotler et al, 2002.)

There is no doubt about the benefits associated with adopting a coordinated system of marketing communication. In reality however, the various communications elements more often than not operate independently of each other. This report discusses the various issues concerning the integration of Marketing Communications especially its benefits and the pitfalls that need to be avoided.

2.0 INTRODUCTION:

‘All too often, companies fail to integrate their various communication channels. The result is a hodgepodge of communications to consumers. Mass advertising say one thing, price promotion sends a different signal...a product label still creates another message, company literature says something altogether different and the company’s website seems out of sync with everything else.’ (Kotler et al, 2002, p.629/630). This assertion by Kotler underlines the complexity of marketing communications and why it needs a company-wide attention.

3.0 MAINBODY:

3.1 **Defining Integrated marketing communications (IMC)**

IMC refers to the concept under which a company carefully integrates its many communication channels in order to deliver a clear consistent and compelling message about the organization and its products [or services]. (Kotler et al, 2002). A more comprehensive definition of IMC – adapted by Brassington and Pettitt (2005) from Pickton and Broderick( 2001, p.67) is ‘ a process which involves the management and organization of agents in the analysis, planning and implementation and control of all tools focused at selected target audiences in such a way as to derive the greatest economy, efficiency, effectiveness,

enhancement and coherence of marketing communications effort in achieving predetermined product [or service] and corporate objectives.

### 3.2

#### **Major Communication Tools:**

a) *Advertising* – any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor.

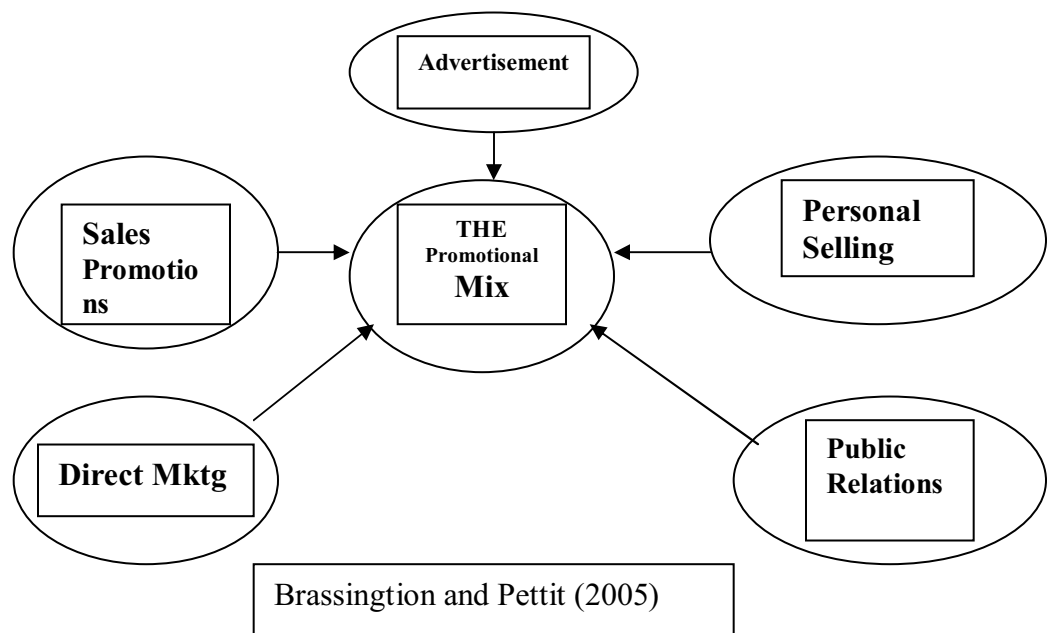
b) *Personal Selling*: Personal presentation by the firm's sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships.

c) *Sales promotions*: Short term incentives to encourage the purchase or sale of a product or service.

d) *Public Relations*: Building good relations with the company's various publics by obtaining favourable publicity, building up a good 'corporate image', and handling or heading off unfavourable rumours, stories and events.

[Kotler et al, 2002.]

d) *Direct Marketing*: The planned, recording, analysis and tracking of customer behaviour to develop relational marketing strategies. [The Institute of Direct Marketing, UK, cited by BPP]



### 3.3 Major features of IMC.

#### *a) Customer centric:*

Every IMC strategy begins with an acute understanding of the customer. This approach goes far beyond demographics to uncover segments and customer motivation that drive purchasing decisions

#### *b) IMC is data-driven:*

Marketers have more information than ever about their customers' behaviours and preferences-IMC depends on this data to identify and understand the company's best customers and to make informed decisions regarding how to communicate with them

#### *c) IMC is integration:*

Customers and other stakeholders- including investors, the media, employees and others- do not distinguish between messages intended for them and those intended for other audiences. IMC not only integrates the marketing communication of advertising, direct and e-commerce marketing and Public relations, but also advocates the alignment of all of a company's business processes, from product (or service development) to customer service.

#### *d) IMC is effective branding:*

When companies respect and understand the customers to whom they market, customers demonstrate their appreciation with loyalty to products, services and corporate brands. The loyal customers reward companies with high retention rates, which in turn translate into the company's measurable success and improved bottom-line profitability.

### 3.4 The Communications Planning Model (Rothschild, 1987, adapted by Brassington and Pettitt, 2005)

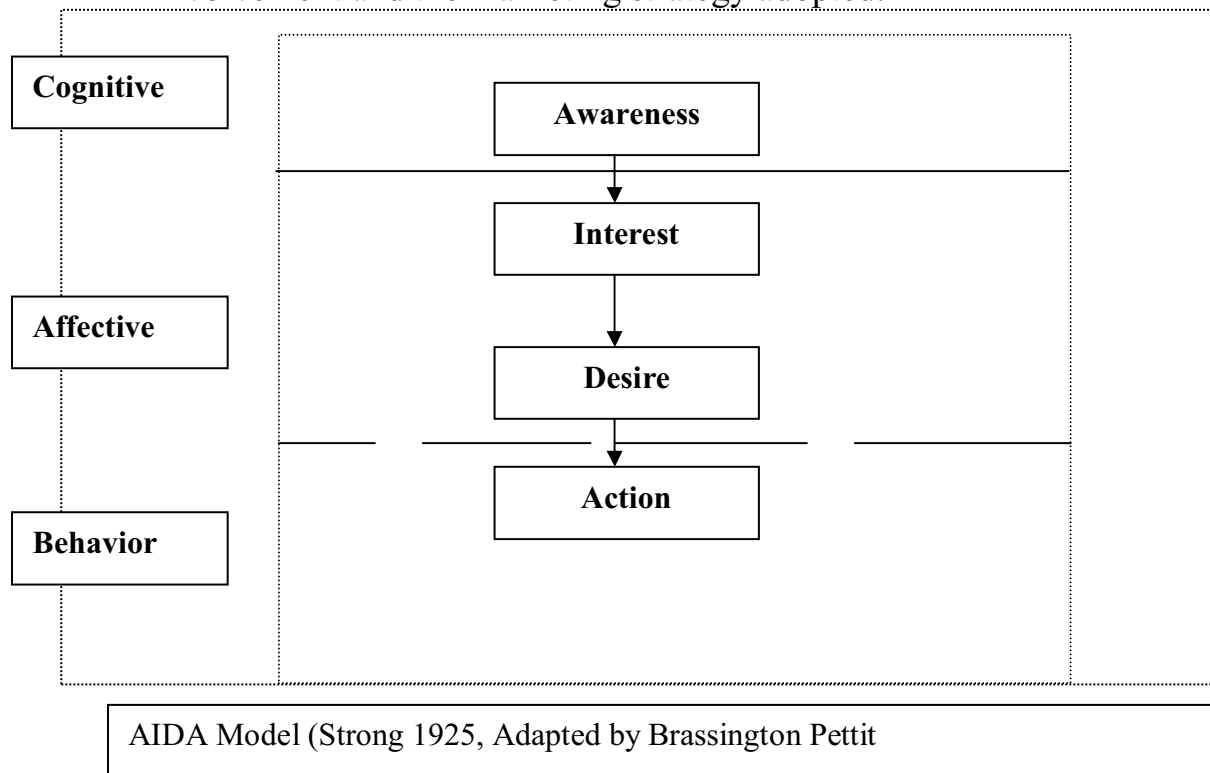
#### *.a) Situational Analysis I: Target Market*

Whether the market is a consumer market or a Business to Business (B2B). B2B markets are very much more dependent on the Personal Selling element, with advertising and Sales Promotion playing a supporting role. The converse is generally true in consumer markets. A large number of customers each making relatively low-value frequent purchases can be most efficiently contacted using mass media. Advertising therefore comes to the fore while personal Selling is almost redundant.

The product (service in our case) itself will influence the shape of the mix, as will the nature of the competition and other environmental pressures. There has to be a good blend of *pull* and *push* strategies of communication.

*Buyer readiness of Target Market:*

Particularly in consumer markets, it likely that people will pass through a number of stages en route from initial awareness, interest, desire and action (purchase) of the service (AIDA model, strong, 1925). Thus the customer passes through the three major stages namely; cognitive, affective and behaviour. The speed with which a target market passes through these stages depends on kind of product (service), the target market involved, the degree of product/service involvement and the marketing strategy adopted.



**b) Situation Analysis (2) the Life Cycle stage (of our Policies)**

Since the overall marketing objectives tend to change as the service moves through each stage, the specific communication objectives will also change. Different tasks need to be fulfilled and the balance of the promotional mix will alter.

At the *introduction* stage, advertising will ensure that the service name and benefits become known and spread among the target market. At the *growth* stage, the emphasis should be on long-term loyalty building. As competitors launch similar services, it is important to ensure that differential advantage is maintained, customers know exactly why they should continue stick with the

company rather than switching to a competitor. Branding will be very important at this stage.

The role of marketing communication at the *maturity* stage is reminding (about the brand image and values) and reassurance.

**c) Situation Analysis (3):**

Social and cultural aspects of the environment will mostly have an impact on the message element of communication. What is said about the service and the scenario within which it is depicted in advertisements will reflect what is socially acceptable and culturally familiar to the target market.

**d) Objectives:**

Marketing communication objectives should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (*SMART*). Precise objectives provide foundation for monitoring, feedback and assessment of the communication mix. Strategies will help to determine how to develop the detail of what the actual message is to be, how best to frame to frame it and what medium or media can be used to communicate it most efficiently and effectively. Designing the message content, structure and format poses questions for managing any element of the promotional mix.

**e) Budgeting:**

Setting the marketing communications budget is one of the hardest decisions faced by companies. There are four main methods used to set the total budget namely: the percentage- of-sales method, the affordable method, the competitive-parity method and the objective-and-task method. It is important for the appropriate method to be used (depending especially on the available resources) so that in that the objectives of the marketing communications are achieved.

**f) Implementation and Evaluation:**

Planning helps to establish priorities, allocate responsibilities and ensure a fully integrated, consistent approach, maximising the benefits gained from all elements of the communication mix.

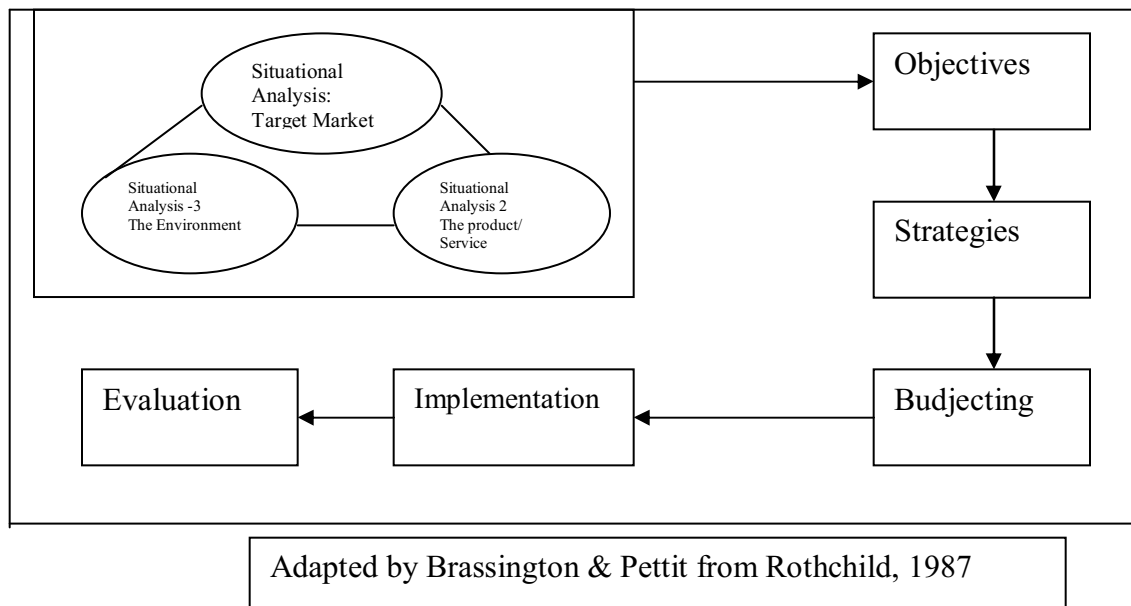
Feedback:

Progress must be measured against the set objectives. Where necessary corrective action to be taken at the appropriate time.

Was there sufficient synergy between them? Do we have the right balance within each element of the mix? Are consumers attitudes and beliefs about

our service the ones we expected and wanted them to develop? Have we generated the required long-term loyalty for our services?

It is through persistent and painstaking research effort that these sorts of questions will be answered. Such answers not only help to analyse how perceptive past planning efforts were, but also provide the basis for future planning activity. They begin to shape the nature and objectives of continued communication task ahead and, through helping managers to learn from successes and mistakes, lead to a more efficient use of skills and resources.



### 3.5 Integrating the Promotion Mix

Having set the promotion budget and mix, the company must now take steps to see that all of the promotion mix must now take steps to see that all of the promotion mix elements are smoothly integrated. Here is a checklist for integrating the firm's marketing communications.

- a) *Analyse trends:* There must be an analysis of both internal and external trends that can affect our company's ability to do business. There should be the determination of the strengths and weaknesses of the various communication functions. Combination of promotional tactics will be based on these strengths and weaknesses.
- b) *Audit pockets of communication spending throughout the organization:* Itemise communication budgets and tasks and consolidate these into a single budgeting process. Reassess all communication expenditures by service (policy), promotional tool, stage of the life cycle, and observed effect.

- c) *Identify all contact points for the company and its brands:* Efforts should be geared towards ensuring that communications at each point with our overall communications strategy and those communications efforts are occurring when, where, and how our customers want them.
  - d) *Team up in communications planning:* Engage all communications functions in joint planning. Include customers, suppliers and other stakeholders at every stage of communications planning.
  - e) *Create compatible themes, tones and quality across all communications elements:*  
We have to make sure that each element carries our unique primary messages and selling points. This consistency creates greater impact and prevents the unnecessary duplication of work across functions.
  - f) *Creation of performance measures that are shared by all communications elements:* We should develop systems to evaluate the combined impact of all communications activities.
  - g) *Appointment of a director responsible the company's persuasive communications efforts.* This encourages efficiency by centralising and creating shared performance measures.
- (Cited by Kotler, (2002) from Gonring (1994).

### **3.6 Benefits of IMC**

- a) IMC helps to build strong brand identity in the market place by tying together and reinforcing all the company's messages, positioning, and images and identity, coordinating these across all its marketing communications venues.
- b) IMC helps to keep track of the promotional expenditures by product (service), promotional tool, product life-cycle stage and observed effect in order to improve future use of the promotion mix tools.
- c) As a result of the appointment of a communications director (czar) with the responsibility coordinating all communications efforts, there is greater sales impact following the degree of consistency planned execution.
- d) IMC leads to a total communications strategy aimed at showing how the company and its products (services) can help customers solve their problems.

e) IMC ensures a high level of cost savings. Because marketing communications are well planned unnecessary expenditures are avoided. Thus the wastefulness associated mostly with mass communication is dealt with.

f) IMC leads to greater effectiveness and efficiency of marketing communications. Efficiency is derived from crucial part each promotional tool plays whereas effectiveness come from the numerous elements employed. Stakeholders become better informed. The message can hardly be missed due to the various channels used.

e) IMC provides direction and purpose for the brand. All the people involved in the communications process are made aware of the objectives and direction of the communications process.

### **3.7 Pitfalls to be avoided.**

a) We must avoid the situation whereby various marketing communications functions become the responsibility of different managers and departments which operate autonomously of each other. Eisenhart (1989, cited in the Journal of Marketing Communications (1999) states that companies that wish to adopt IMC philosophy need to integrate the people responsible for various marketing communications functions into one department

b) The Managing Director should avoid taking the back seat in respect of IMC. In the absence of direct support from the Managing Director, there is an operational threshold past which IMC cannot be fully adopted.

c) The company should avoid selecting specialist agencies that are in direct competition with one another. This is because the task of getting such competing agencies to work as part of the IMC team becomes much more difficult. The reason is that they happen to be more concerned about their own interests of outperforming each other than the common interest of the company.

d) Complacency should be avoided. Members of the IMC team should be made aware that the mere assemblage of the various communication tools alone cannot guarantee marketing communications success. It is only when there is a high level of team work demonstrated that the benefits associated with IMC can be achieved.



e) None of the promotional elements and therefore the people responsible for them should be treated as more important than others. Thus the team spirit should permeate every aspect of the IMC process.

#### **4.0 Conclusion:**

Integrated Marketing Communication is a very desirable practice with in any organization. But for its benefit to be enjoyed or the necessary steps and conditions should be well implemented. it should take accompany-wide commitment specially from the part of the managing director.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

- a) The IMC concept must be implemented systematically and simultaneously at all levels and functions of the company. One programme in which Public Relations and marketing functions are integrated does not qualify the company as an IMC exemplar.
- b) The Managing Director must demonstrate direct support for IMC, because without this critical element, IMC efforts are doomed. Issues like corporate reputation will take a back seat to the provincialism of brand management
- c) Structural and functional issues must become a critical component of any effective IMC programme. There must be the appointment of a communications ‘Czar’ who will be the evangelist and conscience of the IMC implementation effort.
- d) Any IMC programme must be updated to the organisational culture. A ‘one-size-fits-all ‘ IMC must reflect the unique culture in which it operates.
- e) It must look beyond narrow IMC successes in traditional businesses. Many companies do a few aspects of IMC well, but fail to exemplify company-wide integration.