

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN INDIA

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Abstract

Customers today, many a times receive a fragmented and vague picture of the Brand. Why? The reason being, firms are unable to integrate all of their marketing efforts over a period of time.

The sales and sales promotion aspects are managed by the sales department; advertising is outsourced to the ad agencies, and the direct marketing and PR (Public Relations) by other functionaries.

The emerging concept of **IMC (Integrated Marketing Communications)** aims at addressing this issue. Though, easier said than done, very few organizations have managed to switch over to IMC from stand alone marketing efforts. But the organizations which have transformed themselves towards this arrangement are reaping the rewards in terms of higher returns from investment in marketing activities, increase in brand's equity and increased market share.

Example: McDonalds, Logitech International, Hyatt Regency.

The concept of **IMC** involves two fundamental aspects:

1. Consistency of positioning, message and tone across all different media.
2. Simultaneous achievement of several specific marketing goals. (Awareness Increased sales, brand building etc.)

In the present paper efforts have been made by the author to study concept of integrated marketing communications including its history, characteristics, need, and benefits of using integrated marketing communications to brand corporations. The paper will also focus on challenges and opportunities of integrated marketing communications for India and also about future of integrated marketing communications in India.

1. Introduction

1.1 Meaning and Concept of Integrated Marketing Communication

Integrated Marketing Communications is a simple concept. It ensures that all forms of communications and messages are carefully linked together. At its most basic level, Integrated Marketing Communications, or IMC, as we'll call it, means

integrating all the promotional tools, so that they work together in harmony.

As we are already aware of the fact that in the present scenario the Marketing communications play an important role of voice of the brand and are a means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with consumers. They allow marketers to inform, persuade, incentivize, and remind consumers directly or indirectly. The applied tool applied repeatedly is the 'integrated marketing'. Integrated Marketing Communications is a term basically used to describe a holistic approach to marketing communication. It aims to ensure consistency of message and the complementary use of media. The concept includes online and offline marketing channels.

Integrated marketing communication is integration of all marketing tools, approaches, and resources within a company which maximizes impact on consumer mind and which results into maximum profit at minimum cost. This approach was mostly used in developed countries to increase its global market value but now from last few years Indian market is also being attracted towards this concept. It not only informs, but is also used to differentiate the seller's products or services may also be effective in affecting the price elasticity of demand. Prerequisite of Marketing Communication is that the marketing communications strategy of a firm must be coordinated and linked with concepts such as target segments, positioning, differentiation, and image.

India is the most diversified country in the world. It has many cultures and traditions with their own moral values and perceptions which vary from region to region. Therefore it becomes difficult to satisfy the needs of every individual in the most profitable way but India's huge population and growing middle class presents promising potential for many US and European multinational companies focusing on the Indian markets. With more companies viewing India as an emerging market, competition in markets is growing and integration would become inevitable for communications in the developing world. The economic liberalization and reform movement, started in India in 1991, has been

one of the major contributors to the increase in its trade interactions globally. The open flow of communication with the rest of the world and the country's ability to adapt to these changes has made it a very lucrative and promising land for many multinational companies. The growing purchasing power of India's huge middle class makes it easier for companies to do business in India. However, as stated above, the customer base in India is extremely fragmented. The huge geographic expanse of the country has resulted in an inconsistent distribution system that is radically different from that present in most other countries. Added to this is the cultural diversity of its inhabitants, differences in their tastes, habits, and requirements that make it very difficult for companies to market their goods in a streamlined and consistent manner. Therefore, the concept of focused and massive marketing, i.e., integrated marketing, is very helpful in this diverse economy.

With the advent of MNCs in India, the marketing techniques have been changed and have become more systematic in nature. There is a need for a solid marketing strategy to capture the market. Although integrated marketing communications is more than just an advertising campaign, the bulk of marketing dollars is spent on the creation and distribution of advertisements. Hence, the bulk of the research budget is also spent on these elements of the campaign. Once the key marketing pieces have been tested, the researched elements can then be applied to other contact points: letterhead, packaging, logistics, customer service training, and more, to complete the IMC cycle.

The traditional manufacturing companies are now recognizing the **necessity** and importance of getting closer to the customer to provide best service. From the **marketer's** perspective the **business** organizations are extending the hitherto product-centric brands to enter the service market. A **review** of Indian market reveals that brands like **Tata** {from iron and steel, automobile, **cement**, salt to software, telephony, insurance), Reliance (from polymer, petroleum, textile products to telephony and fuel retailing), Wipro (from vegetable oil, lighting to software service) and Wills (cigarette to lifestyle retailing) **is** changing their product portfolio.

Perceptions help in the process of relationships building. The concept of brand itself is incomplete without 'relationship: Communication plays a key role in creating certain perceptions of a brand. Technological development has redefined life and world as a whole. Internet (Net) represents

optimal *synergy* of convergence of technologies and it is a medium of communication, a mechanism of collaboration, an access to information, etc. *Getting connected* has become the new *mantra* of business management in general and marketing in particular. With this, Marketing has become more open, *volatile and networked* and technology drawn.

1.2 History of Integrated Marketing Communication

The History of Marketing in the 20th century and earlier is a complex and still not fully explored subject, mixed up as it is with a history of trade and economics. The concept of integrated marketing is focused on the creation of value, arguing that the organization needs to be united in the creation of distinctive or differentiated value in order to achieve productive synergy. Similarly, Peter Drucker argued that, "Every organization, whether business or not, has a theory of the business. Indeed, a valid theory that is clear, consistent and focused is extraordinarily powerful."

According to Drucker, the Theory of the Business consists of assumptions about the environment of the organization, the specific mission of the organization and assumptions about the core competencies needed to accomplish the organization's mission. The concept of integration also arises as a result of recognition of disintegration, especially in the field of communication. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) developed during the 1990s as an Endeavour to achieve consistency across marketing communications disciplines and media that had become fragmented over time through the cultivation of individual disciplines, competition and the development of independent communication objectives. By 2000, it was recognized that there was a logical and practical need in what was called stage for IMC for this to be extrapolated across all organizational contact with customers and therefore across the entire organizational business processes.

1.3 Characteristics Integrated Marketing Communication

- 1) Customers feel that all their brand experiences come from one identity.
- 2) Customers trust the brand's promises (and pass them on through word of mouth).
- 3) The brand treats different kinds of customers in ways appropriate to them.
- 4) Whenever appropriate, the brand recognizes individual customers wherever they interact or do business.
- 5) Customers are happy with the brand experience.

- 6) There is a service-oriented ideal that encourages aligned commitment across the organization.
- 7) Everyone nurtures what the brand means to committed customers
- 8) Future vision is consistent with core truths of the brand
- 9) The values we experience in our company culture support the values we express in the Brand .
- 10) The brand organisation is excellent at realizing high value propositions from idea to Implementation.
- 11) Quality is understood as that which is good for the customer, employees and company.
- 12) All business Objectives are coherent with our competence.
- 13) There are no silos across the organisation.
- 14) Practices ensure shared learning across the organization.
- 15) The organisation works in effective partnership with the members of its value stream.
- 16) The culture encourages people to release their creative potential.
- 17) Business processes are actively aligned to the brand value position.
- 18) Quality customer information is available in a timely way at every point of need.
- 19) Leaders promote what they practice.
- 20) The Marketing function is organized primarily around customer groups with their different needs and opportunities, not marketing disciplines.
- 21) Senior marketing people are skilled in multiple communication disciplines.
- 22) Customer management focuses on the value of customers over their lifetime.
- 23) All communication to all constituencies at all touch points uses the same planning and evaluation framework.
- 24) The company and agencies all work together in partnership.
- 25) Communication is creatively aligned through “big media neutral ideas”
- 26) Evaluation is managed as a learning discipline across the participants.
- 27) The key evaluation processes are primarily designed to increase knowledge about what most efficiently creates value for customers.
- 28) Local and international marketing management collaborate effectively

1.4 Needs for Integrated Marketing Communications

Integrated marketing communication is the company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communication channels to deliver a clear, consistent, and compelling message about the organization and its brands. IMC builds a strong brand identity in the marketplace by tying together and reinforcing all your images and messages.

- a. Conflicting messages from different sources or promotional approaches can confuse company or brand images.
- b. The problem is particularly prevalent when functional specialists handle individual forms of marketing communications.
- c. The Web alone cannot be used to build brands; brand awareness potential is limited.
- d. Best bet is to wed traditional branding efforts with the interactivity and service capabilities of online communications.

2 Research Methodology

The present study is descriptive in nature and secondary data have been used.

3 Findings of the Study

3.1 Benefits of using IMC to brand corporations

In recent years the concept of applying marketing techniques to the corporation has become more widespread with related notions of stakeholder relationship.

The Indian corporation increasingly has to manage itself – for all its stakeholders - as a brand. Promoting the corporate brand to attract workers is seen as particularly important by managers, with the well-reported shortage of skilled workers. In Australia, the proportion of those aged 65 and over increased in recent years. And it is projected that it will double by 2050. Projected population data of India shows that the next decade will experience a shrinking of the working population and if the low unemployment rate stays at its current, there will certainly be a lack in supply of a suitable workforce. The need for companies to differentiate themselves in the employer marketplace is becoming critical.

While mainstream marketers have long championed the IMC cause, a perhaps more “offbeat” approach to integration has arisen in recent times, which acknowledges the need for the handling of difference and variety within the context of an integrated communications project. It should be noted that beyond a general call for horizontal co-ordination, the nature of such processes is rarely specified in the literature. Indeed it has been argued

that in the post-modern world, IMC may be. Given the apparent lack of Literature, and different cultures prevailing, this looks specifically as barriers faced by organizations on the road to IMC.

The attachments to different professions and challenges of working across departments have also been researched in the area of culture and health care. A recent multi-perspective study of healthcare professionals by Morgan and Ogbonna (2008) noted that respective loyalties of professional subcultures may be stronger than loyalty to the organization and may impede lay managers' authority to influence practices. Their study looked at two large healthcare organizations in the UK and examined the differing views of doctors, nurses and "nonclinical" managers. They found that, in the context of professional organizations, complex, multiple cultural values are frequently hierarchical and are commonly interpreted differently, with differentiated, fragmented and collective meanings. They even found that within sub-cultures there was fragmentation. And pointing out that a company does not consist of one unified culture with variations arising in groups, professions, functions and countries. With a similar theme, in the disciplines of communications and marketing, the concept of integrated communication has been proposed as a way of avoiding contradictory messages and improving an organization's "corporate story".

3.2 Dimensions of integrated marketing

From buyer's point of view, each marketing tool is designed to deliver a customer benefit. A complementary breakdown of marketing activities has been proposed that centers on customers. Its four dimensions and the corresponding customer questions these are designed to answer are:

1. Solution: How can I solve my problem?
2. Information: where can I learn more about it?
3. Value: What is my total sacrifice to get this solution?
4. Access: Where can I find it?

Winning companies satisfy customer needs and surpass their expectations economically and conveniently and with effective communication.

Two key themes of integrated marketing are that (1) many different marketing activities communicate and deliver value and (2) when coordinated, marketing activities maximize their joint effects. In other words, marketers should design and implement any one marketing activity with all other activities in mind.

Integrated Marketing Communication

(IMC) involves the idea that a firm's promotional efforts should be coordinated to achieve the best combined effects of the firm's efforts. Resources are allocated to achieve those outcomes that the firm values the most.

Promotion involves a number of tools we can use to increase demand for our The most well known component of promotion is advertising, but we can also use tools such as the following:

- **Public relations** (the firm's staff provides information to the media in the hopes of getting coverage). This strategy has benefits (it is often less expensive and media coverage is usually more credible than advertising) but it also entails a risk in that we can't control what the media will say. Note that this is particularly a useful tool for small and growing businesses—especially those that make a product which is inherently interesting to the audience.
- **Trade promotion.** Here, the firm offers retailers and wholesalers temporary discounts, which may or may not be passed on to the consumer, to stimulate sales.
- **Sales promotion.** Consumers are given either price discounts, coupons, or rebates.
- **Personal selling.** Sales people either make "cold" calls on potential customers and/or respond to inquiries.
- **In-store displays.** Firms often pay a great deal of money to have their goods displayed prominently in the store. More desirable display spaces include: end of an aisle, free-standing displays, and near the check-out counter. Occasionally, a representative may display the product.
- **Samples**
- **Premiums**

The preferred name for public relations is changing.

According to Mr. Thomas Harris, The Marketer's Guide to Public Relations, Considering marketing and public relations as the same function, in my view, is in the best interests of the corporation. ... Marketing and public relations can and should be compatible. ... in gaining understanding of influential third parties—such as legislators, government agencies, political parties, labor unions, public interest groups, and churches. In the future, public relations will play a greater role in shaping marketing strategies responsible to consumer concerns. In the classic sense, PR will influence not only what

companies say but what they do.

Public relations has never been the unanimous choice for what to call the process of managing organizational relationships, but in recent years, it was noted, "The number of companies that identify their internal unit for communicating with their constituents as public relations has dropped off dramatically." This is more fully discussed in a linked reading.

Whether *integrated marketing communication*, *corporate communication*, or one of the other popular buzzwords will ultimately overshadow public relations as the name of choice remains to be seen. They may all turn out to be short-lived fads. What will be far more important is whether the underlying integration of communication functions that these terms purport to represent will actually be realized and, at this point, the projections are anything but unanimous.

3.3 Challenges and Opportunities for India

During the last decade, a series of studies have been conducted, either on a country level or sometimes among several nation states investigating the development, diffusion, and acceptance of IMC. Thus, the most recent research on IMC has been mainly focused on its perception by clients and their advertising agencies in India. In some of those studies, scholars have argued that IMC is nothing new, it is simply a reiteration of what marketing and communication organizations have always done. In others, research has shown that IMC is indeed a new paradigm and can be quite successfully deployed by all types of firms in the new millennium.

Today's marketplace of India is fundamentally different as a result of major societal forces that have resulted in many new consumer and company capabilities. These forces have created new opportunities and challenges, and marketing management has changed significantly in recent years as companies seek new to achieve marketing excellence, that is, integrated marketing.

✓ Challenges

The differences and similarities in cultural values of India influence the different demographics and contribute to the requirement of a very different marketing communication plan as compared to other regions. What is the cultural composition of the organization's markets and how does it respond to varied marketing needs for same products?

The history of industrial and economic development of India stands out as a unique process, not only because of its geographically heterogeneous

demographic traits, but also because of its colonial history. The predominant demographics contributing to this uniqueness are:

1. Rural-urban mix: Industrialisation in India emerged as the result of poor agricultural conditions and dwindling handicrafts. The push from land and craft generated to some extent a pull toward industry.

2. Occupational diversity: Even though the population of India is and has been overwhelmingly agricultural, there had always been a variety of non-agricultural occupations such as handicrafts and arts involving various types of skills.

3. Diversity in economic conditions: Despite the overall poor image, extremes of poverty and wealth have always co-existed.

4. Colonial rule: Even though the British rule destroyed the indigenous industry in India by means of market competition, there has been continuous improvement in the means of transportation and communication contributing to the advancement of the economic scenario.

The differences in the attitudes and behaviors within these broad segments can help marketers identify niches and target these niches on the basis of social class. By reviewing the available literature on social class, one can understand how messages are formulated to reach the target markets.

The new millennium has at least made one thing certain for businesses - the uncertainty. Change, today, is occurring at an accelerating rate. Three major forces in the last decade *via*, deregulation, globalization and rapid technological advances have totally changed the way

Businesses are conducted the world over. In this new environment marketers are forced to adopt new paradigms to fight intense competition and to meet rising consumer demands. On the other hand, these developments have spelt endless opportunities in terms of large, free global markets and improved ability to meet the challenges by using technology.

Integrated Marketing is here to stay and to develop. The name might change, but the concept will not. It is a way of thinking and operating that enhances value for customers, employees and the organization and leads to the resolution of many of the current frustrations within the marketing industry. We aim to make a significant contribution and value the opportunity to work with you and others committed to developing best practice in this.

Current scenario: isolated marketing communication

Customers are bombarded with multiple

advertisements through multiple mediums with multiple propositions. Since most companies resort to using more than one channel of communication, the customer is left confused due to lack of consistency in marketing messages.

Ideal scenario: integrated marketing communication
By practicing an integrated marketing approach, companies like yours can get across single proposition across multiple media and benefit from customers' consistent brand experience. An integrated marketing approach can rejuvenate your organization's marketing communication initiatives, which will experience a positive impact.

The best marketing strategy in the world will ultimately fail if you are unable to get the right message to your potential customers at the right place and the right time. An integrated marketing communications plan matches your available budget of time and money to the most effective means for distributing your message. No matter how great your product or service, if your potential customers don't know it exists, there will never be a sale. Current marketing philosophy views Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as imperative for organizational success and it has been trumpeted as *the* major communications development of recent times in India.

Despite its challenges, the concept of IMC is becoming more and more relevant in the field of brand management, slowly but surely organization have realized that if a brand or company has to survive in this globalised world for years to come, it has no choice but to Integrate its marketing communication, or else the customer will abandon the brand.

✓ **Opportunities**

India's huge population and growing middle class presents promising potential for many US and European multinational companies focusing on the Indian markets. With more companies viewing India as an emerging market, competition in markets is growing and integration would become inevitable for communications in the developing world. The economic liberalization and reform movement, started in India in 1991, has been one of the major contributors to the increase in its trade interactions globally. The open flow of communication with the rest of the world and the country's ability to adapt to these changes has made it a very lucrative and promising land for many multinational companies. The growing purchasing power of India's huge middle class makes it easier for companies to do

business in India. And integrated marketing communications practices in India will definitely prove to be a reason of success of Indian economy in the near future.

3.4 Future of integrated marketing communication in India:

During the 1990s, the Indian economy emerged as a partially liberalized economy with fewer economic, exchange and bureaucratic controls. This has opened up the floodgates for multinationals companies to enter the Indian market. It has brought many opportunities and threats for Indian business. the Indian business firms have been compelled to analyze , their strengths and weaknesses and plan their strategies for the future.

The customer base in India is extremely fragmented. The huge geographic expanse of the country has resulted in an inconsistent distribution system that is radically different from that present in most other countries. Added to this is the cultural diversity of its inhabitants, differences in their tastes, habits, and requirements that make it very difficult for companies to market their goods in a streamlined and consistent manner. Internet marketing has yet to pick up pace in India because of the slow technological advancement and consumer perceptions. Majority of people buy things while visiting the markets and the concept of home shopping is still alien to them. Credit card usage is minimal and generally used as convenience cards. Personal contacts are still prevalent to achieve a comfortable association between the marketers and consumers. Will technological advancement support the integration between communication channels if markets feel a need for IMC in India?

Although recent liberalization policies have increased competition and enforced new marketing practices in India, the traditional concepts of marketing might be totally different from the concepts practiced in the US. The local environment and local markets dictate the need for specialized or integrated approaches. Future of these prevalent marketing practices is bright in the sense of huge market but lacks the coordination and combination of good approach to tackle the problems of satisfying the need diversification in the market.

With the change in communication practices and technologies around the world, integration in marketing techniques is inevitable for the companies to survive in this multi-national and multi-cultural world emerging globally. India, as one of the more economically advanced among developing countries,

offers excellent opportunity for the study of concepts such as IMC and its need in countries outside the US and outside the western paradigm. But In this information democracy, consumers have taken the lead in changing the ways they interact with a brand. Consumer-managed relationships, consumer-generated media, consumer-generated products and consumer-generated content are all pointing to the need for marketers to respond to these consumer dynamics. And for adopting and implementing the integrated marketing practices there are some Be's:

- **Be analytical**: Use frameworks of consumer behavior and managerial decision-making to develop well-reasoned communication programs.
- **Be curious**: Fully understand consumers by using all forms of research and always be thinking of how you can create added value for consumers.
- **Be single-minded**: Focus message on well-defined target markets.
- **Be integrative**: reinforce your message through consistency and cuing across all communications.
- **Be creative**: State your message in a unique fashion; use alternative promotions and media to create favorable, strong, and unique brand associations.
- **Be observant**: Monitor competition, customers, channel members, and employees through tracking studies.
- **Be realistic**: Understand the complexities involved in marketing communications.
- **Be patient**: Take a long-term view of communication effectiveness to build and manage brand equity.

India has been very cautious in adopting new technologies and others like heavy dependence upon agriculture, old methods of production, overpopulation, lower income are some reasons of its poor market economy but from the time it has adopted the practices of integrated marketing there has been noted a rapid improvement in the market and the growth in its economy. This approach has benefited India a lot in the recent past and will definitely work well in the future. Marketing is the kingpin that sets the rate of progress in economy. The marketing organization, if more scientifically organized, makes the economy strong and stable. This marketing is consumer oriented and due to India's large market it has brought many positive changes in its economy. It has enabled India to

improve the standard of goods and services, business values and consequently the improvement in the standard of living. It has also generated employment both in production and in distribution area. There are large numbers of people employed by modern business houses to carry out the functions of marketing. In the absence of these practices, the level of employment of India should have not increased. Therefore, the future of integrated marketing communications in India is bright in terms of profitability and growth and India will also be benefited in the upcoming years.

Conclusion

“The point of integration is not simply to use the same image and ignore the strengths of a particular medium. We call this re-purposing without purpose. The point of integration is to have a consistent voice while maximizing the strengths of each medium. True integration delivers the brand statement from mass to grass, from mass marketing to grass roots activities, with the Internet residing firmly in the middle as both a mass and one to one marketing weapon.”

IMC can be defined as a process in which messages communicated by each of the promotional elements are harmonized, so that consumers will receive a consistent message regarding the brand or the company. It can be defined comprehensively as a process for managing the customer relationships that drive brand value. More specifically, it is a cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them. The growing importance of IMC can be attributed to various factors. This include increasing competition, decline in effectiveness of mass advertising, more information sources for consumers and technological advances. Implementing the IMC process in an organization is not an easy task and it cannot be done at one go. The implementation of IMC in a company requires proper planning. The American Productivity & Quality Center has devised a four stage process to integrate the marketing communication function. The four stages are tactical coordination of marketing communication, redefining the scope of marketing communication, application of information technology and financial and strategic integration. Though the awareness about IMC is on the rise, implementation has been slow. This is because of

three key barriers, namely lack of top management support, organizational barriers and cultural barriers. To implement the IMC process effectively company needs to follow certain guidelines. In an emerging market like India, an IMC strategy should be formulated taking into consideration the values associated with the culture. The analysis of advertisements shows that there are specific cultural values that most of the advertisements use. These values may be called “cultural interface values” as they serve to integrate marketing communication with the prevalent culture.

As these advertisements suggest, Indian society is primarily divided by the dueling values of traditionalism and modernity. A successful campaign will appease both lifestyles without alienating one for the sake of the other. It should adopt a flexible organizational structure and change the mindset of the employees. It should adopt a customer centric strategy to design communication campaigns from the consumer perspective. A collaborative strategy is needed, that enables coordination and cooperation between various departments in the organization. Entrusting all its creative activities to a single agency will help the company in reducing costs and increasing consistency in communication campaigns.

A significant objective of advertising is attitude change. A consumer’s attitude toward a product refers to his or her beliefs about, feeling toward, and purchase intentions for the product. Beliefs can be both positive (e.g., for McDonald’s food: tastes good, is convenient) and negative (is high in fat). In general, it is usually very difficult to change deeply held beliefs. Thus, in most cases, the advertiser may better off trying to add belief. Consumer receptivity to messages aimed at altering their beliefs will tend to vary a great deal depending on the nature of the product. For unimportant products such as soft drinks, research suggests that

consumers are often persuaded by having a large number of arguments with little merit presented (e.g., the soda comes in a neat bottle, the bottle contains five percent more soda than competing ones). In contrast, for high involvement, more important products, consumers tend to scrutinize arguments more closely, and will tend to be persuaded more by high quality arguments. Celebrity endorsements are believed to follow a similar pattern of effectiveness. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that for trivial products, a popular endorser is likely to be at least somewhat effective regardless of his or her qualifications to endorse. On the other hand, for more important products, consumers will often scrutinize the endorser’s credentials. An IMC strategy should project a consistent image of the brand through synergized communication in various media channels. This is more important in the digital era when connectivity, convergence and social networking impact consumers. The challenge for the IMC strategy is to have the right balance, not only with regard to cultural values and ritual setting, but also how they are conveyed across channels to convey consistent and coherent brand image over a period of time. Cultural values are important brand differentiators in emerging markets with heterogeneous consumer groups. The artful combination of cultural values and IMC tactics will deliver a pioneering marketing exercise for any brand entering emerging markets.

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