

## 12.4: Integrated Marketing Communications

### Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- Define integrated marketing communications (IMC).
- Discuss why IMC is important in marketing.

### Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Defined

Now that you are familiar with the various forms of marketing promotions, how do you use them? Because consumers are all different—no matter how they fit into your target market—it is important to reach them through a combined approach, using a variety of the methods in the marketing promotion mix.

The method of using various forms of the promotional mix to send the same message to the target audience is called integrated marketing communications.

### Importance of IMC in Marketing

If a group of friends is planning to go out to dinner, as the group organizer, you may find it best to text some friends and call others. The message is the same: “Let’s meet for dinner at Chipotle at 6:00 p.m.” The methods of communication are different depending on the traits and characteristics of the group. This works similarly in marketing. Marketers have many forms of communicating through the various methods available in the promotional mix. However, it is important to send the same message in different ways to reach different customers within the target market. And consumers need to hear the same message many times and in many different forms.

### Benefits of IMC

The benefits of an integrated marketing campaign are many. As a marketer seeks to create awareness, stimulate demand, or even encourage product trial, they are continuously seeking methods of cutting through the clutter and noise and trying to reach their intended audience—the customer. When using one method, they may reach a few customers; when using two or more methods, the odds begin to increase; and when using all of their available promotional mix methods to reach the consumer with a consistent message, marketing becomes more effective. The benefits of the integrated approach are significant.

### Better Results

Without an integrated approach, the marketing message and delivery methods will be disjointed. Different marketing team members may be sending very different messages to the consumer. The consumer will then be confused as to what they should do. Think of it as a bike with all the pieces lying on the sidewalk—the bike doesn’t work very well. However, when the pieces all come together to form the bike, it glides smoothly along the sidewalk. It is the same when the message comes together.

When Taco Bell (see Figure 12.7) wants to tell the consumer that the Grilled Steak Burrito is only available for a limited time, it can send the message in many different ways. The consumer soon knows the Grilled Steak Burrito is only available for a limited time. They have received the same message through ads on television and radio, an email, a photo and reminder on Instagram, and a billboard on their way to work. After receiving the same message in many different ways, the consumer realizes there is some urgency in getting to Taco Bell to try the new Grilled Steak Burrito. When the customer is physically near their local Taco Bell, apps such as RetailMeNot can send push notifications to customers when they pass the location. The offer can include BOGO or other promotions to convince the customer that the time to purchase a Grilled Steak Burrito meal is now.



Figure 12.7 Taco Bell effectively utilized an IMC strategy to tell customers that its Grilled Steak Burrito was available for a limited time. (credit: "Taco Bell" by JeepersMedia/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Increased Efficiency

Having streamlined communication channels all working toward a unified goal reduces waste and increases productivity. The marketing effort should not create divergent messaging. Through integrated marketing communications, creating a clear and simple message allows the marketing team to focus on the single message while each team member uses their skills to push the message through their unique specialization, be it public relations or advertising. Everyone comes together through a shared goal.

### Improved Brand Awareness

You can tell a small child to brush their teeth multiple times, and chances are good it still won't happen. But when a parent tells the child to brush their teeth, the dentist provides them with a toothbrush and tells them to brush their teeth, and Elmo shows them the importance of brushing their teeth, the child soon understands that it is a good idea to brush their teeth. The same thing happens when Southwest Airlines publishes all of its fares and fees on its website, broadcasts ads on television and radio, sends emails to its Southwest Rapid Rewards customers, and advertises on its mobile app (see Figure 12.8).



Figure 12.8 An IMC strategy in which the consumer hears product or service benefits through multiple channels, as utilized by Southwest Airlines, allows a company to increase brand awareness. (credit: “Waikiki IMG\_2379” by John Martinez Pavliga/flickr, CC BY 2.0)

### Repeated Success

Through the use of an integrated approach, marketers are finding repeated success. Success is generally based on the metrics chosen for the campaign objectives. Typically, marketers are concerned with objectives such as return on investment, cost per impression, cost per lead, and customer lifetime value. With a truly integrated campaign, the objectives remain the same while the execution strategies change across the various promotional methods.

### Customer Satisfaction

When customers know the brand promise and hear it repeated often with increased company connection, customers are more educated and have more realistic expectations. The combination of connection and knowledge leads to increased customer satisfaction.

## Knowledge Check

It's time to check your knowledge on the concepts presented in this section. Refer to the Answer Key at the end of the book for feedback.

1.

British Airways used the James Bond movie *Die Another Day* to show that James Bond flies first class. The airline also ran ads with the slogan “Save your moneypennys, fly like Bond,” which referenced one of the main characters in the film. The airline also posted ads where consumers were watching the movie. This an example of \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. the marketing mix
- b. distribution
- c. integrated marketing communications
- d. advertising

2.

The goal of integrated marketing communications is to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. have all marketing and promotional activities project a consistent, unified image
- b. gain control of the distribution process
- c. use only paid methods of promotion
- d. develop a competitive pricing structure

3.

When Sally is able to quickly recall the Taco Bell ad and think about purchasing a Grilled Steak Burrito from Taco Bell when she is hungry, it indicates which of the following benefits of an integrated marketing communications approach?

- a. Increased efficiency
- b. Customer satisfaction
- c. Improved brand awareness
- d. Expense

4.

Tina knows that when she goes to Walgreens, she can use coupons and her reward points. She is thrilled with the way she saves money at Walgreens, and she is happy to be able to use so many of the great promotional opportunities. She tells many of her family and friends about her savings and her experience. Which of the following integrated marketing communications benefits is Tina demonstrating?

- a. Better results
- b. Increased efficiency
- c. Improved brand awareness
- d. Customer satisfaction

5.

When a marketer uses multiple promotional methods to send a consistent message to the consumer, they are demonstrating the use of \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. advertising
- b. public relations
- c. integrated marketing communications
- d. personal selling

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