**Marketing Communications**

This unit enables learners to understand the principles, practice and components of integrated marketing communications and how they are used to optimize marketing messages, including the use of digital media. Learners will be able to develop an integrated marketing communications plan.

**Indicative Content**

**1. Understand the principles of marketing communications**

Communications process

* Communications theories and characteristics; communications process model; scope of and platforms for marketing communications
* Strengths and weaknesses of marketing communications information (quantitative and qualitative data) that derives from different sources: interviews, surveys, observations, experimentation, internet; uses of marketing information; role in the setting of communications objectives; improving effectiveness of each part of the communications mix

Marketing communications strategy

* Long and short term goals; fit with corporate strategy and business plans; use of balanced score cards; viability of implementation; marketing strategy controls

Marketing mix

* Interrelationship between aspects of the marketing mix and their coherence with the marketing strategy; application of 3 Ps (physical evidence, process and people) to service marketing; use of service quality standards and models (GAPs and SERVQUAL) in marketing services; relationship and requirements of marketing and sales functions within an integrated marketing plan

**2. Understand integrated marketing communications**

Integrated marketing communications advantages

* Distinction between marketing communications and integrated marketing communications (IMC); advantages, challenges, uses and benefits of integrated marketing communications (IMC); tactical and strategic uses; evaluation problems: multiple causation, time lags

Paid advertising

* Role of paid advertising within an IMC campaign; considerations: budget; location; publication; reach/circulation/readership; cost-effectiveness; copy writing techniques; response mechanisms (e.g. coupons)

Public relations

* Concepts and characteristics of lobbying, influencing and campaigning; role of PR in promoting products and services; role of PR in crisis management; integration of PR into an integrated marketing plan; PR KPIs

Direct marketing

* Definition, characteristics, benefits, challenges and uses; use of technology and media; response mechanisms; measurement of response rates and evaluation criteria;

**3. Understand the use of digital media for marketing purposes**

Developments

* Technology as a means of creating new ways of marketing and conducting market research: exploitation of new markets through internet-related services, e-marketing, new media, JIT, mobile technology, interactive television, databases; e-commerce, online surveys and social networks as sources of marketing information; technologies enhancing customer focus and targeting

Scope, benefits and drawbacks

* Advantages and disadvantages of different platforms; transparency of customer feedback and possible reputational damage; Data Protection issues; consumer privacy; push and pull digital marketing
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Factors in a digital marketing campaign

* Skills requirements; writing marketing messages for use by digital media; connectivity and hardware requirements; etiquette for engaging consumers via digital media; development and use of customer profiles; Search Engine Optimization (SEO); use of CRM

Evaluation

* Budgets; targeting; cost per unit and value of digital marketing; evaluating the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of campaigns

**4. Be able to develop an integrated marketing communications plan**

Objectives, targets etc.

* DAGMAR framework; Target Group Index, socio-demographic tools; setting evaluation criteria; pre- and post-testing e.g. portfolio tests, aided recall tests; contingency planning techniques

Marketing mix and intelligence

* Application of the marketing mix to integrated marketing strategy; use of sales promotions, critical success factors and integration into marketing communications plans

Alignment

* Factors in the alignment of marketing communications plans and strategies; responses to misalignment

Monitoring mechanisms

* Principles of risk identification, assessment and treatment options; Key Performance Indicators, operational and financial monitoring; identification of shortfalls, deviations and unexpected outcomes (good and bad) possible responses to deviations