

THE MARKETING MIX OF IMC: A MOVE FROM THE 4 P'S TO THE 4C'S

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Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

“The cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data driven, purposeful dialogue with them.”
- IMC Using Advertising and Promotion to Build Brands



IMC: The Next Generation
Available at
www.barnesandnoble.com

Innovation and communication

Today's companies, marketers and brands face an ever-changing environment and with the continuing developments in computers and communication technology, the increase in consumers' knowledge about what they want and needs, the way we communicate to consumers should change as well. A different perspective to marketing is necessary to provide for the consumer effectively and efficiently in order to build long lasting relationships.

IMC – What is it and why do we need it?

This is the principle of integrated marketing communications (IMC), “the cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these group and encouraging data driven, purposeful dialogue with them.”(1) According to Tom Duncan, author of IMC, Using Advertising and Promotion to Build Brands, “a company must move from using inside-out thinking, to using outside-in thinking.” Outside-in thinking begins with the customer and focuses on the customer's needs and wants

Perspective change to the Four C's

This change to an integrated, relationship-based marketing effort includes changing from a traditional focus on the 4 P's (product, price, place, promotion) to a marketing mix & strategy that is more focused on the consumer, the 4 C's- customer, cost, convenience, communication.

The Four C's and an example of each:

CUSTOMER - Focus on customer's needs and wants instead of just products. This makes the communication more relationship-based.

Example: A company that can manufacture a watch that can be set to play the happy birthday song on a specific date and time. If the consumer is not interested in this special feature the product is worthless, even if the manufacturer can offer it at a low cost.

COST - Focuses on what it costs a customer to own/use a product/service instead of pricing the product to make a profit. This concept makes organizations consider how much a product will cost in the long run, included such factors as

maintenance costs.

Example: If there are 2 similar, but different burger joints, but one is 3 miles farther to drive than the other. Marketing Communicators need to take the cost of driving into consideration when promoting the restaurant.

CONVENIENCE - Focus on how easy it is for customers to obtain/buy the product instead of how easy it is for companies to distribute the product. With the increase in use of the internet and phone orders, consumers do not need to leave their house to purchase which is why such things as e-commerce have been so successful.

Example: Coca-Cola has been successful based on the concept of customer convenience. They have made efforts to make their products accessible in more places than Pepsi, their main competitor; Coke is in a million more places than Pepsi according to online information.



COMMUNICATION - Focuses on two-way communication with consumers – “listening and learning” instead of one-way communication of “telling and selling”. This is the final and most important shift for organizations and their marketing strategies. Traditionally promotion included sending brand messages to consumers to get them to purchase and if they could relate to that message then they bought. This is focused on building stronger relationships through communication.

Example: A good example of this concept is the relationships we all have in our personal lives. The only way to build relationships with people is to listen to them and learn from what they communicate to you. The same is true in an effective business relationship.

INSTEAD OF JUST:

4P'S
PRODUCT
PRICE
PLACE
PROMOTION

MOVE TO INTEGRATE:

4C'S
CUSTOMER
COST
CONVENIENCE
COMMUNICATION

Benefits of Incorporating the Four C's into Strategies

The benefits associated with incorporating the Four C's into the business structure are:

- Formula for success of organization reaching consumers'
- Builds profitable customer relationships and brand name brand name

Overall profits will increase with a shift in perspective to the customer's needs and an integration of this into all aspects of the marketing strategy.

What does it all mean?

The Four C's model is effective in showing how an IMC focus is different than the traditional marketing focus and focuses on building relationships with customers. This does not mean the the Four P's are not important, however integrating both the Four P's and C's into the marketing communications strategy will help effectively build a strong brand.

References

1. IMC Using Advertising to Build Brands, 2002
2. IMC: The Next Generation, 2003



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