



## Integrated Advertisement Message Strategy: A Tactical Implementation of Imc in Advertisement Discourse

### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT

*The contributive stance of this study is towards the realm of IMC conceptualization and particularly the implementation phase. As scholars have identified that the implementation of IMC principles still remains obscure and executing the premise of IMC at a tactical level in marketing communication messages mystifies practitioners. This article thus operationalizes the tactical adoption of IMC tenets in advertisement as the "integration of advertisement message strategy"; such as incorporating the brand advertisement appeals with direct response advertisement appeals. The perspective of implementation suggested in this paper relevantly agrees with past studies on the need for an integrated advertisement model especially in the era of IMC and how to effectively establish the incorporation of more than one message strategy in a particular advertisement discourse is the practical integration of marketing communication tools in advertising; which in other word known as the tactical approach of defining IMC principles.*

### Introduction

Schultz and Schultz (2003) articulated that one of the driving factors for the evolution of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) in the marketing communication industry is that the conventional way of advertising is no more sufficient to persuade customers, consequently, IMC proposed the integration of the entire piece of marketing communication in order to increase the persuasive power of both marketers and advertisers. Meanwhile the feasibility and execution of such integration has instilled chaos in several minds of advertising specialists and even theorists (Borden & Madden 1996), for instance Schultz and Schultz (2003) logically asked "... should the traditional message demonstration be used?" Several theoretical and empirical efforts have been exerted to answer such a puzzling question, especially for the practical actualization and implementation of the IMC conception. This paper conceptualizes the integration of brand and direct response advertisement in advertisement message discourse as a tactical method of implementing the tenet of IMC in advertising. Consistently, Hartley and Pickton (1999) proposed in their study that there should be a change of mind set, taxonomy and the use of language in marketing communication tools as they classify the impediments of actualizing the practice of IMC in four places; (1) segregation of marketing communication tools, (2) parochial mind set, (3) organizational structure and (4) dimensions of integration. The source buttressed that provincial approach has been employed to unitize the inter-related marketing communication disciplines since the conceptualization of IMC, while there are other numerous ways to achieve the IMC approach.

### Literature Review

Although there has been a consensus definition of IMC as an approach to develop a one look and one voice message, through different message channels and contents, the premise is not explicit enough to practitioners to be actualized. One of the barriers found in the exploratory study by Schultz and Kitchen (1997) is the impossibility of the advertising and promotional agencies to possess professional skills in every aspect of the marketing communication tools even though their work is interrelated. The study envisages through the sight of their findings that the adoption of IMC concept across organization divisions would remain a conflict. As their study open directions for future researches on advancing the issue of executing and implementing the practice of IMC,

it also confirms that agencies are still not confident on how to execute the concept of IMC. Like Blech and Blech (2001) confirm that advertisers and public relations specialists are the most critical impetus for the implementation of IMC concept and process, there should be an explicit method that guides to marketers and advertisers on the execution of the IMC process.

Nowak and Pheleps, (1994) affirm that the advent of IMC tenet has trivialized the walls within marketing communication disciplines, more so, the traditional media is growing weak, the strategic tenet of coordinating and integrating marketing communication effort to strengthen marketers and advertisers approach of targeting, persuading, and cultivating consumers compel the shift for integration. Ostensibly, the shift is reflected in the practices and theories of the entire marketing communication disciplines; (Newsom, Carrell & Hussain, 1992; and Schult & Shultz, 2003), and distinctively influenced the practice and theory of advertisement in the areas of message execution, marketing, media, and social issues (Nowak & Pheleps, 1994). Even though the functional and tactical essence of integration and coordination is yet to produce a handy conviction as regards to its influence on advertisement audiences and communication effect (Rotzoll, 1991), as advertisers forge ahead to incorporate the "one look and one voice" concept (Duncan, 2005), brand advertisement is losing its conventional functionality of persuading and promotional effect of stimulating audience actions. Consequently, to keep up with the market demand and the industrial shift from just persuasion to brand development through advertisement, advertisers faced the challenge of designing advertisement strategies and tactics that functionally help achieve ads primary communication objectives and executionally spark its audience behaviorally in other to develop competitive and effective brand equity (Groove et al., 2007).

Nowak & Pheleps (1994) evidently reviewed that there is still no unanimous approach of operationalizing "integration" in the entire marketing communications discipline and specifically in advertisements message strategies, meanwhile advertisers are often comfortable to merge the brand and direct response advertisement message strategies in a particular discourse as a tactical means to integrate the content of advertisement messages and implement the tenets of IMC

principles. Meanwhile, the pragmatic connections between IMC and Advertising exceed the industrial rescue that the conceptual proposition and the tactical functions of IMC has offered the practice of advertising especially towards message design and strategies, the duo are also connected as functioning communication tools whose impacts and effects are hardly and tenuously tested correctly. Manifestly, Swain et al. (2001) relate the possible cause of the fuzzy definitional and implementation nature of IMC to the problematic practical experience faced by theorists in measuring the value and the impact of IMC itself like other marketing communication activities. Meanwhile, critique over the communicative effectiveness of advertising is obviously and continually pervasive in literature (e.g; Weilbacher, 2001).

IMC, being a newly invented means of engaging the modern audiences and consumers -if compared to the conventional ways of advertisement persuasiveness and promotional appeals- has offered extremely different ways of approaching audiences. For instance, according to Schultz et al. (1993) the strategic and tactical integration of the entire tools of marketing communications (such as public relations, direct response ads and brand ads) in a particular advertisement message content for better communication effectiveness and often brand development (Nowak & Phelps, 1994 and Grove et al, 2007). Arguably, the principle of IMC can be operatively explained in this context as the integration and coordination of all kind of marketing communications, with a distinctive tactical footing in all marketing communication disciplines. Clow and Baak (2007) affirm that the essence of IMC in advertisement is to combine the formally segregated tactical usage of advertisement message strategies. O'Guinn et al. (2009) demonstrated that using a particular message strategy is used in advertisement to achieve a particularly relevant objective and the type of message strategy used determines the classification of such advertisement.

### 2.1 Advertisement Message Strategy

Going by the rudimental explanation of advertisement message strategy and the illustrations of advertisement classification by Moriarty et al. (2012), it can be conceived that advertisements are used to achieve different communicative and promotional aims and objectives connectively to the subjective strategic commercial need for advertising. This strategic subjectivity is spelt out in ads copies depending on the adopted message style which are operatively known as the tactical approach to actualize the advertisement aimed objective. Subsequently, the types of message strategy (ads content and channels) adopted in advertisement copy determines the advertisement goal and allocates an appropriate space for the ads in the purpose of classification. For instance, brand advertisements according to Moriarty, et al. (2012) are the most prevalent types of advertisements and they are theoretically known as consumer advertisement as their primary aim almost always focus on developing a brand name, identity, and image by using the conventional advertisement appeals and creativities. Most often brand advertisement may not arouse consumers to buy the advertised product or used the advertised service but rather achieve their strategic effectiveness by creating a strong awareness of the brand names, values and image in consumers' memories. While the direct response advertisement otherwise arouse consumers' actions, purchase and response. The direct response message strategy can be incorporated in advertisement copies or differently by any other means of marketing communication (such as; direct mails, newsletters, promotions and coupons). In any form, emphases are always made in direct response messages on the advertised brand's contact, such as telephone number, web address, email address or brand retails or vendors locations (Moriarty, et al. 2012; and Nowak 1989). The work of Nowak and Phelps (1994) has charged future research to empirically examine the incidence of integrating the message strategies of brand advertisement and direct response advertisement by noticing the strategic influence of such integration on achieving advertisement ef-

fectiveness. Long before that, James and Vanden (1989) and LeBourveau et al. (1988) have noticed the chances that the message strategic tools used to achieve the aim of brand advertising and those used in direct response advertising can be interwoven as O'Guinn et al. (2009) and Moriarty, et al. (2012) discuss and concur that the entire advertisement categories and message strategy types are commonly availed either by creatively and informatively or the duo, to achieve the peculiar communicative effect of advertisement types. Thus the integration of the communicative and promotional objectives of advertisement through the use of brand advertisement and direct response advertisement in advertisement message content is tactically the implementation of IMC tenets (Grove et al, 2007).

### 2.2 Incidence of IMC in Advertisement Message Strategy

Kliatchko proffered "a-four pillar" approach to elucidate the process and implementation of IMC. The four pillars of IMC involve the holistic implementation and utilitarian of IMC in communicating and advertising corporate brands. It is believed that the strategic process of IMC is incomplete without the tactical and coordinated plan in four levels; *stakeholders, content, channels, and results*. The inclusion of "content" as one of the important pillar of the strategic execution of IMC however does not only approve the presumptions of this study, but also provide it a theoretical kernel which other postulations of the study grow from. The pillars project the understanding that content (message) is what actually connects the consumers and audiences with the advertised brand, it is what creatively, informatively and attractively persuade customer and it is only after the persuasion other IMC phases becomes relevant (Chattopadhyay & Laborie, 2005). It is believed that the advent of digital technology has exonerated and liberated consumers thus offer them the power to actively choose and reject media contents, authorize audience to be content creators and radically encourage them to be more passionate and desperate about media messages (Schultz, 1996; and Kliatchko, 2008). Considerably IMC can only help advertisers in this regard by integrating creativity, tactics and communication tools that sufficiently assure them an effective communication with their targeted audiences.

Corroboratively, a conceptualized model by Nowak and Phelps (1994) exemplified the integration of different communication tools (public relations, brand advertising, consumer sales promotion, and direct response advertising) in advertisement. The model synchronizes the tactical application of IMC in designing of advertisement messages with the strategic coordination of communication tools, functionally to maintain the image and behavioural effectiveness of advertisement (integrated advertisement). According to Nowak and Phelps, their model was a suitable effort to theoretically reform advertising to adhere to the IMC premise. However, Grove et al. (2007) adapted the Nowak and Phelps model for an empirical approach to examine the incidence of integrated marketing communication in ads messages design, remarkably their result confirm the model genuinely, hence the possibility of integrating several communication tools in an advertisement vehicle, notably with an emphatic illustration on the integrated occurrence of brand advertising and direct response.

To an extent, the aforesaid model has manifested the possibility of integrating advertisement messages to achieve the essential purpose of communication (e.g., persuasion and information) and the promotional function (e.g., purchase and branding). Understandably, the postulations of Nowak and Phelps model conform with the recent development in defining advertisement, where most authors don't confined their definition of advertisement to just "a paid-to-persuade communication through the mass media", a more refined definition is provided by Shimp, (2000) and O'Guinn et al. (2009) stating advertisement as a communication and promotion strategy to persuade, inform, identify, attract, and so on, tactically through creative characteristics of the ads mes-

sage. Schiffman and Kanuk, (2000) and Goebel et al. (2004) corroboratively affirm that the contents and the design of advertisement messages are the essential mast and vehicle that brings ads meaning to their targeted audiences and subsequently allot them their effects. Connectedly, the fervent authors of IMC have severally and notably apportioned IMC application to communications' message development and consistency (Schultz & Schultz, 2003; Kitchen & Schultz 2003; Carlson et al., 2003; McGrath, 2005; and Zavrnik & Jerman, 2009). More conspicuously, Zavrnik and Jerman (2009) model the conceptualization and the measurement of IMC, while two of their latent variables were message-based constructs (characteristics of communications messages and unified communications for consistent message). Rationally, these are theoretical postulations that justify a diverse approach towards the implementation of the IMC principles in different marketing communication tools and specifically the integration of different communication appeals in advertisement content to achieve an integrative objective of communication and better communication clarity which are also part of the major aims of the IMC principles.

### Conclusion and Discussion

Conclusively, the conceptual model of Integrated Communications' Landscape propounded by Nowak and Phelps (1994), postulated that the conceptualization of IMC can be actualized at the campaign level and the advertisement level or both. The Nowak and Phelps Model refer to "integrated advertisement" as the adoption of more than one communication strategy in advertisement. For instance, advertising with the use of brand advertisement message strategy which is practically inclined to the conventional way of advertising together with the use of direct response advertisement which is practically inclined with the public relation discipline is un-

derstandably the approach to integrated advertisement message strategy. Conceptually, integrated advertisement message strategy according to the Nowak and Phelps approach is the incidence of brand advertisement message strategy (such as; appeals, headlines, product appraisal and so on) with the direct response message strategy (such as; urging actions, contact number, address, web links and so on) in an advertisement message design, thus, operationalized as the tactical implementation of the tenets of IMC in advertisement message and contents.

This paper gives a clear and vibrant tactical manifestation of IMC to advertisement practitioners. Both the discourse based analysis and consumer perception based analysis is empirical enough to show practitioners a judicious way of integrating advertisement in this modernized era of IMC and a particular effective way of persuading their jaded audiences. As the operationalized tactical implementation of IMC in advertising continue to become the new strategic style of advertising, especially as a record of implementing the concept of IMC, future researchers are strongly recommended to delve on the effectiveness of this new style of advertising and underscore its similarities and differences with the former conventional style of advertising. The hierarchy of effect model remains the main model for testing the effectiveness of advertisement; it would not be a futile effort to adapt such model to examine the effectiveness of the new style of advertisement (Weillbacher, 2001). It is also important to determine the possible relationship between the integrated advertisement message strategy and brand equity as scores of studies have noticed advertisement and IMC as incredible tools in the development of brand image and awareness.

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