



Integrated marketing as management of holistic consumer experience

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Abstract In a bid to combine the two major perspectives (strategic communications and strategic brand management) of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), this article proposes a Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework. According to the framework, the key mission of IMC is to effectively manage the mediated impression of and the direct encounter with the brand, so that synergism ensues among all the interrelated elements of IMC, including research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, consumer service management, marketing message construction, and communication program execution. As such, IMC is capable of enhancing the holistic consumer experience and creating a holistic brand value structure, which can unite the consumer's sensory, emotional, social, and intellectual experiences in a new and positive way.

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1. IMC at a glance

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), a very young marketing-related discipline, is still undergoing a stage of conceptualization. While the view of IMC was previously focused on the tactical aspect of putting marketing messages together with a variety of communication tools to create a consistent brand image, in recent years it has been shifting toward a more strategic orientation. The rationale underlying this shift is very simple: if IMC refers to nothing more than tactically delivering commer-

cial messages through a mixture of advertising, public relations, special events, product placement, and sales promotion activities, then it does not deserve to include the term "integrated," the connotation of which goes beyond a mere mixture of everything without strategic discretion.

A growing number of researchers look at IMC from the perspectives of strategic communications and strategic brand management. However, a review of literature indicates the lack of a framework that combines these two perspectives into a comprehensive entirety. As a result, IMC seems like a marketing practice split by brand communicators and brand managers, both of whom claim authority over it.

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In a bid to orchestrate the aforementioned two perspectives, this article applies the experiential marketing paradigm and conceptualizes IMC within the Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework (HCEM). The proposed framework argues that IMC is capable, through the comprehensive orchestration between communication factors and brand management, of managing effectively the mediated impression of and the direct encounter with the brand. What results is a holistic brand value structure, fully reflecting the mental and physical spaces of the consumer, relevant to his or her sensory, emotional, social, and intellectual experiences.

A strategic axis focusing on the holistic consumer experience ought to run through the units of research and development, manufacturing, marketing management, and marketing communications. This brings out the synergy of interrelated elements in these units to cohort the IMC practice, which leads to a sustainable driving force of the brand usage.

2. The era of the experience economy

2.1. The Apple Store Experience

In 2001, Apple Computer Inc. began a foray into direct retailing by offering the 'Apple Store Experience.' Designed with the target consumer in mind, the Apple Store Experience offers on-site opportunities to learn and experience things that can actually be done with a computer, such as make movies, burn custom music CDs, and publish digital photos on personal Web sites. Unlike the more traditional retail setup of items being organized by type (e.g., printers over here, cameras over there), products in the Apple Store are arranged by the contexts in which people use them. With digital cameras, photo printers, and Apple's iPhoto software set up together, consumers can envision using these products in their own lives, while dreaming about the possibilities of enjoying them in different situations.

Moreover, the stores feature Apple Genius Bars, in which professional consultants are available to answer technical questions, acting as friendly liaisons to connect consumers more closely with the Apple brand. In the upstairs multimedia theater, shoppers experience the abundance and sumptuousness of the audio/visual effects the Apple gadgets are capable of producing, with the shoppers' senses receiving satisfactory treatment.

Designed to make the consumer experience more visionary, valuable, meaningful, memorable,

and enjoyable, the Apple Store not only provides Apple Computer Inc. with considerable revenue growth, but also underscores a new philosophy of marketing.

2.2. A new philosophy of marketing

In the last few years, many marketing researchers have come to the agreement that marketing's fundamental mission is to manage the consumer experience. Pine and Gilmore (1999) were the first to formally announce the arrival of the experience economy era, which requires a new philosophy of marketing that prioritizes the consumer experience of product brands. For better or for worse, the 21st century marketplace has changed strategies from selling products and services to selling consumer experiences.

In *The Experience Economy*, Pine and Gilmore (1999) assert that the marketplace is to be understood as a theatrical stage, replete with actors, scripts, and audience (consumer) participation. Central to their thesis is the notion that companies now market and sell much more than just products, because consumer experience has become the core element.

Carbone (1998) also warns companies against the myopic view that they are exclusively in the product and service business (commodity business), rather than taking a broader one which recognizes the value they create as a total consumer experience. The traditional product/service value proposition is no longer adequate for reaching consumers or creating significant differentiation. Businesses must facilitate the enhancement of a seamless total experience for consumers, which determines whether products and services maintain competitive edges.

According to a study conducted by *Marketing Week* (as cited in *NZ Marketing Magazine*, 2003), 71% of senior executives in the U.S. and U.K. agreed that the consumer experience is the next big battleground. Fragmented media, clever and articulated consumers, and the rise of freethinking and savvy customers are factors that have helped create an atmosphere in which marketing is more challenging than ever. Under such conditions, experiential marketing gains importance, especially for marketers of intangible products.

Pepsi, for example, has begun to use non-traditional forms of marketing advocated by the experiential paradigm. Enjoying a sales growth of 30% in 2002 with relatively small expenditures on traditional media advertising, Pepsi now engages in marketing through live-show product placements, special events with impressive atmospheric impact

and brand community activities that tighten emotional bonding, and continuously innovated product quality. These measures, aimed at the establishment of brand strength, are characterized by enhancing the consumer experience (*NZ Marketing Magazine*, 2003).

2.3. Brand value structure and consumer experience

Recently, [Pralhad and Ramaswamy \(2004\)](#) challenged marketing strategists and executives alike to consider a completely new paradigm for value creation. Their basic premise suggests that future-thinking corporations should shift strategic focus from managing resources and capabilities to managing the consumer experience as the primary source of value creation. With the convergence of industries, technologies, and active consumers, the role of the consumer in today's business system has changed. Thus, the future of competition rests on a new approach to value creation with a holistic brand value structure, the key function of which is to enhance the consumer experience at various dimensions.

As [Pralhad and Ramaswamy \(2004\)](#) emphasize, firms, in order to be successful in value creation, must focus on a new set of building blocks: in-depth dialog with customers, transparency to facilitate this potentially intrusive interaction, new kinds of access to information, and the freedom to exchange information (to assess and share risks). Via these building blocks, marketers are in a better position to excel in engineering a brand value structure that is carved out to enhance the consumer experience.

In the past, companies and consumers in the value creation process were prescribed to have distinct roles of production vs. consumption. Products and services contained value, and markets exchanged this value from the producer to the consumer. But in the experience economy, as the marketplace moves from the conventionalist product-centered notion toward the experientialist consumer-centered notion, the distinction between production and consumption disappears. Increasingly, consumers are involved in the processes of both defining and creating value, and the co-created experience of consumers through the holistic brand value structure becomes the very basis of marketing.

Consider, for example, Blue Nile, the Internet-based diamond marketing company. Since 2003, Blue Nile has employed a co-created experience approach to become the largest engagement ring brand in the United States. Its website invites

customers to browse diamonds priced at half the cost of those found in regular retail stores, choose a gemstone that best fits their criteria, and select a ring setting. Blue Nile then displays the ring image, lists a price, and offers the custom design for sale. In this way, the company works earnestly with prospective consumers through a personalized interactive service system in designing their rings into the best possible and most desired mode. In addition, a fast delivery system ensures that the designed ring reaches its terminal owner on time. Should the consumer change his or her mind and want to adjust the ring's original mode, an arrangement is made immediately to fulfill that wish. Lacking many of the push and pull forces provided by handsomely advertised messages, the Blue Nile experience spreads itself among consumers via word-of-mouth and journalistic exposure.

Rather than being attributable to the gimmick of high-tech Internet marketing, the secret of Blue Nile's success lies in its holistic brand value structure. The customer's sensory involvement in the process leads to an enjoyable consumer marketing experience.

2.4. Experiential marketing paradigm

As [McCole \(2004\)](#) summarizes, the crux of the experiential marketing paradigm lies in extending the concern of marketers beyond the realm of consumer satisfaction into that of attaching the consumer experientially to the product/service. Thus, the traditional marketing concept that places emphasis solely on consumer satisfaction is no longer in tune with the experience economy. Marketers are faced with the challenge of finding ways in which consumer commitment is commensurate with the enhancement of unique and enjoyable experiences.

Starbucks, the specialty coffee retailer, is one of the great 21st century success stories that owes its achievements to the experiential marketing paradigm. Considered one of the most admired companies today, Starbucks has grown from a single store in Seattle 33 years ago to 5945 outlets in United States and 2392 more in 28 countries, today. In fiscal year 2003, the company posted revenues of \$4.1 billion.

Based on the experiential marketing paradigm, the company has successfully turned a pedestrian commodity into a Starbucks lifestyle experience, in which the coffeehouse becomes a gathering place. It is not just a shop that offers gourmet cups of coffee, but also a center for socializing and intellectual discussion, particularly among students and young urban professionals. This type of unique

offering is relevant and differentiated. In its stores, Starbucks consumers will find comfortable chairs, wireless Internet connections, and even downloadable music selections. Furthermore, through a never-ending cycle of product innovations, Starbucks welcomes its target audience to express their opinions. The end result is an enjoyable experience for a broad range of consumers, including students, urban professionals, and arts workers.

Simply stated, the experiential marketing paradigm represents a divergence from the more traditional teachings of revitalizing, rethinking, realigning, and refocusing both concepts and functions. This paradigm seeks to identify attitudes and value sets held in common across an audience, although demographic and lifestyle characteristics of members might be quite diverse. The fundamental idea is to stretch beyond the traditional boundaries of marketing manufactured and service products into a realm that focuses on what experiences the product may generate to make daily life more enjoyable.

3. Two perspectives of IMC

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), an oft-discussed but divergently conceptualized marketing-related discipline, has never been seriously viewed from the experiential marketing paradigm. As such, IMC seems to be out of touch with the emerging but important trend of placing marketing management and communication in the context of the experience economy. Thus, it is both theoretically and practically appropriate to combine major perspectives of IMC by applying the experiential marketing paradigm, in order that the overarching task of today's marketers (consumer experience management) may be duly incorporated into the conceptualization of IMC.

Before we engage in an in-depth discussion regarding how IMC is conceptualized with the experiential marketing paradigm, it is necessary to take a look at the two major, but distinct, perspectives of IMC: strategic communications and strategic brand management.

3.1. IMC as strategic communications

The most resonant call for elevating IMC to the altitude of strategic communications came in the late 1990s, when Shultz (1998) strongly expressed his view that the brand is the very key to IMC. As he argues, the brand is supposed to be the hub of what consumers want, need, and consider valuable. To achieve this objective, it is required that strategic

communication functions of IMC be brought into full play.

In essence, the strategic communications perspective of IMC involves blending various communication devices (e.g., publicity, advertising, sales promotion, etc.) into a unified and preferable brand image in the marketing campaign. Generally, this perspective puts forward two basic propositions for IMC:

- (1) IMC is a coordinated marketing communication process, which focuses on unifying a firm's communication efforts across the spectrum of marketing communication disciplines to target multiple audiences with a message congruent with their expectations;
- (2) IMC is to facilitate one-voice as well as situational brand communication, which emphasizes unity among various communication vehicles and promotional tools to reflect brand image that, in addition to being consistent in different contexts, is also preferred by different target consumers.

Duncan (2001), the well-known strategic communication theorist of IMC, further elaborates that there are five strategic communication elements for generating effective IMC. First, IMC depends on cross-functional design with support from top and senior managers. The second element, the outside-in database, helps to determine consumer perceptions and market trends, and is at the center of IMC. The outside-in database acts as an engine for the sequential various marketing communication activities. Third, marketing messages and activities, operating in a synergistic manner, must follow the principles of consistency, integration, clarity, systematization, economics, and concentration. The fourth element relates to the wide scope of target audiences, who consist of customers, prospects, and end consumers, as well as all selected target audiences, including governmental agencies, consumer rights advocates, and community groups. Finally, it is suggested that a successful brand should be based on a special relationship with multiple audiences, underpinned by two-way and symmetric communications.

In sum, from the perspective of strategic communications, IMC is understood as integrating all the communication factors inside and outside the corporate organization, in pursuit of a communication environment in which the brand represents itself through the multi-facets of communication endeavors geared around building a consistent and preferable brand image. Thus, the target consum-

ers may perceive the brand through strategically integrated marketing messages.

3.2. IMC as strategic brand management

In addition to concentrating on communication factors, either tactically or strategically, researchers have begun to conceptualize IMC from the perspective of strategic brand management. In line with this, the study of IMC is conducted more in the spectrum of total quality management and dual brand positioning. This perspective, more pronounced in updating the conventional 4ps theory of marketing management (product, price, place, and promotion) to the contemporary marketing practice, is characterized by two principles:

- (1) Strategic brand management is an alignment of total quality management with IMC;
- (2) Brand positioning should emphasize both functionality and symbolism.

In the mid-1990s, the techniques of total quality management (TQM) began to be employed in combination with IMC for strategic brand management (de Chernatony, 1996). The most notable TQM/IMC project from this period was the Awareness, Trial, and Usage study, which was aimed at measuring the effectiveness of (1) marketing communications in improving consumer awareness of the brand, (2) promotional offers in increasing consumer trial of the brand, and (3) manufacturing in strengthening consumer recognition of product quality. The findings of the project indicate that all three measures help achieve the result of maintaining continuous consumer usage of the brand.

Haynes, Lackman, and Guskey (1999) systematically theorize that IMC needs to be incorporated into total quality management. As they contend, the key to comprehensive brand management is aligning total quality management principles and integrated marketing communication efforts, hence formulating synergistic strategy and execution in the manufacturing and marketing of the brand. In this way, strategic brand management becomes possible, and can produce long-lasting effects in meeting consumer needs on different levels. The combination of IMC and total quality management results in comprehensive brand management. This comprehensive brand management extends from the level of basic quality control to those of the management of employees, suppliers, distributors, marketing communication agencies, and the media.

Another essential element in IMC being conceptualized from the perspective of strategic brand

management is attributable to the dual brand positioning theory, which asserts that the functionality and symbolism of the product brand impact marketing effectiveness. Bhat and Reddy (1998), who conducted an empirical study on the consumer perceptions of different product categories, find that functionality and symbolism affect similarly on consumer evaluations of both utilitarian and expressive product brands. The mean ratings of expressive brands on the functional scale were generally around the mid-point, and ratings of utilitarian brands on the symbolic scale were also close to the mid-point. Thus, a dual brand positioning theory is proposed for brand managers, and IMC is suggested to be instrumental in positioning the brand not only in terms of high quality, but also in terms of symbolic meanings.

In sum, according to the strategic brand management perspective, IMC should be carried out in a manner in which it is aligned with total quality management and the dual brand positioning approach. With the help of strategic integration in the areas of setting brand concept, designing brand attributes, selecting brand distributorship, arranging brand service system, and planning brand message construction/delivery to tune-in with the complex and volatile expectations of the consumer, brand managers have a better chance of augmenting continuous consumer usage of the brand.

4. Proposed HCEM framework of IMC

In this era of the experience economy, the perspectives of IMC as strategic communications or strategic brand management fail to grasp the essence of IMC as a comprehensive entirety in enhancing the consumer experience. In terms of the strategic communications perspective, too much emphasis is placed on communication factors, while other marketing factors are not stressed enough. Although wider in its marketing management view of total quality management and dual brand positioning, the strategic brand management perspective gives short shrift to the understanding that IMC also serves as a strategic communication function.

Thompson (1995) and Mooy and Robben (2002) distinguish between two types of consumer experiences, mediated and lived, which form the total perception of a particular object. Conceptually, the mediated experience results from media-generated and word-of-mouth messages, containing narratives and events spatially and temporally distant from the practical context of daily life. The lived

experience results from the practical activities and direct encounters in our everyday lives, and is situated, immediate, and largely non-reflexive.

When we view IMC in terms of strategic communications, the mediated experience is largely managed. Conversely, if IMC is looked upon only from the perspective of strategic brand management, primary attention is given to the management of the lived experience. In other words, the two perspectives of IMC have to be combined to holistically cover both the mediated and lived experiences of consumers.

In order for IMC to be conceptualized as management of the holistic consumer experience, a framework is needed to incorporate strategic communication factors (for building a consistent and preferable brand image) and strategic brand management (which stresses superior product quality and offers consumers functional and symbolic meanings). As a facilitator, this article proposes a Holistic Consumer Experience Management (HCEM) framework, which applies the experiential marketing paradigm in orchestrating the said two perspectives of IMC, and thus establishes a more comprehensive perspective of IMC.

Specifically, according to the proposed Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework, the primary conceptualization guidance of IMC is grounded on the premise that strategic communications and strategic brand management should be comprehensively orchestrated (Fig. 1). The

key mission of IMC is designated as effectively managing:

- *The mediated impression of the brand*: An accumulation of media and interpersonal communication messages regarding the tangible and intangible attributes of the product brand;
- *The direct encounter with the brand*: Based on the immediate and instantaneous experience in the buying and using contexts of the product brand.

Thus, synergism is supposed to ensue in all the interrelated elements of IMC, including research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, consumer service management, marketing message construction, and communication program execution. As such, IMC as a comprehensive entirety is aimed at achieving the following four outcomes:

- (1) *Framing preferable brand vision*: The consumer may imagine, with a great deal of pleasurable anticipation, the benefits and performance they might receive from the product brand;
- (2) *Strengthening brand value and meaning perception*: The consumer not only acquires the product brand in its physical form, but is also provided with added values and meanings on cognitive, affective, and social levels;

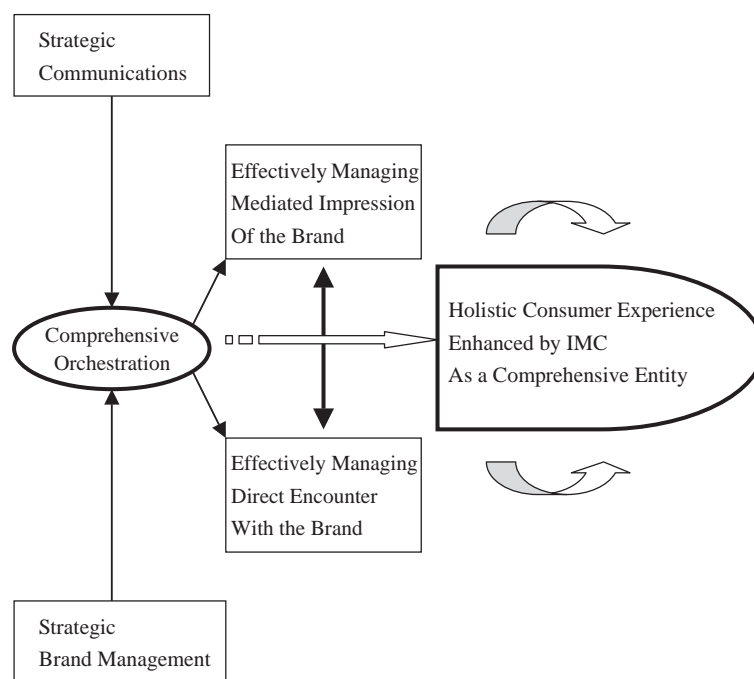


Figure 1 Holistic consumer experience management framework of IMC.

- (3) *Enriching brand memory*: The consumer may have vivid and colorful memories of the product brand, which catalyzes future repurchase intention and behavior;
- (4) *Making daily life more enjoyable as a whole*: With the holistic consumer experience being enhanced, the marketed product becomes a facilitator in bringing multi-faceted enjoyment into the daily lives of consumers.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1997), experiences derived from both media and direct encounters are organized by the consumer imagination, so that the consumer understands what is presented to the senses. In other words, a person's perception of an object is the result of an interaction between their mental faculties and environmental contexts. Imagination plays an active role in facilitating such a process. For example, on a visit to the Disney theme park, consumers may conjure up media-generated information about the park and imaginatively associate it with their personal experiences there. This leads to a more comprehensive experience, and one which might be all the more enjoyable for it. As a result, consumers may find themselves in a world that appeals not only to their physical senses, but their mental and emotional senses, as well.

Based on the experiential paradigm, Integrated Marketing Communications recognizes the dynamism in constructing the consumer experience, and thus calls for managing the consumer experience holistically in terms of both the mediated impression of and the direct encounter with the product brand, throughout the entire process of marketing management and communication. Therefore, it is premised that all marketing efforts should be directed at creating a holistic brand value structure, corresponding to the expectations and aspirations of consumers on the cognitive, affective, and social levels. The physical space in which the product brand is produced, marketed, delivered, and serviced is not congruent with the mental space inside the consumer, where the product brand is transformed into a hotbed that spawns multi-faceted enjoyment. To coordinate these two spaces and holistically enhance the consumer experience, integrative management must be employed.

In short, during all developmental stages of the consumer experience, the consumer is immersed in enjoying both the mediated and lived experiences derived from the product brand in accordance with the fantasies, dreams, and desires deep in his or her mind and heart.

4.1. The holistic consumer experience

In the Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework, consumer experience is emphasized as holistic in nature. To elaborate this argument, we must consider the experience embodiment theory developed by scholars such as Johnson (1987), Joy and Sherry (2003), Lyon and Barbalet (1994), and Smith (1996).

The experience embodiment theory distinguishes between two levels of awareness of experience: the conscious and phenomenological level, and the cognitive and unconscious level. The former makes individuals aware of their bodies in their thoughts and actions, while the latter involves all unrecognized activities, including the neural processes of message transmission and learning that enable individuals to think and act. Daily experiences are processed through these two levels of awareness, and the stockpile of information amassed is used to interpret incoming events.

According to experience embodiment theorists, all experiences spur knowledge growth, and life learning occurs on a daily basis through events such as contact with our parents, face-to-face interaction with friends, watching television and movies, etc. These experiences are then typified and crystallized into routines or rules of thumb, which can be used as skills and problem solving techniques in everyday life. Following that train of thought, as soon as a person anticipates or experiences something, they can follow the established interpretative channel and have access to all pertinent knowledge and meaning. Hence, the stock of experiences that individuals possess is by no means homogeneous.

Because of diverse experiences, individuals will respond differently to the same objectively defined product brand. Therefore, as Timmerman (2001) suggests, marketing management and communication should manage the holistic consumer experience without neglecting any single facet, so that the brand representation will be carried out through a configuration of all knowledge (conscious or unconscious), feelings, and attitudes toward the brand. Then, the brand is experienced in accordance with the consumer's most desired pattern across different segments.

Fournier (1991), among others, incorporates cognitive psychology, social psychology, and cultural anthropology in depicting relationships between consumers and product brands as construed through the tangibility, emotionality, and commonality of the brand, all of which generate aggregate impacts on consumers. *Tangibility* is defined as the objective attributes of products,

the meaning of which is resident in the product itself and perceived by consumers. *Emotionality* includes aspects of arousal and felt experience, as well as degree of emotional attachment to products, the meaning of which is borne by the affective evaluation of consumers. *Commonality* refers to shared personalities of products, the meaning of which is manifested in the social structures in which consumers exist. In other words, the consumer experience comes from the tangible, emotional, and communal relationships with the brand, thus rendering the consumer experience holistic in nature.

Putting the consumer experience concept into a more practical application theorization, Schmitt (1999, 2003) proposes that the five experiential components of consumers (sense, feeling, thinking, acting, and relating) form the base for the holistic consumer experience. Using different modules of the five components, brand marketers are able to:

- Gain original insight into the consumer world;
- Develop an experiential strategy platform;
- Create a unique and vivid brand experience;
- Provide dynamic interactions at the consumer interface;
- Innovate continuously to improve consumer lives.

Moreover, the empirical research of Dube and Lebel (2003) confirms that consumers classify pleasurable experiences into four possible types:

- (1) Sensory (or physical) pleasure that is chiefly borne of the pleasant sensations induced during the experience;
- (2) Social pleasure derived from one's interactions with others (or lack thereof, as in the pleasure of solitude);
- (3) Emotional pleasure borne of feelings, ideas, or mental images;
- (4) Intellectual pleasure from appreciating the complexities and subtleties of things around the consumer.

For instance, one can drink a bottle of Moët and Chandon champagne for sensorial experience (taste, tingle on the tongue, etc.). The same bottle can be drunk in the company of friends and open the gate to social pleasure. Riding the 'wings' of the wine to conjure up a mental picture of nostalgic good old times elicits emotional experience. Adding expertise and knowledge about the wine, the consumer experience turns into an intellectual undertaking to appreciate the subtle aromas and the winemaker's craftsmanship. All construct the holistic consumer experience of the brand.

4.2. IMC enhancement of the holistic consumer experience

At the strategic planning horizon of IMC, top executives are advised to articulate a holistic philosophy and to build an across-the-board consensus of and behavioral orientation toward it. Company organizational culture is a determinant in achieving this. Based on the theorization of Ashill, Frederikson, and Davies (2003), strategic marketing planning can be interpreted as hierarchical and as embedded in culture, with each layer being a manifestation of and derived from lower layers in the hierarchy. Tacit beliefs and assumptions, which underpin an organization in guiding its strategic planning, may significantly impact the core values and overt artifacts in formulating concrete policies. Therefore, an organizational culture that acknowledges the necessity of constructing a holistic consumer experience becomes a prerequisite in the comprehensive orchestration of strategic communications and strategic brand management. This orients IMC toward a comprehensive practice that is rooted in the teamwork that centers on consumer experience-directed goals.

At the implementation horizon of IMC, effectiveness lies in managing the entire process of every developmental stage of the consumer/brand relationship. As Hall (2002) indicates, marketing communications generate different functions in different stages of the product brand-derived consumer experience. Before actually experiencing the product itself, the consumer wants a marketing communications-fueled rationale for purchasing it. In the during-experience stage, marketing messages serve to add more value and meaning to the product. After experiencing the product, the consumer organizes his or her memories of the product brand through the verbal, visual, and aural cues provided by the marketing messages. Simply put, throughout all stages of the consumer experience, IMC functions as a comprehensive entity in maximizing the holistic consumer experience of the product brand.

Most importantly, through IMC, consumers' tastes are altered and their experiences enhanced. Very often, consumers' perceptions of the external world are 'locked in' by their experiences, and can lessen interest in new consumption opportunities, even though the opportunities are clearly available. IMC, based on the experiential paradigm, is conducive to unlocking pre-occupied knowledge and perceptions, helping consumers to develop and construct new product experiences. After product consumption, IMC serves to further activate the imagination mechanism of the consumer,

leading them to perceive how the product might bring enjoyment into their daily lives at cognitive, affective, and social dimensions.

For example, Samsung, the South Korean electronics giant, found that traditional advertising did not work well in building its brand image among American consumers. Thus, the company has shifted to an IMC campaign called the "Samsung Experience." In October 2004, Samsung created a space like a mini, high-tech theme park inside the new AOL Time Warner Center. It allows consumers to enjoy, in an unfettered and unpressured manner, the experience and imagination of Samsung products. Before consumers even get inside the store, they experience a giant, hand-activated, interactive map of New York City. The same technology that powers this map was used in the Hollywood film "The Minority Report," starring Tom Cruise. As consumers explore the map, they discover new aspects of people living in the city and how they are using Samsung technology. Once inside, consumers first see a Virtual Speakeasy, which consists of huge, rotating towers of plasma screen TVs and artwork. As consumers move around each post within the Speakeasy, they obtain different perspectives on the space, the people inside, and the characters stationed about. Finally, there is also a section in which home, office, mobile, and futuristic Samsung technologies and products are displayed. On whole, the physical space (in which Samsung products are operational and represented) becomes congruent with the mental space inside the consumer (where the product brand transforms itself into a hotbed, spawning sensory, emotional, social, and intellectual experiences in which the consumer is enjoyably immersed).

The Samsung Experience campaign has generated more than just publicity. It has also prompted a great deal of consumer feedback, including comments regarding unique Samsung experiences. This has all worked to further strengthen Samsung's presence in the U.S. market, and has achieved what traditional media advertising did not.

As the Samsung Experience example illustrates, in the experience economy, fragmented media advertising no longer serves as an adequate mechanism to maximize persuasive effect, and traditional marketing practices that concentrate solely on customer satisfaction are not sufficient to enhance the holistic consumer experience. Creative and impressive events, delicate and personalized services, exciting and memorable interactions, and tailored product benefits and performances have been proven far more effective in transforming the consumer-product relationship from pure transaction to multi-faceted enjoyment. IMC,

based on the experiential paradigm, is about more than a one-off experience; rather, it is a new way of thinking about marketing that accentuates the significance of the holistic consumer experience.

5. Discussion

5.1. Transcending separate marketing approaches

The Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework of IMC proposed by this article is capable of comprehensively orchestrating the perspectives of strategic communications and strategic brand management. Moreover, it is also in line with the call to consider the consumer as a whole person, worthy of more than experiential fragmentation.

In years past, marketers held a rather traditional, pragmatic definition of consumer behavior. This definition was one-dimensional, and confined to the narrow scope of the functionality and substitutability of a particular product brand. Now, however, many marketing researchers argue that contemporary consumer behavior is closely associated with post-modernism as a socio-cultural phenomenon, revolving around the notion of individuals engaging in consumption not to fulfill basic needs, but more in pursuit of identities of self, social groups, and culture/subculture. Another stream of consumer research, which emphasizes the role emotion/affect plays on the purchasing behavior of consumers, tilts toward the emotional aspect of marketing.

In contrast to tilting toward any single perspective, the HCEM framework takes a holistic paradigm. It suggests that marketing strategists get past seeing consumers as little more than accountants concerned only about the monetary value of the brand, or as symbolism seekers and affective romanticists who put predominant emphasis on the symbolic meanings or affective value of the brand.

5.2. Strategic integration

In terms of brand management, brand managers mindful of the experiential paradigm must first enter into the hearts and minds of consumers, envisioning how the product brand may elicit personal reactions involving senses, feelings, thoughts, and relational ideas. Thus, the concept, attributes, pricing, distributorship, and service system of the product brand can be geared around the enhancement of the holistic consumer experience.

In terms of brand communication featuring the experiential paradigm, when a marketing communication program emphasizes a certain dimensionality of the consumer experience, it must not be interpreted as an indication that other dimensionalities are unimportant and negligible. Through deciphering the personalities, needs, lifestyles, and social/cultural backgrounds of the target audiences, brand communicators formulate strategies to deliver messages and conduct activities appropriate to the various consumer characteristics. This is done through advertising, publicity, special events, personal selling, and via mechanisms of consumer–relationship management. Thus, the effectiveness of constructing the holistic consumer experience may be further intensified.

5.3. Tearing down partitions

The most noteworthy contribution of the Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework is the tearing down of departmental partitions in the strategic planning and implementation of IMC. The task of IMC, based on the experiential paradigm, is to not only present consumers with a particular buying opportunity, but also present it in a way that satisfies their consumption needs and enables further enjoyable experiences. The product development department no longer operates alone; it is advised that the product development department align with marketing managers, in order to:

- (1) Frame preferable brand vision;
- (2) Strengthen brand value and meaning perception;
- (3) Enrich brand memory;
- (4) Make daily life more enjoyable as a whole.

IMC, through comprehensive orchestration of strategic communications and strategic brand management, is capable of effectively managing both the mediated impression of and the direct encounter with the brand. Synergism ensues among all the interrelated elements of marketing the product brand, including research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, consumer service management, marketing message construction, and communication program execution. With such synergism, the physical attributes and substantive performance of the brand are incorporated into a communication framework that utilizes interpersonal interaction and media communication to build the brand image in experientially guided ways. All efforts should take into consideration consumer expectations, aspirations, and fantasies.

A strategic axis focusing on the holistic consumer experience ought to run through the units of research and development, manufacturing, marketing management, and marketing communications. This brings out the synergy of the interrelated elements in these units to cohort the IMC practice, preventing it from being hindered by lack of orchestration. IMC can then generate a comprehensively strategic effect in creating a holistic brand value structure, which can unite the consumer's sensory, emotional, social, and intellectual experiences in a new and positive way. In consequence, the IMC practice steers toward convincing the consumer that the marketed product brand is something highly worth acquiring and enjoying in their life.

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