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Integrated Marketing Communication in Building Customer-Based Brand equity: A Review Paper

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Abstract:
This study examines the impact of integrated marketing communication in building customer-based brand equity for firms and its customers. In today's dynamic and technological -driven marketing environment, traditional advertising media such as TV, radio, magazine and newspaper seem to be losing grip on consumers. This changing media landscape brought about by the dynamic marketing environment has forced marketers to re-evaluate how they should communicate with consumers and increase brand equity for the firm and to its customers, employing the concept of integrated marketing communications became a promising option. Understanding the needs and wants of consumers and organizations and devising products and programs to satisfy them are at the heart of successful marketing. Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the existence of a brand. Integrated marketing communication tries to mix and match communication options –that is, how to employ a range of communication options in a coordinated or integrated fashion to build customer –based brand equity. According to the customer-based brand equity model, marketing communication can contribute to brand equity by creating awareness of the brand; linking points- of-parity and point -of – difference association to the brand in consumers' memory, eliciting positive brand judgements or feelings ;and facilitating a stronger consumer brand connection and brand resonance. In this study, the main focus is on the influence of IMC in customer-based brand equity. However, a number of factors such as brand knowledge, brand awareness, brand image, brand association has influence on this work. We considered the importance of IMC .The paper also presents the customer-based brand equity model. We consider how the relationship between IMC and customer-based brand equity and components of brand knowledge.

Keywords: Integrated marketing communication, building, customer-based, brand equity, brand awareness.

INTRODUCTION:

The rapid development of direct marketing activities since the second half of the 1980's and the impact the internet has made have coincided with a move towards what has become regarded as integrated marketing communication. Another significant development has been the shift in marketing philosophies from transactional to relationship marketing. Integrated marketing communication emerged partially as a reaction to the structural inadequacies of the industry and the realisation by the customers that their communication needs can be achieved more efficiently and effectively than previously.Integrated marketing is a move from the traditional communication strategies,based largely on mass communications, delivering generalised messages, to one based more on personalised, customer-oriented and technology –driven approach. Marketers employ multiple communications to achieve their goals. In doing so, they must understand how each communication option works and how to assemble and integrate the best set of choices. The major marketing communication options from a brand building perspective include; Advertising, promotion, event marketing, publicity, personal selling. Therefore, it is very important for people tounderstand the importance of integrated communications. 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".

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Jones &Schee, (2008) consider that integrated marketing communication represents a combination of direct marketing, general advertising, sales promotion and public relations. The eventual role of the IMC is to convey a consistent message to customers. Effective IMC approaches foster companies to effective usage of promotional resource and to build longer term sustainable consumer relationships. The concept of IMC is increasingly accepted by many firms due to a number of advantages. The mass media advertising was initially thought of as viable and useful. However, nowadays specialists consider it ineffective because of high cost involved and the unpredictable target audience. Today, firms use precisely targeted promotional techniques such as direct mail, cable TV, the Internet, etc. Today almost all companies seek for effective implementation of information technology in promotional aspects. These new initiatives of information technology have foster buyers and sellers to share and to promote an effective customer relationship management. Integrated marketing communication represents the reunion of all marketing tools, approaches, and resources within a company which maximizes the impact on the consumer’s mind and which leads to maximum profit at minimum cost. Brands are companies most valuable assets; adding both economic and strategic value to a company. The value of this asset is often referred to as brand equity which is the marketing and financial value associated with brands strength in the market.

Aaker(1991), sees brand equity as the marketing effects or outcomes that accrue to a product or service given its brand name as compared with those that would accrue if the same product does not have a brand name. Brand equity consists of the marketing effects uniquely attributed to a brand. That is brand equity explains why different outcomes result from the marketing of a branded product or service than if it were not branded.Brand equity provides a common denominator for interpreting marketing strategies and assessing the value of a brand. Brand equity concept reinforces how important the brand is in marketing strategies.It clearly builds on many previously identified principles about brand management. Although a number of useful perspectives concerning brand equity have been put forth, the customer-based brand equity model provides a unique point of view as to what brand equity is and how it should be best built, measured and managed. TheCBBE model approaches brand equity from the perspective of the consumer. Understanding the needs of the consumers and organisations and devising products and integrated marketing communication programs to satisfy them are at the heart of a successful marketing. In particular, two fundamental questions are asked by marketers: What do different brands mean to consumers? And how does the brand knowledge of consumers affect their respond to marketing activities.The basic idea of CBBE model is that the power of the brand lies on consumer perception,what they learned, felt, heard, and seen about the particular brand as a result of their experience with the brand overtime.Therefore,the power of the brand lies in what residues in the minds of the consumers. The challenge of marketers in building strong brand is ensuring that customers have the right type of experience with products and services and their accompanying marketing programs so that the desired thought, feelings, images, beliefs, perception , opinion and so on become linked to the brand. Customer-based brand equity is the differential effect that band knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand. A brand has positive customer-based brand equity when consumers react more favourably to a product and the way it is marketed when the brand is identified than when it is not.Thus customers might be more accepting of a new brand extension for a brand with positive customer-based brand equity,less sensitive to price increases and withdrawal of advertising support,or more willing to seek the brand in a new distribution channel.On the other hand a brand has negative customer-based brand equity if the consumers react less favourably to marketing activity for the brand compared with an unnamed or fictitiously named version of a product.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Integrated marketing communications

Integrated marketing communications emerged partially as a reaction to the structural inadequacies of the industry and the realisation by the customers that their communication needs can be achieved more efficiently and effectively than previously. IMC was developed mainly to address the need for businesses to offer clients more than just standard advertising. The concept of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) makes definite sense – so much so that trainee in the field may get amaze what all the confusion is about. IMC recommends that marketers focus at the customer first – his or her preferences, buying patterns, media exposure, and other factors – and then customer is exposed to the products that fits its need through mix of communication methods which the customer find more attractive and credible. According to Jones (2008) it is revolutionary step because of a whole culture of agencies, in-house departments, and consultants had grown up around the notion of separation for advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations efforts, rather than the harmonious, customer-based planning process that IMC requires.

Integration has become an essential concept in marketing because technological advances have changed how business stakeholders interact. Marketing theory that was established during the discipline‗s formative years has been overtaken by the complexities of real-time, multimodal, multi directional communication. Schultz (1993) defined IMC as concept of marketing communication planning that combine and evaluate strategic role of different communication discipline to get the clarity, consistency and greater impact. According to Percy et al. (2001) planning and execution of all marketing communications are required in some way to meet the objective.Process of producing and applying the different communication programs and the probability to have impact in future over time, overall IMC process starts with the customer and work to determine and define the methods and forms to develop the influential communications programs (Schultz, 1993).

IMC is also considered as a strategic business process which is used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate the coordinated and assessable influential marketing communication programs relevant to external and internal audience over time (researchandmarkets.com). Raman and Naik (2005) defined the IMC in following words, ―an IMC program plans and execute various marketing activities with consistency so that its total impact exceeds the sum of each activity‖. It is a strategy in which different communication tools like advertising, public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and personal selling work together to maximize the communication impact on target consumers (en.wikipedia.org). IMC is also defined as a management concept which is designed to make unified force of different aspects of marketing communication such as sales promotion, public relations,advertising, event marketing and direct marketing rather than to work in isolation (marketing.about.com).

IMPORTANCE OF IMC:

Each strategy has its own importance which can be assessed from the results and impact of that strategy. IMC is supposed as a key competitive advantage in many organizations (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001;Weilbacher, 2001; Smith, 2002) because sales and profit can be increased while saving the time, money and stress by applying IMC (Smith, 2002). This fact is also recognized by agency executives

(Kitchen and Schultz, 1997).IMC has positive impact on communications, creativity and cause consistency in communications. Real contribution of integrated promotional mix can makea strategic tool for business. IMC provides new dynamic model that facilitate the business to make marketing communication as consumer oriented (Kitchen, Brignell, Li and Jones, 2004).It makes easy availability and access of goods and services and makes message more efficient and reduces product related risks in the mind of consumers.

Objectives of IMC: There are always some specific objectives behind every strategy and these objectives are the end results of that strategy. IMC strategy of communication is also focused to achieve specific objectives. Katrandjiev (2000) described two conflicting objectives of IMC as (1) to achieve considerable sales and (2) to build a strong brand image. Schultz (1993) said that objective of IMC is to influence the behaviour of target audience The ultimate goal of IMC is to setup customer oriented sensibilities, help in resource allocation, achieve competitive advantage and develop business process in all direction of organization and its operations that add value for its customer (researchandmarkets.com). Despite these major objectives, there are some common objectives like create brand awareness, favourable customer attitude and to drive business & revenue (ehow.com).

Components of IMC: When going to develop any strategy, there are always different elements which support to develop that strategy. These components can be said as pillars of that strategy. Each pillar has its importance and all pillars are essential for the successful implementations of strategy. In the same way, IMC strategy is consisted of three main elements: the consumer, the channels and the evaluation of results. These components are discussed below (wiki.answers.com):

1. Consumers:

In this element it is interrogated how consumers get information as well as how the delivery of that exchange of information affects the message's form and contents.

2. Communication channels:

This element interrogates several channels and how much effective each channels is in IMC strategy.

3. Results:

It considers how the level of intricacy in IMC strategies leads marketers to measure result by designing new ways. According to Linton, there are different elements of IMC; these elements are media, message consistency, design consistency, reinforcement and sales alignment. Media is used to perform specific role and is used to create awareness about the product to the prospects. In advertising campaign of product only main features are highlighted and more deeply details are provided through direct mailing, websites, telemarketing, brochures etc. Message should be consistent i.e. same message should be delivered through different media. Design consistency refers to consistency in colour, photographs and other visual elements and proper linkage among these elements. Design consistency reduces cost and increases impact on the audience. Reinforcement is about the result evaluation. It evaluates how much the strategy successful and whether the required message is delivered. In business-to-business marketing, purchase is the lengthy and complex process where there are different decision makers and influencers. IMC provide the information at every stage, buying team establishes its requirements, prepares a specification and short list of potential suppliers, evaluates proposals, and makes a final assessment of the most suitable suppliers. An integrated campaign aligns the communication program with the purchasing process at each stage to ensure success.

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BRAND EQUITY

There are two opposing viewpoints regarding brand equity. Some specialists favour the consumer-oriented perspective while others consider that the market performance-oriented

Perspective is best suited to conceptualize this concept. Motomeni and Shahrokhi (1998) identified two opposing perspectives or schools of thought: the Marketing perspective and the financial accounting perspective.

The financial accounting perspective: It deals with brand equity in terms of asset valuation for the balance sheet or for merger, acquisition or divestiture purposes. One should also study brand equity because it helps improve marketing productivity. Due to higher costs, greater competition, and flattening demand in many markets, companies try to increase the efficiency of their marketing expenses. Therefore, marketers need a more thorough understanding of consumer behaviour in order to improve the decision making process and the positioning of the firm's products. It is believed that one of the company's most valuable assets for improving marketing productivity is the knowledge that has been created about the brand in the minds of the consumers from the firm's investment in previous marketing programs. Financial valuation issues have little relevance if no underlying value for the brand has been created or if managers do not know how to exploit that value by developing profitable brand strategies.

The marketing perspective: Customer-based brand equity. Marketers start from the assumption that the power of a brand lies in the minds of consumers and what they have experienced and learned about the brand over time. The advantage of conceptualizing brand equity from the consumer's perspective is that it enables managers to consider specifically how their marketing program improves the value of their brands. Although the ultimate goal of many marketing programs is to increase sales, it is first necessary to establish knowledge structures for the brand so that consumers respond favourably to marketing activity for the brand.Aaker (1991) defined brand equity as "a set of five categories of brand assets (liabilities) linked to a brand's name or symbol that add to (subtract from) the value provided by a product or service". He presented in his model the five dimensions of brand equity:

a) Brand awareness;

b) Brand perceived quality;

c) Brand associations;

d) Brand loyalty; and

e) Other proprietary brand assets, such as patents, trademarks and channel relation-ships. Aaker (1991) considers these dimensions the main bases for brand equity measurement. Conceptualizing brand equity from the consumer's perspective is useful because it suggests both specific guidelines for marketing strategies and tactics and areas where research can be useful in assisting managerial decision making. Two important points emerge from this conceptualization. First, marketers should take a broad view of the marketing activity for a brand and recognize the various effects it has on brand knowledge, as well as how changes in brand knowledge affect more traditional outcome measures such as sales. Second, markets must realize that the long-term success of all future marketing programs for a brand is greatly affected by the knowledge about the brand in memory that has been established by the firm's short term marketing efforts. In short, because the content and structure of memory for the brand will influence the effectiveness of future brand strategies, it is critical that managers understand how their marketing programs affect consumer learning and thus subsequent recall for brand-related information.

In conclusion one could state that brand equity helps to differentiate the product from competitor's' offerings; serves as a proxy for quality and creates positive images in consumers' minds; presents market share erosion during price and promotional wars; and prevents market share erosion by giving a firm time to respond to competitive threats.

Consumer-based brand equity

The conceptualizations of consumer-based brand equity have mainly derived from cognitive psychology and information economics. The dominant stream of research has been grounded in cognitive psychology, focusing on memory structure (Aaker1991; Keller 1993). Aaker (1991) identified the conceptual dimensions of brand equity as brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets such as patents, trademarks and channel relationships. The former four dimensions of brand equity represent consumer perceptions and reactions to the brand, while proprietary brand assets are not pertinent to consumer –based brand equity. Keller (1993) looked at consumer based brand equity strictly from a consumer psychology perspective and defined it as "the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand".According to this conceptualization, a brand has a positive (or negative) value if the consumer reacts more (or less) favourably to the marketing mix of a product of which

he/she knows the brand name than to the marketing mix of an identical yet unbranded product. Consumer response to the marketing mix of a brand can be translated at various stages of the purchase decision making sequence such as preference, choice intentions and actual choice.

According to Keller (1993), brand knowledge is a key antecedent of consumer based brand equity and is in turn conceptualized as a brand node in memory to which a variety of associations have been linked. Brand knowledge is then decomposed into two separate constructs, brand awareness and brand image (associations). The majority of conceptual studies agree that awareness and associations are important components of consumer-based brand equity. The majority of conceptual studies on CBBE took place in early/mid 1990s with subsequent research being mostly empirical. It may also be argued that the emphasis of conceptual research has shifted from the relational intangible asset (i.e. brand equity) *per se* to the consumer-brand relationship (e.g.Fournier 1998) and customer equity (e.g. Rust et al. 2000; 2004).

IMC and Customer-Based Brand Equity: Customer-based brand equity can be defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer's reaction to the marketing of that brand.it occurs when the consumer is close with the brand and contains some favourable positive strong and unique brand associations in the memory.Kitchen et al. (2004) identified that IMC is not only a communication process, but also a process connected with management and brands.Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn (1993) explained the impact of IMC on brand equity in terms of contacts‖, a contact is any information-bearing endure that a customerhas with the brand, including experience of using the productand the words of mouth. According to Schultz (2004) IMChas been suggested as a strategic business process that could cause to establishing brand value.It is widely accepted that influential communication is important in enabling the creation of brand awareness and brand image, that is, brand equity. According to Chang and Thorson (2004) IMC, with synergy among the several communications vehicles as its essential concept, could potentially generate the greatest persuasion impact in consumers' encounters with brand contacts.According to Kotler (2006) ―IMC can contribute to the brand equity by crafting brand image and embedding the brand in the consumer's memory‖. According to CBBE model, the consumer knowledge drives the difference that manifests them in terms of brand equity. What marketers need, then,is an insightful way to represent how brand knowledge exists in consumers' memory. In fact, a universal model of brand equity is required to perceive the role of all the various sorts of marketing communications in building brand equity. Keller (2001) and (2008) proposed a model as the customer based brand equity, based on this model, brand equity is basically specific by the brand knowledge and marketing strategy are responsible. Definition of brand equity according to this model is the derivative effects that customer knowledge has about brand equity. Keller implied that brand knowledge is all regarding to the emotions, awareness, images, understandings and so on that become linked to the brand within the awareness of customers, and it is not about the facts about the brand. These types of information will be considered as a collection of associations data of brand in consumers' minds.

Janiszewski and Osselaer (2000) defined the essential evidence of the customer -based brand equity model. They believed the strong brand equity in the minds of consumers and which means that the brand has accomplished in the widest common sense. Brand awareness and brand image are two important components of brand knowledge. The brands' strength in consumers' awareness and their ability to recognize the brand under diverse conditions is called brand awareness, while customer understanding and priority for a brand as several types of brand name associations held in customers' memory is termed brand image. Unique and strong brand associations are vital for an organization because they can be utilized as sources of brand equity to determination of the difference special effects. Keller (2008) and Hoeffler and Keller (2003) described several advantages for having a strong brand associations including: enhanced loyalty, better communication and efficiency network, advance chances via extension lead and value premiums and additional positive value elasticity reactions.

Prior studies have widely accepted IMC or integrated marketing communication. Basically, marketing is a dynamic and evolving process that develops on the basis of a vision cantered on service (Dialog *et al.*, 2008). Also, they proposed that integrated marketing communication is replacing the manifold in a commercial focus and limited management tools of the trade mark must be used to initiate and maintain an on-going dialogue with customers and to improve relations. The means for the development of strong, customer -based brand equity can be provided by integrated marketing communications as Keller (2003) stated. According to published literature, IMC is a simple device developed by "inside-out" the advertising tool combines a strategic process is designed to brand management (Kitchen *et al.*, 2004). In addition, according to Naik and Raman (2003), IMC accentuates on the benefits of synergies across several number of media in order to build brand value of goods and services. Investigation in the field of IMC has become popular and it led to several academic conversations and intellectual discourse over the past decade. In fact, organizations apply IMC as a strategic tool that make them enable to become more efficient to achieve their goals and helped their brand communication. Based on the accelerating growth of new electronic media, brand communication can be reach the number and variety of communication option plus its speed, range is widely increases. Therefore, adopted a global perspective by the companies and rapidly changing advertising environment will grow the theory and practice and IMC (Bezjian-Avery A and D, 1998; Keller, 2001; Schultz, 2003; Gould, 2004).To create the differential response that leads to customer-based brand equity, marketers should associate unique, meaningful points of difference to the brand to provide a competitive advantage and a '' reason why''

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consumers should buy it.Thus the basic premise of the CBBE model is that the true measure of the strength of a brand depends on how consumers think,feel and act with respect to that brand.

The Associative Network Memory Model-Brand knowledge

The brand knowledge can be defined in terms of an associative network memory model.This model views memory as consisting of a network of nodes, and connecting links, in which nodes represent stored information or concepts, and links represents the strength of association between the information and concepts. Using the associative network model,we consider brand knowledge as having two components: Brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness is related to the strength of the brand node in memory, which we can measure as the consumer's ability to identify the brand under different condition although this is not sufficient to building brand equity. Other consideration comes into play such as brand image. Brand image is consumer's perception about a brand, as reflected in consumer's memory. In other words, brand association are the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. Association comes in all forms and may reflect characteristics of the product or aspects independent of the product.

COMPONENTS OF BRAND KNOWLEDGE

There are various components which are associated with brand equity.These components includes;brand awareness,brand image,brand association. Customer-Based brand equity occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favourable, and unique brand association in memory. In some cases brand awareness is enough to create favourable consumer response, for instance in low-involvement decisions when consumers are willing to base their choices on mere familiarity. In other cases, however, the strength, favourability, and uniqueness of brand associations play a critical role in determining the differential response that make up brand equity.If customers perceive the brand as only representative of the product or service category,they will respond as if the offering were unbranded. Thus marketers must convince consumers that there are meaningful differences among brands.Consumers must not think all brands in the category are the same. Establishing a positive brand image in consumers memory-strong, favourable and unique brand association goes a long way in creating band awareness to build customer-based brand equity.

BRAND AWARENESS:

Brand awareness consists of brand recognition and brand recall performance. Brand recognition is consumer's ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue. In other words, when consumers go to the store, will they be able to recognize the brand as on to which they have already been exposed to? Brand recall is consumer's ability to retrieve the brand from memory when given the product category, the need fulfilled by the category, or purchase or usage situation as a cue. If research reveals that many consumers decisions are made at the point of purchase, where the brand name, logo, packaging and so on will be physically present and visible, then brand recognition will be important. If the decisions are mostly made in settings away from the point of purchase, then brand recall will be more important. For this reason, creating brand recall is critical for service and online brands: consumers must actively seek the brand and therefore be able to retrieve it from memory when appropriate.

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BRAND IMAGE

Creating a positive brand image takes marketing programs that link strong, favourable and unique association to the brand in memory.The definition of customer-based brand equitydoes not distinguish between the source of brand association and the manner in which they are formed; all that matter is their favourability, strength and uniqueness This means that consumers can form brand association in a variety of way other than marketing activities; through experience, through information from other commercial and nonpartisan sources such as consumer report or other media vehicles; from word of mouth,and by assumptions or inferences consumer make about the brand itself,its name,logo or identification with a company, country,channel of distribution,or person,place or event.Marketers should recognize the influence of these other sources of information by both managing them as well as possible and by adequately accounting for them in designing communication strategies.

CONCLUSION

Marketers know that consumers receive many types of communication. They know they need to compete for your attention, so they look for ways to reach you in a coordinated manner through integrated marketing communication. The CBBE model approaches brand equity from the perspective of the consumer.Understanding the needs and wants of consumers and organizations and devising products and programs to satisfy them are at the heart of successful marketing. An IMC strategy begins not with the organizations goods and services but with consumer needs or wants and works in reverse to the product, brand, or organization. Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade, and remind consumers directly or indirectly about the existence of a brand. Integrated marketing communication tries to mix and match communication options –that is, how to employ a range of communication options in a coordinated or integrated fashion to build customer –based brand equity.IMC is a strategic communication tool and organizations applying them have competitive advantage over others.Thereby, saving time, money and stress because sales and profit can be increased by applying IMC. It is widely accepted that influential communication is important in enabling the creation of brand awareness and brand image, that is, brand equity. The coordination of an IMC program often produces a competitive advantage based on synergy and interdependence among the various elements of the promotional mix. Effective IMC approaches foster companies to effective usage of promotional resource and to build longer term sustainable consumer relationships. The concept of IMC is increasingly accepted by many firms due to a number of advantages.

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