

14.12: Customer Communication

Learning Objectives

- Explain the value of effective communication with customers

In *Identifying and Understanding Customer Behavior* there is a review about the buying process from both the firm and the shopper's perspective.

Regardless of which orientation we chose, we saw that marketing & promotion are implicitly important for the buying process because they grab *attention*, help develop *interest* and provide resources from which consumers *gather information* and ultimately *evaluate options*. To encourage consumers to make decisions/ purchases, some customer communication might include a specific *call to action* or *offer* that has a specific period of availability. In thinking about marketing and promotion in this way, we begin to see what's required for effective Customer Communication:

- Grab attention
- Provide information, which will:
 - Develop interest
 - Help consumers understand benefits
 - Evaluate options
- Offer a reason to act now.

Consumers are driven by their individual wants and needs. No marketer, regardless of how insightful they are, can create an ad so compelling that it can force people to buy something they do not need. Marketers cannot create demand, where a consumer want doesn't exist. Thus, the role of advertising is to get the consumer's attention to make them aware of products/ services. Then, they explain how the product or service can satisfy an unmet need. And, sometimes, they provide a reason to take action now.

To evaluate advertising with this framework, consider a company like the Coca-Cola Company. They certainly advertise, but why? And, why would it advertise its flagship soft drink, Coke? Is it really about grabbing attention and providing information to develop interest among consumers or to help them make a selection?

For its part, the Coca-Cola Company is the largest beverage company in the world. And, Coca-Cola is a truly global brand. *Business Insider* wrote that "The red and white Coca-Cola logo is recognized by 94% of the world's population." Further, it is routinely described as being among the most powerful, most valued and most recognized brands in the world. It boasts incredibly high Brand Recognition and Affinity. Coke, the product, is available in more than 200 countries.

Why does the Coca-Cola Company advertise? And, why does it advertise Coke?

Is it to make consumers aware of Coke? Probably not, given that people consumer 1.9B servings of Coca-Cola daily. (That's a serving for ~25% of the global population every day!)

Is it to educate consumers about what a Coke is? Probably not, given that the recipe is a closely guarded secret.

But, think about the commercials themselves. What do the images convey? What do the words say? How does the music make you feel? Don't all these pieces work together to grab your attention?

What about the specific messages within the commercial? Are they more about reason or emotion? Do they sell the benefits of the beverage itself, i.e. the nutritional contribution or taste? Or, do they promote other benefits like connection, nostalgia or belonging? Isn't it the latter? And, in messaging this, isn't the Coca-Cola Company trying to make an emotional connection to develop consumer interest?

Does the Coca-Cola Company sell a carbonated soft drink in their ads, or do they promote the special moments that Coca-Cola is shared and the emotions that underpin those moments? With their slogan "Open Happiness," I would argue it's the latter. Does The Coca-Cola Company providing more information, outside of the product itself, with which the consumer can evaluate the product?

Thus, we might answer, "Why does the Coca-Cola Company advertise?" with "to get the consumer's attention to explain how enjoying a Coke can provide a moment of happiness." And, this leads us back to the original topic of this section, the elements required for effective Customer Communication:

- Grab attention

- Provide information, which will:
 - Develop interest
 - Help consumers understand benefits
 - Evaluate options
- Offer a reason to act now.

“Wait a minute,” you’re thinking. “There isn’t a call to action!”

You’re right. But, remember that Integrated Marketing Communication optimizes messaging by harnessing the benefits of *each* channel to build clearer and broader impact. Wouldn’t we expect The Coca-Cola Company to message in other channels, especially in-store? Would it surprise you to find displays? What about special offers and sales? Might we also see special packaging? In this way, The Coca-Cola Company is effectively using multiple channels for Integrated Marketing Communication, sharing customer messages that grab attention, develop interest, share information and (sometimes) make specific calls to action.

? Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/9300>

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