

**1. IMC and the importance of message integration and strategic integration within IMC**

A strategic business process used to plan, develop, evaluate and execute coordinated, measurable and persuasive brand communication programs overtime to a wide range of audiences.

An integral component of IMC is its focus on synergy and integrating all IMC tools together so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Integration occurs along a continuum. At one side of the continuum you have incoherent brand messages that cause dysfunction. At the other end of the continuum you have messages that are well integrated, enabling synergy. Optimal synergy occurs where both message and strategic integration are present.

Message integration refers to the verbal and visual consistency of a message. That is consistency in the theme of the message, the message itself, the colour use, the corporate image, the logo and brand elements. This is also referred to as “one-voice” or “image-integration”.

Contrastingly, strategic integration involves coordinating all marketing activities. It’s about sharing budget methods, multiple audiences, activities that contribute to the corporate mission, the integration of IMC tools. It involves common objectives and working towards the same goals, consistently. The benefits of strategic integration is that it avoids duplication, facilitates the advantage of synergy and enables efficient and effective marketing communications. Consumers evaluations of a brand are the product of the extent to which the messages they receive are well integrated.

**2. Different types of bonding a consumer may develop with a brand**

The two types of bonds consumers may have with a brand are emotional and behavioural.

The emotional bond describes how consumers develop feelings towards a brand. This is said to occur on 3 levels. Namely, product benefits, personality and emotions. At the product benefit level, consumers form opinions about the brands attributes based on the various brand communications they are exposed to e.g. Panadol is used for headache removal. This the most basic level and at this level consumers are not brand loyal and are likely to switch between brands. The personality level goes beyond looking at the brands attributes. It’s about the brands human-like characteristics that are formed through a brands overt and covert communications. This is where consumers might think about the prestige associated with a brand like Rolex which may tap into their own notions of self-concept. The final level is the most desirable level – where consumers develop emotional attachments and loyalty to the brand e.g. when consumers will buy Coke and not Pepsi because they are attached to the brand and all of its components.

Behavioural bonding describes the process that consumers develop attachments and loyalties to a brand. This is dependent on 4 key criteria being satisfied. Namely, consistency, accessibility, responsiveness and commitment. Consistency refers to the extent to which the brands messages, IMC tools used, communications and positioning are consistent and cohesive. Accessibility refers to how easily or quickly consumers are able to get into contact with the brand. Responsiveness is about the extent or the nature of customer service offered which will affect consumers trust levels. Finally, commitment is about the brands commitment to developing and maintain long term relationships with its customers. If all of these levels are satisfied, consumers are likely to respond with satisfaction,