

14.13: Integrated Marketing Communications

Learning Objectives

- Define integrated marketing communications

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) optimizes the communication of a firm's message by harnessing and leveraging the benefits of each channel of communication, e.g. on-air, on-line, in-home and in-store, and type, i.e. owned, paid and earned. When combined, these channels broaden the reach and deepen the impact of the messages.

Media proliferation, audience fragmentation, globalization of markets, the advent of new communications technologies, the widespread use of databases meant that the old methods, and practices used in mass marketing were no longer relevant. In particular, the rise of digital and interactive media meant that marketers were relying less on advertising as the dominant form of marketing communications.

Integrated marketing communications is a holistic planning process that focuses on integrating messages across communications disciplines, creative executions, media, timing and stakeholders. An integrated approach has emerged as the dominant approach used by companies to plan and execute their marketing communication programs.

So, what does this really mean?

Firms using Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) consider the various channels through which consumers can be reached and through which they [consumers] choose to gather information. This shows an appreciation for consumers' active and passive media consumption, e.g.:

- Active:
 - Visiting a brand's website
 - Following a brand on social networks
- Passive
 - Hearing advertisements on the radio
 - Seeing commercials on television.

As a result, it also recognizes that not all media is paid. Instead, savvy marketers can broaden their audience by complementing their paid media, e.g. paid search, television, print ads, etc. with their owned channels, e.g. website and social media assets, and earned media, e.g. organic search, press releases and independent ratings & reviews.

Let's revisit the scenario you may have read about in [Multi-Channel Retailing](#), regarding the Pillsbury™ Bake-off, as this provides a great example of IMC in practice. You read:

On a social network, a consumer sees a post from Pillsbury™, announcing the winners of the annual Pillsbury™ Bake-off. Interested, they search for past winning recipes and find themselves at Pillsbury.com. Inspired, they find a recipe they want to try and plan a trip to Schnuck's, their local supermarket, where Pillsbury items are available on-shelf.

But, let's back-up even further, considering the event and all related communication from the viewpoint of the marketers at Pillsbury™. That is, let's begin with a simple question, "Why does Pillsbury™ sponsor the Pillsbury™ Bake-off annually?"

The answer is that Pillsbury™ sponsors the event to create a platform around which to promote their brand and to sell their products. And, IMC helps them broaden the reach of their brand messaging.

You can probably imagine the marketing team at Pillsbury™ creating a robust marketing plan around the event, perhaps creating a flowchart to show all the channels of communication they'll use, the specific messages and the timing. For example, it might include:

- Press Releases to announce the date and site of the Pillsbury™ Bake-off
- Posts on Pillsbury's™ social networks to share the same
- Links on Pillsbury.com to register to participate or access past winning recipes

Then, as the date nears:

- FSIs (Free Standing Inserts), i.e. ads and coupons, placed in newspapers to promote the brand and products

- Efforts by the Sales Team to secure displays, in-store signage and promoted items in store circulars

And, after the event:

- Press Releases to announce the winner of the Pillsbury™ Bake-off
- Posts on Pillsbury's™ social networks to share the same
- Links on Pillsbury.com to download the featured and winning recipes
- On-line ads to promote the winning recipe and the products used in it
- FSIs (Free Standing Inserts), i.e. ads and coupons, placed in newspapers to promote the brand and the products used in the winning recipe
- Efforts by the Sales Team to secure displays, in-store signage and promoted items in store circulars

Consider the activity again, appreciating that it spans on-air, on-line, in-store and blends paid, owned and earned:

- Press Releases to announce the date and site of the Pillsbury™ Bake-off (On-air, In-home and/ or On-line; Earned)
- Posts on Pillsbury's™ social networks to share the same (On-line; Owned)
- Links on Pillsbury.com to register to participate or access past winning recipes (On-line; Owned)

Then, as the date nears:

- FSIs (Free Standing Inserts), i.e. ads and coupons, placed in newspapers to promote the brand and products (In-home; Paid)
- Efforts by the Sales Team to secure displays, in-store signage and promoted items in store circulars (In-store; Paid & Earned)

And, after the event:

- Press Releases to announce the winner of the Pillsbury™ Bake-off (On-air, In-home and/ or On-line; Earned)
- Posts on Pillsbury's™ social networks to share the same (On-line; Owned)
- Links on Pillsbury.com to download the featured and winning recipes (On-line; Owned)
- On-line ads to promote the winning recipe and the products used in it (On-line; Paid)
- TV ads to promote the winning recipe and the products used in it (On-air; Paid)
- FSIs (Free Standing Inserts), i.e. ads and coupons, placed in newspapers to promote the brand and the products used in the winning recipe (In-home; Paid)
- Efforts by the Sales Team to secure displays, in-store signage and promoted items in store circulars (In-store; Paid & Earned)

In this way, the Pillsbury™ Bake-off isn't a singular event for a relatively small number of participants. Instead, it's a platform the company and brand uses to promote their brand and products. Further, because of the unique nature of the event, Pillsbury™ is able to leverage IMC to broaden the reach and deepen the impact of its marketing messages. Again:

IMC unifies and coordinates the organizations marketing communications to promote a consistent brand message. Coordinating the brands communications makes the brand seem more trustworthy and sound as it is seen as a 'whole' rather than a mixture of different messages being sent out. The IMC perspective looks at the 'big picture' in marketing, advertising and promotions.

? Practice Questions

<https://assessments.lumenlearning.co...sessments/9301>

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