INTRODUCTION TO MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Describing the communications process
- Understanding how marketing communications work
- Appreciating how information is processed
- Explaining the purchase decision process

Definition of marketing communications

"Marketing communication or promotion is one of the elements of the marketing mix and is responsible for putting the marketing offer to the target market. It is the planned and integrated communication activity that communicates with an organisation’s stakeholders."  
(Fill, C., 2002)

Syllabus Reference: 1.1–1.3, 1.5, 2.8
The communications process

Shannon and Weaver’s simple model of communication (1958) shows the various stages of the communication process.

Opinion formers and leaders

The effectiveness of the process is also determined by:

- The communication environment
- The mood of the people involved in the process
- Opinion formers and opinion leaders

Opinion formers tend to be ‘experts’ such as travel journalists and their messages are seen to be more believable than a travel advertisement.

Opinion leaders tend to be from one’s own peer group who may have an interest in a topic. Alternatively, they could be members of pressure groups or celebrities who are admired by particular target audiences.

Word-of-mouth communications

Word-of-mouth communication is highly credible.

Persuasive communications must be:

- Credible – if the source is seen to be objective
- Attractive – if consumers can identify with the source
- Powerful – if the source can reward or punish
Multi-step models

Multi-step models reflect life more accurately than simple models because they show how people talk to and influence each other.

How marketing communications work

No one model can explain how marketing communications work. The AIDA model was an early attempt to explain how an advertising’s target audience might pass through a number of steps, with attention being the first and most important one.

The Heightened Appreciation model

The heightened appreciation model is another tool that helps determine advertising strategy. It suggests that, by using consumer research to identify a key attribute of a product and linking that to the brand, the consumer is able to associate with brand attributes.

**Prue’s (1998) alphabetical model** attempts to present advertising from a customer orientation perspective, helping a customer appreciate the item, that interest is then stimulated by brand recognition, that persuasive communication makes an impact and that eventually changes the perceptions of a brand’s attributes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appreciation → Interest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Branding → Stimulate recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication → Persuasive impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desired effect → Perception change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hall’s Four Frameworks model

Hall (1992) suggests four frameworks that are used in advertising:

- **Sales** – messages to shift product, e.g. direct response advertising
- **Persuasion** – moving buyers through sequential steps
- **Involvement** – drawing consumers into an emotional response
- **Salience** – using conspicuous presentation

Au: Please check if it is OK as edited
Strong vs. weak theories of advertising

Jones’s strong theory of advertising views consumers as passive and maintains that advertising can persuade and generate repeat purchase behaviour.

Ehrenberg’s weak theory of advertising views consumers as active problem solvers, driven by habit to make a purchase. He suggests the Awareness–Trial–Reinforcement (ATR) framework.

ATR framework reminds people of a need and is a more likely model for how purchase behaviour comes about.
Information processing

The vast quantities of information that consumers receive means that they inevitably ‘process’ information to screen it out. Perception and attitudes both influence and are influenced by marketing communications.

**Perception** is how individuals see and make sense of their environment.

For marketing communications, it involves:

- Attention getting, with free samples or music, voice overs and camera angles.
- Organizing stimuli by packaging, shapes, colour and brand names.
- Encouraging the correct interpretation, e.g. by using involvement and emphasizing the correct attributes.

**Attitudes** are an expression of a person’s feelings. They are learned through past experiences and may be formed by external factors, e.g. age, sex, class, peers, culture.

Marketing communications tries to influence the following:

- What consumers know/have learnt about a product – **cognition**.
- How people feel about a product – **affection**.
- What people will do with regard to a product (buy or reject) – **conation**.

When faced with a product one learns something about it, then feels something about it and then does something – either reject it or (repeat) purchase.
Changing attitudes

Marketing communications can change attitudes by modifying negative attitudes, and which in turn can change purchase behaviour.

Attitudes can be changed by marketing in the following ways:

- Changing the product itself and its description
- Changing misunderstandings
- Changing attribute priorities
- Changing perception
- Changing brand associations

However, consumers modify or are selective with the messages they absorb.
The purchase decision-making process

Understanding the stages buyers pass through and the influencing factors helps identify what information consumers require, and when and how they use it.

The nature of purchasing

How lengthy the decision-making process is depends on the nature of the purchase. There are three types of decision-making:

- **Routine problem-solving** generally concerns low-priced, fmcg products
- **Limited problem-solving** generally involves a new or unfamiliar brand so that there is some degree of information seeking
- **Extensive problem-solving** involves the consumer making a more detailed search for information and spending longer on the evaluation of alternatives
Perceived risk
Buyer behaviour is often related to the perceived risk

Types of risk
Performance – will it do the job?
Financial – will it be of good value?
Social – what will others think?
Ego – how will it make me feel about myself?
Physical – is it safe?
Time – have I got time to investigate this product?

The level of involvement in a purchase relates to the purchase importance and the perceived risk

High involvement purchases require an active information search so that rational messages about product attributes are needed. This might involve visual demonstrations, using opinion formers and guarantees/warranties

Low involvement purchases require less effort and need more of an emotional appeal to be used. This might involve using branding or celebrity endorsement
Communication appeals

Appeals tend to be based around emotional criteria or those of a more rational/logical nature

Types of appeal

- Price/value
- Quality
- Start appeals/testimonials
- Ego
- Fear/anger
- Sensory
- Sex, love and social acceptance
- Novelty
- Experience of staff/customer service
- Security – reassurance
- Aspiration – luxury goods

Likeability in communications

Advertisements that are liked are more likely to be enjoyed and remembered by consumers and in turn are more likely to generate sales

Likeability relates to the personal meaningful feeling that an advert can create in individuals
Ethics and corporate social responsibility

Ethics relate to the rights and wrongs relating to business and corporate social responsibility relates to organizations taking responsibility for how their actions affect others. This can relate to health and safety, environmental and other such issues.

If product claims are made, they should be true and companies need to recognize their responsibilities to society as a whole.

Key CSR marketing communication issues:

- Advertising to children
- Depiction of women in advertising
- Product labelling
- Confusion pricing
Hints and Tips

There is no one model that can be used to explain how marketing communications work because of all the different contexts in which marketing communications are used and because of the complex nature of individuals. Consequently, this is a fascinating and complex area of study.

Key topics:
- Appreciating word-of-mouth communication and how it can be maximized
- Applying multi-step models to the use of opinion leaders and opinion formers in campaigns
- Understanding how attitudes are an influence and can be influenced by marketing communications

Ensure that you can distinguish between emotional and rational messages and look at the two views on how advertising might work, so that you can decide if you agree with the ‘strong’ or ‘weak’ view of advertising.

The Knowledge Hub on the CIM website www.cim.co.uk is a useful reference point and within the site, www.shapetheagenda.com will allow you access the debate on contemporary issues. You can also go to www.cimvirtualinstitute.com and www.marketingonline.co.uk for additional support and guidance.