

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND THE CONSISTENT MESSAGE AND IMAGE OF BUSINESSES IN THAILAND

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Abstract— With the global competition technological advances, and fast informed customers, it is important for businesses to make a powerful impact on target audiences and markets. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has significantly influenced thinking and acting for all types of business. IMC is more important than former promotion mix, via many types of marketing communication tools affecting the consumer's buying decision and corporate image. Owing to each tool has advantage and disadvantage particularly but supportively to each other helping to develop brand awareness, which means that consumers translate product information into perceptions about the product's attributes and its position. The need for an organization properly implements its marketing communication strategies in order to deliver clear, consistent and competitive messages about itself and its products. Hence the interesting in the Thai famous companies' marketing communication tools selection by its objective was taken to this topic that would be presented the logical aims of media selection. The benefits of this research could be enhance theoretical knowledge from literature reviews and real experiences of key informants which could be added in lesson of Integrated Marketing Communication and case studies, and also apply fact findings to marketing communication plan reasonably for any business. This research was focused on the relationships of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and marketing communication's objectives of more than 20-year companies in Thailand. By qualitative study, data was gathered by interviewing from key informants as marketing directors as follows; marketing executives, marketing directors or managers, and/or marketing communication directors or managers. Combining with the marketing plan from the annual reports and performance documents of companies were gathered from Internet and their websites.

The findings were found that companies of automotive business, the marketing communications were presented focusing on presentation of products' quality and features by marketing communication via public broadcasts as above the line medias, more than service providing and sales promotion that presented via below the line medias such as personal selling, printed brochure, and also trade fair twice a year. For the cases of service businesses such as market rental, or bank, it focused the marketing communication with the selected channel for the objectives of customers' reminding and stimulates their purchasing with sales promotion strategies and the specific goals to expand sales and market share in the short run. Besides advertising, including website, email or mobile application, and personal selling effect brand perception and loyalty in a long run. Furthermore, the different important reasons of their mixed

marketing communication tools selection by its objective were separated by types of goods and service, for goods, marketing

communication's objectives were focused on brand contacts and product's components. The advantage of product differ from its competitor would presented via above the line medias toward mass audience. For service businesses, they focused on service offerings via below the line toward client personally. The whole conclusion showed that most businesses usually focused on marketing messages via several tools across all channels of communication in order to create an organization a clear, consistent, impactful and result driven communications about its brand and image of business. The consistent look and feel of a product, a brand, or even a campaign is critical to earn the customer perception and loyalty.

Index Terms—Integrated Marketing Communication, Brand, Corporate Image, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Global competition, technological advances, and fast informed customers make a powerful impact to on target audiences and markets for all businesses. As the report of World Bank concluded that Thailand's high economic growth at 8-9 percent per year during the late 1980s and early 1990s was interrupted by the "Asian Crisis" of 1997-1998. Since then, economic growth has been moderate, with period of robust growth, such as at around 5 percent from 2002 to 2007, followed by the fall-out from the global financial crisis of 2008-2009, the flood in 2011, and the impact of political tensions and uncertainty in 2010 and again in 2013-2015 [1]. As a result, economic growth in Thailand has lagged that in both low and middle income East Asian neighboring countries in recent years. From the causes of economic and competitive threats, most companies have tried to satisfy its consumers by using different approaches. Effective strategic management from the management level has proved a valuable instrument which helps firms to achieve their objectives, and firms have tried to execute different strategies in order to gain more competitive advantage. However, as important as effective strategic management are marketing strategies to increase sales volume and market share. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has been used as a tool of the marketing strategies [2]. Therefore, communication tools will supportively to each other helping to develop

brand awareness, which means that consumers translate product information into perceptions about the product's attributes and its position. Every business need for properly coordinate its marketing communication strategies in order to deliver clear, consistent and competitive messages about itself and its products.

In the midst of strong competition including with the need of business strategy adjustment for further business growth and survive, the process of any production, human resource, and marketing management relative with all functions as a whole. The global expand rapid growth of business especially in Asian community since the Second World War up to now, the free trade area established new market in Asian many countries for the international competitive advantage and regional cooperative economic development [3].

Owing to the impact of information technology, changes came about in the domains of marketing and marketing communications which led to the emergence of IMC. IMC is more important than former promotion mix, via many types of marketing communication tools with specific objective of each tool for competitive advantage and affecting the consumer's buying decision. Owing to each tool has advantage and disadvantage separately but supportively to each other that depending on the difference of product and customer.

For decades the advertising business was dominated by large. The advertising strategy for a national brand involved creating one or two commercials that could be run on network television, a few print ads that would run in general interest magazines, and some sales promotion support such as coupons or premium offers. However, in today's world there are a myriad of media outlets – print, radio, cable and satellite TV, and the Internet – competing for consumers' attention. Marketers are looking beyond the traditional media to find new and better ways to communicate with their customers [4].

Marketing strategy means marketing plan formulation generally as an essential part of organization achievement consist of Product, Price, Place, Promotion (4Ps) or Marketing Mix. The concepts of marketing communication involve with mixing and integrating several communication channels. Thus, companies need to integrate many communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about the firm and its brands, it could therefore be suggested that marketing communications is the "promotion" part of the marketing mix. Promotion is essentially communicating with current and potential customers about a specific product and persuading them to buy it [5].

Marketing communication helps to develop brand awareness, which means that consumers translate product information into perceptions about the product's attributes and its position within the larger market. Businesses also use marketing communication to retain the product's current customer base, and to cement relationships with customers and suppliers, notes "Reference for Business." Marketing communication strategy defines the business's plan for

product information dissemination and brand awareness development.

IMC can help in creating coordinated and consistent messages across various channels of communication. Furthermore, the concept is especially valuable in that it places great emphasis on the importance of all stakeholder groups and, in particular, on customer loyalty, which can only be created through strategic relationship building [6]. Due to the objectives of integrated marketing communications (IMC) is brand equity. This is achieved by integrating a variety of communication tools efficiently and in full so as to access the target group specifically with the type of communications suiting their interests at an appropriate time and through an appropriate channel [7].

The integrated marketing communication goes beyond these specific promotion tools. The design, and packaging of the product, its container and packaging, its price, and the retail stores that sell the product, all communicate something to buyers. Thus, although the promotion mix is an organization's primary communication, the whole marketing mix including product, place, price and promotion must be coordinated in order to achieve the desired impact. The organization IMC helps the firm in identification of the target audience, and then helps the firm in designing a well-coordinated promotional program that focus on managing the customer relationship over time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing Communication

A marketing strategy may include an analysis of the situation, target segmentation, creative execution, advertising, promotions, direct and online marketing and evaluation [8]. Marketing communication comprises five main functions: marketing (direct), advertising, public relations, sales promotion and personal sellin

Marketing assesses the market in which the organisation operates or plans to operate. Advertising employs various media for message dissemination; this includes television, radio, newspapers, magazines and the internet focusing on more non-personal forms of communication. Public relations establish and maintain a mutual understanding between the organisation and its stakeholders. In addition it acts as the social conscience of the organisation; it is the custodian of reputation and perception management and a vehicle for issues management and corporate social responsibility. Internal communication is one of its main areas of focus and much attention is given to this heightened need. Sales promotion is used to offer added value and a unique selling proposition, both often used to increase sales or awareness. Personal selling is often face-to-face and is undertaken by representatives of the organization [9].

The origin of many definitions rests with a promotional outlook, where the purpose was to use communications to persuade people to buy products and services. The focus was on products and on one-way communications, and there was a short-term perspective. The expression

'marketing communications' emerged as a wider range of tools and media evolved. In addition to awareness and persuasion, new goals such as developing understanding and preference, reminding and reassuring customers were recognized as important aspects of the communications effort. Direct marketing activities heralded a new approach as one-to-one, two-way communications began to shift the focus from mass to personal communications effort.

Keller explained that it could therefore be suggested that marketing communications is the "promotion" part of the marketing mix. Promotion is essentially communicating with current and potential customers about a specific product and persuading them to buy it. Integrated Marketing Communication is a step towards an integrated approach in achieving efficiency by synergy [5]. By definition, It involves the merging of distinct communication functions in a way that allows an organization to speak with "one voice, one look" [10]. Marketing communication represents the "voice" of the company and its brands and is the means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationship with customers.

Kotler and Armstrong point out that the marketing communications activities allow companies to connect their brands to people, places, experiences, feelings and objects [11].

Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers –directly or indirectly– about the products and brands they sell. In a sense, marketing communications represent the 'voice' of the company and its brands and are a means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with and among consumers. The marketing communications mix consists of eight major modes of communication (see Table 1): the first four can be seen as more mass media types of communications; the latter four are more personal modes of communication [12] [13].

Marketing communications have become a fundamental aspect of marketing, a business vision and an essential factor in successful marketing communication. Its importance have increased dramatically in recent decades, considering that the marketing and communication are inseparable, all organizations business areas using various forms of marketing communication to make their offer and to meet financial or non-profit targets [14].

Although marketing communications can play a number of crucial roles, it must do so in an increasingly tough communication environment. The media environment has changed dramatically in recent years. Traditional advertising media such as TV, radio, magazines and newspapers are losing their grip on consumers. Technology and other factors have profoundly changed when, where and how consumers process communications, and even whether they choose to process them at all. To understand the role of all the different types of marketing communications for brand building, a comprehensive, cohesive model of brand equity is needed.

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

The theory and practice of advertising, public relations and sales promotion, were predominantly approached as

individual disciplines within a broader marketing and management framework. An integrated marketing communication plan uses the same thematic message in different types of promotions. The idea behind the message remains consistent whether consumers see a magazine ad or the company's web page. An integrated marketing communication plan may leverage its multiple promotion sources. A print ad might direct consumers to enter a contest or sign up for personalized savings on a web site. Product packaging could play a role in an integrated marketing communications plan as well.

IMC incorporates every form of communication to customers and includes the price of the product (that might create the perception of quality and exclusiveness), where the product is, how attractively it is displayed, advertising across multiple platforms, how the product is labeled and packaged, direct marketing, sponsorship and public relations.

According to Kitchen et. al [15], the main focus of IMC is on influencing the customer through communication, by beginning the communication process and then working it back to the communicator via customer feedback. This communication uses a network consisting of various points of contact between the brand and the customer as a message delivery channel. To maintain consistency in the message, every element and process in the marketing mix has to work in synergy and be co-ordinated.

Don E. Schultz who is considered to be the father of IMC says that "IMC is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programs over time with consumers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences" [16].

Integrated Marketing Communications is the term used to describe the entire program by which you communicate with your customers. The "face, personality and spirit" of your company and products (all marketing mix variables) should blend together to present a unified message. In its simplest form, IMC can be defined as the management process of integrating all marketing communication activities across relevant audience points to achieve brand coherence. IMC is also referred to as a modern way of enhancing increase in product sales awareness and exposure [17].

From above mentioned concepts, it may conclude that IMC is systematic communications mix includes advertising, personal selling, public relations, publicity, sales promotions, direct marketing, internet, and other media channels in order to make informed purchase decisions.

In addition, Fitzerpatrik mentioned that Integrated Marketing Communication is a step towards an integrated approach in achieving efficiency by synergy. By definition, It involves the merging of distinct communication functions in a way that allows an organization to speak with "one voice, one look" [10].

In summary, IMC is an approach communicate about promotional message and also other marketing mix (product, place, and price) used by organizations to brand and coordinate their marketing efforts across

multiple communication channels. "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 as parts of a unified whole rather than in isolation.

The Importance of IMC

IMC is the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools, avenues, and sources within a company into a seamless program, which maximizes the impact on consumers and other end users at a minimal cost. This integration affects all of a firm's business-to-business, marketing channel, customer focused, and internally directed communications. The marketing mix consists of Products, Pricing systems, Distribution systems, Promotional programs. The promotions mix consists of: Advertising, Sales promotions (including consumer and trade promotions), Personal selling activities The IMC promotions mix also includes Direct Marketing, Public Relations Programs, Internet Marketing, Sponsorship Marketing, and Database Marketing [14].

The basic premise of IMC is that a number of communication objectives exist for a brand and there are various different communication methods that can be used to achieve those different objectives [5]. In other words, multiple and united options are advised that use two-way communication [16] through interactive media [4]. Therefore, communication is at the heart of IMC. For Shimp, marketing is communication and communication is marketing. All organisations use various forms of marketing communication to promote their offerings. Further, a service is a communication experience and when the client experiences emotional 'heat' through the experience it increases the brand's equity and adds value for the customer through a positive experience [14].

In the traditional approach to marketing communications, businesses and their agencies plan separate campaigns for advertising, press relations, direct marketing and sales promotions. Integrated campaigns use the same communication tools to reinforce each other and improve marketing effectiveness. In an integrated campaign, you can use advertising to raise awareness of a product and generate leads for the sales force. By communicating the same information in press releases and feature articles, you reinforce the messages in the advertising. You can then use direct mail or email to follow up inquiries from the advertising or press campaigns and provide prospects with more information. To help convert those prospects to customers, you can use telemarketing to sell directly or make appointments for the sales team.

The ability of a company to utilize an outside-in approach and to portray a consistent image to prospects and existing customer groups becomes a critical success factor in competitive and information-rich market places [6]. Hence, businesses should focus on marketing messages

via several tools across all communication channels in order to strengthen brand and corporate image with a clear, consistent, impactful message and result driven communications.

(1) HENCE, CONSUMERS SHOULD CONSIDER WHO MAKES THE PRODUCT, FOR WHAT PURPOSE OR BENEFIT IT STANDS AND LINKS THE BRAND TO PEOPLE, PLACE, EVENTS, EXPERIENCES, AND FEELINGS. AND FOR INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION OF BUSINESS ENHANCES COMPANIES' ABILITY TO REACH THE RIGHT CUSTOMER WITH RIGHT MESSAGE AT THE RIGHT TIME AND IN THE RIGHT PLACE BY THE RIGHT CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION.

Integrated Marketing Communication Objectives

The objective of integrated marketing communications, or IMC is brand equity. This is achieved by integrating a variety of communication equipment efficiently and in full so as to access the target group specifically with the type of communication suiting their interests at an appropriate time and through an appropriate channel. Marketing changes lead to the redesigning of marketing communications. Formerly, marketing communications were aimed at a large number of target groups. However, the current formation of marketing communications mainly focuses on reaching specific target groups more directly and intimately [7]. The informed customer of the twenty-first century will have extensive knowledge about the product category, the product per se, or even the company in general [18]. So that means brand equity would be emerged from brand perception, awareness and developing to brand loyalty if it combines with consuming experience positively. Most important consideration in marketing communication plan understands target group and appropriate channel.

As IMC theoretical content, after grouping the customers into segments, promotional activities should be integrated such that they work according to the overall strategic IMC plan in order to accomplish the set marketing communication objectives. It must not be overlooked that communication between customers and organization should be a two-way process, that is, a dialogue or an exchange of information [16].

It can be concluded that integrated marketing communications have a highly complex content, both in terms of scope and the objectives pursued and on methods and tools for action. Considering that the primary purpose of marketing communication is to build and strengthen the brand. While the main market competitors have become brands. Many opinions of experts converge to the idea that in the contemporary era the marketing communication will be the only way to create and sustaining competitive advantage.

(2) SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study was planned schedule for searching the secondary data of business background, IMC implementation, and its objectives and results. Interview guide was generated simultaneously according with the concepts and theory of Integrated Marketing Communication as well. The samples were selected specific

key informants of marketing communication affairs of famous long-time businesses in Bangkok, Thailand. For the whole period, this research from the beginning of reviewed literatures until interviewing process, analysis, conclusion and reporting, it could be reported within 12 months as condition of institutional research fund contract.

(3) METHODOLOGY

This study concerned with Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) of the businesses in Thailand, specific sampling was selected to imply for interviewing because of the convenience of data gathering but consisting research objective to study the implementation of communication tools and their objectives. The samples specify by sufficiently data of IMC planning and tools using from Internet firstly, then more than 20-year businesses were selected and searched for the names of key informant as interviewee from Internet at the beginning.

Population and Samples

Population of this research is Key informant as the positions of marketing director, marketing communication chief, marketing manager or planner of famous businesses in Thailand. The samples could be specified business that its key informant was requested possibly for interviewing. Along 4 months, 8 businesses confirmed for interview date and time.

Data gathering

The secondary data of business background and marketing communication details were gathered from their website and online media such as online newspaper or magazine. Primary data, interview confirmation as followed the interviewees' convenience by place and time, and informed them for the permit of sound recording so as to be confidence in conclusion correctly and obviously. The telephone call should be insisted gently before date 2-3 days. Interview guide was prepared and testing for recorder. Each interviewing was spending approximate at least 30 minutes to 1 hour depending on interviewee's convenience.

SUMMATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The multinational automotive industry leaders in Thailand: Mazda Sales (Thailand), Toyota K.Motors, and Volvo Car Thailand, focused on mass medias via television, radio, printed media, and specific digital marketing on mobile application, website, and social media (You Tube to communicate the strengths of product or selling point according with customers' satisfaction. Additional, the promotional campaign can stimulate purchasing in a short time. Besides they always move forward to sport activities (sport marketing) so as to create and remind brand and corporate image as well

Businesses of consumer products: Thai Storage Battery, Thai President Food, and SCG Paper, according to consumers' trend focusing on advertising via above the line medias more than below the line medias. Advertising via television and radio always access mass consumer, but some channels such as personal selling, sales promotion, and marketing for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or Social marketing

could be implied to stimulate purchasing and increasing brand image simultaneously.

Service businesses: Siam Commercial Bank, Advance Info Service, they focused on advertising via television and printed medias such as brochure, newsletter and mobile applications to enhance service satisfaction, simultaneous improved modern service centers. The objectives of marketing communications were to repeat brand loyalty in a long run. Besides they also focus on societal activities in both of human life quality and environment caring for corporate image maintaining as a planning of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for enhancing brand image and loyalty.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

The marketing communications of automotive business, under the brands of Mazda, Volvo, and Toyota, focused on presentation of products' quality and features by marketing communication tools via public broadcasts as above the line medias, television, radio and other communications can be used to either build brand awareness or drive sales through specific offers by personal selling and sales promotions working together with printed brochure, and also trade fair twice a year, as same as Belch and Belch (2003) explained that The most common form of a sales promotion is a coupon and the final aspect of a promotional mix is personal selling. For the cases of service businesses, Commercial Bank and market rental business, they focused Sales Promotion strategies, Leaflets or brochures to expand sales and market share in the short run. And occasional social marketing concept is deployed in social development campaign projects for teenagers and environment. The specific goals of integrated marketing communication were for reminding brands, stimulating brand perception and loyalty in a long run with the selected channels for the objectives of purchasing stimulation. Besides advertising, including website, email or mobile application, and personal selling effect desired consumer behavior such as calling back for more information or purchasing order.

In conclusion, most business deliver consistent message to buyers through an organization's promotions that may span all different types of media such as TV, radio, magazines, the Internet, mobile phones, professional selling, and social media. The different important reasons of their mixed marketing communication tools selection by objectives were separated by types of goods and service, for goods, marketing communication's objectives were focused on brand contacts and product's components. The advantage of product differ from its competitor would presented as selling point via above the line medias toward mass audience. For service businesses, they focused on service offerings via below the line toward client personally. The whole conclusion showed that most businesses usually focused on marketing messages via several tools across all channels of communication in order to create an organization a clear, consistent, impactful and result driven communications about its brand and corporate image. The consistent look and feel of a product, a brand, or even a campaign is critical to earn the customer perception and

loyalty as María Ángeles and Navarro-Bailón mentioned that a cross-tool campaign that makes use of consistent messages is more effective in building brand images than a repetition strategy in which the consumer is exposed to the same message twice [19].

So Integrated Marketing is an approach to creating a unified and seamless experience for consumers to interact with the brand/enterprise; it attempts to meld all aspects of marketing communication such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and social media, through their respective mix of tactics, methods, channels, media, and activities, so that all work together as a unified force. It is a process designed to ensure that all messaging and communications strategies are consistent across all channels and are centered on the customer.

Brand contacts and product's components or selling point should be sent to target customer for brand awareness, brand and corporate loyalty according to the explanation of Raveena Singh that the main considerations in message design should include the link between the overall vision of the organization, the link between the main and sub-messages of the strategy and full understanding of the values, beliefs and attitudes of the target group [20].

For the results of brand awareness and brand equity from societal marketing, according to the finding of "The Research Studies on Brand Equity in 2009-2013" [21], the impacts of event marketing such as sport marketing, events, sponsorship, CSR activities, trade fair, or exhibition effected the positive brand equity that related with consumer's brand experience and attitudes and also correspond to Marketing Communications' objectives.

Recommendations

VII. The findings guided the recommendations divided to three parts as follows:

(1) For inside preparation and planning: A cross-functional communication management team is established. This team consists of department heads across the organization. A team leader oversees, organizes and coordinates the group, but does not dominate the direction, discussion, or ideas. Each departmental head generates ideas, aids in the marketing communication strategy development, implementation, management, training, and results tracking for his or her own department. They make sure all communications are on strategy, on target, and approved by the team leader or IMC Manager. There is no individual departmental marketing of independent messages, themes, or looks. The cross-functional management team in an integrated company essentially expands the marketing responsibility beyond the marketing department and makes each employee a marketing representative.

(2) For the communication selection and message design: marketing communication plan should clarify target audience consistent with communication channels and persuasive message.

(3) For the further study: researchers should study the measurable customer's activity moving closer to purchasing

behavior and the influence to a change in the behavior of prospects in the future because IMC programs consist of a variety of communication tools and measuring the interactive effects of all of these elements has proven to be much difficult.

(4) Besides, Other studies need exploratory research on boarder scope of business and qualitative deeper communication objectives of brand loyalty building.

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