Establishing a Hierarchy Model for Evaluating Integrated Marketing Communications Services of Newspaper Groups in Taiwan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to build an evaluation model for integrated marketing communications services of newspaper groups. First, researchers obtained the proper evaluation criteria by using related documents and the modified Delphi method to condense experts' opinions. Then, AHP (Analytical Hierarchy Process) was applied to determine the weights of these criteria, allowing researchers to order the alternatives and find the most suitable newspaper group to implement integrated marketing communications services. The model was then applied to a real case of a famous financial holding company in Taiwan, which was looking for a newspaper group as its partner to promote its company image. According to the research results, the criteria that the advertisers cared about, in order of importance, were as follows: scale of the newspaper organization, ability of planning and implementation, ability of resource integration, and choice of communication tools. This model can provide advertisers with an objective and efficient method of choosing the most suitable newspaper group, and is of certain value and contribution in academic circles and practices.

Keywords: Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP), Integrated Marketing Communications, Modified Delphi Method, Newspaper Groups, Selection Model

INTRODUCTION

According to the first season media survey report of Rainmaker XKM International Corp (2011) on information source media, 57.33% of interviewees obtain information from TV, 21.58% from the Internet, 10.58% from newspapers, and 2.08% from broadcasting. As for the most trusted media, 45.25% of the interviewees trust TV the most, followed by, in descending order, the Internet (10.36%), newspapers (9.91%), and broadcasting (1.09%). According to the above

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data, the main information sources as well as most trusted media was TV, followed by the Internet, newspapers, and broadcasting.

In addition, according to a report by ZenithOptimedia regarding overall investment in advertisement in the market in 2011, TV was advertisers’ first choice because of its high level of influence. In 2011, the amount of TV advertising had slightly increased by 6.56% compared with that in 2010, which means advertisers still invested mainly in TV media. However, the report also found that the 15~24-year-old TV audience was reduced by 9.4%, indicating that the attraction toward TV media among young people has declined. The amount of website advertisement had largely increased, indicating that Internet media has changed young people’s TV watching habits (ZenithOptimedia, 2011).

No matter whether they use computers or mobile devices to access the Internet, people are spending more and more time online, and therefore, they have inadvertently reduced their time spent reading newspapers. With the popularization of the Internet, this seems to be an irreversible process. Circulation and advertising in traditional newspapers have both largely decreased in recent years, indirectly leading to the closure of several newspapers. Data published in 2009 by the Newspaper Association of America revealed that the second season newspapers advertisement revenue decreased by 29%, i.e., 2.8 billion dollars less than the same season of the previous year. Over the past three years, the decline has increased with each successive season. This reflects not only the economic recession but also the impact of advertising companies shifting their focus to the Internet (Tseng, 2009).

Since 2009, several newspapers with over 100 years of history have fallen into a state of crisis. For example, the Rocky Mountain News, with 50 years of history, went out of business, and the Seattle Post-Intelligencer, with 100 years of history, ceased publication of its physical newspapers, similar to the Ann Arbor News, with 174 years of history. The Christian Science Monitor, at the 100 year mark, decided to issue online newspapers only. The San Francisco Chronicle, with 137 years of history, faced a crisis of transferring ownership. Among the large newspaper groups which have declared bankruptcy and applied for bankruptcy protection in the US are the Chicago Tribune, the Los Angeles Times, and the Philadelphia Inquirer.

In the past, newspapers could only attract advertisers through print advertisements. Now, with its advancement and development, almost everyone wants to be a part of the media market. Following strategic thinking, newspapers have used their core values, such as news resources, and their own media advantages, such as brand images, to develop various communication tools, such as newspapers, Internet advertisements, or hosted activities. They can adopt the newspaper group cross-media project model to provide consistent communication information, bringing maximum communication effects to advertisers. Thus, integrated marketing communications have become the key to newspapers’ survival.

The integrated marketing communications (IMC) concept was first promoted by Tannenbaum Schultz of Northwestern University, USA, and Professor Lauterbor of the University of North Carolina (Schultz et al., 1993). According to Schultz’s definition, the so-called IMC is a process allowing the management of all product/service-related information sources, so that consumers or potential consumers can receive integrated information, triggering their purchasing behaviors while remaining loyal to the brand.

Duncan believed that strategic integration result is better than the results from individual planning and implementation of advertisement, PR, and activity execution. Also, it permits users to circumvent the issues of budget competition or the delivery of conflicting information from individually planned and implemented marketing tools (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997). In other words, when product information or corporate information is combined strategically, the resulting synergy is even better than the sum of the individual parts. An important goal of IMC is to deliver consistent messages through IMC tools, so that the corporate/brand images delivered to consumers are also consistent, facilitating purchasing behaviors and building sustainable
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