

ninth edition

# MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

fame, influencers and agility



 Pearson

CHRIS FILL  
SARAH TURNBULL

# Marketing Communications



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# Marketing Communications

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Chris Fill and Sarah Turnbull



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KAO Two, KAO Park  
Harlow CM17 9NA  
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Tel: +44 (0)1279 623623  
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Dedicated to Karen, Johnny and Mike (CF)  
Dedicated to Simon, Daisy and Bea (ST)

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# Preface

## Why study marketing communications?

Marketing communications provides a core activity for all organisations, large and small, commercial, government, charities, educational and other not-for-profit and third-sector organisations and their various audiences. The goal is to foster engagement so that all interested parties can understand the intentions of others and appreciate the value of the goods and services offered.

The world of marketing communications continues to change, and some of these changes have caused major disruption. Technology is the principal driver of this change, the effects of which can be seen in new forms of buyer behaviour, changing organisational structures, new ways of delivering marketing communications, and of course different expectations, experiences, forms of measurement and revised organisational performance.

Many of these changes and their impact are explored in this book. It is not possible to cover them all in depth but many of the key academic and practitioner reactions to these developments are examined.

## Your career and employability

Whether you follow a career in marketing, marketing communications or any other business discipline, you will need to apply a range of skills necessary for analysing and solving problems, and for communicating ideas and solutions to colleagues and clients. This requires the ability to think critically and to apply core concepts and ideas to new situations.

When you are in your final year and starting to apply for jobs, you will need to demonstrate to potential employers that you are 'employable' and that you have the characteristics, skills and potential that help distinguish you as the individual they need to employ.

Employability is a core focus of this book. Critical thinking is developed through questions and tasks, positioned in the Viewpoint features, and Review questions, which are positioned at the end of each chapter. These questions and activities are designed to encourage you to reflect on what you have just read and thereby improve and deepen your learning.

Critical thinking is also developed through the use of theories, concepts and frameworks. These can be found in each of the chapters. In certain chapters we present a range of theories and approaches, without specifying one that is correct. You should consider the different approaches and formulate your own opinion, making a judgement about which is more appropriate and note the reasons for your decision.

The case studies included in this book are all drawn from the world of marketing communications. Many are written by agencies and practitioners. A large number of these cases have won awards, and national and international recognition. Readers are encouraged to consider the cases from a critical perspective and to think about the actions and decisions that agencies and clients have taken. The review questions that follow the cases are designed to help you apply your learning and understanding of the case itself, and with regard to the content of the chapter in which it is located.

If you have access to the online learning resources, you will find a range of multiple-choice questions. Answers are provided, so use these to test your understanding and make sure your learning is on track. These questions enable you to reflect on your learning and on where additional work is required.

In terms of employability, employees who can think flexibly and apply concepts and theories in new and perhaps strange situations to analyse and solve problems will be much more valuable to their employer. This book helps you to develop these skills. What is more, use of this book and the online resources will allow you to gain experience in using evidence to support and assess arguments. Employers value these problem-solving skills and the more you demonstrate your abilities the greater the number of opportunities that will come your way.

## The aim of this book

This is the ninth edition of *Marketing Communications* and we have developed it to reflect current issues and practices in marketing communications.

The book is positioned as an academic resource about marketing communications. The practitioner element however, is acknowledged as an important distinguishing feature of this book (Rossiter and Percy, 2013) and is reinforced in this edition. The support and endorsement provided by the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) has been continued and is much appreciated.

This book:

- Recognises the complexity of marketing communications and considers the strategic, tactical and operational aspects. Above all else, this book considers marketing communications from a contextual standpoint. This means that no one single theory is used to explain all marketing communications activities. Indeed, several theories are presented for some of the topics, and readers are encouraged to consider multiple interpretations.
- Offers a blend of academic and practitioner materials. The goal is to enable you to see the practical application of theories and concepts. This real-world orientation is designed to encourage you to reflect on your learning, to apply it to the real world, and to use real-world examples to understand marketing communications issues and problems, to help you develop your career.

In particular, this book has been written to help you in four main ways:

1. To understand and appreciate the variety of ways in which organisations use marketing communications.
2. To identify and understand some of the key theories and concepts associated with marketing communications.
3. To appreciate the way in which academic materials can be used to interpret practical aspects of marketing communications.
4. To develop insights into the reasoning behind the marketing communications activities used by organisations.

Marketing communications is a complex subject and draws on a variety of disciplines. This book has been written in the hope of disentangling some of the complexity so that you can enjoy the subject, be stimulated to want to know more and wish to engage further with the exciting and fast-changing world of marketing communications.

## About the authors

**Chris Fill** BA, MSc, is a Director of Fillassociates and was a Principal Lecturer at the University of Portsmouth. He was also a Fellow and, for 15 years, Senior Examiner for Marketing Communications at the Chartered Institute of Marketing. He has worked with the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising on special projects and for clients in the UK and overseas. Having authored over 36 textbooks, and published papers in many leading academic journals, he is recognised internationally for his contribution to marketing communications.

**Sarah Turnbull** PhD, MBA, MSc, FCIM, FHEA is a Professor of Marketing at the University of Portsmouth. Sarah is a Freeman of the Worshipful Company of Marketors and a Fellow of The Chartered Institute of Marketing. Prior to joining academia she worked in a number of global advertising agencies and spent eight years as Account Director on the Emirates account in Dubai. Her research on advertising practice and creativity has been published in leading academic and professional journals. She is an Associate Editor of *The Journal of Marketing Management* and serves on the Editorial Review Board of the *International Journal of Advertising* and *The Journal of Advertising Education*. Sarah is regularly invited to speak about advertising at practitioner and academic events internationally.

We thank you for reading our book, and if you have any comments, observations, suggestions or opinions, please feel free to contact either of us: Sarah can be reached through [sarah.turnbull@port.ac.uk](mailto:sarah.turnbull@port.ac.uk), and Chris through [chrisfill29@gmail.com](mailto:chrisfill29@gmail.com).

## New to this edition

Each of the chapters has been revised and brought up to date to reflect contemporary marketing communications.

**Each chapter contains new examples** of marketing communications practice, drawn from around the world. Many of these are presented through Viewpoints.

**Each chapter has a new case study.** Many of these concern campaigns for well-known brands, and most have achieved national and international acclaim. Many of these cases have been written by either agencies or clients, demonstrating the practical orientation of the book. Cases situated at the end of each chapter contextualise your learning in the real world.

**All of the scholars' papers have been reviewed** and the number of papers included has been increased, with key academic papers discussed to help take your study further.

## Additional resources

### Web support

Students and lecturers who adopt this text have access to a range of support materials and facilities. Readers are invited to use the website designed for *Marketing Communications*, not only as a source of additional material but also to share feedback.

## Student resources

- Multiple-choice questions.

## Lecturer resources

- Instructors' Resource Guide.
- PowerPoint slides for each chapter.

A test bank of multiple-choice questions has been developed for use by students and lecturers.

For lecturers and tutors there is an Instructors' Resource Guide containing a range of slides and exercises in downloadable format.

# Structure of the text

There are three main parts to the book:

## Part 1 An introduction to marketing communications

- **Chapters 1–4**

This opening part provides an important foundation for understanding the breadth and depth of marketing communications. The first chapter provides an introduction, which is used to establish some broad principles, practices and concepts associated with the subject, including the importance of engagement. Chapter 2 considers various communication theories, and explores the impact of both technology and people within contemporary communication practice. Chapter 3 examines classical and contemporary theories and concepts about buyer behaviour and considers the impact these can have on engagement. The final chapter in this part considers ideas about how marketing communications works.

## Part 2 Managing marketing communications

- **Chapters 5–9**

This part explores some of the managerial aspects associated with marketing communications. Chapter 5 considers the various aspects of strategy and how organisations should develop their marketing communications in the light of their contextual positions. Chapter 6 examines the role and nature of objectives and outlines positioning strategies. Chapter 7 provides an overview of the task of marketing communications in branding and Chapter 8 explores the concept of integrated marketing communications. The final chapter in this part of the book, Chapter 9, gives consideration to how organisations budget for marketing communications and the role of evaluation in the communication process.

## Part 3 The marketing communications mix

- **Chapters 10–16**

The marketing communications mix material constitutes the largest part of the book. This content is, of course, crucial to most courses on marketing communications. Unlike other texts, the approach here is focused on the three elements of the communication mix, namely the disciplines, content and the media.

## Cases

Each of the 16 cases are new to this edition. These have been written by a variety of people including client organisations and marketing communications agencies.

Chapter 1	The scope of marketing communications
Case	From running shops to serving customers: The Tesco turnaround story
Chapter 2	Communication: theory, interactivity and influencers
Case	Gymshark
Chapter 3	Understanding buyer behaviour and improving engagement
Case	How Aldi re-energised an existing advertising concept to reignite growth
Chapter 4	How does marketing communications work?
Case	Gordon's Gin: Legacy brand turned challenger – doubling the size of a legacy brand by thinking like a challenger
Chapter 5	Marketing communications: strategies and planning
Case	Results & a half: how generosity paid off for Cadbury
Chapter 6	Marketing communications: objectives and positioning
Case	David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust: Hello in elephant – translating an endangered language to help save an endangered species
Chapter 7	Branding and marketing communications
Case	Lloyds Bank: the power of Pure Brand
Chapter 8	Integrated marketing communications
Case	Baileys: from forgotten icon to global treat
Chapter 9	Budgeting and evaluation
Case	Audi: the value of <i>Vorsprung durch Technik</i> over four decades
Chapter 10	Advertising: role, forms and strategy
Case	Building a brand fit for the biggest decision of your life: Made in the Royal Navy
Chapter 11	Public relations and sponsorship
Case	KFC: Michelin Impossible – how an Aussie underdog took on the food establishment
Chapter 12	Direct marketing and sales promotion
Case	Unlocking the value of direct-to-fan for Formula 1
Chapter 13	Brand: placement, experience and packaging
Case	A Night. . . At The Louvre: how Airbnb created a magical experience

Chapter 14	Content: messages, credibility and creative approaches
Case	Whiskas K.I.T.: how cat content grew up to drive digital growth
Chapter 15	Media: principles, practice and formats
Case	'Should have gone to Specsavers!'
Chapter 16	Media planning: concepts and practices
Case	How Soreen used its loaf to become a millennial favourite

These cases refer either to broad issues concerning a particular topic, or focus on a specific issue that is included in the chapter to which the case is assigned. Some cases refer to several campaigns undertaken for a specific brand or company, while others consider a specific campaign and associated activities. Several of these cases have won awards either at the IPA Effectiveness Awards or at Cannes. There are review questions at the end of each chapter that refer directly to the designated case.

## Reference

Rossiter, J.R., & Percy, L. (2013). Observations: How the roles of advertising merely appear to have changed. *International Journal of Advertising*, 32(3), 391–398.

## Recognition for Marketing Communications

*Marketing Communications* has been recognised as a leading contributor to the University of Portsmouth Business School's 3rd place in the global Power Teaching Rankings, 2021. This is a measure of how much a university's academics' work is used on other business courses. Harvard Business School was the top school, and the Sloan School of Management was second.

See: <https://www.ft.com/content/beb77be1-f735-45e9-82cb-ec834eb39565>

'A comprehensive resource that balances theory with practical application.'

Beth Cummings Swansea

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The list of individuals and organisations involved with this book is extensive. We have tried to list everyone but if anyone has been omitted then we offer our sincere apologies.

Many people have given their time and energies either to writing or cajoling others to write case studies and Viewpoints for this edition. The fruits of their labour are on show here and we would like to express our gratitude to you all for your support. These contemporary insights into practice make this book unique.

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# Part 1

## An introduction to marketing communications

Part 1 establishes the scope and contextual aspects of marketing communications. It provides an important underpinning for the other chapters in this text.

Chapter 1 introduces the subject and starts with a consideration of the scope of marketing communications, including its role, tasks and definition. It then explores ideas associated with engagement and the configuration of the marketing communications mix. Consideration is then given to the importance of context in the use of marketing communications, the consumer journey, international marketing, technology, and ethical and moral issues.

Chapter 2 explores issues concerning communications from both a theoretical and practice perspective. In particular it examines several models of the way communication is thought to work. Focus is then given to word-of-mouth communications and the way in which brands use influencers to reach target audiences.

Chapter 3 explores the impact of consumer behaviour on marketing communications. The

first half of the chapter looks at important theoretical concepts associated with information processing and decision making. These include attention, perception, learning, attitudes and perceived risk. We then review the way digital media and the Covid-19 pandemic have changed aspects of people's behaviour. This is followed by an exploration of more contemporary approaches to understand buyer behaviour; hedonic, tribal and ethical consumption, and behavioural economics. In each of these approaches the implications for marketing communications is considered.

The final chapter in this part introduces ideas about how marketing communications might work. Rather than trust a single interpretation, five separate approaches are presented. These reflect the diverse thinking and developing knowledge about how marketing communications might work. These five are the sequential, attitude, relationship, significant value and cognitive processing approaches.



**Chapter 1** The scope of marketing communications

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**Chapter 2** Communication: theory, interactivity and influencers

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**Chapter 3** Understanding buyer behaviour and improving engagement

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**Chapter 4** How does marketing communications work?

# Chapter 1

## The scope of marketing communications



Marketing communications is concerned with the methods, processes, meanings, perceptions and activities that audiences (consumers and organisations) undertake with regard to the presentation, consideration and actions associated with products, services and brands.

### Aims and learning objectives

The primary aim of this chapter is to set out the scope of marketing communications, including its purpose, tasks, and the role and significance of engagement. A further aim is to explore how the use of marketing communications is influenced by context. Consideration is given to the use of marketing communications in the customer journey, in international markets and as influenced by technology, before considering some of the ethical and moral issues involved in its use.

The learning objectives are to enable readers to:

1. understand the purpose, tasks and influence of marketing communications;
2. learn about the role of engagement and how it underpins effective marketing communications;
3. describe the nature and configuration of the marketing communications mix;
4. comprehend the role of marketing communications in the customer journey and the development of customer experiences;
5. explore some of the issues associated with international marketing communications;
6. examine how technology influences marketing communications;
7. appreciate some of the ethical and moral issues associated with the use of marketing communications.

# Introduction

Tag lines such as 'Because you're worth it' (L'Oréal), 'Have a break, have a KitKat', 'The world's favourite airline' (British Airways), 'We try harder' (Avis), and 'Vorsprung durch Technik' (Audi), all provide instant brand recognition and understanding.

These memorable slogans represent the fundamental essence of the brand, an idea from which marketing communications can flow (Edwards, 2021a).

These tag lines are built into a brand's marketing communications and are incorporated in the various campaigns and activities that are used to engage audiences. However, marketing communications is not simply about tag lines. Indeed, it is a complex activity, one that is used by organisations with varying degrees of sophistication and success. For example, global brands develop campaigns to run across numerous territories, using multiple media and several languages. In contrast, a local firm may produce a one-off print ad to be run in a local newspaper.

While organisations may use marketing communications in different ways, to achieve different goals, and to pursue their own marketing and business objectives, engaging audiences is key to the success of any campaign. This text will help you to understand *why* organisations use marketing communications and *how* campaigns are developed and implemented, drawing on academic and practitioner views.

In addition to the impact Covid-19 has had on world health, the pandemic has also transformed our way of life, including **consumer** and **organisational behaviour**, work patterns, business operations, marketing and, of course, marketing communications. We refer to many of these changes throughout the text, recognising that some are transient while others are longer lasting. What is not in doubt is that marketing communications has had to adapt to the emerging post-Covid-19 environment. Consumers have changed many of their behaviours, in some cases very quickly, during periods of lockdown. This in turn has required rapid changes to the way marketing communications is used. Agility and the ability to sense and rapidly adapt to changes in information processing, market demand or competitors (Akhtar et al., 2018) now characterises contemporary marketing communications.

Earlier we referred to 'engagement'. This represents the degree to which messages captivate audiences. There is no universally agreed definition of the term 'engagement', and it is used in many different contexts. Marketing communications is closely aligned to an educational context and Li et al. (2013) refer to three types of engagement taken from a learning perspective. These are cognitive, relational and behavioural engagement. Cognitive engagement refers to the degree to which individuals are intellectually involved in what they are learning (messages). Relational engagement refers to the extent to which individuals feel connected with their environment, while behavioural engagement reflects the extent to which individuals feel involved and participate in activities.

All three of these aspects of engagement can be activated using marketing communications. A range of communication tools are available to first expose, and then sometimes to gain the attention, captivate, and then enable interaction with and between audiences. It is often achieved through a blend of intellectual and emotional content. Engagement may last seconds, such as the impact of a funny video ad, an emotional TV ad or a witty interactive billboard. Alternatively, engagement may be protracted and last hours, days, weeks, months or years, such as an exhibition, a festival sponsorship or brand experience.

All organisations, large and small, use marketing communications as either planned or unplanned activities. Planned marketing communications incorporates three key elements: tools, media and content (messages). The main communications tools are **advertising**, **sales promotion**, **public relations**, **direct marketing**, **personal selling** and added-value

approaches such as **sponsorship**, **exhibitions** and **field marketing**. Content can be primarily informative or emotional but is usually a subtle blend of both dimensions, reflecting the preferences and needs of the target audience. To convey these messages to their audiences, organisations have three main channels:

1. They can pay for the use of particular media that they know their target audiences will use – for example, social networks, websites or television programmes. These are referred to as *paid* media.
2. They can use their own assets to convey messages, such as their buildings, employees, vehicles and websites, which they do not have to pay to use. These are referred to as *owned* media.
3. They can encourage people to talk and share ideas about their brand, often through social media, which involves relatively little cost. These are referred to as *earned* media.

In reality **brands** use a mixture of these **paid**, **owned** and **earned** media formats, which collectively are referred to as **POEM** (see Chapter 15).

Unplanned marketing communications involves messages that have not been anticipated. These may be both positive and negative, but the emphasis is on how the organisation reacts to and manages the meaning attributed by audiences. So, comments by third-party experts and influencers, changes in legislation or regulations by government, the actions of competitors, failures in the production or distribution processes or – perhaps the most potent of all communications – word-of-mouth comments between customers, all impact on the way in which organisations and brands are perceived and the images and reputations that are shaped. In addition to these there are communications arising from unplanned or unintended brand-related experiences (empty stock shelves or accidents). People also encounter marketing communications relating to both their experience from using products (how tasty is this burger?) and their consumption of services (just how good was the service in that hotel, restaurant or at the airport?) (Grönroos, 2004).

## Scholars' paper 1.1

### What does customer engagement mean?

**Santini, F.O., Ladeira, W.J., Pinto, D.C., Herter, M.M., Sampaio, C.H., & Babin, B.J. (2020). Customer engagement in social media: A framework and meta-analysis. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(1), 1211–1228.**

These researchers consider different aspects of customer engagement and with a social media context provide helpful background information about the concept. They find engagement impacts organisation/brand performance, behavioural intentions and word-of-mouth.

#### See also:

Hollebeek, L.D., Glynn, M.S., & Brodie, R.J. (2014). Consumer brand engagement in social media: Conceptualization, scale development and validation. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 28(2), 149–165.

Hollebeek, L. (2011). Exploring customer brand engagement: Definition and themes. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 19(7), 555–573.

## Defining marketing communications

There is no universally agreed definition of marketing communications. This lack of consensus can in part be explained by the vast number of ways marketing communications is used and partly because of the way marketing communications has evolved, particularly through technological advances.

Over time, different definitions have emerged reflecting the topical perspective of the subject. These include persuasion, reminding, integration, relationships and experience. Some of these interpretations fail to draw out the key issue that marketing communications provides added value, through enhanced product and organisational symbolism. They also fail to recognise that it is the context within which marketing communications flows that impacts so much upon the meaning and interpretation given to such messages. Its ability to frame and associate offerings with different environments is powerful.

Rather than simply provide product or service information, marketing communications now forms an integral part of an organisation's overall communications and customer experience strategy. This perspective encompasses communications as one-way, two-way, interactive and dialogic approaches, necessary to meet the varying needs of different audiences. Above all else, marketing communications should be an audience-, not product-, centred activity.

**The purpose of marketing communications is to prompt engagement and to promote conversations with and among audiences. Through the development and presentation of relevant messages the aim is to encourage particular attitudinal, emotional or behavioural responses.**

There are three aspects associated with this definition.

The first aspect concerns *audiences*. Marketing communications should be an audience-centred activity and in that sense, it is important that messages be based on a well-founded understanding of both the needs and environment of the audience. To be successful, marketing communications should be contextually relevant, and grounded in the behaviour and information-processing needs of the target audience. This requires an understanding of the context in which the communications event is to occur. From this base it is easier to present and position brands in order that they are perceived to be different and of value to the target audience.

The second aspect concerns *engagement*. Consumers can have different forms of relationships with brands. These span a spectrum ranging from transactional to collaborative relationships. Transactional links between a buyer and seller are based principally on price, functionality and a short-term orientation. Collaborative relationships occur when buyers and sellers not only trust each other, they are also committed to the relationship over the long term. Value is vested in the relationship, not the product or the price. This means that engagement will need to take different forms depending on the relationship needs of the target audience. Marketing communications can be used to engage audiences using one-way, two-way, interactive and dialogic communications, in order to captivate audiences (Chapters 2, 4 and 11). It is unrealistic to believe that all audiences always want a relationship with your organisation/brand, and, for some, one-way communications, based on price and functionality, are fine. Messages, however, should encourage individual members of target audiences to respond to the product/brand. This response can be immediate through, for example, purchase behaviour, use of customer help/carelines or use of the FAQs on a web page. Alternatively, it can be deferred as information is assimilated and considered for future use. Even if the information is discarded at a later date, the communications will have attracted attention and consideration of the message.

The third aspect from the definition concerns *responses*. This refers to the outcomes of the communications process, and can be used as a measure of whether a communications event has been successful. There are essentially three key responses: attitudinal, emotional and behavioural. Attitudinal responses can be seen in changes to audiences' **attitudes** towards brands, services or issues. For example, communications activity may be aimed towards improving consumer attitudes towards the quality perceptions of a brand. Emotional responses seek to drive emotional engagement with the brand or organisation. Campaigns seeking to elicit emotional responses use emotional messaging, which is discussed further in Chapters 4, 10 and 14. Behavioural responses can occur when campaigns seek to change what audiences actually do as a result of engaging with a communication event. For example, a campaign might try to drive people to a website, to visit a particular page, or to buy now using a promotional code.

## The engaging role of marketing communications

We have now established that engagement is a key element of marketing communications. Engagement with audiences through marketing communications enables brands to pursue their business and **marketing objectives**. The nature of these objectives will vary between organisations. Some will be to drive profit, increase market share and encourage loyalty. Other goals include raising awareness, changing perceptions or attitudes, or simply developing brand values.

The reason to use marketing communications may vary according to the prevailing situation or context but an essential goal is to provoke an audience response. For Rossiter and Percy (2013, p. 392) this response is only about selling products and services. They see the role of advertising as unquestionably about selling 'more of the branded product or service, or to achieve a higher price that consumers are willing to pay than would obtain in the absence of advertising'.

To get to the point of purchase, however, several communications effects usually need to have been achieved. So, the response might be geared to developing brand values, attitudes, preferences and the positive thoughts an individual might have about a brand. This is grounded in a 'thinking and feeling orientation', a combination of both cognitive thoughts and emotions and feelings about a brand.

As mentioned earlier, 'behavioural responses' are aimed at encouraging particular audience behaviours. For example, these might include trying a piece of cheese in a supermarket, encouraging visits to a website, sampling a piece of music, placing orders and paying for goods and services, sharing information with a friend, registering on a network, opening emails, signing a petition or calling a number. Brands with a Facebook presence can utilise **call-to-action (CTA)** buttons, such as Sign Up, Shop Now, Contact Us, Watch Video and Apply Now. These buttons enable users to tell their audience how to engage with a post. For example, if a user is posting a link to a new product, the *shop now* button should be placed on the post. This tells users *how* to interact with a post, and it makes response easier (Kunesh, 2020). In other words, CTA buttons encourage engagement.

Engagement, therefore, can be considered to be a function of two forms of desired response, one to drive brand values and the other to drive brand responses. Marketing communications should be based on driving a particular type of response. For example, furniture retailer Cotswold Company used TV advertising to drive brand awareness, alter some unfavourable perceptions and grow the brand's stature. This was then followed up separately with a brand-response campaign using print inserts, **direct mail**, and digital and **social media**. Sales grew at a faster rate than ever previously experienced (Gibson & Owen, 2020).

Where engagement occurs, an individual might be said to have been (positively) captivated and, as a result, opportunities for activity should increase. Engagement acts as a bridge, a mechanism through which brands and organisations link with target audiences and through which the goals of all parties can be achieved. In other words, there is mutual value.

Today there is a multitude of media channels, which represents a major challenge for those seeking to interlink their communications. Some brands and retailers attempt to manage the multichannel environment by treating each channel as an independent entity, a silo approach. Others now focus on developing consistent customer experiences and to do this they link together the various points at which customers interact with brands. This results in consumers encountering seamless brand experiences regardless of device, location or context. This is referred to as omnichannel marketing.

Successful engagement indicates that understanding and meaning have been conveyed effectively, that the communications have value. Counting the number of likes, viewers, readers or impressions says little about the quality of the engagement and the value that it represents to individuals. At one level, engagement through one-way communications enables target audiences to understand product and service offers, to the extent that the audience is sufficiently engaged to want to enter into further communications activity. At another level, engagement through two-way or interactive communications enables information that is relationship-specific (Ballantyne, 2004) to be exchanged. The greater the frequency of information exchange, the more likely collaborative relationships will develop.

## Viewpoint 1.1

Messages can be planned, unplanned and controversial



**Image 1.1** Pictures of the wrecked Hyundai Genesis GV80 Crossover in which Tiger Woods crashed generated huge levels of positive unplanned marketing communications around the world. The car's structure and strong safety values may have saved the golfer's life  
Source: Frederic J. Brown/AFP/Getty Images.

In February 2021 Tiger Woods was involved in a car crash in which he was the sole occupant of the vehicle. He suffered serious leg injuries, had to be cut out of the vehicle and underwent immediate surgery. Although news of the golfer's injuries spread around the world quickly, huge attention was also bestowed on his car, a Hyundai Genesis GV80 crossover. Images and videos of the damaged GV80 spread rapidly on social media as law enforcement officials said the integrity of the vehicle may well have saved his life.

Lorna Jane, an Australian activewear brand with 134 stores in Australia, and other countries, launched a new type of athletic leggings in 2020. The company claimed that its products were sprayed with LJ Shield, which protected against and stopped the spread of Covid-19. These claims were made in a variety of media including email, in-store signage, its own website, social media

posts and press releases. Advertising used the tag 'Cure for the Spread of COVID-19? Lorna Jane Thinks So'.

In December federal court action was taken against the firm for making false and misleading claims. It was alleged that the statements gave the impression that the Covid-19 claims were based on scientific evidence when this was clearly not the case, a point which the brand later admitted. Lorna Jane responded by stating that LJ Shield was not a cure and that LJ Shield is simply added protection for clothes like sanitizer is for hands. They claimed to have been let down by a supplier. Lorna Jane was found to have behaved in an exploitative, predatory and potentially dangerous manner at a time when fear and concern about the pandemic was high. Apart from the damage to the brand's reputation, Lorna Jane was fined \$5 million.

Sources: Australian Associated Press (2021); Corrigan (2021); Edwards (2021b); Jardine (2021); Lim (2021).

## Insight

The worldwide attention given to the Genesis GV80 is an example of unplanned marketing communications. The positive comments about the safety and structural integrity of the vehicle, provided by credible sources, namely police officers, would have positively engaged

potential buyers and added to the reputation of the brand.

The Lorna Jane issue highlights the use of owned media (the Lorna Jane website) and earned media (social media comments and publicity associated with the legal actions).

**Question:** To what extent is it ethically sound to seek publicity using highly sensitive and possibly misleading claims?

**Task:** Follow up the Lorna Jane case and consider the judgements and impact on the brand.

## The tasks of marketing communications

Communications are important as they can help achieve one of four key tasks. These are to differentiate, reinforce, inform and persuade audiences. See Figure 1.1.

Marketing communications can be used to differentiate brands and services. This means that in markets where there are few physical or service features that separate competing products and brands, communications can be used to add emotional values.

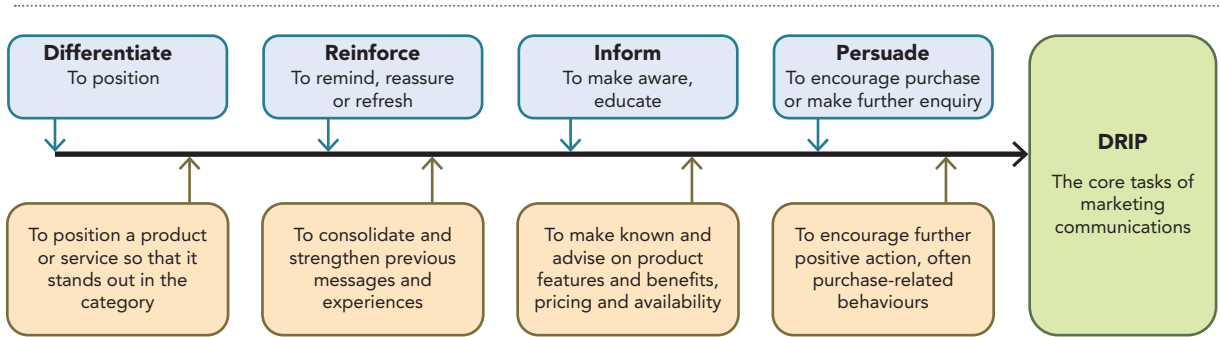


Figure 1.1 DRIP – the core tasks of marketing communications

This can help a brand stand out from the others in the category. It can also help to reduce any purchasing risk experienced by consumers and provide them with confidence and positive attitudes towards the brand. This is known as **positioning**, which we consider in depth in Chapter 6.

Mineral water products, such as Perrier and Highland Spring, are largely similar. By using emotional messages these two brands have created separate brand identities within the same market. This enables consumers to form distinct images and engage with them, and make purchasing decisions.

Communications can also be used to reinforce experiences. This may take the form of reminding people of a need they might have or reminding them of the benefits of past transactions, with a view to convincing them that they should enter into a similar exchange. Amazon and other online retailers will remind potential buyers that they have items left in their baskets and that they should return to the site and complete the transaction. In addition, it is possible to provide reassurance or comfort, either immediately prior to an exchange or, more commonly, post-purchase. This is important, as it helps drive customer reviews, which are then used to assist potential customers to make their purchasing decisions.

Communications can *inform* and make potential customers aware of an organisation's offering. By informing audiences of a new brand, revised product features, offers and incentives, audiences can be made aware and those who are considering a purchase in the category might become engaged with the communication. By providing knowledge and information about a brand any perceived risk can usually be reduced. Communications may attempt to *persuade* current and potential customers of the desirability of entering an exchange relationship. Through the use of emotional messages that trigger particular influence strategies, consumers can be motivated to make a purchasing decision. Therefore, communications can **differentiate**, **reinforce**, **inform** and **persuade**; in other words, **DRIP**. The nature of the tasks in a campaign will vary, often because of the point that the buyer is at in their purchasing journey, which we consider later in this chapter. This means that only one or possibly two of these DRIP tasks will be used in any one campaign.

In addition to supporting transactions, by differentiating, informing, reinforcing or persuading, there are other, higher-level outcomes that the communications process delivers. For example, communications itself offers a means of exchange, such as communications for entertainment, for potential solutions and concepts for education, and self-esteem. Communications involve intangible benefits, such as psychological satisfactions, for example the entertainment associated with engaging and enjoying advertisements (Schlinger, 1979), the experiences of participating within a sponsored part of a social network, or through online gaming.

Communications can also be seen as a means of perpetuating and transferring values and culture to different parts of society or networks. For example, it is argued that the way women are portrayed in the media and stereotypical images of very thin or ‘size zero’ women are dysfunctional in that they set up inappropriate role models. The form and characteristics of the communications process adopted by some organisations (both the deliberate and the unintentional use of signs and symbols used to convey meaning) help to provide stability and continuity. Dove, for example, understood this and successfully repositioned itself based on natural beauty, using a variety of ordinary people for its communications.

Other examples of intangible satisfactions can be seen in the social and psychological transactions involved increasingly with the work of the National Health Service (NHS), which due to the Covid-19 crisis has had unprecedented coverage in the news media, and charities, educational institutions and other not-for-profit organisations, such as housing associations. Not only do these organisations recognise the need to communicate with various audiences, but they also perceive value in being seen to be ‘of value’ to their customers.

All organisations have the opportunity to develop their communications to a point where the value of their messages represents a **competitive advantage**. This value can be seen in the consistency, timing, volume or expression of the message. Heinonen and Strandvik (2005) argue that there are four elements that constitute communications value. These are the message content, how the information is presented, where the communications occur and their timing. In other words, it is the all-important context within which a communications event occurs that really matters. These elements are embedded within marketing communications and are referred to throughout this text.

## The marketing communications mix

Figure 1.2 depicts the three elements that comprise the **marketing communications mix**: tools, media and content.

Successful marketing communications involves configuring the various elements of the mix according to the needs of the target audience and the goals of the campaign.

Originally the elements that made up the marketing communications mix were considered to be just the tools or disciplines, namely advertising, sales promotions, public

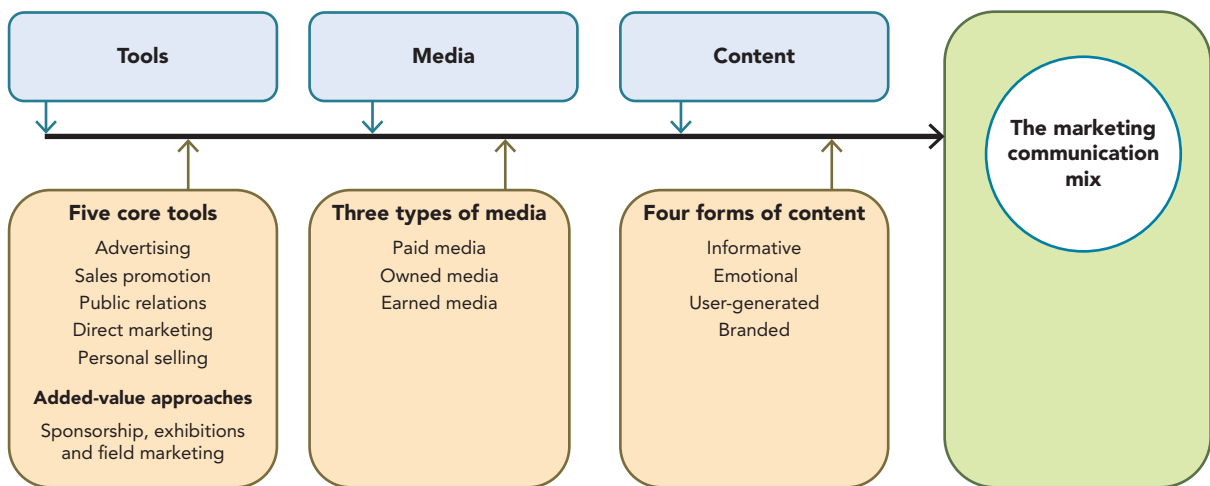


Figure 1.2 The elements of the marketing communications mix

relations, direct marketing and personal selling. These were mixed in various combinations and different degrees of intensity in order to attempt meaningful communications with a target audience.

This mix was used at a time when brands were developed using advertising to generate **above-the-line** mass communications campaigns. The strategy was based around buying space in newspapers and magazines, or advertising time (called spots) during major television programmes that were watched by huge audiences (20+ million people). This strategy required media owners to create programmes (content) that would attract brand owners because of the huge, relatively passive, audiences. By interrupting the audience's entertainment, brand owners could talk to (or at) their markets in order to sell their brands.

There is now a proliferation of media. Although the use of television is actually increasing, audiences, especially young adults, no longer use television as their main source of information or entertainment. When considered together with falling newspaper and magazine readership, it is clear that consumers are using media for a variety of purposes. These include a need to explore and discover new activities, people, experiences and brands, to participate in events and communities, to share experiences and information, and to express themselves as individuals. This reveals that people seek active engagement with media.

We now have a huge choice of media and leisure activities, and we decide how and when to consume information and entertainment. People are motivated and able to develop their own content, be it through text, music or video, and consider topics that they can share with friends on virtual networks. Media and messages, not the tools, are therefore key to reaching consumers today. More direct and highly targeted personalised communications activities using direct marketing and the other tools of the mix now predominate. This indicates that, in order to reach audiences successfully, it is necessary to combine not just the tools, but also the media and messages (content).

So, in addition to the five principal marketing communications tools, it is necessary to add the media, or the means by which advertising and other marketing communications messages are conveyed. Tools and media should not be confused as they have different characteristics and seek to achieve different goals. Also, just in case you were thinking something is missing, the internet is a medium, not a tool.

Without messages being conveyed to and among target audiences, engagement is not going to occur. Increasingly referred to as content, four forms can be identified: informational, emotional, user-generated and branded content. These are explored in various chapters in this text, and in particular Chapters 8, 10 and 14. Previously, organisations were primarily responsible for the origin and nature of the content about their brand. Today a huge proportion of messages are developed by consumers and shared with other consumers and brands.

The contemporary view of the marketing communications mix represents a shift in approach. Traditionally the mix represented an *intervention*-based tactic, one based on seeking the attention of a customer who might not necessarily be interested, by interrupting their activities. Today brands use a *conversation*-based marketing communications tactic, where the focus is now on communications with and between members of an audience, including some who may have contributed content to the campaign.

## Marketing communications in context

Having considered the nature and tasks we now consider ideas about the different contexts in which marketing communications is used. Each context influences the nature and form of engagement, and in turn this shapes the marketing communications mix and the way it is deployed. There are many contexts that shape the way in which marketing

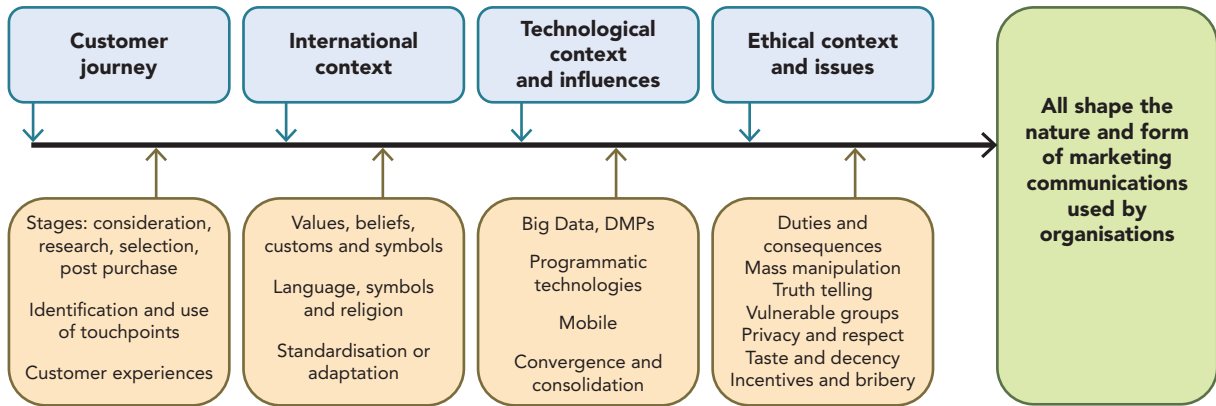


Figure 1.3 Some of the contexts that shape the way marketing communications is used

communications is used. These include the characteristics and relationships held with particular audiences, and the nature of products and services, as well as the business sector or category. In addition, the advertising industry and associated regulations shape the use of marketing communications. These are considered elsewhere in this text. Here we examine four contexts or settings that influence the broad use of marketing communications. These are set out in Figure 1.3.

## Marketing communications in a customer journey context

The first context that we consider is the process through which individuals purchase goods and services. This is often referred to as a **customer journey** or **purchase journey**. The purchase journey was once conceptualised as a linear passage, often represented by a **(sales) funnel** as set out in Figure 1.4 (Court et al., 2009). This approach was used to portray the way customers identified a problem, how they considered a certain set of brands, and then their systematic reduction of the number of feasible solutions until a purchase was made. Marketing communications was seen to be used to get **attention**, drive **interest**, create **desire** and then trigger **action** or behaviour as individuals progressed along the funnel (**AIDA**).

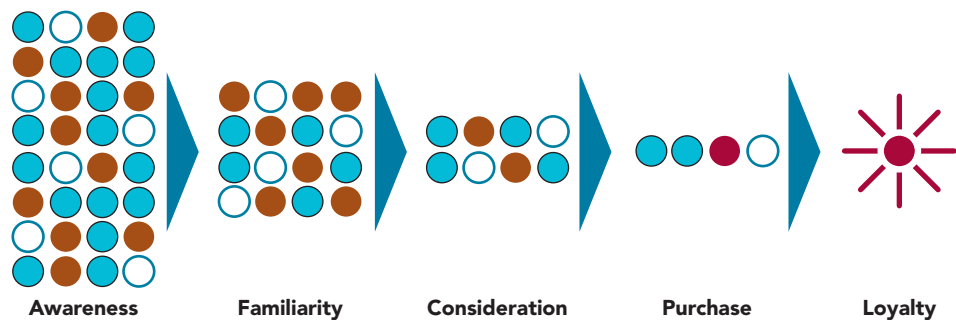


Figure 1.4 The traditional funnel metaphor  
Source: Court et al. (2009) used with the kind permission of McKinsey.

Today, the complexity of the media landscape, the variety of buying opportunities and the huge volume of data that is available have made the linear interpretation redundant. Now a non-linear explanation, a near circular format, is necessary in order to express the multiplicity of paths customers use to make purchase decisions. Hogg (2018) suggests the journeys can be considered as ‘a sightseeing tour with stops, exploration, and discussion along the way—all moments when you need to convince people to pick your brand and stick with it instead of switching to a competitor’ (p. 1). Marketing communications is still used to influence people in their journeys, but in different ways, at different stages in their various purchase journeys and increasingly through interaction and dialogue.

Despite the complexity of contemporary journeys, Court et al. (2009) and Siebert et al. (2020) argue that there are four distinct phases to the contemporary customer decision journey.

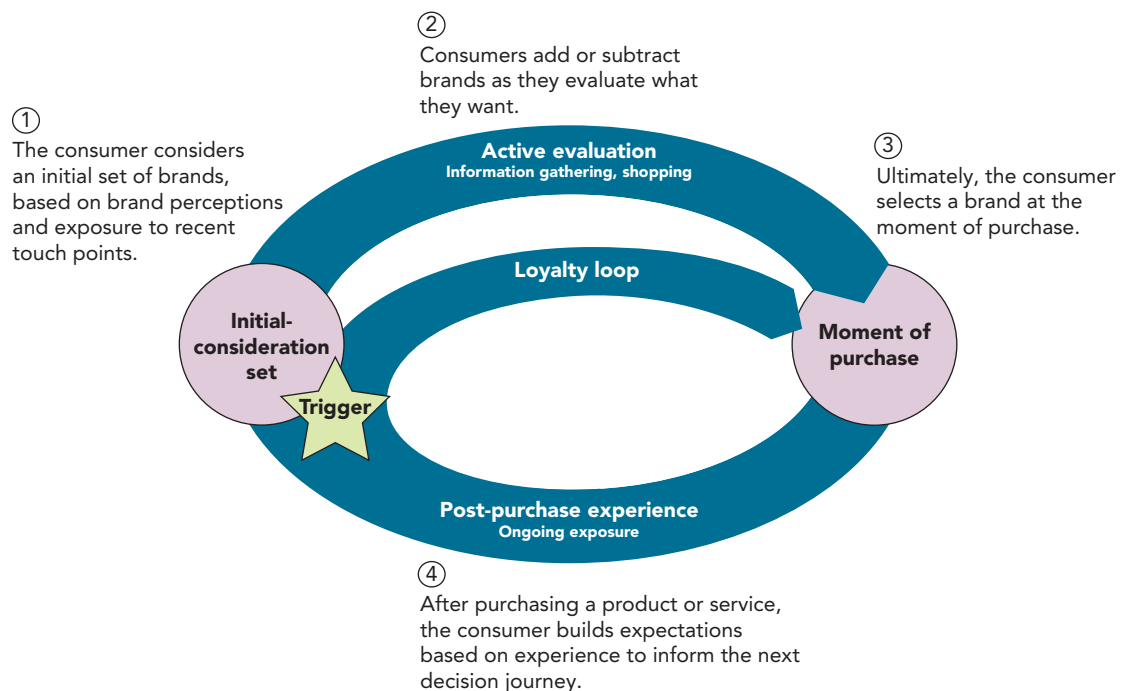
**Phase 1** – initial consideration phase – use of brand advertising and content marketing.

**Phase 2** – active research and evaluation of potential purchases – use of interactive website tools.

**Phase 3** – closure through the selection and purchase of a brand – use of in-store advertising and special offers at the moment of purchase.

**Phase 4** – post-purchase – use of informative packaging and service updates to enhance the consumption experience.

Marketing communications should be used to win customers over during these four phases. Success in terms of **customer satisfaction** over the first cycle increases the likelihood that customers will return for purchases. Figure 1.5 sets out the way in which these elements work together.



**Figure 1.5** The circular decision-making journey

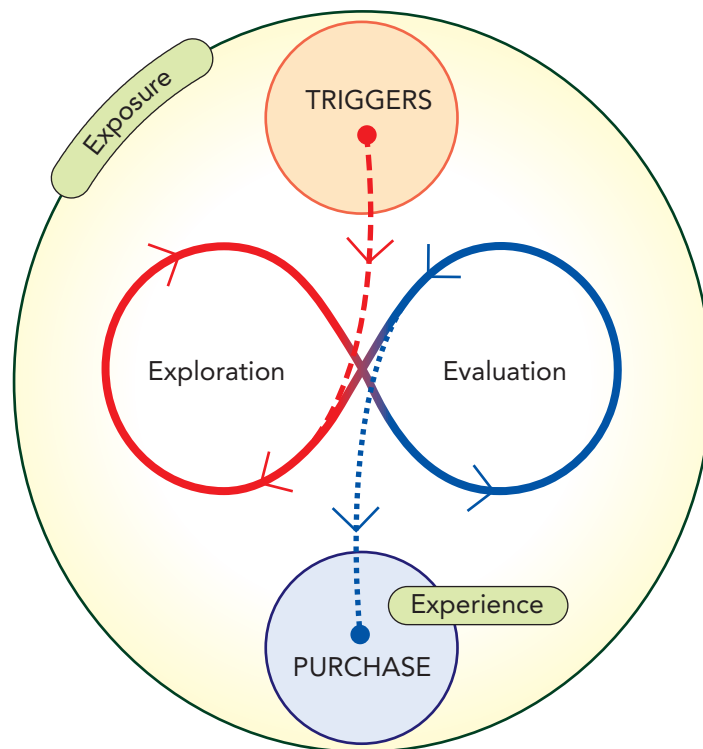
Source: Court et al. (2009) used with the kind permission of McKinsey.

Rennie and Protheroe (2020), building on the work of McKinsey, propose a revised model that focuses on the period between what triggers a purchase and the purchase decision itself. They call this the ‘messy middle’. See Figure 1.6

Rather than identify several linear or progressive stages in decision making, their research leads them to believe that there are only two significant mental states. As people consider search engines, social media, aggregators and review websites, activities distil to *exploration*, an expansive activity, and *evaluation*, a reductive activity. Rennie and Protheroe argue that ‘people loop through these twin modes of exploration and evaluation, repeating the cycle as many times as they need to make a purchase decision’. What triggers a decision while travelling through these loops concerns heuristics, mental shortcuts that we use to avoid using rational, formal and difficult thought processes. We consider the use of heuristics as a part of decision making again in Chapter 3.

Whatever interpretation of the customer journey is considered, marketing communications are used to maximise engagement opportunities at particular ‘touchpoints’ on a consumer journey. Touchpoints refer to any occasion when a consumer interacts with a brand within a channel. These points of interaction may be physical (as in offline, face-to-face or print), or digital (either online through a website, or as reviews), which are beyond a brand’s direct control (Interaction Design Foundation, 2020). Identifying touchpoints, therefore, is important as they provide opportunities for brands to use marketing communications in order to influence consumers on their various journeys. Managing purchase journeys and touchpoints is a critical aspect of media planning and is considered further in Chapter 16.

Developing a single journey, however, is no longer a feasible approach, and attempts to manage the various consumer/brand touchpoints in order to improve efficiency and customer satisfaction at individual parts of the journey is equally questionable. Rawson



**Figure 1.6** The messy middle of purchase journeys

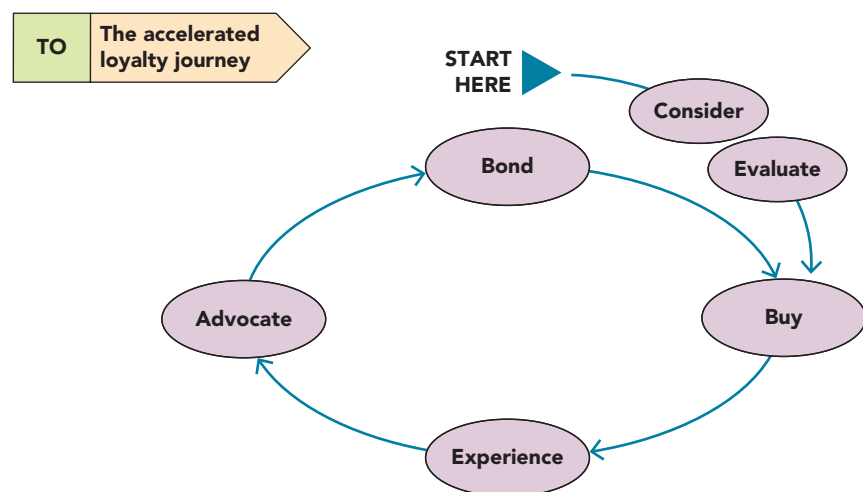
Source: Based on Rennie and Protheroe (2020).

et al. (2013, p. 92) believe that customer satisfaction is not a factor of these multiple, yet individual interactions, it is the 'cumulative experiences across multiple touchpoints and in multiple channels over time' that influence the overall experience and levels of customer satisfaction. Indeed, it is the sum of all the different types and forms of engagement with a brand that appears to be critical. Customers now interact with brands through an increasingly complex web of channels and media. As a result, attention has shifted from an emphasis on understanding touchpoints and customer satisfaction to one that is focused on managing the customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016).

Subsequent to these developments, McKinsey found that organisations using digital technologies to design and continuously optimise decision journeys can now respond to customers as they make purchasing decisions, and they can also 'actively shape those decision journeys' (Edelman & Singer, 2015). Many leading organisations use journeys to deliver value to the customer (as well as the brand), and achieve this by radically compressing or eliminating the consideration and evaluation phases. Consumers are consequently projected into the loyalty phase of the relationship. The purchase journey is now configured differently, as in Figure 1.7.

These journeys, according to Siebert et al. (2020) are referred to as 'smooth' journeys. The assumption is that the goal is to try to make customers' lives easier by creating consistent and predictable experiences, and so reduce the frequency of decision making. However, research indicates that although predictable experiences satisfy customer expectations they can also risk losing their attention. As a contrast many organisations today offer what Siebert and his colleagues refer to as 'sticky' journeys. These are deliberately inconsistent, they require effort, and are intentionally unpredictable in order to keep customers involved and excited. Siebert et al. refer to gambling, entertainment and video gaming, in which attention is sustained due to the unpredictability of the journey, or what will happen next. This induces excitement as the customer anticipates what might happen and is determined to complete the journey. Managing sticky journeys requires a different approach than for smooth journeys, partly because each is unique and because customers progress at a different pace. For more on this interesting concept see Scholars' paper 1.3.

Finally, reference needs to be made to the emerging idea that purchase journeys and experiences are not always undertaken by individuals. The concept of 'social customer journeys' has been advanced by Hamilton et al. (2021). They refer to the idea of 'traveling



**Figure 1.7** The accelerated loyalty journey

Source: Edelman and Singer (2017) used with the kind permission of McKinsey.

companions (or social others on the journey), who interact, directly or indirectly, with the decision maker through one or more phases of the journey'. The authors believe that travelling companions not only influence the decision maker, but also the companions' own journeys. See Scholars' paper 1.2.

## Delivering consumer experiences

People have become less responsive to mass communications and now expect a more personalised experience, regardless of the sector in which they are purchasing. Their attention spans are decreasing but their search activities are more detailed. This means that brands need to deliver a more relevant and engaging experience at each touchpoint on the consumer's purchase journey.

There is a view that considering individual touchpoints misses the bigger picture of a consumer's overall decision journey (Rawson et al., 2013). Each touch or customer/brand encounter, with any part of the product, service, brand or organisation, across multiple channels and at various points in time, represents an experience (Pantano & Viassone, 2015). Providing experiences that directly engage consumers has become a key aspect of marketing and, as highlighted earlier, customer and brand experiences are increasingly becoming a central feature of marketing communications campaigns.

Becker and Jaakkola's review of the customer experience literature is an attempt to reconcile the different views about the subject. They conclude that 'customer experience comprises customers' non-deliberate, spontaneous responses and reactions to offering-related stimuli along the customer journey' (2020, p. 638).

As customers interact with brands through a variety of touchpoints in multiple channels and media, their purchasing journeys have become considerably more complex. Marketing communications is used to manage and enhance customer experiences during these journeys. Indeed, the establishment of customer experience managers at many major organisations, including KPMG, Amazon and Google, is recognition of the growing importance of this aspect of marketing. Lemon and Verhoef (2016) believe that customer experience is a multidimensional construct, involving a customer's responses to a brand's cognitive, emotional, behavioural, sensorial and social components (Schmitt, 1999), during their entire purchase journey. Managing experiences during the entire journey is an opportunity to create a competitive advantage, something that cannot be copied by competitors.

## Viewpoint 1.2

### The Peloton experience

Peloton supply high-tech indoor fitness equipment such as bikes and treadmills, and complement it with subscription-based live-streaming group fitness classes to people in their homes, around the world. Peloton subscribers compete and share progress in classes taught by their elite instructors. Unsurprisingly, Peloton saw sales rocket when the Covid-19 pandemic forced gyms to shut, and people had to work from home.

Peloton have mapped how customers think and feel during the customer journey and this helps engage current and potential customers through their use of communications:

- Step 1** – intrigued (with the idea/product).
- Step 2** – infatuated (with the desire of bike ownership).
- Step 3** – pragmatic (about logistical issues).
- Step 4** – excited (by placing their order).



**Image 1.2** Peloton extend the entire purchase journey into online classes to maintain high levels of customer experience

Source: kali9/E+/Getty Images.

**Step 5** – apprehensive (until delivery and setup).

**Step 6** – addiction (to the thrill of the workout experience).

This map of the journey also enables Peloton to focus on the customer experience.

When Peloton launched in the UK it opened several showrooms in London in order that potential customers could try out the bikes. To assist the process, PR and advertising were used to raise brand awareness and to stimulate trials. The campaign ran for six months across national TV, digital out-of-home, experiential and digital media. Nearly 25 per cent of the digital work was linked to Peloton's website.

Peloton targeted fitness fanatics, not just casual gym users, many of whom often regard fitness as a means to improve their body shape. Fitness fanatics are interested in the exhilaration of a strong workout. They relish competition, and the

satisfaction of achieving their goals. Using artificial (AI) technology, algorithms were developed to identify user groups with a high likelihood of purchasing a Peloton bike.

Relationships established with other members, such as an 'exercise buddy', can be rewarding but it is the relationships that are made with the instructors that enhance the overall experience for many users. Instructors not only lead and direct the classes, but they provide leaderboards and shoutouts, congratulating riders on milestone rides, birthdays and personal goal attainment. All of this coalesces into a strong sense of community that in turn fuels an incredible 96 per cent level of retention, and releases further monthly subscriptions.

Search, social media, email, word-of-mouth, and even Peloton's own uniformed delivery and installation service, all play an important part in attracting, enabling and refreshing the entire Peloton experience.

Sources: Brereton (2020); Biggart (2017); Vizard (2018).

## Insight

The Peloton customer product and service experience is crafted around an understanding of the target market, the customer journey, astute messaging and the knowledge that high-end technology can be used to fuel competition and community. Marketing communications is used to engage audiences from the beginning

through trialling in showrooms (even hotels in the US), to online sales, personalised delivery and then addiction through use. The Peloton experience might represent a 'sticky' journey as user effort is required and each Peloton ride is unpredictable as instructors seek to keep customers involved and excited.

**Question:** To what extent is the Peloton brand experience driven by technology and communications rather than the nature of the physical workout?

**Task:** Set out possible communications activities against each of the steps in the Peloton customer journey.

## Scholars' paper 1.2

### Customer journeys and experiences

**Hamilton, R., Ferraro, R., Haws, K.L., & Mukhopadhyay, A. (2021). Traveling with companions: The social customer journey. *Journal of Marketing*, 85(1), 68–92.**

The essence of this conceptual paper is that customers invariably make purchase decisions with others, and that they are not alone for an entire journey. This also means that some customer experiences are shared, including those with artificial intelligence agents who serve as surrogates for social others. This very accessible paper is a must read for both students/academics as well as practitioners.

**See also:**

Becker, L., & Jaakkola, E. (2020). Customer experience: Fundamental premises and implications for research. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48(4), 630–648.

Siebert, A., Gopaldas, A., Lindridge, A., & Simões, C. (2020). Customer experience journeys: Loyalty loops versus involvement spirals. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(4), 45–66.

Lemon, K.N., & Verhoef, P.C. (2016). Understanding customer experience through the customer journey. *Journal of Marketing AMA/MSI Special Issue*, 80(6), 69–96.

## Marketing communications in an international context

For organisations operating in international markets there are a host of economic, cultural, social, legal, educational, attitudinal and religious differences that usually need to be considered. Brand managers might be conversant with the marketing environment at

home but, as they move outside the country or region, it is likely that their knowledge and understanding of market characteristics, such as prices, market channels, finance, customer behaviour and knowledge, media and competitors, will be less informed.

Developing marketing communications for overseas markets has always been seen as particularly challenging for organisations. Understanding the differences in consumers' beliefs and values and interpreting the sometimes subtle nuances that exist between cultures has challenged brand managers for decades (Melewar et al., 2000). The complexities of creating international or global campaigns, and the decreased level of control that often accompanies international campaign development, provides additional uncertainty. It is not unsurprising that the risks associated with international and global campaigns are seen to be higher than those for their home country.

Even when campaigns are created for single-country use, given the global nature of media, particularly digital platforms, it is likely that communications will be seen in a number of countries. Brands, therefore, need to consider how their messages will be received by different cultures and ethnic identities, even if the campaign is only to be used in the organisation's home country.

**Culture** is an important consideration. The values, beliefs, customs and symbols of particular societies are referred to as culture, and provide individuals with their identity. It is culture that provides guidance on what is deemed to be acceptable behaviour and influences behaviours and lifestyle. Marketing communications needs to ensure that culture is respected, otherwise there is a danger that campaigns will be seen as offensive, and this is likely to have a negative effect on the organisation. Campaigns are often adapted to meet the local market needs to ensure the imagery and language adhere to cultural norms. Melewar et al. (2000) highlight the importance of meeting cultural norms when advertising in Middle East Islamic markets. For example, they suggest advertisers need to avoid showing food being served using the left hand and suggest women are shown modestly dressed.

Other aspects of culture, such as language, symbols and religion are equally important considerations for marketing communications. Language is a symbolic device used to share meaning in society. Therefore, the words and style of language used in campaigns need to consider how other members of that society will receive the message. Translating advertising from one language to another can be problematic and advertisers need to ensure that the campaign message is retained and understood by the local market.

Organisations need to be mindful of the imagery used in advertising, public relations and direct mail campaigns, to avoid infringing a culture's aesthetic codes. The clothing of models for use in international and global marketing communications material can be particularly problematic, and it is not uncommon for some photography and film to be shot several times with models wearing different clothing to align with local dress codes.

Religion has always played an important part in shaping the values and attitudes of society and is an important cultural consideration. Care needs to be taken not to offend religious beliefs and their associated artefacts. Turnbull, Howe-Walsh and Boulanouar (2016) suggest organisations need to consider Islamic ethics when developing messages for Muslim audiences. They argue that advertising needs to be mindful of both the socio-cultural and religious sensitivities in Muslim countries and when targeting Muslim consumers. Using imagery such as statues is seen as being insensitive to Islamic tradition and to be avoided. Other considerations, such as avoiding comparative advertising and respect for elders, are highlighted.

Although many organisations go to great lengths to ensure that they get their communications right, with some pre-testing their messages across countries, blunders are not uncommon. For example, the US beer brand Coors launched their 'Turn it Loose' campaign in Spain. Unfortunately, the translation of the tag line reads as 'suffer from diarrhoea' (MediaBeacon, n.d.).

## Standardisation versus adaptation

The dilemma that has faced organisations is whether they should use a single creative platform that can run globally across markets, or to adapt messages to meet the needs of each individual market.

Since Levitt (1983) published his work on global branding, declaring the world had become a global marketplace, the issue of whether to standardise messages or adapt campaigns to meet the needs of local markets has been a topic that has received significant discussion.

### Standardisation

**Standardisation** offers two key advantages for brands. First, there is the potential for significant cost efficiencies associated with adopting a uniform approach to marketing communications. Organisations can save on creative development and production costs by using the same creative ideas and creative assets across markets. This makes better use of resources and because of the economies of scale leveraged, organisations have the opportunity to spend more on the creative production. This means that there is the potential for much larger-scale campaigns.

The second key advantage of a standardised approach is that it presents a consistent global brand to consumers. In whatever country consumers see a brand message, it will be the same; message consistency and the prospect of horizontally integrated campaigns is very compelling, and it is not hard to understand why so many global brands opt for a standardised approach.

While standardisation offers several potential advantages such as cost savings and message synergy, several problems can also be identified with adopting this strategy. Kanso et al. (2015) highlight the cultural differences of consumers across markets, different lifestyles, language diversity, alternative market infrastructures and government regulations as some of the impediments to standardisation. Some authors have warned against standardisation and argue that ignoring local tastes and culture does not provide competitive advantage (Navarro et al., 2010).

### Adaptation

Adapting messages to meet the needs of local markets provides an alternative approach for organisations. The argument in favour of this approach highlights the different needs of consumers and argues that even if suitable advertising stimuli could be identified as having universal appeal, it is unlikely that consumers across international boundaries share similar experiences, abilities or potential to process information in a standardised way, or to ascribe similar sets of meaning to the stimuli they perceive. Using ideas and message concepts developed centrally may be inappropriate for local markets and less effective at engaging audiences.

**Adaptation** considers the different cultural environment of each local market. Messages are developed to suit the local values and native language is used. This may mean for example, that in some Middle East countries Arabic calligraphy may replace typefaces in advertising copy. This strategy also ensures that local advertising regulations are considered when campaigns are developed.

The strategic choice of whether to standardise or adapt marketing messages is a complex one and in practice few organisations operate at either end of the spectrum. Most brands tend to use a 'middle of the road' or contingency approach (Melewar et al., 2000). This means that there is a degree of standardisation that occurs, and organisations will try to make cost savings whenever possible by using existing creative material across markets.

Some organisations choose to adopt a strategy of 'glocalisation'. This means that the organisation develops a global creative platform centrally and then allows the local markets to adapt or localise the creative. This has the advantage of offering a more consistent brand style across markets and is also tailored to local culture.

## Global consumer culture theory

An alternative theory that has emerged to explain strategies for global marketing in recent years is global consumer culture theory (GCCT) (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The theory of GCCT argues that the **globalisation** of markets has led to the emergence of a global consumer culture, with consumers who share similar beliefs and consumption values. These consumers are not bound by where they live and so this market segment exists across borders. Sharifonnasabi et al. (2020) show that GCCT has been considered in terms of homogenisation, glocalisation and more recently, deterritorialisation.

An extension of GCCT is used in marketing communications to develop positioning strategies for brands (Alden et al., 1999). The authors argue that global consumers have shared behaviours and symbols, and this makes it possible for brands to develop positioning strategies to target them. Alden et al. (1999) propose global consumer culture positioning (GCCP) as a strategy that organisations can use to identify their brand as a symbol of global culture. Taylor and Okazaki (2015) outline two alternatives to GCCP; local consumer culture positioning (LCCP) and foreign consumer culture positioning (FCCP). LCCP refers to when an organisation avoids making any association with shared global cultural meanings and instead draws on local cultural meanings within their message. A study of advertising from the US and Japan identified that GCCP is frequently being used as a positioning strategy by brands (Taylor & Okazaki, 2015). The findings highlighted how GCCP appeals in the US used symbols of global culture such as luxury goods and well-known sports brands. Similarly, global symbols such as Pokémon and soccer players were identified in GCCP appeals for advertising in Japan.

The suggestion here is that standardisation of advertising may be an effective route for more global brands. The identification of a global culture allows organisations to use language and symbols that appeal to a wider cultural base. Developing a position and messages that are likely to appeal across borders allows organisations to take advantage of global media and has the potential to save costs.

## The impact of social media in a global context

Sheth (2020) develops a contemporary interpretation of international marketing and communication, based on an extension of the principles associated with GCCT. He refers to the explosive growth, 'a tsunami', in his words, of social media. The numbers of people who are active monthly users of Facebook alone equate to the emergence of a new nation, the 'Facebook Nation'. He argues that this transnational, not international, new nation is subject to little or weak regulation and seems to have developed as a truly global village with an associated mindset, similar to e-commerce marketplaces such as Alibaba and Amazon.

The significance of social media in a global brand context is observed by Kim et al. (2019). They refer to the importance of social media to managers because it provides an immediate reflection of what is happening to brands across markets. Sheth argues that digital campaigns can no longer be clearly delineated by markets. This is because international markets are no longer rigidly defined, as there is leakage through social media channels across regions, resulting in market distortion. The outcome is 'that it is becoming increasingly difficult for international brands to contain themselves within single markets as local issues seldom remain local' (p. 5). This, Sheth suggests, will lead to a 'global village'

where 'social groups (tribes) will become more prevalent and displace the nation-states. International marketing managers will have to target their communication and campaigns to these global villages in the new world of social media tribes' (p. 10).

## Viewpoint 1.3

### Global brands approach it differently



**Image 1.3** These traditional houses on the coast at Polignano a Mare, Italy, provide Airbnb an opportunity to focus its communications on local storytelling

Source: Josef kubes/123RF.

**Nike** used high-profile advertising, celebrity endorsement and sponsorship to both drive global awareness and establish its brand values. These are regarded as competitive, risk-taking, irreverent, ambitious and bold. When Nike introduced its NikeiD co-creation platform, it enabled consumers to design the products they wanted. Through this approach Nike delivers customised products that align with different cultural preferences and styles.

**Red Bull** with its distinctive red identity, hosts and sponsors extreme sports events such as air races, windsurfing, BMX, mountain biking, Formula 1, snowboarding, cliff diving and free-style motocross, as well as supporting concerts

and music festivals, around the world. This not only complements the adrenalin-fuelled drink, but the variety and excitement of the events provide a powerful customer experience. Red Bull also produces high-end action sports and youth-culture-oriented content distributed across interactive and linear media.

**Airbnb's** global marketing communications strategy is founded upon localisation. The brand had a dedicated department responsible for making the site accessible around the globe. The brand focuses on local storytelling, which serves to develop trust and a sense of community between hosts and travellers. The brand's move into streaming its own original

travel-related entertainment emphasises its global positioning.

Although the **Coca-Cola** bottle is recognised universally, its strategy to adapt to local tastes and cultural preferences, including its marketing communications, has underpinned

the brand's global development. Coca-Cola's strategy is founded on universal values such as sharing and happiness, as well as owning the colour red. These are then localised by featuring local celebrities and cultural references.

Sources: Campaign (2020); Inlea (2020); Laporte (2019).

### Insight

These examples show that brands do not practise marketing communications at the extremes of the standardisation/adaptation spectrum. Different brands adopt different approaches when communicating with global audiences.

They create individual approaches that are partly a reflection of their culture, the nature of the product/service, and their approach to the use of technology.

**Question:** To what extent do you believe that consumers do share similar beliefs and consumption values globally?

**Task:** Consider each of the examples and determine whether their marketing communications incline towards standardisation or adaptation.

## Scholars' paper 1.3

### Culture and social media impact international marketing

**Sheth, J.N. (2020). Borderless media: Rethinking international marketing. *Journal of International Marketing*, 28(1), 3–12.**

This is an excellent paper in which Sheth not only provides a review of the various approaches to international marketing, but also signals how the impact of social media is going to affect international marketing practices.

**See also:**

Sharifonnasabi, Z., Bardhi, F., & Luedicke, M.K. (2020). How globalization affects consumers: Insights from 30 years of CCT globalization research. *Marketing Theory*, 20(3), September, 273–298.

Meyer, M. (2017). Cultural behaviour determinants of the global consumer. *Handel Wewnêtrznny*, 1, 230–239.

Levitt, T. (1983, May/June). The globalization of markets. *Harvard Business Review*, 61, 92–102.

## Marketing communications in a technological context

Technological developments have always had an impact on marketing communications. From the creation of the printing press, to the development of radio, and then television, which enabled brands to get closer to their audiences. In the past 30 years it has been digital technology and the internet in particular that have had not only a huge and significant impact but have also disrupted many established marketing communications practices.

Marketing communications has been radically influenced by the rapid advancement in digital technologies. These influences include the high frequency with which many individuals use mobile devices daily, increasing consumer engagement with social media, and the growing number of interactive facilities that now characterise contemporary lifestyles. For example, the number of mobile devices has increased enormously in recent years, and as of July 2021 stood at nearly 15 billion worldwide (O’Dea, 2021a). Mobile devices have become more varied, more accessible and their functionality supports new lifestyles.

These effects can be considered in two contexts. One, of course, concerns consumers or users. Their behaviour has changed to accommodate these developments, and this is explored in Chapter 3. The other concerns the communications industry, and in particular clients and the agencies that work on their behalf to reach and influence specific audiences. At a broad level, technology has enabled several aspects of marketing communications strategy and media planning to be automated. This is explored in Chapter 16, but here consideration is given to the influence of technology on the industry side, clients and agencies.

Marketing communications practitioners now have access to technologies that deliver a range of specific benefits. These are set out in Figure 1.8. Technological advances can be considered to be features, and once applied, they can give rise to benefits. For example, Big Data, which is considered below, is essentially a feature. It’s only through analysis of the data that the benefit of more accurate and faster audience targeting emerges.

### Big Data

One of the pivotal technological developments is **Big Data**. This term is used to describe the huge volumes of structured and unstructured data that is created each day by organisations. Figure 1.9 depicts the main dimensions of Big Data.

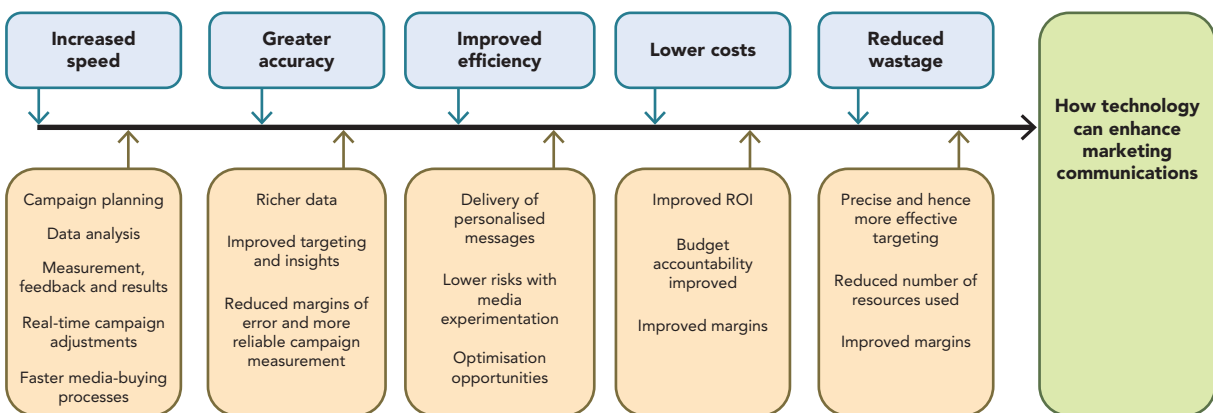


Figure 1.8 Benefits of using contemporary technologies within marketing communications

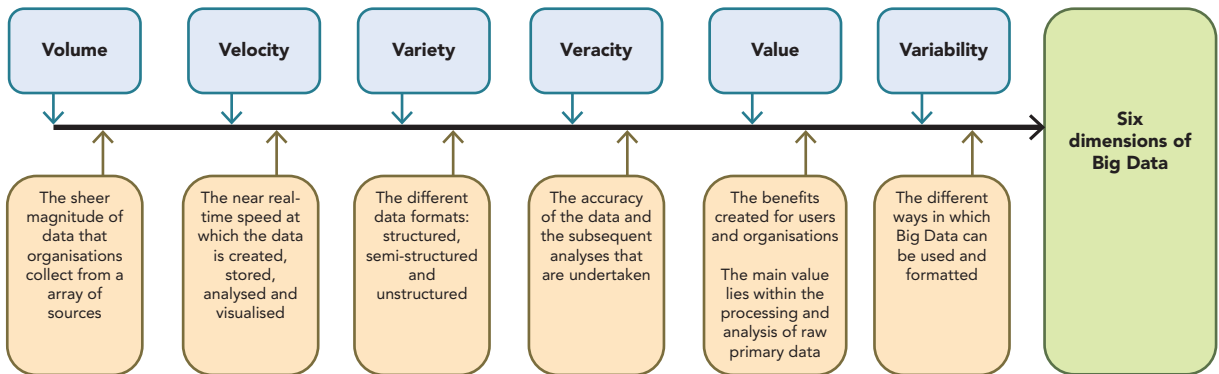


Figure 1.9 The Six Vs of Big Data

Organisations use Big Data in a wide variety of disciplines but in marketing it can provide deep insights into customers. These insights can then be used to deliver personalised communications, improve customer service and increase the quality of customer engagement and experiences (Botelho & Bigelow, 2020).

The utilisation of Big Data continues to have an enormous impact on marketing communications. It can help clients understand consumers with detail not previously known, including knowledge of their actual, real behaviours, not those that are claimed, which are gleaned from surveys and questionnaires. Big Data is used to segment and target audiences as narrowly as a single person and provide insight into the media used as individuals move through purchase journeys. Big Data can be used not only to measure a purchase click but also to determine how relevant the ads were that the individual consumer was exposed to on a particular journey. All of these and other outputs from the use of Big Data are considered in later chapters.

## Data management platforms

Big Data is harnessed by **data management platforms (DMPs)** so that clients and agencies can centralise the control of all their audience and campaign data. DMPs use first- and third-party data from online, mobile and offline sources. They collect, classify, analyse and transfer data to other platforms such as those used for targeted advertising, content customisation and campaign management.

Among the many benefits, this enables clients to implement customised re-targeting campaigns based on specific activities and behaviours. They can also optimise their websites so that content is customised for different customers, and measure campaign performance. In addition, DMPs enable audience segmentation and targeting, and media integration, as well as real-time campaign and audience analytics. DMPs have spurred the technological revolution by focusing on the need to understand what the data reveals. That means it is the way we analyse data, not the data itself that is critical (King, 2016).

## Programmatic technologies

**Programmatic** technologies are concerned with the automatic buying of digital advertising space, using data from a DMP, to decide which ads to buy and how much to pay for them. This is often undertaken in real time. When looked at in terms of traditional approaches when publishers ran campaigns, programmatic reverts the management and measurement to the advertiser (Rogers, 2017).

Programmatic enables advertisers to target very exact audiences, at precisely the right time, in the right context and with the right creative message. In addition, campaigns can be adjusted

or optimised, based on real-time information, to re-target audiences and to deliver more appropriate messages. Media budgets can also be optimised to reflect changing campaign conditions. More information about programmatic media buying can be found in Chapter 16.

## Mobile

Of all the new technologies, it is the near-saturation ownership of a mobile device, and the pervasiveness of smartphones in particular, that has arguably had the greatest impact on the media landscape, and on marketing communications. Consumers now spend much longer (an extra four hours) each day with media than in the pre-mobile era and stay connected to the internet for longer using mobile devices. In 2021, 96 per cent of UK households had a mobile phone and 92 per cent of UK adults owned a smartphone (O’Dea, 2021b), with a major part of their usage geared to social media.

Mobile’s ‘always on’ and roaming capability presents advertisers with an opportunity to focus on micro-moments, and to meet consumers’ desires at the right moment, at the right time and in the right place. Mobile screens engage users through sight, sound, touch, movement and depth. As a result, they can deliver immersive, multisensory experiences that are on-demand, personalised and seamless. This in turn presents a range of opportunities for advertisers to integrate content and entertainment.

Advertising utilising traditional formats is of course routine, but add the enormous rise in the use of social media, video, the developing augmented and virtual reality technologies, plus product placement, in-game advertising and sponsorship, and it is not a surprise that mobile has become the dominant screen.

## Consolidation and convergence

Technology has forced media channels together and as a result many organisations are moving into unfamiliar markets. Examples include deals such as Meta’s purchase of Giphy in 2020, Apple’s takeover of Shazam in 2018, and Amazon’s acquisition of Bebo in 2019.

This means that while these companies previously operated in separate sectors, convergence has brought them into direct competition with one another. Convergence and integration activity can be seen through consoles such as the PS5 and Xbox Series X, which host streaming apps such as Netflix, Amazon Prime and Now TV, all accessed through the home screen.

Some organisations seek to package different technologies together and in doing so offer high levels of cross-functionality. For example, Virgin and BT offer phone, mobile phone, broadband and TV services packages as one solution. This provides advertisers with access to a range of potentially lucrative audiences. However, as the supply of content now outstrips demand, it is inevitable that there will be some form of market consolidation (Rajan, 2020).

Global companies such as Apple, Google, Meta, Amazon and Microsoft are reconfiguring themselves to compete in new markets, introducing new advertising platforms, investing heavily in innovation and driving technological change. For example, Meta is investing heavily in **augmented reality** with glasses that allow users to add digital features to their view of the world. Rajan (2020) also points to the growth of gaming, which accelerated through the pandemic, and which is expected to grow as the availability of superfast broadband continues.

We have referred to only a limited number of ways in which technology has influenced marketing communications. Other developments include the introduction of 5G, the evolution of social media, including viral marketing, the penetration of voice and chatbots, AI-powered augmented and virtual realities, and the rollout of targeted **apps**, all of which are considered in Chapter 15. What is common to all these technology-enabled marketing communications is the change in consumer behaviour that they generate. These changes are explored in Chapter 3, but for clients and agencies they have disrupted their use of

marketing communications. The impacts have been felt in terms of strategy and planning, tactics, more precise segmenting and targeting of audiences, more effective use of budgets and reduction in the amount of waste, real-time optimisation, more media-based experimentation, and highly tuned measurement and campaign management. In addition, there are changes in **agency** structures, operations and the skill sets required to deliver optimal returns for their clients. These are also explored in later chapters.

The final comment at this stage is reserved for the way in which technology has brought to the surface several ethical issues. These include concerns associated with data privacy, taste and decency associated with gender issues and misplaced ads, plus deception and misrepresentation, which are explored in the next section.

## Scholars' paper 1.4

### How does technology impact marketing?

**Davenport, T., Guha, A., Grewal, D., & Bressgott, T. (2020). How artificial intelligence will change the future of marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 48, 24–42.**

Just as the title indicates, this paper provides an interesting insight into the way AI will impact marketing strategies and customer behaviour. It provides insightful background material and explains a range of relevant concepts without becoming absorbed in jargon and technical issues.

#### See also:

Puntoni, S., Walker Reczek, R., Giesler, M., & Botti, S. (2021). Consumers and artificial intelligence: An experiential perspective. *Journal of Marketing*, 85(1), 131–151.

Kumar, V., Rajan, B., Venkatesan, R., & Lecinski, J. (2019). Understanding the role of artificial intelligence in personalized engagement marketing. *California Management Review*, 61(4), 135–155.

Malthouse, E.C., & Li, H. (2018). Opportunities for and pitfalls of using Big Data in advertising research. *Journal of Advertising*, 46(2), 227–235.

Garaus, M., Wagner, U., & Bäck, A.-M. (2017). The effect of media multitasking on advertising message effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, 34(2), 138–156.

## Marketing communications in an ethical context

Any introduction to marketing communications would not be complete without a consideration of the ethics associated with its use. Ethics is the study of morality, and it involves those practices and activities that are importantly right and wrong (De George, 1999). Marketing communications is not 'exempt' from the moral considerations that apply to human affairs in general. As organisations seek advantage in increasingly competitive and turbulent markets, so they must be held accountable for the decisions and actions they undertake.

Genuinely ethical brands need to distinguish and differentiate themselves from competitors to ensure that they deliver both the functional and the symbolic needs of customers. This requires an understanding of their customers' values and then communicating appropriately. Here functionality refers to a brand's ability to satisfy utilitarian needs, while the symbolic dimensions are those aspects of a brand that enable consumers to express something about themselves.

**Table 1.1** Areas of ethical concern in marketing communications

Issue	Explanation
Mass manipulation	The use of advertising, primarily, to manipulate people into buying products they do not want. This view is often used when reviewing the use of advertising in political critiques of capitalistic society.
Truth-telling	The need to present audiences with factually correct and transparent information, and not to lie, deceive or misrepresent a company or an offering's attributes.
Vulnerable groups	To recognise and communicate sympathetically with people (groups) who are unable to make informed decisions. These include children, people with learning difficulties, elderly people, the recently bereaved and people who are ill.
Privacy and respect	To respect the wish of some people not be sent direct communications and to refrain from using communications that are annoying, harassing or that cause unwarranted distress or shock.
Taste and decency	The use of communications that do not either deliberately or inadvertently offend audiences.
Incentives, bribery and extortion	The use of bribes and extortion is an attempt to cheat and violate distributive justice. Incentives and the use of corporate hospitality can be considered inappropriate use of marketing communications.

Brands, however, need to be aware that there are various issues associated with the use of marketing communications, some of which can impact ethical standards. Some of these are set out in Table 1.1.

Brands should ensure that their communications always satisfy these issues. In other words, ensure that the ethical context is recognised and complemented through considerate actions, events and campaigns. For example, a Peloton ad (see Viewpoint 1.2) caused considerable adverse comment as it depicted a man giving his wife a Peloton as a Christmas gift. Reactions on social media included 'sexist', 'out of touch' and 'deranged' (Michallon, 2019).

In addition to a brand's self-awareness of societal norms and morals, the UK advertising industry provides a further contextual umbrella. One form of control is exercised through formal legislation and another, the majority, is through informal regulation administered through voluntary self-controls. Indeed, the UK is regarded as having one of the best self-regulation frameworks in the world. All advertising is governed by codes of practice that have been established to protect the consumer and ensure advertising is honest, legal, decent and truthful. These codes of practice are maintained by the Committee of Advertising Practice (CAP) and must be followed by all advertisers, media and agencies. The codes are enforced by the **Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)** and regulate all forms of advertising, including banner and display ads, paid-for search, company websites and networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook, commercial email and **SMS** text message ads, in-app ads and online behavioural advertising (OBA).

Earlier we considered the impact of technology on marketing communications, and one major development concerns the increasing use of AI. Davenport et al. (2020) consider a range of issues that have arisen from the extended use of AI, including the degree to which the management of data and associated privacy issues should be governed by self-regulation or legislation. The answer is partly determined by the prevailing culture and societal norms.

Another important consideration concerns the way brands use social media advertising regardless of the impact it can have on some people. Organisations have a responsibility to ensure that their communications do not adversely affect people, yet the mental health of some ad recipients, most notably young adults, may be jeopardised by continual exposure to social media advertising. People with poor self-regulation skills are, according

to Russell and Rogers (2019), at greater risk through their heavy use of social media, of suffering from anxiety, depression and fear of missing out (FOMO). Here, self-regulation refers to an individual's ability to exert control over themselves by changing the way they think, feel or behave. The weaker the ability to apply self-regulatory skills, the poorer the likely psychological outcomes.

In view of these risks, brands might consider providing disclaimers with their advertising, when messaging in environments that potentially can affect health, safety or the financial welfare of potential customers, such as gambling. The important point is that brands should evaluate their use of marketing communications within recently developed technological contexts from an ethical perspective.

## Viewpoint 1.4

### Halonix shine a light



**Image 1.4** Halonix responded to the public's identification of crime spots in Delhi by installing street lighting

Source: Aleksander Ilin/123RF.

The Indian energy company Halonix used LED billboards to communicate its brand and help tackle Delhi's dreadful reputation as India's rape capital. Using an online poll, the public helped identify and prioritise the streets and areas in most need of improved lighting.

Halonix then installed a variety of lighting solutions, which featured their brand name, but at the

Source: Brodsky (2017).

same time their brand was framed meaningfully around supplementing Delhi's energy grid, assisting the efforts of the police force and contributing to a reduction in the number of rape crimes. The campaign proved so successful that the Indian population expressly requested that the campaign be rolled out nationally.

## Insight

This example demonstrates how marketing communications can be used ethically within a public sector and business-to-business (B2B) context. Halonix demonstrated their recognition and sympathy with a social issue by working with numerous public organisations to

provide a practical solution. They engaged not only with the core social issue but also with their various audiences. They used their brand name to communicate their involvement and social responsibility without overshadowing the cause they were supporting.

**Question:** How might other energy companies in India react to the strategy adopted by Halonix?

**Task:** Select another energy company, in a country of your choice, and determine whether they have been involved in any social responsibility campaigns.

## Scholars' paper 1.5

### Acting unethically

**Woo, H., Jung, S., & Jin, B.E. (2020). How far can brands go to defend themselves? The extent of negative publicity impact on proactive consumer behaviors and brand equity. *Business Ethics: A European Review*, 29(1), 193–211.**

This paper provides an interesting consideration of the role of negative publicity surrounding a brand following an incident or event. In particular, attention is given to the impact of various recovery strategies on consumers' behavioural responses and brand equity. The focus is on social exchange theory and Keller's Brand Resonance model.

**See also:**

Schauster, E., & Neill, M. (2017). Have the ethics changed? An examination of ethics in advertising and public relations agencies. *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 32(1), 45–60.

Badger, M., Bronstein, C., & Lambiase, J. (2018). #WomenNotObjects: Madonna Badger takes on objectification. *Advertising & Society Quarterly*, 19(1).

## Comment

This chapter has considered several issues that involve or impact the way marketing communications is developed and deployed by organisations. One remaining issue needs consideration, namely the impact Covid-19 and the pandemic has had on consumers, organisations, agencies and clients who populate the world of marketing communications.

The crisis that exploded in 2020 generated a huge number of changes, in a very short period of time. Many of these adjustments are expected to be long lasting as the economic aftermath unfolds. These changes have influenced all aspects of marketing

communications, but buyer behaviour and the media have been transformed by the crisis. There was a major shift in the number and frequency of people using online purchasing. There was a swing towards local shopping and a preference for local produce. People became more aware of the health and safety aspects associated with the products they consume, while the reliability of products to continue to deliver functionality, as well as value, became more important purchasing criteria. Brand switching became more frequent as value for money, availability, proximity and flexibility became key factors for purchasing (Martínez, 2020). Consumers demonstrated their agility by trying new brands, stores and websites.

Media usage has changed as well. During the first and second lockdowns, advertising budgets were slashed but usage of both social media and live TV rose. Video and audio streaming usage also increased while outdoor advertising and, of course, cinema suffered badly. The press suffered a large drop in revenues, but overall online activity increased substantially.

During and post lockdowns, brands have had to demonstrate agility, to be able change course quickly. The **media mix** has changed with the increasing prevalence of mobile, the continued growth of connected TV and video, and the trend towards more direct-to-consumer (DTC) featuring heavily (Sentance, 2020). In addition, brands and advertisers are seeking to harness **artificial intelligence** (AI) far more, especially in the light of 5G technology, while programmatic technologies are being used increasingly.

Brands need to be mindful of changing societal norms. For example, Arora et al. (2020) refer to a 'growing culture of doing the right things, looking after society, and "being all in this together"'. Brands should be aware of the need to choose projects and associations carefully, and that the messages that they, their employees and partners send to customers are clear, truthful and transparent. In addition, the pandemic has pushed privacy and ethical issues further up the agenda as consumers demand higher standards.

## Key points

- Engagement is the main role of marketing communications. Only by engaging audiences does it become possible to provoke and sustain relevant conversations.
- Engagement is a function of two forms of desired response; one to drive brand values and the other to drive brand responses.
- The tasks of marketing communications are based within a need to differentiate, reinforce, inform or persuade audiences to think and behave in particular ways (DRIP).
- The purpose of marketing communications is to prompt engagement and to promote conversations with and among audiences. Through the development and presentation of relevant messages the aim is to encourage particular attitudinal, emotional or behavioural responses.
- The marketing communications mix consists of various tools, media and messages (content) that are used to reach, engage and provoke audience-centred conversations. The five tools, three categories of media and four types of messages can be configured in different ways to meet the needs of target audiences.
- As consumers progress through purchase decision journeys, marketing communications is used to maximise engagement opportunities at particular 'touchpoints' or occasions when a consumer interacts with a brand within a channel.
- The complexity of customer journeys has focused attention on a brand's need to identify and enhance the customer experience throughout an entire customer journey.

- Organisations using marketing communications in international markets need to observe and openly respect local and regional cultures. These concern the values, beliefs, customs, symbols, language, and religious properties and characteristics that provide individuals and societies with their identity.
- A fundamental decision for firms operating in the global marketplace concerns whether to standardise communication messages or adapt campaigns to meet the needs of local markets.
- Global consumer culture theory holds that the globalisation of markets has led to the emergence of a global consumer culture, with consumers who share similar beliefs and consumption values. These consumers are not bound by where they live and so this market segment exists across borders.
- Social media has transformed international marketing practices, including communications.
- The impact of Big Data, data management platforms, programmatic and mobile technologies, among others, has been to change not only aspects of consumer behaviour but also the nature, shape, operations and structure of the communications industry.
- Organisations need to be aware of a variety of ethical and societal issues when using marketing communications. These include concerns about mass manipulation, telling the truth, communicating with vulnerable groups, observing individual rights to privacy and respect, communicating and behaving tastefully and with decency, and avoiding situations where accusations of incentives, bribery and extortion could be levelled.

# Case Study



## From running shops to serving customers: The Tesco turnaround story

Original Case Authors: Simon Gregory, BBH and James Parnum, MediaCom



**Image 1.5** Using a platform of 'Prices That Take You Back', Tesco associated themselves with a host of nostalgic cultural moments and characters from Bullseye to Mr Blobby to highlight the relationship between the brand and the nation.

Source: Tesco. Reproduced with permission by IPA.

Tesco's success as the UK's leading supermarket came to an abrupt halt in 2014. Hit by a combination of external and internal factors, Tesco's growth stalled. Externally, new competitors such as the German retailers (Aldi and Lidl) changed price and value perceptions, while premium players such as Waitrose, Marks and Spencer and Sainsbury's positioned themselves around higher-quality food.

Shopping behaviour had also changed. By 2014 over 50 per cent of shoppers chose to complete their main shop across two to four grocers, shifting away from the traditional out-of-town one-stop big shop that had served Tesco so well through the 1990s. Home delivery had also started to impact.

Internally, stories emerged of supplier payments being knowingly delayed and customers being misled, while the category-wide 'horse meat contamination' crisis raised questions about supply chains. Then, in 2014, Tesco's share price plunged after it emerged that the business had been overstating profits.

Drastic action was required and Tesco responded with a five-year recovery plan, involving three core activities. First, Tesco needed to rebuild trust by putting customers at the heart of the business. Second, it needed to change perceptions of food quality by demonstrating that Tesco cared about the food its customers created. Third, the company needed to restore value perceptions by simplifying and rebuilding Tesco's offering.

## Rebuilding trust

Tesco decided it should put ‘serving customers’ back at the heart of its business. This required several cultural changes. The arrival of Dave Lewis as Tesco’s first CEO from outside the business reset the ethos of the company, emphasising transparency, acts over words, and serving customers. A new narrative ‘From running shops to serving customers’ became the cornerstone of Tesco’s new purpose.

To deliver the ‘serving customers’ position, several changes to the company’s communications were required:

- Previous campaigns had focused solely on the short-term, essentially price promotions. The new approach rebalanced the media investment in favour of campaigns that supported long-term, brand-based objectives.
- Tesco’s share of voice (SOV) correlated to share of market and spend was in long-term decline. SOV needed to be restored to the stature of Tesco’s scale and ambition to serve.
- By re-weighting its media mix it was able to better reflect people’s evolving media consumption. This resulted in down-weighting print and up-weighting digital spend.
- To rebuild relationships both inside and outside of the business, customers and Tesco colleagues were placed front and centre of its campaigns. This demonstrated its shift to serving customers through messages of ‘helpfulness’.
- Communications were planned around maximising Tesco’s unique owned channels: over 2,300 stores, 330,000 employees, 2,500 trucks, 17 million Tesco Clubcard members, the most-read magazine and a host of other websites. This would reach over half of the nation before even paying for any media and was estimated to be worth £147 million in annual media value.

## Repairing Tesco’s food credentials

Tesco’s relatively low level of food quality communications between 2010 and 2014 (which focused on pricing) and a lack of product development compared to its competitors exacerbated the lack of trust and food scandals.

Food plays an integral role in our lives evoking memories, anniversaries, holidays, special occasions and good times shared. Tesco made a shift in focus: from the food it sells, to the food you love to make for the people you love.

A trinity of people, stories and food was created, referred to as ‘Food Love Stories, brought to you by Tesco’. This was a series of tales that used food to deliver love. This redefined how Tesco treated food both internally and externally, from new dialogue with suppliers and colleagues, to new recipes, food inspiration and meal deals.

Media plans used to deliver the Food Love Stories campaign had four elements:

1. The tastiest stories were amplified to drive reach and build brand. Radio was added as a natural storytelling medium.
2. Stories were made personal by segmenting by meal type, occasion, family make-up and convenience, to add further relevance.
3. Ideas were brought to life and made deep and meaningful in helpful ways through owned media including point of sale (POS), recipe cards, emails, *Tesco Magazine* and *Tesco.com*, as well as in-store.
4. Media was tracked and optimised as stories were retold and shared. This resulted in shifts from display to video, up-weighting **out-of-home (OOH)** in regions where communications had been poor, and testing short- and long-form content strategies on social.

The Food Love Stories campaign helped the brand shift away from the ‘pile it high and sell it cheap’, to ‘serving customers through the food they loved to make’.

## Restoring value perception

By 2014, Tesco had 32 in-store and value promotion mechanics (e.g. buy-one-get-one-free) and focused the vast majority of its in-store media budget on price communications. Clubcard had become complex and cluttered with different ways for using points. Compared to the German retailers’ simplicity of low prices, Tesco looked complicated, confusing and out of touch. Meanwhile, customers were walking away with extra items in their basket that they felt they didn’t need.

It was necessary to simplify and rebuild Tesco’s value offering. Previously there had been a focus on transactional value such as the rational equation of getting more for less. However, talking further to customers revealed the importance of the *feeling* of value. The emotion-driven pride of being able to provide more for the family, the reassurance that you knew where you stood, or the excitement of getting something you wouldn’t normally be able to afford. Tesco’s role was to help make this achievable.

Tesco introduced a series of innovative products and services that provided customer value in new ways. It introduced seven simple value mechanics, including a simplified Clubcard, based on easy maths. All of these needed to be communicated clearly.

In order to reassure consumers on the essentials, such as the new value range of 'Exclusively at Tesco' brands, communications were framed around shopper needs.

These messages were delivered through a 'virtual shop window', created by bringing together front pages of the nation's 'red tops' (a first), and combining it with a long-term media partnership with *The Sun*, *Daily Mirror* and 27 regional titles. Tesco's exclusive news brand partnership with *The Sun* served to block out the competition in paper and online.

This was complemented by a greater emphasis on targeting shoppers using first-party data from Tesco's first ever data management platform (DMP) to deliver greater relevancy in social, display, video, digital audio and addressable TV.

## The outcomes

Over the five years of Tesco's recovery plan, reputation, quality and value all experienced improvements on a scale previously unseen in the category. In 2019 the business posted its highest profits (+£2.21 billion) since a pre-tax loss of £6 billion in February 2015.

Communications became a vital part of Tesco's recovery narrative to consumers, the city and other Tesco stakeholders. Re-weighting the plan to support campaigns with long-term objectives, a single-minded focus on winning share of voice (SOV), and a media mix that reflected shoppers' actual media usage gave Tesco a strong foundation from which to grow.

This case study is an edited version of a paper submitted to the IPA Effectiveness Awards 2020. It has been reproduced here with the kind permission of the IPA, WARC, Tesco, and their agencies BBH and MediaCom who wrote the original paper.

## Review questions

### Tesco case questions

1. Evaluate the main role of marketing communications in the Tesco recovery programme.
2. Using the DRIP framework, explain the key tasks that marketing communications was required to accomplish for Tesco.
3. Examine the main elements of the marketing communications mix that were used in the 'Food Love Stories' campaign.
4. Identify the different ways in which Tesco engaged its audiences.
5. Explain how the key target audience influenced the configuration of the marketing communications mix.

### General questions

1. Define marketing communications. What are the key elements in the definition?
2. How might the contribution of the tools differ from those of the media within a marketing communications programme?
3. Discuss the way in which brands can enhance their customer experiences.
4. Evaluate the ways in which engagement might vary across international borders.
5. Explain how marketing communications might differ within consumer and business marketing strategies.

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