

How Cross Media is used by ICA Supermarket to improve their Brand

Mikael Vemmenby

Umeå University

Dept of Informatics

CMID

mvemmenby@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper is about how Cross Media can improve the branding process. But first I will try to define what Branding, Digital Branding and Market Communication is and how you can use it. After that I will try to show how *ICA*, a supermarket brand in Sweden, uses Cross Media in their marketing to broaden their brand and how they have found new ways to get new customers, by enhancing their *ICA* experience.

Author Keywords

ICA, Experience, Cross Media, Promise, Reputation

ACM Classification Keywords

Branding, Digital Branding, Market Communication, Touchpoints,

General Terms

Branding, Cross Media, Touchpoints, Facebook, ICA

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will try to give an explanation on how Cross Media can be used to improve a brand and the branding process. And in order to do that I'm going to have to start with explaining what a brand is and what the word branding is implying. The AMA, or the American Marketing Association, defines a brand as a "name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of the them. They try to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and tries to differentiate them from those of other sellers. Which makes branding not about getting the target group to choose your brand over the competition, but instead it's about getting the customers to see your brand as the one brand that provides them with the best solution to their problems. [2, 3, 4]

So what makes a brand successful? There are certain aspects that a brand must fulfill in order to even have a chance to be successful. Which is;

A brand have to:

- See to it that their message is clearly delivered.
- See to it that the brand's credibility is confirmed and received by the customers
- Connect with your target group emotionally.
- Motivate your target group when they buy your brand

- Reinforce the user's loyalty.

So these are just a few crucial touchpoints that you as a brand needs to look into. And then find out if you have a clear view of these aspects and if the brand stays true to them and see if they are being fulfilled all throughout the brand or company.

And by understanding the touchpoints, you will not only help yourself understand the needs and wants of your prospectors and customers, but you will also help integrate these strategies into your company. [1, 2, 3]

So when you manage to succeed with the different touchpoints, and the brand gives the customers a good experience and they start to perceive the brand as a good thing. They will hopefully become loyal customers. Which then makes a strong brand invaluable in the battle for the customers. And therefore, time spent researching and defining your brand during the building of a brand is important. After all, you are giving a promise to your customers and this will be the fundamental piece in your marketing communication and this is something you don't want to be without. [1, 2]

So in order to understand branding it is crucial that you understand what brands are. And a brand is the idea or image of a specific product or service that consumers connect emotionally with, by identifying the name, logo, slogan or design of the company who owns the idea of image. So branding in itself is when that idea or image is marketed in such a way that more and more people recognize it, and can identify themselves with it. No matter how many other companies offers the same product, it is yours they choose to buy. This is because you have penetrated the social wall and your brand have now begun to have a more emotional connection with the customers. [1, 2]

Branding is also a way for companies to get an important asset within the brand or company, which is good reputation or "Goodwill". When there is no reputation or the reputation isn't very high, branding is a way to help the companies change that factor. With the help of branding the companies can build up an expectation about the company and about the product or service they provide and with this,

at the same time get the company to maintain that expectation, or better yet, exceed them. Bringing better products and services to the market. [1, 2]

When we then take a look at digital branding we can today see that digital branding is an important part of the whole and helps the companies build up their reputation as well as expand beyond the original product and service. However, when using digital branding you have more to think about. If we take a look at using the Internet as a way of branding. You have to put in a lot of work just in order to co-ordinate domain names and brand names to keep visitors and clients. And if it is a new brand, it becomes easier for visitors to easily discover the new brand if you have managed to solve this problem. [1]

The explosion of technology over the past few years has not changed the rules of how to build a powerful brand. But it has changed how we do market our brands. So by using digital branding, the tools and tactics within branding have just magnified everything we know to be true about managing and creating brands. [1]

And within branding you need to have an insight to what consumers think and how they feel and experience the brand. And with digital branding, that gives the companies more insight to consumers' behavior. But the digital branding also lets the consumers gain insight to what the brands actually do and don't do. So digital branding is also a way for companies to find out what the competitors are up to and why consumers choose the competitive brand instead of their own. And when talking about market communication and digital branding. Consumers can let the world know instantly whether or not a brand has met their expectations and if the brand keeps "the end of the bargain" so to speak. The technology that exists today lets consumers magnify, amplify and share their opinions and experiences about how they perceive the brand and their brand promise. [1, 2]

So when brands are using digital branding, they can create larger experiences that are engaging and more memorable. And by using today's technology it becomes more interactive and gives the consumer a more compelling and memorable and hopefully a more positive relationship to that brand or company. [1, 2]

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And when we look a bit closer at market communication, and what this is referring to and what it says and promises the customer, as a brand or a company. The things you have to keep in mind is that everything you say as a brand becomes the face of your company or brand. And that will later become the very thing that people communicate in a cultural and social message. And that is then directed towards various audiences or social groups. So if you have two people with different backgrounds, they might (or probably will) interpret your market or brand communication strategy in two different ways. [2] This is because of the different ways that people today live their lives, experience reality and perceive it. And it is that factor that refers to your brand, and how people later share the experience in social and cultural events. So according to the social constructionist theory, the role of marketing communication, it is their job to teach people how to act and respond in different consumer situations. [2]

HOW THE USE OF "CROSS MEDIA" IMPROVES BRANDING FOR ICA

So how can we then use Cross media to improve branding? It needs also be said that cross media doesn't just mean web-based or TV-based branding or experiences. Cross media refers to all media platforms used today. And to name a few, they can be magazines, radio, books, games, web, TV, newspapers etc. So you have the possibility to work with a lot of different mediums during your branding and promotion of your brand.

So if we take a look at one example on how cross media can be used in the retail business here in Sweden. Here we have a company called, ICA, which is a supermarket store that sells normal groceries. *See figure 1.*



Figure 1. Logo of the ICA supermarket chain

But they also have some toys, clothing, electronics and garden equipment. Today they market themselves across many different mediums. One of the more popular ones is their TV commercial, that has almost gotten a life of its own, it has become almost like a mini series. In short it's a commercial that is played-out in one of the ICA's department stores. And there you find the manager and his three employees. And during the commercial they talk about everyday problems, of things happening in the store, and outside the store. As they at the same time, show the audience the different products that are one sale that week. And from day one they started to air this commercial, it became a hit and people today actually want to see the ICA commercial. *See figure 2.*



Figure 2. The ICA commercial team

This is a fantastic concept that they have managed to do, a commercial that people actually want to see. The only problem is that nobody can clearly remember what products were on sale that week, as the commercial itself, is the thing people remember from the commercial. So therefore, they send out, "ICA-bladet", that comes with the normal mail, and there you can look through their offers and see more of them.

They also have something called Buffé, which is a food magazine for the customers that have a membership card. See figure 3.



Figure 3. Illustration of the ICA magazine; Buffé

This magazine is filled with recipes and tips on what you can cook for yourself, family or with friends. This magazine always comes wrapped in plastic, because the magazine also includes a paper with special offers with specific discounts for the customer. And the products that are shown on that paper depend on what you buy in the supermarket. So it becomes more individual to the customer and gives you the feeling that they take the time to look up your shopping habits. And also depending on how much money you spend on your groceries, each month you get a coupon that will represent the bonus you get for being a card member at ICA.

And now as the Internet has become faster and digital branding has taken a big leap in branding in just a few years. They have also started to use their webpage in a larger extent. There you can find whatever you might need concerning food. They have different recipes you can

search for, you can also do your shopping online and then go to the store and just pick up your bags. So it's a very extensive webpage and ICA has managed to put a large number of options on to their site. Another thing they have managed to launch is a mobile application, that works almost like the website. The customers can look up recipes and find out more about their variety of groceries.

They have even started their own bank. It works the same as any other bank. Today they even offer insurance and another thing they have started is a program for students. So if you are a student, and if you become a member of ICA-Bank, you will get special student discounts on food at their stores.

And when you look closer at different topics within marketing and branding. We have Facebook for example. If you enter ICA's Facebook site and hit the "Like" button you can enter different competitions to win nice prizes. This is also a way for them to know that you like their brand and you don't mind showing people that you do, but also a nice way for them to lure you into their marketing research. So Facebook has almost become a large market communication community site, where people can discuss different experiences, things they like or dislike which gives the companies or brands an insight to what customers actually think about them and what they like and what they want.

So ICA, is a company that has managed to find a solution to a large number of things in people's daily lives. They are trying to make ICA the number one company you should want to use. As they can solve every problem you might have in your life. Be it finance problems or what should I make for dinner problems or even health problems, they have it all. And why shouldn't you want to have everything at one convenient place? It would become more practical for you. You won't have to deal with a lot of different companies.

So by using cross media, this helps ICA to get more customers to see their brand every time they get their mail, when watching TV and the commercial comes on, some even might use the mobile application without thinking that it is ICA that provides it. But their ICA logo gets stored in their memory. So when asked of a good supermarket they will automatically think of ICA. This is because ICA works so hard on giving the customer a good experience so they want to shop at their store. Even though ICA might not always be the cheapest, people go there to buy their groceries because of their past experience.

Touchpoints

This is where the term touchpoint comes into play. Touchpoints are crucial for a company to find. They are the moments that will determine if customers will return and continue to shop from your brand. So basically everything within a brand can deliver a message to the customers as touchpoints leave an emotional impact on the customers. So for a company like ICA, it is up to them to manage and find these customer contact points. [2, 4]

This so they can increase the value of the brand and strengthen the customer-brand relationship and enhance the positive brand experience in ways that the customers find meaningful. Another dimension of touchpoints are experiences. This is a concept that is designed to help managers understand the crucial interaction points between customers and brands in a more meaningful way. This can be activities such as sponsorships, special events in public relations programs or other event marketing. [2, 4] And in ICAs case, they are usually good at helping out with sponsoring different teams around Sweden. Giving them a value of "Goodwill", that can be explained as something a brand dose to raise awareness about there brand that they stand for more than just there product.

So as mentioned earlier in the text, it is important that the company do what they say they will do, as this becomes the most important touchpoints. What the company promise they most keep. And that leads us further into the subject and we can then talk about the integration triangle and brand integrity.

Integration Triangle and Brand Integrity or Say, Do, Confirm

This simple model not only illustrates the critical touchpoints of a brand and its consistency, but can also be used to uncover inconsistencies or gaps between saying, doing and confirming. That in turn can cause damage to the customer-brand relationship. See figure 4.

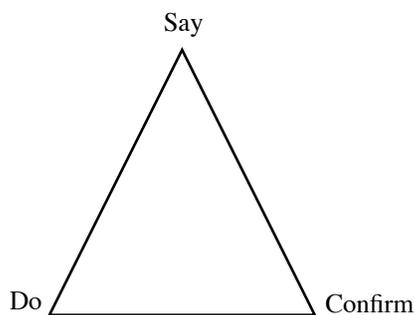


Figure 4. Illustration of the Integration Triangle, Say, Do and Confirm

It also helps determine three sources of brand meaning which are - marketing communication, brand experience and reputation. [2, 4] So how do ICA then add up to this model? Well to begin with their promise, they say that they are unique. Which I would say works well between what they say and what they do. As I don't know of any another supermarket that have there own bank, insurance, and even a special branch within the company that focus on helping students to buy cheaper food, that for me is just unique right there. And this uniqueness continues as they give you the possibility to buy other experiences on there website. Example: an evening of trying out and tasting different chocolates.

So ICA works extremely hard to give us as customers a nice experience and tries to find new ways to draw us in and give us as consumers and customers experiences above the ordinary.

CONCLUSION

So in conclusion of how the cross media helps to improve the branding. I think that it dose a lot for brands today to be able to use more mediums and create experiences that makes us as customers more interact with the brands. This not only makes it feel more personal but gives you as a customer a sense of appreciation. And in my mind, cross media is what it all comes down to. The cheer experience of the brand and the brands interest in me as a customer. For them to but in that work to give me an experience out of the ordinary that makes me feel that I mater to them. I don't want to feel that "I'm just another wallet". Even if the reality that might be the case, I don't want to feel that way, when I interact with my favorite brands.

And another thing I like with the use of cross media branding, is that it but more pressure on brands, to live up to there promise. And gives us as customers a larger impact on the brands, Example: If they where to stray from their brand promises, we as customers can show are discontent for that by using social media.

So cross media branding is something I think companies are going to use more and more in the future. And by doing so they will learn quicker to pinpoint the different touchpoints that will be crucial for them to either fix, or make even better then they already are. And this is something I do hope they. So they can enhance there brand experience for me as a consumer and also show me that the brand value has improve and that there brand is worth my time and money.

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