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**Integrated Marketing Communication**

Just as a body system consists of Cells, tissues, and organs which make up the system because there has to be some sort of specialization to ensure proper workability and on the long run the result is greater collectively than when done in parts. This is the same scenario that we seek to deploy in explaining how Intergrated system of communication works.

There is no generally or internationally recognized definition of IMC, however, integrated Marketing Communication is the linking of all forms of communication and messages. Simply put, it entails the integration of all marketing tools and promotional tools as well as its technologies to work in harmony and increase efficiency. Integrated Marketing Communication tools cuts across a wide variety of them, different from the conventional/traditional ones we know to that which we do not. So IMC goes further to persuade potential customers to buying their products or services by employing a wide variety of communication systems, platforms and strategies to pass across the same basic information but in a more compelling and captivating way to create a lasting impression on the minds of the potential customers. However, liking and retweeting a brand's promotional content on Twitter and reposting o Instagram makes you actively in it's process of Integrated Marketing Communication. IMC seeks to leave no stone unturned in its bid to get across to her target audience.



 Photo: MMC Learning

According to MMC learning (www.multimediamarketing.com), There are other levels of integration such as Horizontal, Vertical, Internal, External and Data integration. Here is how they help to strengthen Integrated Communications.

Horizontal Integration occurs across the marketing mix and across business functions – for example, production, finance, distribution and communications should work together and be conscious that their decisions and actions send messages to customers.While different departments such as sales, direct mail and advertising can help each other through Data Integration. This requires a marketing information system which collects and shares relevant data across different departments

Vertical Integration means marketing and communications objectives must support the higher level corporate objectives and corporate missions.

Meanwhile 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 -cohesive message, an integrated message.

The Promotion Mix as a Marketing Communication Method

Just as the Marketing mix which consists of primarily the 4Ps of Price, Product, Place and Promotion, so does the promotion mix have its tools. Promotion mix basically refers to how marketers combine a range of marketing communication methods to execute their marketing activities.

There are seven of them which are;

Advertising; Advertising basically is any paid form of presenting ideas, goods and services by an identified sponsor.

Public Relations: This is the act of creating and maintaining a good relationship between the organisation and the public it is trying to reach out to. This happens though paid or unpaid ways

Direct marketing; This involves the use of selling products and services directly to the consumers without involving the retailers. Examples are telemarketing, mobile marketing, use of catalogues, etc

Sales promotion

Personal selling; This involves directly meeting customers and establishing relationships with them. It also involves face-to-face interactions and explanations of how some products work if the need arises.

Digital Marketing: It covers a lot of ground, from Web sites to search-engine, content, and social media marketing. Digital marketing tools and techniques evolve rapidly with technological advances, but this umbrella term covers all of the ways in which digital technologies are used to market and sell organizations, products, services examples are Google Adsense, Google Admob, YouTube, Facebook etc.

Guerilla marketing; This newer category of marketing communication involves unconventional, innovative, and usually low-cost marketing tactics to engage consumers in the marketing activity, generate attention and achieve maximum exposure for an organization, its products, and/or services. Examples are Mobile Nescafè spots and Indomie Noodle outlets. The essence is to unconsciously capture the minds of the public.

Most marketing initiatives today incorporate multiple methods: hence the need for Integrated marketing Communication.

 Benefits of Integrated Marketing Communication

1. It creates competitive advantage in the sense that an organisation will focus more on what is within their reach and their strength- their strongholds and what they are known for. They will fully grab the market and capitalize on it. Also, it boosts sales and profit, while saving time, money and stress.

2. It wraps communications around customers and helps them move through the various stages of the buying process.

3. It saves money on the long run as it prevents the duplication of adverts needs like graphics and other images.

Demerits of Integrated marketing Communication

1 . It discourages creativity as everything would be done virtually.

2 . It sometimes leads to internal otganizational power tussle and

**Marketing strategy**

Marketing strategy may be a long-term, forward-looking approach and an overall game plan of any organization or any business with the elemental goal of achieving a sustainable competitive advantage by understanding the requirements and need of consumers .

Philip Kotler still debates the precise meaning of selling strategy. There are various other definitions but all of them appear to focus on the notion that strategy refers to a broad statement of what's to be achieved. “The marketing strategy lays out target markets and therefore the value proposition which will be offered supported an analysis of the simplest market opportunities." To further explain this, Peter Drucker says "The aim of selling is to understand and understand the customer so well the merchandise or service fits him and sells itself."

A marketing strategy refers to a business's overall game plan for reaching prospective consumers and turning them into customers of the products or services the business provides. A carefully-cultivated marketing strategy should be fundamentally rooted during a company’s value proposition, which summarizes the competitive advantage a corporation holds over rival businesses. Whether it is a print ad design, mass customization, or a social media campaign, a marketing asset are often judged supported how effectively it communicates a company's core value proposition. marketing research are often helpful in charting the efficacy of a given campaign and may help identify untapped audiences, so as to realize bottom-line goals and increase sales.

Purpose of a marketing strategy

A major purpose of the marketing plan is to line the corporate on a selected course in marketing. Goals of selling generally align with broader company objectives. a replacement company looking to grow, as an example , often features a marketing plan that emphasizes strategies to extend customer base. a coffee penetration pricing strategy may be a common technique during this case.

Fundamentals of selling strategy

The marketing mix is an important tool to assist understand what the merchandise or service offers . The marketing mix is most ordinarily executed through the 4 P's of marketing: Price, Product, Promotion, and Place which builds a marketing strategy to drive sales. While marketing strategy is aligned with setting the direction of a corporation or product/service line, the marketing mix is majorly tactical in nature and is used to hold out the general marketing strategy. The 4P's of the marketing mix represent the tools that marketers can leverage while defining their marketing strategy to make a marketing plan.

Product: the products and/or services offered by a corporation to its customers.

Price: the quantity of cash paid by customers to get the merchandise .

Place (or distribution): The activities that make the merchandise available to consumers.

Promotion: The activities that communicate the merchandise ’s features and benefits and persuade customers to get the product. Usually through advertisement.

5 marketing strategies

Branding: this is often one among the foremost important marketing strategies a business can implement. The brand message is that the promise made by the corporate to the buyer . Decide what makes your products or services better than the competition. Then use proprietary colors, typeface, layouts, logos and taglines to spot your business within the mind of the buyer . Consistency is that the key when developing a corporation brand.

Print Advertising and Marketing Materials: Print advertising and collateral marketing materials go hand in hand with branding. Additional print collateral material like brochures, catalogs, booklets and newsletters also are effective for marketing. Commercial printers that handle this sort of printing can provide customization, quality and consistency.

Direct Mail: lately spam also can include direct email. The key to a successful spam strategy for any business, small or large, is targeting the audience.

Social Networking: Besides putting up an internet site , businesses can put popular social networking sites to figure as a marketing strategy. Websites like Twitter and Facebook are often invaluable for describing existing products, introducing new products, offering promotions and announcing sales. YouTube, the video website, are often effective for companies with a product that needs an indication or for a producing plant tour.

Electronic Barcode Technology: Electronic barcode technology like Microsoft Tag is becoming more and more popular as a marketing strategy for little business. A logo type graphic of roughly 1-inch square is placed on a card , poster or the other printed piece. the buyer can then use a phone application to "read" the Tag. Your website or other online information then exposes for the buyer.

Marketing tools

Each of the four Ps has its own tools to contribute to the marketing mix:

Product: variety, quality, design, features, name , packaging, services

Price: asking price , discounts, allowance, payment period, credit terms

Place: channels, coverage, assortments, locations, inventory, transportation, logistics

Promotion: advertising, personal selling, advertisement , PR

An effective marketing strategy combines the 4 Ps of the marketing mix. it's designed to satisfy the company’s marketing objectives by providing its customers with value. The 4 Ps of the marketing mix are related, and mix to determine the product’s position within its target markets.

**Effects of Covid-19 on the elements of marketing mix**

First of all the elements of marketing mix are important because marketing mix is a significant tool for creating the right marketing strategy and its implementation through effective tactics. The critical assessment of each of the elements- product, promotion, price, and place plays a vital part in your overall marketing approach. Covid-19 has impacted immensely on all sectors of a given nation's economy.

Coronavirus has really dwindled the level of economic activities globally, let's take a close look on how it has also affected the various elements of marketing mix vis-a-vis Using Dangote Cement as a case study;

Price

Apparently due to the fact that all businesses were put on hold, major construction conglomerates and other retail building projects have all been suspended. Ideally, using the economic assertion that when demand decreases and supply/production has been dropped it is best resolved that price will definitely drop. In this case, given the fact that Dangote cement is the largest cement manufacturer in the sub saharan region, he could as well price. On the other hand that wouldn't go well for him because he has other competitors like Ashaka cement, Lafarge cement, Elephant Cement (UNICEM), BUA Cement, formerly Cement Company of Northern Nigeria. (CCNN) so this would serve as some sort of check on them. Furthermore, price may increase due to scarcity of the product due to the limited supplies and interstate lockdown measures put in place. However due to the fact that

Product; The product itself which is the cement will experience reduced sales as a result of the pandemic, backed up by government policies. No matter how sought for the product has always been, the modalities put in place for self sustaining distribution and usage have been thwarted. Due to this, the partial relaxation of the lockdown has created lots of uncertainties as to how long this would last. It is also important to note that final consumers wouldn't want to do future buying purposes because cement coagulates overtime from its powdery form to a solid state difficult to be used. So everyone in need if it for long term jobs and projects would rather wait and be certain but people who need it for quick setting tasks can go ahead with it. Even retail outlets will stock limited amounts as demand won't be high as usual.

Place; places primarily refers to markets and other places where buying and selling is done. All outlets, depots, warehouses as well as others involved in the distribution chain will be put on hold due to the medical and safety measures that follow up the prevention of spread of the disease. Lockdown saw only the selling of essential goods and services needed by the populace for survival. All forms of businesses have been closed and as such there will be no place for buying and selling to take place further holding down the profit of Dangote Cement. So all possible places/channels for the purchase of this product will remain inactive will said otherwise not the government. This is very important because place is where all transactions are sealed and delivered.

Promotion; For the records most of the mainstream media do not really place commercial adverts at this period, it is more of sensitisation contents on COVID-19 and safety. However, if Dangote cement had paids for advertisements, sponsorship and other forms of promotion, it would be to their detriment now because even of they are advertised, the public are not in a position to make any purchase decision. So there they go without sales, increased profit, and consumer responses and reviews which is the sole aim of promotion. Nevertheless Dangote cement as a brand is in her maturity stage. They actually do less promotion due to their brand and its general acceptability.