

An evaluation of the strategic application of integrated marketing communications...



An Evaluation of the Strategic Application of Integrated Marketing

Communications for Dove Introduction The pace of change in the marketing communications industry has accelerated with the advent of the Internet and new media technologies.

New technologies create new ways for marketers to reach consumers and are having an impact on the more traditional media, in terms of greater fragmentation of these media (Belch & Belch). For the purpose of this report, the official website of Dove will be critically evaluated. With effective use of the response hierarchy models, an analysis will be conducted on how Dove is exploiting the Web for influencing consumers. The Role of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) “ Marketing communications is a management process through which an organisation engages with its various audiences. Through understanding an audience’s communications environment, organisations seek to develop and present messages for their identified stakeholder groups, before evaluating and acting upon the responses. By conveying messages that are of significant value, audiences are encouraged to offer attitudinal and behavioural responses” (Fill 2005, pp.

7). It was during the 1980s that firms started moving towards IMC, which essentially acknowledges the added value of a comprehensive plan that strategically evaluates the roles of a variety of communications tools and effectively combines these tools to provide maximum impact of communications (Belch & Belch, 2004). Traditionally there are five principal marketing communications tools which include advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and direct marketing. Purpose of the website

The website of a company can be considered as a promotional event on its

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own. The web is a place for individuals to communicate with others, organisations and individual alike (Rowley, 2004).

The primary purpose behind the Dove website is to act as a rich information source targeted at the consumer; essentially females of all age groups. Such websites are generally referred to as non-transactional brochure websites.

The website aims to provide information about the Dove brand, Dove products, Real Beauty philosophy and tools to attract users and enabling them to interact with the company. Although Dove does not sell directly to the consumer, unlike Body Shop, the website is very customer-centric due to the nature of the creative communications strategy - 'Real Beauty'.

Communications Objectives The communication objectives can vary from creating and increasing brand awareness to changing perceptions about the philosophy of the company that would ultimately affect behaviour.

Possible communications objectives may include education and information, branding and image building, affecting attitudes, and loyalty and reminding (Christopher et al, 1995). In the case of Dove, the umbrella communication objective is to provide information to effectively change the target consumer's knowledge, perceptions and attitudes towards the brand, which would eventually change behaviour. The content of the website is focused on the objective of branding, via brand building activities with the use of the marketing communications tools. The communication objectives also include dissemination of information about new and existing products, and about the Real Beauty campaign and the various activities and promotions that are linked with it, which are strongly aimed on changing mindsets of the target audience. Also included in the objectives is creating relationships (Rowley, <https://assignbuster.com/an-evaluation-of-the-strategic-application-of-integrated-marketing-communications-for-dove/>)

2004) and attaining customer loyalty, through direct interaction with customers and finding ways of making the brand more meaningful to them. Evaluation of the Response Hierarchy Models Belch & Belch (2004) believe that perhaps the most important aspect of developing successful marketing communications programmes involves a comprehension of the response process the receiver may go through and how the promotional efforts of the marketer influence responses of the target consumers.

The three renowned models of the response process include the AIDA model (Christopher et al, 1995; Fill, 2005; Belch & Belch, 2004), hierarchy of effects model and the information-processing model (Fill, 2005; Belch & Belch, 2004; Huizingh et al, 2003). The stages in all three models are represented by the cognitive, affective and behavioural stage. The hierarchy of effects model is based on the assumption that a consumer passes through a sequence of steps, which include awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase. While most of the steps in the information-processing model are similar to those of the hierarchy of effects model, a new step introduced is that of retention, which pertains to a customer retaining relevant information. The hierarchy of effects model is known to be effective in advertising (Belch & Belch, 2004; Fill, 2005) and Huizingh et al (2003) has proven through experiments, the effectiveness of the model to websites as a marketing tool. Linking Marketing Communications Tools to Response Stages An analysis is undertaken below to identify the tools that appear to be the most effective at each stage of response.

Advertising The core theme of the website is to inform the target audience about Dove's philosophy of beauty, which is that, " beauty comes in different <https://assignbuster.com/an-evaluation-of-the-strategic-application-of-integrated-marketing-communications-for-dove/>

shapes, sizes and colours”. The philosophy is aimed at touching a nerve of females of all age groups and is in stark contrast with the popular culture which bombards us with unrealistic images of physical perfection (www.unilever.com).

The brand pyramid exhibited below shows what Dove, as a brand, stands for at a glance. The website contains a section dedicated to Real Beauty which contains TV ads, inspirational articles, health and beauty articles, campaign promotions, awards, Ask the Expert feature and interactive beauty tools. There has been an argument over the effectiveness of ESPs (Emotional Selling Points) versus USPs (Unique Selling Points), wherein the former focuses on brand values based on emotion and imagery and the latter on a more functional, rational approach (Fill, 2005). Dove’s campaign clearly highlights the ESPs, as they stir a chord in the women’s heart, therefore creating both cognitive and affective responses. A slight area of concern about the Real Beauty Campaign is that while Ad Age (Neff, 2004) might consider the campaign as a step forward, with Dove’s sales increasing over the years, it is still to be seen how the campaign will be received over the long-term. Dove was initially launched with a unique functional benefit strengthened by support from dermatologists and formed a strong emotional link through its one-fourth moisturising cream.

That struck a chord with women who liked Dove’s qualities of simplicity, gentleness and truthfulness, thereby creating a strong bond of trust. The Real Beauty campaign focuses on an important issue that women are facing worldwide but it may well be seen slightly disconnected with the brand’s history and prior positioning. Sales Promotion The sales promotions offered <https://assignbuster.com/an-evaluation-of-the-strategic-application-of-integrated-marketing-communications-for-dove/>

at the website include giving out free samples of Calming Night, Ultimate Clean, Good Stuff shampoo and Real Beauty T-shirts (on ? 15 purchases). All the free sampling is done for new products which are launched within their own interactive sections on the website. These sections assume the role of interactive advertisements on the net. The tool of sales promotion is therefore effectively being used on the website to induce trial of new products and can lead to covering all the stages in the hierarchy of effects model, starting from brand awareness (cognitive stage) to leading them to the behavioural stage (ordering free samples or purchasing Dove products worth ? 15).

Direct Marketing The browser is enticed to join “ YourDove” and register for Dove Dimension e-newsletter or magazine. “ YourDove” entitles the user to previews of special offers and product innovations, articles from “ Opera. om”, access to beauty editors and expert’s advice and provides tips to create their own personalised beauty care routines. Toll free contact numbers are available on the website for customer support and emergency calls. The website provides a link to enable the browser to give feedback to Dove and “ Add Your Details” option. The direct marketing on the Dove website influence the browser at the cognitive and affective stages in the model.

Public Relations One of the most crucial aspects in the success of the Real Beauty campaign has been the effective use of PR to affect the consumers at the cognitive and then the affective stage. The “ Dove in the News” section contains a number of press releases that were published in various

newspapers and magazines. The Power of Word of Mouth (WoM) All product
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detail pages have a link to enable the browser to send the page to a friend by email. A link for the campaign for Real Beauty website (www.campaignforrealbeauty.com) is available in the Real Beauty section, which takes the browser into a detailed version of the activities related to the campaign (advertisements, surveys, Self Esteem Fund, voting by browsers on their notions of their beauty, message board for females etc.

. This provides the browsers with an online platform to engage in meaningful dialogues about the campaign by sharing their views and experiences, which results in an overwhelming experience for the browsers. This takes the concept of the effectiveness and power of WoM to a new level, thereby affecting the browser at a cognitive level and possibly at the affective level in case of the online forum, if he/she happens to read some really heart-warming experiences. Other important elements of the website There is consistency and clarity in the flow of the website and the use of brand colours, language and design aspects give a very welcoming feel to the browser. One aspect of peculiar interest in the website is the “ We’re listening” section wherein the browser can find the FAQ, store locator and contact us sections. The FAQ section contains information on Dove’s promotions and offers, the availability of coupons in newspapers and magazines and the plans of making these coupons available to Dove subscribers.

If a consumer has to track an order that he places, the only way is via emailing Dove, as they do not email the consumers about how the item is being tracked, which is a weakness of the website. It is intriguing to note that information about product ingredients, product lifetime and information <https://assignbuster.com/an-evaluation-of-the-strategic-application-of-integrated-marketing-communications-for-dove/>

about some of the brand values is in the FAQ section. Facts like Dove is committed with a limited number of organisations in donating products for charity, the company's ethical stance on animal testing and its stance on recycling and environment are only available in the FAQ section. Other information about Dove's beauty philosophy including the Self Esteem Fund etc. is also found in the FAQ section.

The problem here is that vital information about the brand is lying in a section, which is quite invisible to the browser. Notably this information can play a key role at the cognitive stage. Conclusion & Recommendations It has been noted that the Internet is having a huge impact on the marketing communications programmes of companies. The hierarchy of effects model was used to analyse how Dove is exploiting the Web for influencing consumers. In this analysis of the website, it is concluded that the marketing communications tools of advertising, sales promotion public relations, direct marketing and word of mouth have been effectively used to influence the browser at the cognitive and affective stages of response. It is seen that the tools can influence the browser at more than one stage at a particular time.

It appears that the tools of advertising, direct marketing, public relations and word of mouth, in case of Dove's website, influence the browser at the cognitive and affective levels. Sales promotion, however, seemingly has an influence on the cognitive, affective and behavioural stages of response. The website overall is quite focused on the creative communication platform of Real beauty, which is integrated into many features of the website, which influences the browser strongly at the affective stage. The weaknesses of the

website include the lack of visibility of brand values to the browser, so it is recommended that a separate section for brand values should be created.

Also, some of the aspects of the website are not integrated well, especially those pertaining to sales promotions, for which the browser has to visit another linked website. If these features were better integrated into the website, it would create a more synergising and integrated experience for the browser. Lastly, while the Real Beauty campaign, which is at the heart of Dove's marketing communications strategy, is creating waves in the media presently, not much can be said about the future of the campaign as it deviates ever so slightly from the previous positioning of the brand. Nevertheless, Dove appears to be a very caring and supportive brand. The website achieves the communications objectives satisfactorily and can therefore be deemed as successful. It influences the browser more at the cognitive and affective stages of response and lesser at the behavioural stage, which is acceptable due to the non-transactional nature of the website.

Appendix Screenshot 1 Screenshot 2 Screenshot 3 Screenshot 4 Screenshot 5 Screenshot 6 Screenshot 7 List of References Kotler, P. (2003), Marketing Management, 11th ed. , Pearson Education, Inc. Baker, J. M.

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