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## The Effectiveness of “Integrated Advertisement Message Strategy” in Developing Brand Equity- A Conceptual Framework

<sup>1</sup>Raji Ridwan Adetunji, <sup>2</sup>ShahrinaMd Nordin and <sup>3</sup>Shuhaida Md Noor

<sup>1,2</sup>Department of Management and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Petronas.

<sup>3</sup>School of Communication, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

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### ABSTRACT

“Integrated advertisement message strategy” is considered an evolving message strategy in advertising. This strategy is said to allow advertisers integrate brand and direct response advertisements in one advertisement discourse as a tactical means of adopting the tenets of the integrated marketing communication (IMC) principles. Such message strategy has recently become the most preferred message strategy in advertising. Also, theorists unanimously contented that the so called “integration” is an effective strategy to rescue the challenges facing the practice of advertising itself. Consistently, this study proposes a comprehensive framework that guides an empirical measurement of the effectiveness of the integrated message strategy and the examination its role in developing audience-based brand equity.

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## INTRODUCTION

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has evolved as a concept since the early twentieth century. However, IMC has been practically proven to be a communicative synergy that incorporates and synergizes the process, the channel and the content of marketing communication (Schultz *et al.*, 1993). Most essentially, the world of marketing communication has grown more complex as marketers and advertisers nowadays find it difficult to be heard clearly by their target audiences, thus; marketers witness a commercial message cluster which hinders them to thump ahead. Such message clusters make it important for advertisers to focus on promotional efforts and communicative approach in order to ponderously improve marketing and advertising effectiveness and overcome the noise barrier, fragmented traditional media, and the flaws in targeting their potential audiences. To some extent, some theorists believe that the focus of advertisers to resolve the foregoing industrial threats (e.g; noise barrier, media fragmentation, accountability and targeting flaws) are what resulted in the conceptualization of IMC as a communication strategy that is said to be more functionally effective if compare with other predating advertising and marketing strategies.

These theorists opined that the principles of IMC offer a collective usage of several marketing communication tools such as; personal selling, advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relation, sponsorship, packaging, point-of-purchase, internet ads, word of mouth, and reputation management to achieve a unique and effective communication objectives (Percy 1997; Smith, Merry, and Pulford, 1998; Smith 1998). Meanwhile, the implementation of these IMC principles in different marketing communication disciplines varies. For instance, in the advertising industry, IMC is regarded as a tool that combines persuasion and promotion tools for the purpose of communication clarity and higher level of effectiveness (Ridwan *et al.*, 2013).

The principles of IMC is uniquely adoptable in all marketing communication displaces, particularly in designing advertising and branding messages. For instance, the concept of “Integrated Advertisement Message Strategy” is an understandable facet of adopting the principles of IMC in advertising (Ridwan *et al.*, 2013). Hence, it becomes a cynosure in the advertising and branding discipline to examine the effectiveness of the integrated advertisement message strategy on the phases of brand equity listed by Keller (1993); (Brand Awareness and Brand Image) and the actual promotional reason for advertising; (Brand Purchase Intention).

**Corresponding Author:** Raji Ridwan Adetunji, Department of Management and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi Petronas.  
E-mail: roduoba1@yahoo.com

**Defination of Key Terms:****Integrated Advertisement Message Strategy:**

The Nowak and Phelps' (1994) Model refers to "integrated advertisement" as the adoption of more than one communication strategies in an advertisement design. For instance, the adoption of brand advertisement message strategy together with direct response advertisement in an advertisement discourse is regarded as an integrated advertisement. Operationally, this paper adopts the Nowak and Phelps (1994) approach to define the integrated advertisement message strategy as the adoption of brand advertisement message strategy (appeals, headlines, product appraisal and so on) and the direct response message strategy (urging actions, contact number, address, web links and so on) in an advertisement message design.

**Brand Equity:**

Keller (1993) stated that the approach towards the study and understanding of brand equity differs as it is either studied through customer perspective approach or through it organizational influence approach. In any of these approaches, the connotation of brand equity is unanimously believed to be the reward of an effectively executed marketing and communication effort. Consistently, O'Guinn *et al* (2009) and Barnes (2001) contended that successfully integrated brand advertisement delivers successful brand equity. More recently, there has been no notable difference in the terminological usage of advertisement, branding, brand building and development, in fact brand equity and brand development are the main reasons why most organizations increase their advertisement budget and their advertising efforts (Shimp, 2003).

Theoretically, the term "Branding" is often used to refer to the whole tools, designs, messages, and approaches used in creating knowledge and awareness about a product, service, or sellers of the product to their targeted audiences, purposefully for a unique differentiation and identification of the products to the competitors (Kotler, 1991; Keller, 1993; Shimp, 2003; ). The fact that advertisement is functionally a communicative vehicle to create awareness and provide knowledge about the advertised product (Weilbacher, 2001) rationalizes the interchangeable usage of advertisement and branding in both literatures and practical explanations. Consistently with the graphical portrayal of the brand knowledge model developed by Keller (1993), regardless of the source of information or knowledge about a brand, as long as it is understandably conceived by audiences, the effective threshold of such information is twofold namely: brand awareness and brand image. Keller (1993) discussed the measurement of these facets of brand equity and revealed that both are directly or indirectly related to the influence, source and effect of information about the brand. Advertisement has overly demonstrated to be an informative, creative and attractive form of branding, which is more effective in an integrated form (O'Guinn *et al* 2009).

**Brand Purchase Intention:**

Nancy and Surendra (2004) define brand purchase intention as the consciousness, plan and effort of an audience on purchasing an advertised brand. The audience intention to purchase an advertised brand after being persuaded by the messages and content of the advertisement is regarded as the final steps of the effect of advertising. Brand purchase is operationalized in this study as the audience willingness to purchase the advertised brand, as a means of articulating the measurement and the effectiveness of an integrated advertisement messages.

**Literature Review:****The Effectiveness of Integrated Advertisement Message Strategy:**

Tsai and Tsai, (2006) argued that there are two different types of advertisement effectiveness namely purchase effectiveness and communication effectiveness. They elucidated that the total purchase generated as the consequence of an advertisement appeal is considered as gauge to measure the advertisement effectiveness. Meanwhile the audience reception, persuasion, understanding and attitudinal changes are referred as the measurement of communicative effectiveness of advertising.

On the other hand, there are other available approaches in examining the relationship between the content of advertisement, consumer knowledge and persuasiveness (Schultz, 1990). Examining the relationship between advertisement content and advertisement persuasiveness are more realistic, logical and less controversial in literature. This is in line with the definition given to the advertisement effectiveness by Marshall (2006) hence a holistic evaluation of measureable communication objectives such as audience recall, attention, brand linkage, uniqueness and persuasion (persuasion is usually tested with purchase intent, attitude towards the ad, comprehension, involvement, relevance and etc.). Well *et al*. (2006) added that copy-testing analysis is a renowned analysis used in examining the aforementioned communication objectives and often used to reveal the communicative weaknesses and the strength of advertisement content as well as to predict the audience responses.

In the views of Vakratsas and Ambler (1999) and Tellis (2004), advertisement effectiveness can be assessed in three different levels, which are the input level, the mental process level and the outcome level. The

content of advertisement, advertisement appeals, and advertisement channel represent the input level of every advertisement and those apparatus are to be assessed accordingly. At the mental process level, effectiveness of advertisement is examined through cognitive, affective and conative changes in audience as a result of advertisement exposure. Lastly, at the outcome level effectiveness is measured through some latent variables that are not directly connected to the act of advertising such as profit, purchase, revenues and financial performance.

The fact that companies allocate salient amount of resources in advertising is not commendable enough without a flow-up measure to determine the impact of their spending on their organization. The strategies adopted by advertisers should also be empirically examined on how truly those strategies transformed to capture audiences' attention and engage the audience (De Ros, 2008), hence the effectiveness of their advertising efforts and strategies. Researchers however have reported difficulties and inconsistencies in measuring the effectiveness of different types of advertisement strategies and creativities (Hall *et al.*, 2001).

Regardless of the type of message strategies adopted in any kind of advertisement, the basic communicative function of any advertisement message is persuading and affecting both the emotional and rational motives of the audience towards the advertised brand (Arens, *et al.* 2011).

Exploring the effect of integrating brand and direct response advertising is not academically eccentric. The study done by Robert and Smith (1995) on the supplemental effect of advertisement on the effect of Word of Mouth, found that advertisement and Word of Mouth positively supplement each other. The result of their study exemplifies the kind of presumed the effectiveness of conceptualized integrated advertisement message strategy. Similarly, Maria (2007) explored the effectiveness in two different types of advertisement message strategy (figurative and literal) which is also known as image and direct response advertisement message strategy. The study explains the sensitivity of advertisement message strategy adopted in a particular business and market, such as they found figurative message strategy scores surpassed the literal strategy in B2B advertising. In other words, the type of message strategies adopted in advertisement design has a crucial role in determining the effectiveness of such advertisement (Martinez *et al.* 2009). Bower and Landreth (2001) also adopted experimental methodological techniques to examine the effectiveness of advertisement. The advertisement effectiveness scale used in their study is validated genuinely for future studies to adopt especially in a research considering similar methodological design.

An evolving change has been noticed in the methodological convention of examining advertisement effectiveness, particularly in determining the connection of advertisement message strategy on audience attitude towards advertised brand and their brand purchase decision (Bahram *et al.* 2011). Most of the renowned models of advertisement effectiveness that were originally developed in linear form have been adapted and reconstructed to multivariate models, hence progressively including factors that mediate or moderate the effectiveness of advertising messages on audience' attitudes and decision making behaviors (Kim, Hwang & Fesenmaier, 2005). For instance, Buil *et al.* (2013) studied the effectiveness of advertisement with multivariate analytical techniques, hence modelling the relationship between marketing communication efforts (advertisement and promotion) on brand equity. Their study analysed the differences between promotions and advertisements spend in relation to brand equity dimensions from the data gathered from 302 consumer survey in the UK. Their analysis does not only find the connection between marketing communication efforts and brand equity variables but also reinforce the methodology of testing advertisement effectiveness and brand equity.

Consistent with the examination of advertisement effectiveness through brand equity, advertisement researchers are found of employing "recall" and "recognition" as the two dimensions for measuring advertisement effectiveness. Mathaq and Nabsiah (2012) in their study corroborated the notion of examining advertisement effectiveness through brand recognition and advertisement recall in their quest for examining the impact of celebrity endorsement on advertisement effectiveness. Wisal and Zahid (2011) stated that it is not just appropriate investigating advertisement effectiveness with recognition and recall scales, it is more of an advertisement research costume and it is widely accepted. In a similar direction with the objectives this research, their study examine the difference between creative and conventional advertisement and resultantly revealed the astuteness of creative advertisement in stipulating brand recall and recognition and similarly influencing greater purchase intention. Ang *et al.* (2007) illuminated that the success of advertisement can be measured through the development of positive brand knowledge (in this case, awareness and image), thus the development of a consumer-based brand equity, which will in turn stipulate an auspicious impact of their behaviour and attitude (persuasion) and influence their intention to purchase the advertised brand.

### **Persuasiveness:**

The elementary but crucial purpose of advertising and marketing is persuading the attitude and behavior of the audience with the use of both verbal and image elements of advertising message and contents (Nabil & Samar, 2011). In other words, the main function of advertisement contents and efforts is to persuade. It is therefore safe to infer that persuasion precedes any actual attitudinal effort impact or effectiveness of advertising. Babin *et al.* (1992) and Babin and Burns (1997) empirically reported that the imagery content of

advertisement functionally yield a positive attitude of the audience towards the advertised brand. Although, the study of Nabil and Samar, (2011) was scoped towards the comparison between the visual and verbal effect on persuasion and attitudes towards advertised brands, among other tested rhetoric property, they found a significant effect of advertisement on persuasiveness and the audience attitude towards the advertised brand. Their presented result can be interpretatively explained that the utilitarianism of advertisement is to generate a psychological conviction in audience memory. This conviction would subsequently affect audience attitude towards the advertised brand.

The content, strategy and the creativity adopted in any type of advertisement are considered crucial part of any campaign and particularly in testing the effectiveness of an advertising campaign. Thus emphasizing on the influence advertisement strategy and creativity on advertisement persuasiveness is important, such as the study of Kover *et al.* (1995), in examining the connection between creativity and audience response. Nonetheless, Mehta (1998) and Till and Baack (2005) argued that few analyses are published on the empirical connection between advertisement content and strategy on audience persuasiveness. On this account, Till and Baack (2005) examined the influence of advertisement content (creativity) on audience attitude towards brand and their purchase intention, although their study could not validate the results of past studies on the connection between creativity and persuasiveness (Ang and Low 2000 & Stone *et al.*, 2000) but also presumed that creativity used in advertisement have an impact on audience attitude and intention to buy the advertised product. In this study, such impact or the connection of creativity in advertisement content with audience purchase intention is operationalized as persuasiveness and therefore should be included in an accurate advertisement effectiveness measurement.

In a semiotic approach, Mzoughi and Abdelhak (2011) studied the impact of rhetoric figures of print advertisement content on recall and imagery with an experimental research design. Their analysis confirmed the essence of advertisement comes after persuasion which was measured through the audience attitude to the advertisement or attitude towards the advertised brand. Thus a realistic method of measuring the effectiveness of advertisement or branding as operationalized in this study is the persuasiveness of the advertisement or branding content.

#### **Brand Awareness:**

Brand awareness is the central hob of testing any advertisement effectiveness (Rossiter and Percy, 1987). Consistently, Kelly (1991) highlighted the theoretical connection between the measurement of brand awareness and the hierarchy of effect model, affirming that the primary aim of the entire advertisement strategies and tactics is to generate awareness for a particular brand. Logically, consumers can only buy a product they are aware of, and this simply rationalizes the arrangement of the Hierarchy model element by keeping "awareness" as the start of the model. This practically means that an effective advertisement must create awareness about a particular brand or product (Macdonald & Sharp, 1996). The major presumption of this study is basically on the use of brand advertisement in creating brand awareness, as according to the result presented by Macdonald and Sharp (1993), majority of their respondents (94%) believe that brand awareness is the measurement tool for communication effectiveness. It is mentioned above that the crucial and the mostly recognized tool for creating brand awareness is brand advertisement. On the other hand, Peltier, *et al.* (1992) reviewed that the major strategic function of direct response advertisement is to generate tangible response from the audience. As the concept of IMC continues to grow, there have been some advertisement message copy integrating the function of awareness and response together and this has documented an incredible emotional and rational turn-up from the audience (Peltier *et al.* 1992).

Kyung *et al.* (2008) similarly examine the relationship between brand awareness, brand equity and brand image in the case of achieving positive and marketable brand image among Korean hospitals. The study administered 490 questionnaires to respondents and the entire dimension of the variables were validated and attained acceptable coefficient of Alpha before proceeding for multivariate analyses. Their study recorded significant positive relationships among brand awareness, brand equity and brand image.

On the other hand, the result of a replicated study conducted by Macdonald and Sharp (2000) on the relationship between brand awareness and consumer decision making documented that brand awareness influence the decisions and attitude of consumers towards a product. Their study employed a controlled experimental research method in examining the said relationship. Invariably, it is logical to presume that brand awareness moderates the persuasiveness of advertisement.

#### **Brand Image:**

Brand equity is fundamentally described as the cognitive associations of the audience with a particular brand (Keller, 1993). The conceptual aim of Keller (1993) was to articulate a correct methodology of testing the effect of brand communication on audience so as to document the tangible effectiveness of branding from the audience perspective. A research article published by Ipsos-ASI; an advertising research company contended that advertising remain the conventional way of building brand equity. Their published study reported a

significant correlation between brand equity and brand health as according to their proposed model. Basically in relation to the hierarchy of effect model, popularity, relevance, quality and uniqueness are among the derivatives of their operationalized brand equity. This explains that advertisement is functionally to teach the consumers the aforesaid features of brand equity. Consistently in the hierarchy model, knowledge and preference are stated before conviction. According to Keller (1993) explanation of brand equity, is presented as types of knowledge resultantly generated from awareness (advertisement message). In brief, the conceptual need for branding and the power of brand equity is to facilitate consumers' likability and convince them towards a particular product (Margaret, 2002). Such conviction potentially generated by brand equity is another possible way of determining advertisement effectiveness, since advertisement remain the dauntless communicative tactic of branding. Clark *et al.* (2009) reported an empirical support to the connection between advertisement and brand awareness, as they find advertising significantly and positively correlated with brand awareness across series of time from their analyzed panel data. Their study affirms that advertisement may not directly affect purchase but contribute towards the development of brand awareness.

Notably, there have been many different conceptual perspectives and theoretical paradigm towards the understanding of brand equity, but the basic consensus amongst the distinct theoretical and conceptual understanding is that branding is an aggressive and consistent marketing activity that successfully and positively affect consumers attitude (Srivastawa & Shocker, 1991). Keller (1993) and Aaker (1993) reliably purported that a successful brand equity will resulted to in consumers' loyalty, repeated purchase, willingness to buy and to pay, to name few among other benefits of brand equity. Simani *et al.* (2009) adopted the Aaker (1996) model of brand equity and found that the relationship between brand knowledge and consumers' willingness to purchase is significantly effective. Considerably, brand knowledge, according to the adopted theory in this study, Keller (1993) is dual faceted; brand awareness and brand image.

#### **Brand Purchase Intention:**

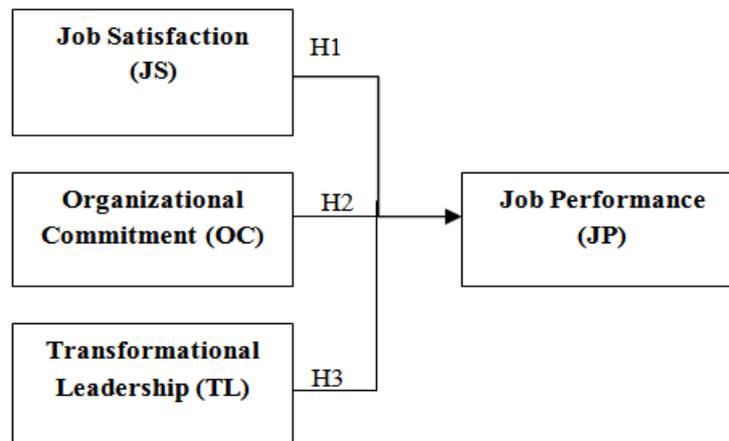
Advertisement literatures are replete as regards to the indirect relationship that exist between advertisement contents and audience attitude or intention to purchase the advertised brand. Recently, almost all advertisement effectiveness studies reiterate this notion by including brand purchase intention as a dependent variable in examining the effectiveness of advertisement. For instance, Seung-Chul and Jorge (2011) studied the impact of violent and nonviolent game environment on either positive or negative influence on the effectiveness of advertisement. The researchers ultimately included purchase intention as among the variable to examine effectiveness of advertisement in the context of their study. Similarly, Methaq and Nabsiah (2012) surveyed 400 consumers from Yemen and analysed their responses with hierarchical regression in order to examine the mediated relationship between an advertisement with celebrity endorsement or spokesperson appeals with the audience purchase intention of the advertised product. Their analyses recorded a significant relationship between advertisement and purchase intention with mediating effect of audience attitude towards the advertisement. It was inferred from their result that, advertisement in any appeals or creativity is designed to create purchase as the major significant of the advertisement persuasiveness. Correspondingly, the analyses Goldsmith *et al.* (2000) examined the effectiveness of advertisement that adopt celebrity credibility through purchase intention.

In a study conducted in Malaysia, Yet-Mee, *et al.* (2011) studied the effectiveness of online advertisement effectiveness on audience purchase decision, using a linear regression method as the inferential statistic to analyse the data gathered from 200 respondents in a private university employee. The result of their study also revealed the significant impact of advertising on audience attitude and decision to purchase advertised brand. Another study by Hwang *et al.* (2011) in a multivariate analytical study revealed an indirect or a moderate relationship between online advertisement and purchase decision. Their analysis corroborated the theoretical notion that brand purchase is as a result of audiences' cognitive or affective responses to advertisement messages. Connectively, Imran *et al.* (2012) found a positive relationship between brand advertisement, brand knowledge and brand purchase decision. Their study reiterated that the development of brand equity or brand knowledge through a well construed brand advertisement messages has a positive impact on audiences purchase decision.

In a study recently conducted by Wei *et al.* (2013) the effectiveness of interactive advertisement was examined through various dependent variables including; brand image, brand awareness and brand purchase intention. Using data gathered from 149 university students in Malaysia, the study revealed that interactive advertisements on social media have a significant influence on audience purchase intention. A significant influence of advertisement on purchase intention was recorded by Yeh and Lin (2010) as an empirical method of testing advertisement effectiveness. This implies that interactive advertisements are ultimate tools for developing brand equity and stipulating brand purchase intentions.

### Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses:

Figure 1 below presents a graphical explanation of the relationship between the variables and the hypotheses proposed in this study. Thus the relationship between the integration of advertisement which is operationally defined as a tactical implementation of IMC as according to Nowak and Phelps (1994) conceptual study and persuasiveness with the two adopted sub variables of brand knowledge from the study of Keller (1993); brand awareness and brand image and brand purchase intention.



**Fig. 1:** Proposed Conceptual Framework.

#### 2.8.1 Hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Integrated advertisement message strategy influences effective persuasiveness*

*H<sub>2</sub>: Integrated advertisement message strategy influences brand awareness*

*H<sub>3</sub>: Integrated advertisement message strategy influences brand image*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Integrated advertisement message strategy influences brand purchase intention*

*H<sub>5</sub>: Persuasiveness of integrated ads message strategy influences brand awareness.*

*H<sub>6</sub>: Persuasiveness of integrated ads message strategy influences brand image.*

*H<sub>7</sub>: Persuasiveness of integrated ads message strategy influences brand purchase intention.*

#### Conclusion:

This paper highlights and explains the newly conceptualized integrated message strategy and discusses its effectiveness particularly in determining and developing audience and consumer-based brand equity (brand awareness and brand image). Audiences' purchase intention is also emphasized herein as an integral measurement of an advertisement effectiveness. Although, literature is replete on the fact that the actual measurement of advertisement effectiveness can be through several phases and steps of effective convictions that the advertisement messages implant in the audience psychological rationale before the advertised product could be intended or be actually bought (Weilbacher, 2001). In this view, since advertisement is theoretically regarded as one of the important marketing tools in developing brand equity, it is logically appropriate to examine the effectiveness of an integrated message strategy through its role in developing brand equity from the audience perspective.

This paper also emphasizes the connection between advertisement and the advent of IMC principles. For instance, eradicating the vagueness of ads accountability and resolving the flaws in measuring advertisement effectiveness and the innovation of digital media connived altogether to challenge the inevitable practice of advertising as discussed by (Bearden & Madden, 1996). Consequently, it is imperative that future researchers validate the proposed framework with the use of relevant statistical tools such as SEM or other multivariate analytical tools.

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