

Impact of Integrated Marketing Communication on Consumer Buying Behavior

A case study of Unilever Pakistan, City Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan

¹Mukhtiar Ali Erri, ²Arman Khan, ³Javed Ahmed Shaikh, ⁴Salar Hussain

ABSTRACT: *Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is one of the most contentious areas of research, the concept marking a constant progress from the simple coordinating of promotional tools to a complex strategic process. Further to the evolution of modern marketing methods, where IMC has become a main way of achievement the objectives of corporations, there is a need to identify opportunities to increase its impact on consumer behavior. Therefore it is of great interest, the relatively recent approach found in the literature, according to which IMC works explicitly through all the four typical elements of the marketing mix: product, price, placement and marketing communications. In this context, this paper intends to clarify some aspects regarding the effects of IMC on the consumer behavior, materialized in the consumer decision-making process. The research of integrated marketing communication influence on consumer decision-making process is a complex activity involving in-depth analysis of the relationship and instruments through which this influence is exercised*

Keywords: *Consumer, Integrated Marketing Communication, Consumer Buying Behavior, Consumer Perception, Marketing Mix and Marketing Communication Tools.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Growth and endurance have become tough for consumer goods producing companies like Unilever in today's highly competitive and unpredictable market place where consumer goods producing companies need to be vigilant and attentive from all facets of targeted market segment. Companies mainly producing consumer goods do not look at the size of targeted market segment, but primarily they focus on returns, which they receive in form of their aggregate sales and revenues from targeted market segments. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has become an integral marketing instrument for multinational companies such as Unilever, which are engaged in consumer goods businesses in multiple global markets at the same time. IMC principally involves collecting accurate and exact information about the dappled market segment through using different marketing tools and

¹ Lecturer, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazir Abad (Nawabshah)

² Lecturer, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazir Abad (Nawabshah)

³ Lecturer, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazir Abad (Nawabshah)

⁴ Lecturer, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University, Shaheed Benazir Abad (Nawabshah)

techniques to devise the profitable strategies to coup up the problems faced by them. The eventual idea of IMC or contemporary marketing emphasizes the demand for possessing thorough and careful information about the requirements, motivations, attitudes and activities carried out by consumers in targeted market segments.

Consumer goods producing companies like Unilever divulges the fact that the orthodox concept of term marketing has been demolished by market forces as in past it was thought that marketing is only about discovering people and convincing them to purchase the goods produced by a company. On the other hand, modern marketing i-e IMC advises marketers to satisfy consumers through company's offerings while identifying consumers' core interests in offerings of the company, which is the essence of consumers' orientation. Implementing marketing mix approaches with IMC is the holistic approach of using marketing mix strategies to generate and build strong and long lasting relations with targeted market. The main purpose of this Research Paper is to explain the mechanism and influence IMC on consumers' buying behavior decision-making process.

II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To know the consumers perception about Unilever products
2. To analyze the impact of IMC on consumers 'buying behavior
3. To know the consumer preferences tools for IMC.

III. SIGNIFICANCE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This study would help Unilever to know the consumers perception and preferences with respect to its execution and put into practice IMC activities. It will help Unilever efficiently use these tools of marketing mix and to associate IMC activities. This study will furthermore facilitate Unilever to exploit and use all possible tools of marketing mix more efficiently and effectively in its targeted market segment.

IV. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

A wide range of restraints may be faced while conducting this research in city of Nawabshah such as a university teacher cannot do alone all the substance individually, this research is not only a type of time consuming work, but it also needs an ample of funds and sufficient workforce as it can be completed and implemented timely. Besides this, the targeted market of Nawabshah city wouldn't give adequate information about the impacts of different tools used by consumers of Unilever products used in IMC

V. LITERATURE REVIEW

This segment of the study defines the integrated marketing communications, marketing communications in contrast to the old practices of marketing communications, development of IMC and its conversion by marketers and marketing agencies. Due to shifting trends in international market, companies have started practicing the integrated marketing communication instead of traditional marketing mix. Schultz (1998) introduced "business process" to define IMC which most appropriately describes the nature and the attributes of integration as IMC is

not only associated with the integration activity of several functional areas of communication and marketing but also involves organization's other handy areas which are consumer driven. Furthermore, the concept of "business process" braces the observations of researchers Fill (2002) and Jones (2004) that the approach IMC has become from being considered exclusively as a process of communication, to the degree of a management process. Moreover, marketing communication enables to efficiently support the company in drawing out the favorable consumers' feedback (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). The IMC tactically started substantial when organizations considered IMC as a set of implementations which rivet development, planning, effective execution, and evaluation of measurable, strongly coordinated, effective brand communications programs interacting over time with stakeholders, potential consumers, prospects and other associates, appropriate internal and external audiences (Schultz, 2004). Thus, effective IMC is a component of an effective strategy of brand equity. Furthermore, effectively focused IMC explore and enhance the brand efficacy of the company's portfolio which effectively influences brand and brand equity.

The companies which apply IMC are customer-centered, making reliable connection with the target audiences and market, procedures, models and systems for associating the business and management functional areas of the organization as disclosed by research of Low (2000), Levinson (2001) and Zahay et al. (2004). The adjacent communication between consumers and organization affirmed to support the implementation of IMC by catering information about consumers and getting the feedback. Adverse market ambiance characterized by close competition and a deficiency of exploitive opportunities, dynamic and strategic environments described by rapid advance technologies and expeditiously changing needs and preferences of consumers are acknowledged to have a compelling impacts on business outcomes and performance (Rust et al. 2004). The aspiration to get the competitive edge in such circumstantial estate may administer impulsion for organizations to execute the IMC practices to facilitate the effective strategic activities.

Direct marketing is defined as personal interface or communication between the customer and marketer. As Kallmeyer and Abratt (2001) elucidated that personal communication contemplated as more efficient as it provides prompt feedback informing the communicator about the delivery of message conveyed or nit conveyed appropriately. The main purpose of direct marketing is to get the immediate feedback of the customer. Direct marketing tactics includes door to door selling where sales persons improve and augment customer loyalty and retention, direct mail and telemarketing. As Curtis (1999) asserted that due to the revolution of high technology communication the least preferred door to door selling has revived its importance through advance high technological communication tools which includes telephone, emails and data base. Data base permit the firms to amend the preferred target audiences, then segment them effectively and communicate with them directly. Emphasizing the importance of direct marketing Krishnan (2001) stated that manufacturers' use their retailer network as an effective direct marketing tool. According to the researcher Geller (1998) direct mail being the most important strategy used to recognize the customers about their importance and compatibility.

Direct marketing permits the marketers to communicate with the customers personally but due to limited resources and time direct marketing needs an integration and coordination with other indirect marketing tools like sales promotion which supports consumers in brand identification, recognitions and retention. Sales promotion is more result and action determined which is executed to encourage consumers to purchase products. As Fill (2002) termed sales promotion as "short term inducements to consumers purchasing activity".

Firms use diverse techniques to bring their mission of selling and purchasing. Different sales promotion techniques have been adopted by firms to cater to the large audience. These techniques include discounts, coupons, price reduction, premium contests and other techniques like trade promotion which consists of packaging, labeling and point of purchase display. Implementation of sales promotion techniques requires short time period to full fill short and

specific objectives. Sales promotion is the most effective communication tool and praises other mass communication strategy, including personal selling and advertising but it is not unlimited in its practices and failed to be the substitute of personal selling and advertising (Eagle & Kitchen, 2000). Hence, these kinds of limitations made sales promotion practices and techniques more coordinated and integrated with other strategies consisting of public relations and advertising.

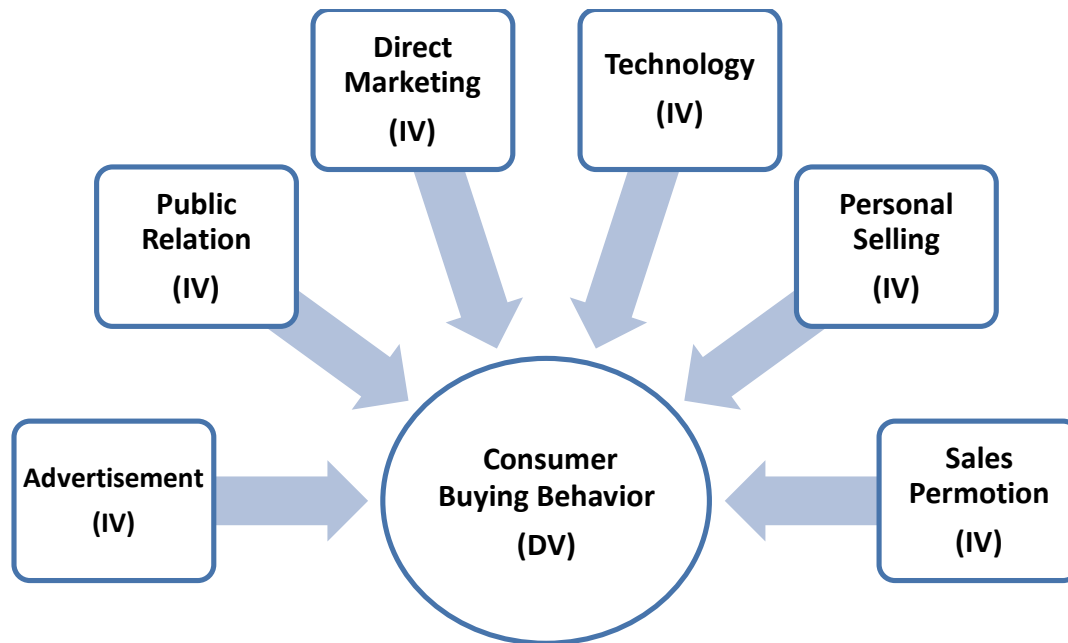
Advertising is an activity which builds a brand identity, brand recognition and promotes products making firm's reputation in the market. Tellis (2006) argued that advertising administers details of organization, product/ services, brand identity and supports in identifying the role and performance of products/ services for each targeted consumer. Integration tactics have been added by practitioners as now advertising campaigns has been designed to provide knowledge about the need then information of the product rather than enforcing or motivating the consumer to make prompt buying decisions. One of the rapidly flourishing extrinsic factor is advanced technological aspects in the globalized market (Berthon & Campbell, 2008). The impact of technology advancement changes the culture and implications of the management, hence the dynamic field of IMC is the development of communications through advance and interactive technology known as media, specifically the Internet. Online plat forms enforced marketers to emphasize on specified and targeted market (Steinbock, 2000). Marketers practicing cohesive, coordinated and effective integrated program that effectively communicate and persuade consumers.

VI. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is using qualitative descriptive research approach. The descriptive research describes and uncovers the new facts, meanings and gives a description of individuals, groups or situations under the researched area through interviews and surveys questionnaires. This descriptive design of research is well known combination of population, sampling and data collection, which are based on re-presentational and analysis (Devers & Frankel, 2000). The qualitative descriptive study is acquiescent specifically for achieving the direct feedback from the target audience in a particular environment and seeks for the descriptive validity explained by another researcher Creswell (2003). This study consists of mixed method approach (quantitative as well as qualitative research) and based on primary and secondary data. A range of consumers who daily use Unilever's products from college, university students to professionals and retailers belonging to Nawabshah filled the questionnaires survey and in this way apt data collected for identifying the impact of "IMC on Consumers Buying Decisions". This study furthermore uses a convenient sampling technique; a form of non- probability sampling. The non-probability sampling for the questionnaire survey was consisted of 250 consumers living in Nawabshah vicinity belonging to above stated populations. To accomplish the appropriate criteria the questionnaire based on close-ended questions

on 5 points Likert scale, were distributed in universities, colleges, banks, hotels, hospitals and superstores situated in different areas of the Nawabshah.

VII. RESEARCH VARIABLES FRAMEWORK



VIII. DATA ANALYSIS

The total estimated population of Nawabshah city is 220,000 (0.22 million) and population of middle class and above is around 121,000 (0.121 million), so population being studied in this research is both SEC A and BAC Nielsen. This study has used both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The practical results taken from survey questionnaires of retailers like superstores were evaluated by following the practice, including written out data, organization, coding, and then personal reflections were note. After that similarity of constructs, patterns, differences, generalized and formalized through cataloging and filtering (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Both SPSS and Microsoft office were used to bring about the analysis. The complete returned questionnaires' data after coding was transformed into the 17.0 version SPSS data file. Expressive and Frequency analyses were done and data were analyzed. To find the reliability the scale test of Cronbach alpha coefficient was pertained to compute the consistency of the Variables and Constructs (Weitxman, 1999). Tested items found near to 0.76, which is a satisfactory value to retain for this study. The respondents' reactions on questionnaires were analyzed against the research objectives. Consumers' outlook has been illustrated in this section. In this research method, we have summarized the consumer survey procedure, now the empirical data assembled and its findings are symbolized. In general 165 respondents filled the questionnaires completely, which were acceptable out of 250 questionnaires

IX. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

The demographics of the spectators have been demonstrated in below given demographic matrix of the consumers. Data for this study collected from Nawabshah city, consumers with common considerate of marketing activities were the beleaguered audiences who were accessible in colleges, universities, hospital, banks and supermarkets and at other public places. Total 165 questionnaires were fully filled out of 250, which are consisted of 78 males and 87 females. The data in demographic matrix further designates 37.8% of the total consumers are belonging to age range from 30 years to 45 years being the major part of consumers' survey, among them 28.5% are between 18 to 30 years of ages, 12.7% are younger than 18 years and 21.2% of them are older than 45 years. This demographic matrix also depicts 41.8% of total surveyed population have an income of Rs 25,001 to Rs 35,000 per month. 24.8% are earning from the later amount, 13.9 are earning less than Rs 18,000 while 19.4% of them are earning Rs 18,001 to Rs 25,000 per month. This demographic matrix also highlights education levels of the targeted population, among them 70.3% are possessing graduation degrees like BA/BBA/MBBS/BE and BSC while 17.5% of them are post graduates, 4.8% of them have their Matriculation qualifications in hands only and remaining 7.3% are college students or just have completed their intermediate degrees.

X. CONSUMERS' DEMOGRAPHIC MATRIX

S #	Demographic Details	Frequency	Percentage	S#	Demographic Details	Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender			3	Income		
	Male	78	47.3%		Less than Rs 18000	23	13.9%
	Female	87	52.7%		Rs 18,001 to Rs 25,000	32	19.4%
					Rs 25,001 to Rs 35,000	69	41.8%
					35,001 and above	41	24.8%
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2.	Consumer Age			4	Education		
	Younger than 18 years	21	12.7%		Matriculation	8	4.8%
	18 to 30 years	47	28.5%		Intermediate	12	7.3%
	31 to 45 years	62	37.8%		Graduation MBBS/BE/BA	116	70.3%

	45 and above	35	21.2%		Masters/MA/ PG/ME/MBA	29	17.5%
		165 TR				165T R	

XI. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH VARIABLES

The descriptive analyses of the implications of research variables show that except personal selling and public relations all variables have a affirmative relationship. With the high mean value of 4.33 of Direct Marketing, consumers are highly subjective by direct marketing activities which have an impact on their buying behavior. Similarly, technology with 3.73 and sales promotion with 3.76 mean value have high positive impacts towards consumers purchase decisions of products of Unilever. Personal selling with mean of 2.7 elaborates that comparing to other variables consumers are less influenced and have less impact of personal selling activities on Consumer Buying Behavior. The table given below shows the descriptive analysis of the research variables.

XII. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH VARIABLES MATRIX

S#	Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Direct Marketing	165	4.3308	0.37388
2	Technology	165	3.7302	0.32252
3	Sales Promotion	165	3.7654	0.37334
4	Public Relation	165	2.4909	0.08334
5	Personal Selling	165	2.7249	0.59444
6	Advertisement	165	3.3569	0.89075

XIII. CONSUMERS' PREFERENCES TOWARDS BUYING BEHAVIOR

For finding out the importance and consumers' preferences of choosing tools for making their buying decisions of Unilever's products, the respondents ranked the given five tools of IMC. With understanding of 1 being the most chosen and 5 being the least preferred, out of 165 respondents 67, means 40.60% of total respondents chosen advertisement as an dominant factor in their buying behavior, among them 20.60% means 34 people preferred technology as an influential driver in their buying behavior. 17.6% means 29 of total respondents preferred the Direct Marketing, 13.9% and 7.3% chosen Sales Promotion and Personal selling respectively. The below illustrated table gives a lucid picture of consumers' preferences that which tools are more valuable for consumers buying behavior.

XIV. IMC TOOLS RANKING MATRIX

<i>S#</i>	<i>Tool</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Ranking</i>
1	Advertisement	67	40.60%	1
2	Sales Promotion	23	13.9%	4
3	Technology	34	20.60%	2
4	Personal Selling	12	7.3%	5
5	Direct Marketing	29	17.6%	3
	N	<u>165</u>		

XV. . RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS:

1. **H1:** There is significant impact of advertising on consumer buying behavior.
2. **H2:** There is significant impact of Technology on consumer buying behavior.
3. **H3:** There is significant effect of direct marketing on consumer buying behavior.

XVI. CONCLUSION

The main objectives of this research were to uncover the effect of IMC on consumers buying behavior, which helps to understand the consumers. This study verifies the significance of IMC practices and concludes that IMC is fit to target consumers, because IMC practices indicating that consumers are largely influenced by IMC implementations. After analyzing the consumer's data, it is confirmed that previous research literatures are valid and appropriate for this study. This study has identified that the most important tools of IMC are advertising and sales promotion as compare to rest of others factors, because these are very essential tools to attract the intension of consumers.

In this model era, people are more engaged on social media, internet and other online activities. It became possible just because of technology, which is integral tool of IMC. Nowadays people do not prefer traditional marketing because consumers are becoming more aware about different varieties of brand an services as well by the help of social media and it could be best defined as the tool of interaction which may be helping dimension for the marketers.

On the basis of consumers feedback this study ended that IMC should be practiced from all the angles of marketing tools.IMC is very effective aspect for all the marketers and companies, because consumers are more relying on easy access, which only possible through IMC tools rather than traditional marketing.

XVII. RECOMMENDATION

According to the study IMC is the result of consumer's intentions, it has changed because of modernization. Therefore, it is being recommended to the marketers that they must apply IMC tools to capture the attention of consumers.

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