

Module - 6

CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

Sangeeta Sahney
Assistant Professor,
Vinod Gupta School of Management
Indian Institute of Technology
Kharagpur, India
Email. sahney@vgsom.iitkgp.ernet.in

LESSON – 31

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY, CONSUMER COMMUNICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS

Instructional Objectives:

After completion of this lesson, the student shall know about:

6.5.4 Designing a Communication Strategy

6.5.5 Integrated Marketing Communication and Models of Communication Strategy

6.5.6 Consumer Communication and Implications for Marketers

6.5.4 DESIGNING A COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

The basic objective behind marketing communication is to inform a consumer (or a prospect) and to make him aware about the product/service offering, and the mix; build a favorable attitude towards the offering; and to encourage a purchase. A marketer needs to formulate his communication strategy and use his promotion mix judiciously. He must formulate a strategy and take decisions on i) the objectives of the communication; ii) the target audience; iii) the media; iv) the message; and v) the feedback.

i) The objectives of the communication:

Decisions related to the objectives of the communication and the target audience, comprise what is known as the “communication strategy”. The marketer may have various objective(s) behind his communication programme. He may want to:

- make the consumer (or the prospect) aware of the product/service offering, and the marketing mix (“cognitive” objective);
- create a favorable attitude towards his product/service offering (“affective/emotional” objective);
- elicit an action (purchase) from the target (“conative/behavioral”: objective).

Apart from these, he could also aim at creating goodwill and a favorable social image (publicity). All or any one of these could comprise as the objectives of communication.

ii) The target audience:

The marketer also needs to decide what or who the target audience is. This would depend upon the product/service offering that the marketer intends to offer. This decision is important for a marketer, because the message strategy and the media strategy would be designed according to the target market. The marketer would design his message and decide on the channel according to the segment(s) that he is catering to. If he is catering to many segments, he would have to create separate messages for each group, and play it across media or channels that are accessed by the various segments.

iii) The media:

Decisions related to the media, comprise what is known as the “media strategy”. The media strategy relates to first, the issue as to which medium is to be used for message delivery; and second, timing and the location of the message so that it has maximum impact (referred to as aperture).

The choice of the media or the channel used to deliver the message depends on i) the product/service offering to be advertised; ii) the target segment (s); and iii) the communication objective(s). Based on these three issues, the marketer needs to decide on the channel(s) for communication. This would imply placing and or playing advertisements across print broadcast and audio-visual broadcast media, so that it is accessed, read, heard and viewed by maximum people. A cost effective strategy would be one where the message is placed in the specific media read, viewed, or heard by selected target markets.

Messages should be placed across media or channels of communication, so as to be able to reach a wide target audience and have maximum impact. This leads to a discussion on “reach” and “frequency”.

- Reach: “Reach” implies the number of people or households who are exposed to the message , because they read the newspaper or hear/watch the program on radio/TV.
- Frequency: “Frequency” means how often they are exposed to the message in a specific period of time.

In order to have a wide reach and frequency, advertisement agencies develop what is

referred to as a “consumer profile” and an “audience profile.”

- Consumer Profile: This refers to a marketer’s description of the consumers who are likely to purchase a product/service offering; they would have the income, access, and desire to purchase the offering. Assumptions are made about social class, income levels, lifestyle, AIO’s etc, thus giving an idea as to what is the media that these consumers read, hear or watch.
- Audience Profile: The media develops its audience profile. The audience profile refers to a media agencies’ description about the kind of consumers who read, hear or watch their print and audio-visual channels. This would depend on a fit between the media and its target segment, thus illustrating a match between the media, its programmes, its price, and its availability on the one hand, and consumer income, access, desire and interest on the other hand.

In order to gain maximum benefit out of reach and frequency, marketers must ensure that there is a fit between the media audience profile and the consumer profile. In other words, it means that the best media choice is one which matches the advertiser's consumer profile to a medium's audience profile.

The alternative that a marketer has is to go for print or audio-visual or both. Each of these media has its advantages and disadvantages. Marketers chose more than one medium to place or run their messages. While one channel/media gains primacy, the other(s) supplement the former, and thus the various channels/media work simultaneously. So what is adopted is referred to as a multimedia campaign strategy. After the marketer has decided on the media category, he can then decide on specific media or channel. The marketer also places/runs his message repeatedly to encourage recall; he also places/runs it across channels so as to achieve both reach and frequency, and to counter grazing/surfing/wandering.

- Involvement Theory and Choice of Media: The marketer would have to select different media for high and low involvement purchases. As per the central-and-peripheral-routes-to-persuasion theory, for high involvement purchase situations, the consumer would

indulge in a great deal of cognitive effort to evaluate the product/service offering; hence, the marketer would have to follow the central route to persuasion, and present a factual message in the print media. On the other hand for low involvement purchase situations, the peripheral route to persuasion would come into play, and the marketer would place his emotional and social message with scenery, music and celebrities in the audio-visual media. However, critics to the theory believe that the processing takes place simultaneously and rational and/or emotional messages can be played across print and audio-visual media.

iv) The message:

The marketer also needs to take a decision on his message strategy. The message is the information that the sender, i.e. the marketer wants to convey to the receiver, i.e. the target segment(s). The message strategy requires that the marketer decides on four basic issues; 1) what to say (the message content); 2&3) how to say it logically (message structure) and symbolically (message format); and, 4) who would say it (message source).

1. What to say (the message content): this depends upon the objective of communication; the marketer needs to assess the objective behind the communication. It could range from merely making the consumer aware of the product/service offering and the mix, or to create an interest in him for more information, or to create a desire in him to try out the offering, or to elicit an action (purchase), or to reduce post-purchase cognitive dissonance.

The marketer must be very clear as to what his objective of communication is. This will help him decide what he wants to say.

2. How to say it logically (message structure) **and symbolically** (message format): the message strategy relates to the content and the form of communication. It must be designed keeping in mind the target segment(s), as the ultimate objective lies in creating an message and delivering it in a manner that elicits an action on the part of the consumer; the action being purchase of the product/service offering.

The communication content refers to the information that the marketer wants to convey to the target segment(s). The information content that the marketer would want to

convey would be based on the objective of communication, i.e, cognitive, affective or behavioral. The various objectives would be met through different content delivered through different channels or media. In other words, a marketer could have many communications objectives, each of which would require a different message to be delivered through a different channels(s).

The marketer also needs to take a decision on how to format the message, in other words, on the method of presentation. This is referred to as the creative strategy, i.e. that form that the message takes. The message format affects the way in which a message is received, held with interest and assimilated by a receiver, and so it is important that the message is designed well and presented properly. The marketer needs to convey his message through proper words (semantics) and sentences (syntax). The message must be clear and precise, in a language that is understandable by the target segment(s). Thus, a marketer needs to keep in mind the personal characteristics of the segment(s) in terms of demographics (age, education, income, etc) as also the psychographics (motivation, attitude, personality, AIOs etc.) and the social influences (culture, sub-culture, family etc), so that the message can be interpreted appropriately. Few areas where the marketer needs to give attention in message structure and format are as follows:

a) Message framing: The manner in which a message is framed affects its persuasiveness. Messages can be framed as positively framed or negatively framed. Positively framed messages are those messages that indicate the benefits or advantages that a person can gain by purchasing and using the product/service offering. For example, Fair and Lovely from HUL is positioned as a fairness cream and the message is a positively framed one, that claims how women can become fair by using the cream. Negatively framed messages are those which indicate the benefits lost or the disadvantages that a person suffers by not purchasing and using the product/service offering. For example, the Complan advertisement shows that children who don not drink Complan remain about 2 inches shorter than those who drink Complan.

Another example that can be discussed is a public message that states “Quitting smoking reduces chances of lung cancer”. This is positively framed message and would

be much persuasive than a message that is negatively framed and states “Don’t smoke. Smoking causes lung cancer.”

Research has shown that positively framed messages generate a greater impact, although both positively and negatively framed messages can be persuasive in nature.

b) Order effects: There occurs an interaction effect between the message framing and the message order, and thus order effects need to be discussed. Research has shown that the order in which a message is transmitted affects the receptivity of the audience. The questions that arise are:

- Should the message be presented first or last or in the middle?

Generally speaking, when exposed to a consumer, the first and the last messages or advertisements are more likely to gather attention and subsequent retention, than those that are presented in between or in the middle. This is referred to as the primacy effect and the recency effect; i.e. when the material that is presented first gains attention and recall, it is called the primacy effect, and when the material that is presented last gains attention and recall, it is called the recency effect. Advertisements placed on the first and last page of the newspaper/magazine as also played the first and the last on TV/radio are recalled much faster than those in between. That is the reason why newspaper and magazine rates for placement of messages and advertisements varies across front page and last page and pages in between. Same holds good for advertisement rates on TV/radio (prime time). The charges are more because of greater visibility and recall. However, it needs to be mentioned that the impact on order effects is higher in the audio-visual media, than in the print.

- How should product/service attributes and benefits be listed in an advertisement?

It has been seen that the manner in which product/service benefits are listed also affect target attention, retention and recall. This would depend upon the product/service in question as also the target segment(s). If the target segment(s), is low on involvement and interest, the most important attribute/benefit should be listed the first to gather attention. However, if the segment(s) is high on involvement and interest, the message can be so designed that it starts with the least important attribute/benefit, gradually moving to the most important (i.e. in an ascending order).

- How should favorable and unfavorable information be presented together?

When both favorable and unfavorable information is to be presented, favorable information should be presented first. It creates space and greater tolerance for the unfavorable information.

c) One-sided versus two-sided messages: Another issue that a marketer needs to take a decision on, is whether the message should be one-sided, and tell the target audience only about the pros, or it should be two-sided, and tell the audience about both the pros and cons. In other words, the marketer needs to assess whether he should be totally open about his product/service offering, or he should restrain himself, and talk only about the advantages of using the product/service offering, thus, ignoring the disadvantages. This would depend on the nature of the audience. Research has indicated that if the segment(s) comprises people who are positive in nature, optimistic, friendly and loyal to the advertiser's product/service offerings and the message, then a one-sided (supportive) message that stresses only the pros or the favorable information would be most effective. On the other hand, if the target audience is pessimistic in nature, critical, unfriendly, and disloyal (switcher), to the advertiser's product/service offerings and the message, then a two-sided (refutational) message would be more effective. In fact it is argued that such an audience would be more educated, and mature enough to understand the pros and cons; they would find two-sided messages to be credible as they would be stating both the pros and cons. The audience would respect the marketer and regard him as credible, because he is truthful about his offering.

d) Comparative advertising: A marketer could position his offering in two ways, one, on the basis of point of parity; and two, on the basis of differentiation. In both these cases, the marketer tries to compare his product/service offering with the competitor. When a marketer tries to compare his product/service offering with a competitor, it is called as comparative advertising. The marketer would exercise some of the following options; 1) State how his product/service has the same attributes like other competitive offerings, but the former's offering is better than the latter's; 2) State how his product/service has attribute(s), that are unique to himself and not possessed by other

competitors. Through comparative advertisement, a marketer tries to illustrate the superiority of his product/service offering over competitive offerings. Such comparisons may be drawn on one or few attributes or on an overall basis.

However, sometimes the effort by the marketer can backfire, to the competitors disadvantage. A comparative advertisement from a marketer may help recall the product/service offering of a competitor. For example, the advertisement of Sprite and Mountain Dew; because the bottle (package), is similar, it leads to confusion with the consumer, and lead to recall.

e) Advertisement appeals: In order to present a message symbolically, a marketer needs to use “appeals”. Advertisement appeals could be of various kinds, viz. factual, emotional (humorous, agony etc.). Broadly speaking, marketers use two kinds of appeals, viz., informational, factual or rational, and emotional. Another appeal that is often adopted is the “slice-of-life”, where the objective is to use themes that relate to problems and issues faced by the target on a day-to-day basis, for example, ink running out of a pen while the exam is on, or, the shoe getting broken while one is walking etc. The choice for each of these and their resulting relevance is based on i) the product/service in question; 2) the level of involvement; and iii) the target audience. In some cases, like for high involvement products, a factual, information oriented message is more suitable; in other cases, an emotional message could be more effective. The various appeals along with relevant examples, are explained through the table (See Table 1).

3. Who would say it (message source): the formal source of communication would include the company (marketer), viz, both public and private organizations, those working not-for profit, as well as those working for-profit. It could include commercial organizations, government organizations as well as non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, the informal source of communication would include family, friends, peers, colleagues and people in our reference group, who provide us with information and advice about a product/service, (word-of-mouth communication). Research has shown that consumers rely more on informal sources of communication.

The message could be communicated through a celebrity (film star, sportsman, etc), a company spokesperson (the founder, CEO or the salesperson), or an expert (dentist, nutritionist etc.). As has been mentioned in the previous section, the message source needs to be credible, otherwise, the message loses its persuasiveness.

v) The target audience: Feedback is the receiver's response to the sender, i.e. the consumer's response to the marketer's message. It is the acid test to determine whether the communication has been effective or not, as it is through this feedback, that the marketer gets to know whether the message has been correctly interpreted by the consumer. It helps the marketer to add/delete/modify his message so that the message is better understood. Marketers encourage feedback by including teaser elements in their ads, or by providing incomplete messages requiring closure, etc.

Table 1: Advertisement Appeals

Appeal	Meaning and Relevance	Example
1. Factual and logical Appeal	<p>Information oriented. Appeal is relevant for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -High-involvement purchase situations - Inner directed personality types -Innovators, and early adopters. <p>-Print advertisements in newspapers and magazines, brochures, catalogs.</p>	<p>Shopping goods: Electronics, Laptops.</p> <p>Specialty goods: Paintings, Fashion Apparel.</p>
2. Social Appeal	<p>Socially oriented Appeal is relevant for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social and public issues/areas of concern - Socially directed or other directed personality types - Early majority and late majority. <p>-Audio-visual advertisements.</p>	<p>Laptops. Eg. Dell Social issues: Pulse polio, Child literacy, AIDS.</p> <p>Convenience goods like Cereal, Cosmetics and Toiletries, Beverages.</p>
3. Emotional Appeals - Humorous appeal	<p>Feeling. Humor, Agony and Fear -Audio-visual advertisements. Humor appeals are highly persuasive appeals. It is believed that humor attracts attention, and retention, and encourages recall.</p> <p>It is used carefully, as some people believe that a humorous appeal could lead to ridicule and subsequent embarrassment for the brand.</p>	<p>Alpenliebe advertisement with Kajol.</p>
- Agony appeal	<p>It works well with low-involvement purchase situations. Agony appeals depict pain and agony; they could depict pain, suffering and discomfort due acidity, indigestion, headache, muscle pull, burns etc.</p> <p>They show how a person is relieved of such suffering through usage of a medicinal drug.</p> <p>They are highly persuasive.</p>	<p>Crocin, Saridon, Burnol, Eno, Pudina Hara</p>

- Fear appeal	Fear appeals illustrate a feeling of fear and insecurity at non-usage of a product/service, i.e. it is a negatively framed message.	
	The appeal should be mild; strong appeals tend to be less effective than mild ones.	
	Strong fear appeal: An advertisement that states that smoking leads to lung cancer would be threatening to a smoker, who would block such messages: selective attention, or would try to refute such claims or messages.	Cigarette smoking leads to lung cancer.
	Mild fear appeal: The consumers are more receptive to a mild appeal, and there exists a positive relationship with persuasiveness.	Non-usage of Pepsodent leads to tooth decay.

Feedback is crucial in both interpersonal and impersonal communication. It is easier to read customer reaction and obtain feedback in interpersonal communication, than it is in impersonal communication. Market researchers try to infer customer reactions to impersonal communication by their action/inaction (whether they purchase or do not purchase).

6.5.5 INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION AND MODELS OF COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

A marketer makes use of his promotion or communication mix, which comprises advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity and direct marketing to communicate with their consumers. He does not use these tools in isolation; he makes judicious use of a combination of them depending upon a) the product/service offering; b) the objective of communication; c) the target audience; d) the environment.

Integrated marketing communication is defined as a mix of both the message as well as the media strategy, so that the messages are transmitted via different media to the target segment(s) in a regular and consistent manner. Integrated communication is important so that a single message is communicated to the audience by the various

channels or media in order to avoid confusion. The various tools are not used in isolation, but they are used in a judicious and coordinated manner.

There are two theories that need to be discussed here, viz., 1) The Hierarchy of Effects Model; and 2) The Brand Experience Theory.

1) The Hierarchy of Effects Model:

The Hierarchy of Effects Model was proposed by Robert Lavidge and Gary Steiner. The model illustrates the steps that consumers go through while making a purchase, especially in relation to the interactivity between such stages and the communication effort on the part of the marketer. In other words, the model explains, how the various stages of the buying are impacted by communication (particularly, advertisement), and how consumers use advertising in their purchase processes.

According to the Model, the buying process can be broken down into seven steps, viz., unawareness, awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase. The seven steps can be classified under three processes, cognitive or thinking component, affect or feeling component, and conative or action component.

- Cognitive or thinking component: unawareness, awareness, knowledge
- Affect or feeling component: liking, preference, conviction
- Conative or action component: purchase

Further each of these components and stages can also be related to psychographic elements.

Unawareness, awareness: Perception

Knowledge: Learning

Liking and preference: Attitude formation

Conviction and purchase: Decision

As per the theory, consumers pass through each of the steps in the same sequential manner, but the speed in which they move through these stages differ from person to person. Also, due to personal characteristics and individual differences, it may be such that a person may not pass through all the seven steps and may even skip some of them.

An Assessment of the Theory: The Hierarchy of Effects Model illustrates how consumers exhibit cognitive, affective, and conative behaviors. However, critics have argued on the ordered steps during the purchase process. They believe that consumers do not always move in a linear manner from a cognitive or thinking component to a affect or feeling component to a conative or action component. Thus other models have been proposed which while based on the same steps arrange them in a different manner, eg., Robertson's Model (Problem recognition, Awareness, Comprehension, Attitude, Legitimization, Trial, Adoption, Dissonance), Roger's Model (Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation, Confirmation), AIDAS Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action and Satisfaction) and the Adoption Model (Awareness, Interest, Evaluation, Trial, Adoption). Further, critics have also argued that depending on the nature of the purchase situation, in terms of involvement levels, (high involvement or low involvement), the thinking-feeling-action sequence would change. In case of low involvement, the sequence would be thinking-action-feeling sequence; and in case of high involvement, the sequence would be thinking-feeling-action sequence.

Implications for a marketer:

The theory has relevance for a marketer as it illustrates clearly the stages through which a consumer passes while purchasing a product/service. It provides valuable insight to a marketer who could formulate his communication strategy accordingly, and use the right kind of tool(s) from his promotion mix.

2) The Brand Experience Theory:

The Brand Experience Theory acknowledges the impact of the cumulative effort of all the tools of the promotion mix on a consumer's decision making process. It falls in congruence with the concept of the integrated marketing communication program. The consumers are exposed to an enormous amount of marketing communication from various channels and media, and are affected simultaneously by all different kinds of marketing communication. Many a times the information received is in disorderly; sometimes conflicting; and thus, often confusing for the consumer. Thus, attention, storage, retention and retrieval of information, is highly complex. The theory seeks to coordinate the different messages and the various media so that the consumers can receive an integrated and consistent pattern of information at the right time. Further, as per the theory, the purchase process and consumer decision making is a dynamic process; it is not essentially an orderly sequential progression from thinking to feeling to behavior. Consumers can move back and forth among the various steps as proposed by various models (eg., Hierarchy of Effects Model), and there is feedback.

Thus, according to the model, the message and the media must be integrated so that the consumers receive a consistent stream of marketing communication. There should also be a mechanism of feedback.

An Assessment of the Theory: The Brand Experience Theory proposes that consumers collect information, form attitudes, and make purchase decisions in varied sequences. It also proposes that consumers are exposed to a wide variety of media and channels, and receive information from such sources, which do not correspond or relate to stage(s) in the decision making process.

Implications for a marketer:

This approach proves to be beneficial both for the marketer as well as for the consumer. The marketer has access to a wide variety of media to choose from and deliver his message; the consumer is exposed to messages via such media, and the consumer is free to choose from whichever channel or media he wishes to choose from. The end result is an integrated form of communication, a judicious blend of the promotion mix.

6.5.6 CONSUMER COMMUNICATION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR MARKETERS:

Marketing communication or consumer communication, whether interpersonal or impersonal, has a great deal of relevance for the marketer. Marketers make use of his promotion or communication mix, which comprises advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, publicity and direct marketing to communicate with their consumers. The basic objective behind marketing communication is to inform a consumer (or a prospect) and to make him aware about the product/service offering, and the mix; build a favorable attitude towards the offering; and to encourage a purchase.

Knowledge about marketing communication or consumer communication helps the marketer in a number of ways. The subject has wide implications in the sense that it makes clear to the marketer that:

1. Consumers rely more on informal sources of communication, i.e. family, friends, peers, colleagues and people in our reference group; this is because it is believed that informal sources do not have a hidden agenda or an ulterior motive of making sales.
2. The marketer needs to decide what to say, whom to say, when and where. In any case, the objective of the sender is to provide information about the product/service offering as well as any changes made in terms of price, distribution and promotion.

3. The marketer has to think of the message content as well as the message context; the former is factual and rational, the latter is emotional. Issues that a marketer needs to address include:

- positively framed messages generate a greater impact, although both positively and negatively framed messages can be persuasive in nature.

- when exposed to a consumer, the first and the last messages or advertisements are more likely to gather attention and subsequent retention, than those that are presented in between or in the middle. This is referred to as the primacy effect and the recency effect respectively.

- when both favorable and unfavorable information is to be presented, favorable information should be presented first. It creates space and greater tolerance for the unfavorable information.

- whether a message is one sided or two-sided would depend on the nature of the audience.

- through comparative advertisement, a marketer tries to illustrate the superiority of his product/service offering over competitive offerings. Such comparisons may be drawn on one or few attributes or on an overall basis. However, sometimes the effort by the marketer can backfire, to the competitors disadvantage. A comparative advertisement from a marketer may help recall the product/service offering of a competitor.

- In order to present a message symbolically, a marketer needs to use “appeals”. Advertisement appeals could be of various kinds, viz. factual, emotional (humorous, agony etc.). Broadly speaking, marketers use two kinds of appeals, viz., informational, factual or rational, and emotional.

4. The marketer needs to think of the media strategy (what channel to use? Interpersonal or impersonal) as well as the message strategy (what to say, how to say it logically and symbolically).

5. The marketer should keep in mind the credibility of the source.

6. Feedback acts as an acid test to determine whether the communication has been effective or not, as it is through this feedback, that the marketer gets to know whether the message has been correctly interpreted by the consumer. It helps the marketer to add/delete/modify his message so that the message is better understood. The customer can address issues of concern and seek clarifications from the marketer.

7. While feedback is important in both interpersonal and impersonal communications, it is easier to obtain customer feedback in interpersonal communication, than it is in impersonal communication.

8. Messages should be placed across various channels of communication, as integrated marketing communication, so as to have maximum impact.

Marketers should also realize that it is on the basis of the segment(s) that the message and media strategy need to be designed. Positioning of the product/service offering needs to be done accordingly. Divergent segments may require different message and media strategies.

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FAQS (FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS):

Ques 1 **How do you go about planning a good “message strategy”?**

Ans 1 A marketer needs to take a decision on his message strategy. The message is the information that the sender, i.e. the marketer wants to convey to the receiver, i.e. the target segment(s). The “message strategy” requires that the marketer decides on four basic issues; 1) what to say (the message content); 2&3) how to say it logically (message structure) and symbolically (message format); and, 4) who would say it (message source).

1. What to say (the message content): this depends upon the objective of communication; the marketer needs to assess the objective behind the communication. It could range from merely making the consumer aware of the product/service offering and the mix, or to create an interest in him for more information, or to create a desire in him to try out the offering, or to elicit an action (purchase), or to reduce post-purchase cognitive dissonance.

The marketer must be very clear as to what his objective of communication is. This will help him decide what he wants to say.

2. How to say it logically (message structure) **and symbolically** (message format): the message strategy relates to the content and the form of communication. It must be designed keeping in mind the target segment(s), as the ultimate objective lies in creating an message and delivering it in a manner that elicits an action on the part of the consumer; the action being purchase of the product/service offering.

The communication content refers to the information that the marketer wants to convey to the target segment(s). The information content that the marketer would want to convey would be based on the objective of communication, i.e, cognitive, affective or behavioral. The various objectives would be met through different content delivered through different channels or media. In other words, a marketer could have many communications objectives, each of which would require a different message to be delivered through a different channels(s).

The marketer also needs to take a decision on how to format the message, in other words, on the method of presentation. This is referred to as the creative strategy, i.e. that form that the message takes. The message format affects the way in which a message is received, held with interest and assimilated by a receiver, and so it is important that the message is designed well and presented properly. The marketer needs to convey his message through proper words (semantics) and sentences (syntax). The message must be clear and precise, in a language that is understandable by the target segment(s). Thus, a marketer needs to keep in mind the personal characteristics of the segment(s) in terms of demographics (age, education, income, etc) as also the psychographics (motivation, attitude, personality, AIOs etc.) and the social influences (culture, sub-culture, family etc), so that the message can be interpreted appropriately. Few areas where the marketer needs to give attention in message structure and format are as follows:

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b) Order effects: There occurs an interaction effect between the message framing and the message order, and thus order effects need to be discussed. Research has shown that the order in which a message is transmitted affects the receptivity of the audience. The questions that arise are:

- Should the message be presented first or last or in the middle?

Generally speaking, when exposed to a consumer, the first and the last messages or advertisements are more likely to gather attention and subsequent retention, than those that are presented in between or in the middle. This is referred to as the primacy effect and the recency effect; i.e. when the material that is presented first gains attention and recall, it is called the primacy effect, and when the material that is presented last gains attention and recall, it is called the recency effect. Advertisements placed on the first and last page of the newspaper/magazine as also played the first and the last on TV/radio are recalled much faster than those in between.

- How should product/service attributes and benefits be listed in an advertisement?

It has been seen that the manner in which product/service benefits are listed also affect target attention, retention and recall. This would depend upon the product/service in question as also the target segment(s). If the target segment(s), is low on involvement and interest, the most important attribute/benefit should be listed the first to gather attention. However, if the segment(s) is high on involvement and interest, the message can be so designed that it starts with the least important attribute/benefit, gradually moving to the most important (i.e. in an ascending order).

- How should favorable and unfavorable information be presented together?

When both favorable and unfavorable information is to be presented, favorable information should be presented first. It creates space and greater tolerance for the unfavorable information.

c) One-sided versus two-sided messages: Another issue that a marketer needs to take a decision on, is whether the message should be one-sided, and tell the target audience only about the pros, or it should be two-sided, and tell the audience about both the pros and cons. In other words, the marketer needs to assess whether he should be totally open about his product/service offering, or he should restrain himself, and talk only about the advantages of using the product/service offering, thus, ignoring the disadvantages. This would depend on the nature of the audience. Research has indicated that if the segment(s) comprises people who are positive in nature, optimistic, friendly and loyal to the advertiser's product/service offerings and the message, then a one-sided (supportive) message that stresses only the pros or the favorable information would be most effective. On the other hand, if the target audience is pessimistic in nature, critical, unfriendly, and disloyal (switcher), to the advertiser's product/service offerings and the message, then a two-sided (refutational) message would be more effective.

d) Comparative advertising: A marketer could position his offering in two ways, one, on the basis of point of parity; and two, on the basis of differentiation. In both these cases, the marketer tries to compare his product/service offering with the competitor. When a marketer tries to compare his product/service offering with a competitor, it is called as comparative advertising. The marketer would exercise some of the following options; 1) State how his product/service has the same attributes like other competitive offerings, but the former's offering is better than the latter's; 2) State how his product/service has attribute(s), that are unique to himself and not possessed by other competitors. Through comparative advertisement, a marketer tries to illustrate the superiority of his product/service offering over competitive offerings. Such comparisons may be drawn on one or few attributes or on an overall basis.

However, sometimes the effort by the marketer can backfire, to the competitors disadvantage. A comparative advertisement from a marketer may help recall the product/service offering of a competitor.

e) Advertisement appeals: In order to present a message symbolically, a marketer needs to use “appeals”. Advertisement appeals could be of various kinds, viz. factual, emotional (humorous, agony etc.). Broadly speaking, marketers use two kinds of appeals, viz., informational, factual or rational, and emotional. The choice for each of these and their resulting relevance is based on i) the product/service in question; 2) the level of involvement; and iii) the target audience. In some cases, like for high involvement products, a factual, information oriented message is more suitable; in other cases, an emotional message could be more effective. The various appeals along with relevant examples, are explained through the table.

3. Who would say it (message source): the formal source of communication would include the company (marketer), viz, both public and private organizations, those working not-for profit, as well as those working for-profit. It could include commercial organizations, government organizations as well as non-governmental organizations. On the other hand, the informal source of communication would include family, friends, peers, colleagues and people in our reference group, who provide us with information and

advice about a product/service, (word-of-mouth communication). Research has shown that consumers rely more on informal sources of communication.

The message could be communicated through a celebrity (film star, sportsman, etc), a company spokesperson (the founder, CEO or the salesperson), or an expert (dentist, nutritionist etc.). The message source needs to be credible, otherwise, the message loses its persuasiveness.

v) The target audience: Feedback is the receiver's response to the sender, i.e. the consumer's response to the marketer's message. It is the acid test to determine whether the communication has been effective or not, as it is through this feedback, that the marketer gets to know whether the message has been correctly interpreted by the consumer. It helps the marketer to add/delete/modify his message so that the message is better understood. Marketers encourage feedback by including teaser elements in their ads, or by providing incomplete messages requiring closure, etc. Feedback is crucial in both interpersonal and impersonal communication. It is easier to read customer reaction and obtain feedback in interpersonal communication, than it is in impersonal communication. Market researchers try to infer customer reactions to impersonal communication by their action/inaction (whether they purchase or do not purchase).

Ques 2 Explain the Hierarchy of Effects Model.

Ans 2 The Hierarchy of Effects Model was proposed by Robert Lavidge and Gary Steiner. The model illustrates the steps that consumers go through while making a purchase, especially in relation to the interactivity between such stages and the communication effort on the part of the marketer. In other words, the model explains, how the various stages of the buying are impacted by communication (particularly, advertisement), and how consumers use advertising in their purchase processes.

According to the Model, the buying process can be broken down into seven steps, viz., unawareness, awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase. The seven steps can be classified under three processes, cognitive or thinking component, affect or feeling component, and conative or action component.

- Cognitive or thinking component: unawareness, awareness, knowledge

- Affect or feeling component: liking, preference, conviction
- Conative or action component: purchase

Further each of these components and stages can also be related to psychographic elements.

Unawareness, awareness: Perception

Knowledge: Learning

Liking and preference: Attitude formation

Conviction and purchase: Decision

As per the theory, consumers pass through each of the steps in the same sequential manner, but the speed in which they move through these stages differ from person to person. Also, due to personal characteristics and individual differences, it may be such that a person may not pass through all the seven steps and may even skip some of them.

An Assessment of the Theory: The Hierarchy of Effects Model illustrates how consumers exhibit cognitive, affective, and conative behaviors. However, critics have argued on the ordered steps during the purchase process. They believe that consumers do not always move in a linear manner from a cognitive or thinking component to a affect or feeling component to a conative or action component. Thus other models have been proposed which while based on the same steps arrange them in a different manner, eg., Robertson's Model (Problem recognition, Awareness, Comprehension, Attitude, Legitimization, Trial, Adoption, Dissonance), Roger's Model (Knowledge, Persuasion, Decision, Implementation, Confirmation), AIDAS Model (Attention, Interest, Desire, Action and Satisfaction) and the Adoption Model (Awareness, Interest, Evaluation, Trial, Adoption). Further, critics have also argued that depending on the nature of the purchase situation, in terms of involvement levels, (high involvement or low involvement), the thinking-feeling-action sequence would change. In case of low involvement, the sequence would be thinking-action-feeling sequence; and in case of high involvement, the sequence would be thinking-feeling-action sequence.

Implications for a marketer:

The theory has relevance for a marketer as it illustrates clearly the stages through which a consumer passes while purchasing a product/service. It provides valuable insight to a marketer who could formulate his communication strategy accordingly, and use the right kind of tool(s) from his promotion mix.

SELF EVALUATION TESTS/QUIZZES:

Section A True/false:

1. The consumer profile refers to a media agencies' description about the kind of consumers who read, hear or watch their print and audio-visual channels.
2. The message strategy relates to the form that the message takes.
3. According to the Hierarchy of Effects Model, the buying process can be broken down into seven steps, which can be classified under two processes.
4. The Brand Experience Theory falls in congruence with the concept of the integrated marketing communication program.

Section B Fill up the blanks:

1. Decisions related to the objectives of the communication and the target audience, comprise what is known as the _____ strategy.
2. _____ implies the number of people or households who are exposed to the message, because they read the newspaper or hear/watch the program on radio/TV.
3. The _____ strategy relates to the content and the form of communication
4. The communication _____ refers to the information that the marketer wants to convey to the target segment(s).
5. When the material that is presented last gains attention, it is called the _____ effect.
6. The _____ Model was proposed by Robert Lavidge and Gary Steiner.

Section C Multiple choice questions:

1. Broadly speaking, marketers use two kinds of appeals, viz.,
 - a) Informational and emotional
 - b) Fear and humor
 - c) Both of the above
 - d) None of the above.
2. Which of the following theories acknowledges the impact of the cumulative effort of all the tools of the promotion mix on a consumer's decision making process?
 - a) AIDAS Theory
 - b) Brand Experience Theory
 - c) Hierarchy of Effects Model
 - d) None of the above.

Section D Short answers:

1. What could be the objectives of communication?
2. What does the media strategy relate to?
3. The message strategy requires that the marketer decides on four basic issues. Mention them.
4. Define:
 - a) Negatively framed messages
 - b) Integrated marketing communication

KEY

Section A True/false:

1. False
2. False
3. False
4. True

Section B Fill up the blanks:

1. Communication
2. Reach
3. Message
4. Content
5. Recency
6. Hierarchy of Effects

Section C Multiple choice questions:

1. a
2. b

Section D Short Answers:

1. The marketer may have various objective(s) behind his communication programme. He may want to:

-make the consumer (or the prospect) aware of the product/service offering, and the marketing mix (“cognitive” objective);

-create a favorable attitude towards his product/service offering (“affective/emotional” objective);

-elicit an action (purchase) from the target (“conative/behavioral”: objective).

Apart from these, he could also aim at creating goodwill and a favorable social image (publicity). All or any one of these could comprise as the objectives of communication.

2. The media strategy relates to first, the issue as to which medium is to be used for message delivery; and second, timing and the location of the message so that it has maximum impact (referred to as aperture).

3. The message content, message structure, message format, and, message source.

4. a) Negatively framed messages are those which indicate the benefits lost or the

disadvantages that a person suffers by not purchasing and using the product/service offering. For example, the Complan advertisement shows that children who don't drink Complan remain about 2 inches shorter than those who drink Complan.

b) Integrated marketing communication is defined as a mix of both the message as well as the media strategy, so that the messages are transmitted via different media to the target segment(s) in a regular and consistent manner, and the same message is communicated via different media.