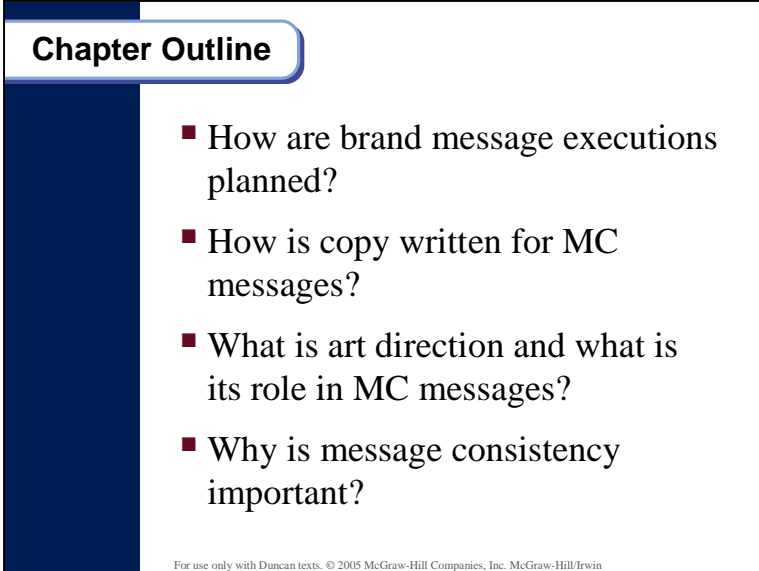# CHAPTER 10: MESSAGE EXECUTION

Chapter Objective

To explain way in which marketing communication messages make the "creative leap" from the creative message strategy to message executions.

Chapter Key Points

Chapter Outline

- How are brand message executions planned?
- How is copy written for MC messages?
- What is art direction and what is its role in MC messages?
- Why is message consistency important?

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This chapter addresses four key issues:

1. How are brand message executions planned?
   - The chapter identifies 13 of the most commonly used message storytelling techniques and discusses the importance of creative elements such as tone, style, and the interaction between words and visuals.

2. How is copy written for MC messages?
   - The chapter discusses the role of copywriting in the development of message executions.

3. What is art direction and what is its role in MC messages?
   - The chapter discusses the role of art direction in the development of message executions and briefly outlines the print and video execution development processes.

4. Why is message consistency important?
   - The chapter explains why message consistency is so important and identifies the two levels of consistency within an organization.

Chapter Perspective

Chapter Perspective

Strong brands have good stories
- This chapter takes the leap from the direction provided by the message strategy…
- …and tells how to execute a good story
  - The elements to use (words, sound, music, etc.)
  - How to structure the elements

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A strong brand is one with a good story; brand communication is all about the telling of the story. The stories we tell and remember are the ones that intersect in personal ways with our lives. Brand stories do that when they are based on nuggets of insight into how customers feel and think about a brand. Figuring that out is the role of *strategy* that you just read about. The *execution* of the strategy is the presentation of those insights in stories that ring true with the target audience.

There are essentially two sets of decisions to make in executing a brand message: what elements to use in the brand story and how to structure those elements. The execution elements include all the bits and bytes of a brand message—the words, the sounds and music, the photos and illustrations, the costumes and settings, the lighting—all the myriad physical details of a production. The structure is the way these elements are combined—the layout, the flow, the form of the message—how everything comes together to deliver the story.

Opening Case: Arnott's

Opening Case: Arnott's
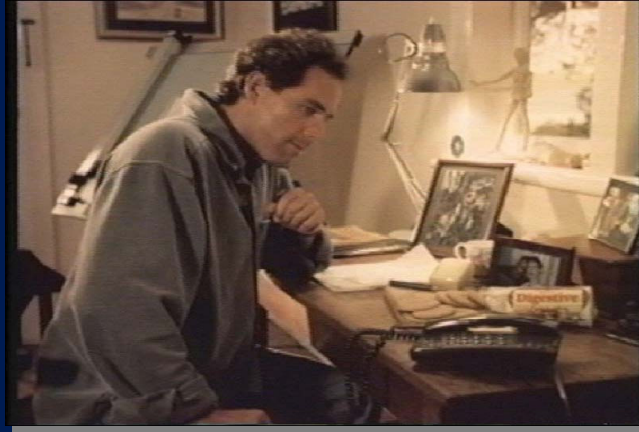
Challenge: → Overcome a "cold" brand image

Answer: →
An IMC program featuring:
• A "soap opera" theme
• Innovative serial TV ad campaign
• Supported by point-of-sale posters and public relations, including an "advertorial" in a women's magazine

Results: →
• Now a favorite brand of New Zealand
• Maintained market share while increasing its average price to 10 percent above the category average
• 15,500 participants "voted" in the soap opera finale
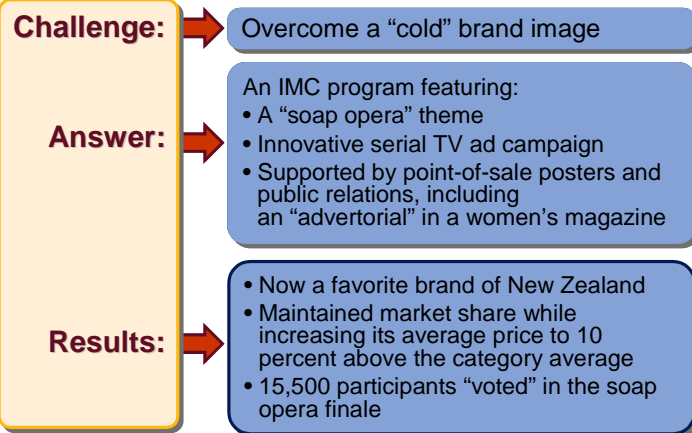
Challenge: Overcome a "cold" brand image

  Answer: An IMC program featuring:
- A "soap opera" theme
- Executed in an innovative serial TV advertising campaign
- Supported by point-of-sale posters and public relations, including an "advertorial" in a women's magazine

Lecture Outline

I.   Brand Message Executions

This Ad's Rough Style Conveys a Rugged Message About Nevada

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A. Message execution
      i. *The form of a completed MC message such as an advertisement, brochure, or package label*

B. Message storytelling

Message Storytelling

13 Commonly used Formats

News Announcement	Inherent Drama	Testimonial/ Endorsement
Talking Head	Lifestyle	Problem/ Solution
Demonstration	Comparison	Picture Caption
Jingle	Humor	Animation/ Cartoons	Special Effects
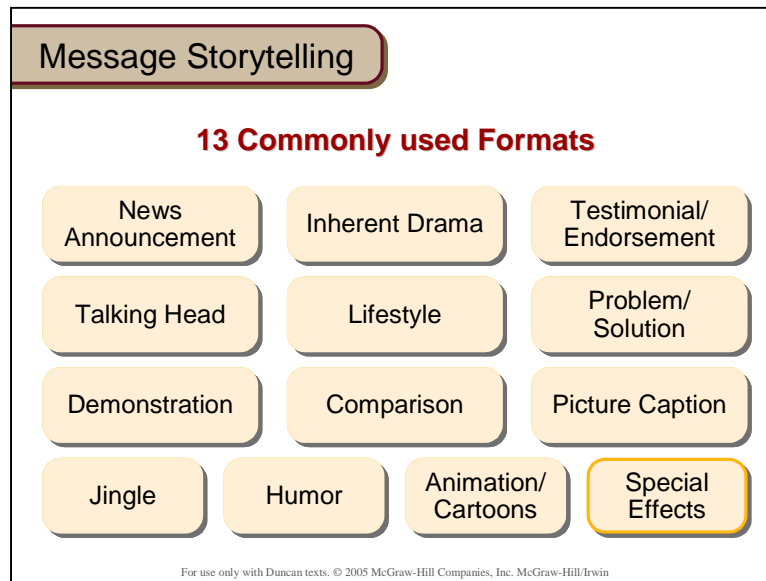
   i. 13 commonly used formats

      1. News announcement
          a. Straightforward, factual presentation
          b. Used for new products; products with a new formula

      2. Inherent drama
          a. Sets the brand apart from competitors
          b. Used in categories with little product differentiation

      3. Testimonial/endorsement
          a. Uses celebrities, experts, or typical users
          b. Used where credibility is important

      4. Talking head
          a. Characters tells a story in their own words
          b. Used to explain and to add believability

      5. Lifestyle
          a. Focuses on associations to the life of the user
          b. Used in categories such as beer and soft drinks

      6. Problem/solution
          a. Identifies a problem that the product can solve
          b. Used to dramatize product differentiation

      7. Demonstration
          a. Provides evidence
          b. Used with products with a real point of difference

8. Comparison
   a. Proves your brand wins in some kind of test
   b. Used to showcase a competitive advantage

9. Picture caption
   a. Tells a story with illustrations and captions
   b. Used for products with different uses/varieties

10. Jingle
    a. Uses music and catchy words to entertain
    b. Used for products with little product differentiation

11. Humor
    a. Creates a fun, likable personality
    b. Used for undifferentiated products

12. Animation/cartoons
    a. Uses drawings, puppets, and claymation figures
    b. Can be used with a variety of products

13. Special effects
    a. Uses visually interesting production techniques
    b. Can be used for a wide variety of products

ii. Tone and Style
   1. Tone

The Marines Use a Tough Tone

We don't promise you a rose garden

THE MARINES ARE LOOKING FOR A FEW GOOD MEN.

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a. *Describes a general atmosphere or a manner of expression,*
- Examples, solemn, angry, happy, cheering, fearful

2. Style

Style and Tone

Style: Describes a manner of expression

- In contrast to tone, which has to do with how a message sounds, style has to do with how it looks or feels

a. *Describes a manner of expression*
- In contrast to tone, which has to do with how a message sounds, style has to do with how it looks or feels

iii. Words and Pictures

Figure 10-1: Creative Elements And The Hierarchy of Effect

ATTENTION

INTEREST

DESIRE

ACTION
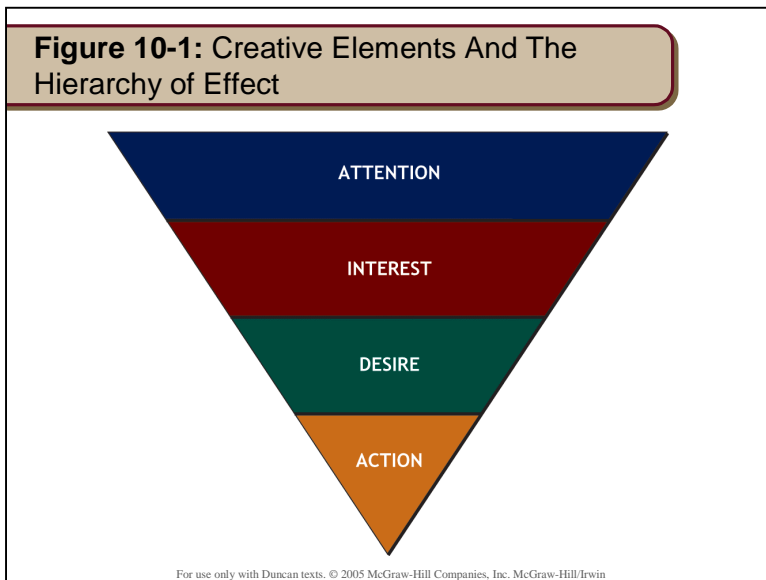
       1. Different elements support different levels of the hierarchy of effects

II.   <u>Copywriting</u>

How Is Copy Written For MC Messages?

Copywriting: The process of executing the message strategy through the use of words and music

- An important tool: slogans
  - A clever phrase that serves as a reminder of the brand, company image, or campaign theme

---

A. Copywriting
    i. *The process of executing the message strategy through the use of words and music*
        1. An important tool: slogans
            a. *A clever phrase that serves as a reminder of the brand, company image, or campaign theme*

B. Writing for print (magazine, newspaper, brochure)

Copywriting

Display copy: copy in a type size that is larger than the body copy, including:
- Headlines designed to get readers' attention
- Underlines and overlines leading in or out of headlines
- Captions, callouts, subheads, and taglines

Body copy: the text of the brand message

---

     i. Display copy: *copy in a type size that is larger than the body copy, including:*

        1. Headlines designed to get readers' attention
        2. Underlines and overlines leading in or out of headlines
        3. Captions, callouts, subheads and taglines

This Gillette Ad Uses Display Copy Devices

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     ii. Body copy: *the text of the brand message*

C. Writing for audio (radio; voicemail)
     i. Challenge: listeners are doing something else…
        1. …so copy must be:
           a. catchy to attract attention
           b. use recognizable sounds
           c. be clearer than any other kind of copy
           d. The use of music is a powerful tool

D. Writing for video (TV)
     i. Video script has a two dimensions to consider
        1. Words/sounds
           a. dialogue
           b. voiceover
           c. music
        2. Visuals
           a. actors
           b. setting
           c. sepctial effects

III.   <u>Art Direction</u>

Art Direction
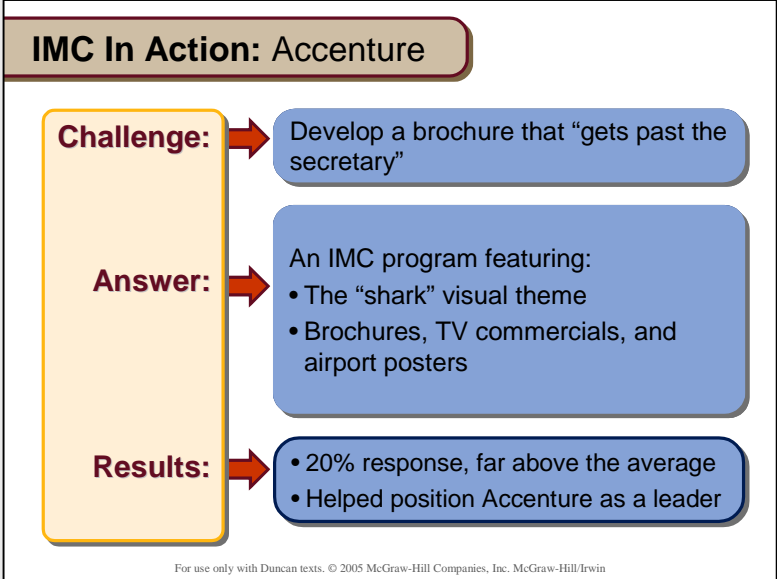
Art direction:
The process of selecting photos, illustrations, filming, logos, and so on—anything that has to do with the look of the brand message

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A. Art direction
   i. *The process of selecting photos, illustrations, photos and filming, logos, and so on—anything that has to do with the look of the brand message*
      1. An important technique: visualization
         a. The first step in turning the message strategy into a visual

<u>IMC In Action</u>: Accenture

IMC In Action: Accenture

Challenge: ➡ Develop a brochure that "gets past the secretary"

Answer: ➡ An IMC program featuring:
• The "shark" visual theme
• Brochures, TV commercials, and airport posters

Results: ➡ • 20% response, far above the average
• Helped position Accenture as a leader

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> Challenge: Develop a brochure that "gets past the secretary"
>
> Answer: An IMC program featuring:
>   - The "shark" visual theme
>   - Brochures, TV commercials and airport posters
>
> Results:
>   - 20% response, far above the average
>   - Helped position Accenture as a leader
>
> Discussion Starters:
> 1) Students may not yet be familiar with Accenture, but they should
>   be able to judge the creative based on the case. So an initial valid
>   question to ask would be this: What message is this campaign is
>   trying to convey to business people?
> 2) A good follow-up would be this: does the "shark" approach
>   effectively execute the intended message, or can you think of a
>   better approach?
> 3) Finally, if you we the "gatekeeper" for your boss, would this
>   campaign succeed in its attempt to "get past you?"

B. Importance of visuals
    i. Powerful tools at the art director's disposal
        1. Visual elements (photos, video, animation, etc.)
        2. Typefaces
        3. Casting of actors
        4. Settings depicted

C. Print design process
    i. Thumbnail sketch
        1. Simple drawing with general locations of headline, visuals, etc.
    ii. Rough layout
        1. Actual size piece with more specific direction on the location
            of each visual element
    iii. Comprehensive layout
        1. Highly refined version of what final ad will look like
    iv. Mechanical
        1. File of all elements presented to printer

D. Video design process
    i. Storyboard
        1. Series of sketched frames proposing the video images and
            audio track scene by scene
    ii. Preproduction
        1. If approved, the art director makes plans to create all the
            frames in the storyboard

  iii. Production shoot

    1. Storyboard serves as the guide

  iv. Postproduction editing

    1. Final commercial emerges

E. Other art direction tasks

  1. Online

    a. Advertising banners and websites

  2. Brand identity

    a. Includes logos, trademarks, distinctive colors, etc.

  3. Exhibit design

    a. Includes displays, and booths

  4. Package design

    a. The "last ad a customer sees"

TALES FROM THE REAL WORLD

It may appear that copywriters and art directors live in separate worlds, but in the real world, they actually collaborate closely on almost all of their projects; for example, copywriters can suggest visuals and art directors can recommend taglines
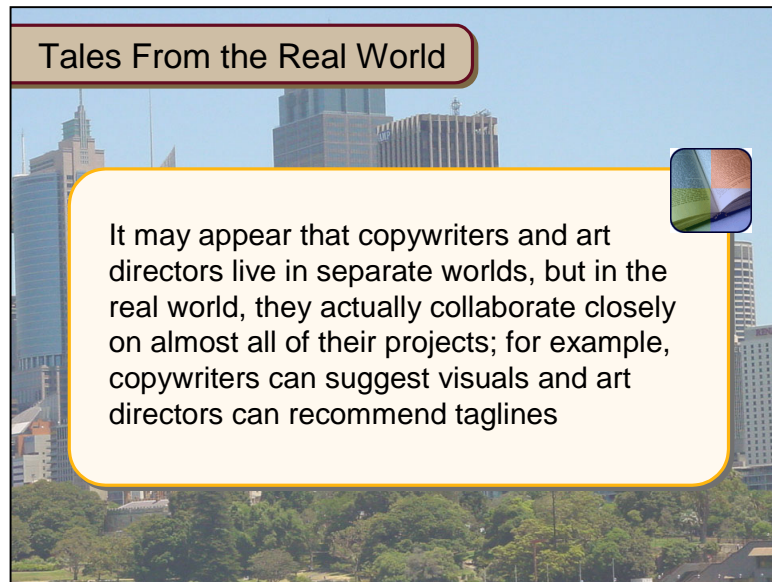
After reading this chapter, it may appear that copywriters and art directors live in separate worlds, and focus exclusively on words or visuals, but in the real world, they actually collaborate closely on almost all of their projects; for example, copywriters can suggest visuals and art directors can recommend the words that make up taglines.

IV.   The Consistency Challenge
    A. Two types of consistency:

Two Types of Consistency

Execution Level → "One-voice, one-look" •*MC messages have the same look, sound, and feel*

Strategic Level → A brand's personality, positioning, and identification are consistent, but individual messages may differ
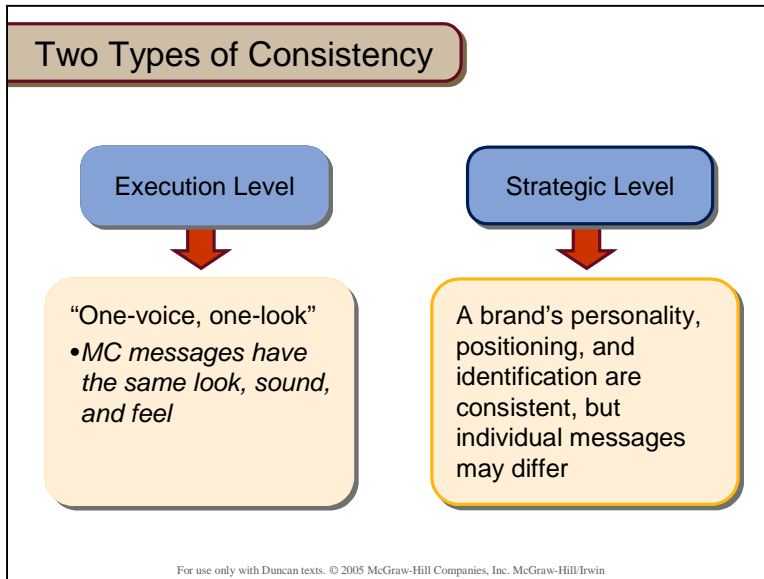
    i. Execution level
        1. "One-voice, one-look"
            a. *MC messages have the same look, sound, and feel*

Figure 10.2: MC Consistency Only The Tip of The Iceberg

| Brochure | Informational Databases | Ordering, tracking | E-mail access | Moderated Chats | Live CSR |

Simple — Complex
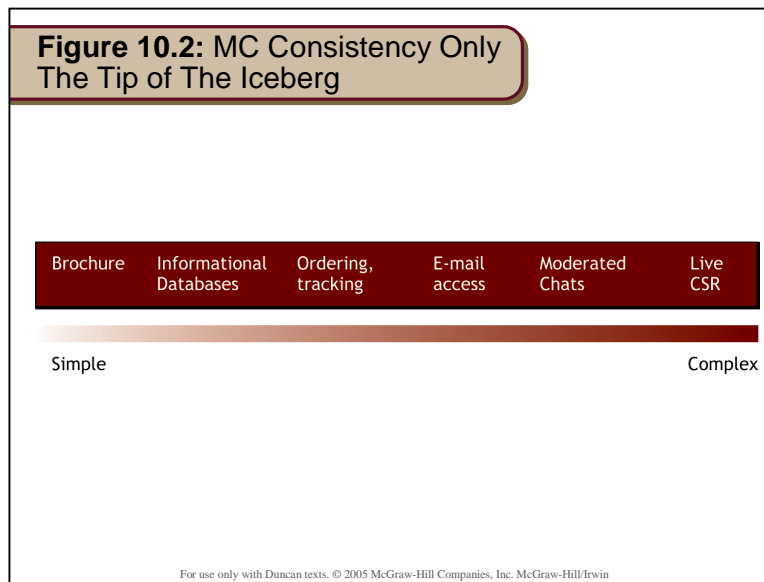
ii. Strategic level
    1. A brand's personality, positioning, and identification are consistent, but individual messages may differ

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▷ **INSTRUCTOR IN-DEPTH INSIGHT:**   **IMC AND CORPORATE CULTURE**

Insight: IMC And Corporate Culture

> An IMC program can influence the way employees express themselves. The more informed employees are, and the better they feel about the company they work for and its mission, the more likely they are to send positive brand messages.
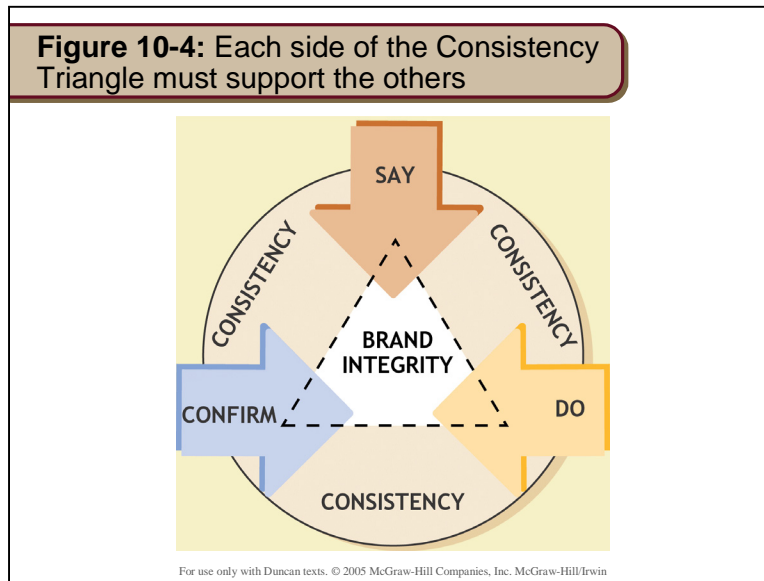
An IMC program can influence the way employees express themselves. The more informed employees are, and the better they feel about the company they work for and its mission, the more likely they are to send positive brand messages.

B. Consistency triangle

Figure 10-4: Each side of the Consistency Triangle must support the others

SAY

CONSISTENCY

CONSISTENCY

BRAND INTEGRITY

CONFIRM

DO

CONSISTENCY

   i.   "Say" messages are delivered by MC
  ii.   "Do" messages are delivered by brand's performance
 iii.   "Confirm" messages are delivered by public opinion

V.   Final Note

Final Note:

Consistency is a means to an end
- *The end is a positive brand relationship*
- *A unified outward image is also a reflection of an organization's internal consistency*

A. Consistency is a means to an end
   i.   The end is a positive brand relationship
  ii.   A unified outward image is also a reflection of an organization's internal consistency

Answers to Review Questions

1) Message executions

a. What are the five key decision areas?

    Answer: There are five key decisions that people on the creative side of marketing communication—writers, designers, and producers—often use to do their jobs. Their goal is to bring the big creative idea alive as an attention-getting and memorable message. These five decision areas are as follows: First, how will we tell the brand storytelling? Second, what tone and style should the message have? Third, what words should be used in the message? Fourth, what visuals should be used? Fifth how consistent will the messages be with one another and with the organization's overall image?

b. Find an ad that illustrates one of the 13 common brand story formats. Explain how it works.

    Answer: Students will have many different answers to this question, but some of the young men may refer to the Gillette Mach 3 print ad in the chapter. This ad is an example of the picture caption format. Another example from the chapter that some of the young women may cite is the Pantene ad featuring Kelly Ripa. This ad is an example of the testimonial/endorsement format.

c. How do tone and style differ? Find an ad that you think illustrates a distinctive tone and another one that demonstrates a distinctive style. Explain how they work.

    Answer: The word tone describes a general atmosphere or a manner of expression such as businesslike, solemn, angry, happy, cheering, fearful, sympathetic, or frustrated. Each of these tones implies nuances in the message and signals a desired emotional response. Style also describes a manner of expression, but in contrast to tone, which has to do with how a message sounds, style has to do with how it looks or feels. Student answers to the second part of the question will vary, but some students may cite some of the work that has been done on anti-tobacco or safety belt campaigns. Specifically, some students may suggest messages that use a fearful tone to express their message. Some find this tone very effective in communicating the message, but others are turned off by its negativity. Other students may cite examples of messages that try to accomplish the same goal, but approach it with a humorous style. One execution that comes to mind is an anti-smoking ad featuring funny visuals of animals with cigarettes dangling from their mouths, and the headline: "this is how silly you look when you're smoking." Some may argue that this style is more appropriate for selling packaged goods and not a serious issue, but others might find it more accessible, less threatening, and therefore more effective.

d. Do you want the visual to be a literal translation of the thought in the headline? What is gained and what is lost with such an approach?

    Answer: Although it is important that the words and pictures work together in creative messages, it helps if the visual adds something to the words and the words

extend the idea presented in the visual. If the visual is a literal translation of the words, you may have a rather predictable, perhaps even boring, concept. Some of the best creative executions are the ones where the visual and copy have true synergy (where the sum is greater than its parts). In these cases, the visual and words create a richer meaning than either element carries by itself.

2) Copywriting

a. What is the purpose of a headline?
    Answer: A headline must serve a set of purposes—attracting attention is the foremost, but it must also engage the audience, explain the visual, lead the audience into the body of the copy, and cue the selling message. These tasks are critical because the average MC message has only a couple of seconds to capture the reader's attention.

b. What do display copy and body copy differ?
    Answer: Once the display copy has helped attract the reader, the task of completing the message is accomplished by the body copy. Set in smaller type than headlines or subheads, the body copy is a logical continuation of the ideas introduced in the display copy. The body copy compliments the display copy, hopefully by providing more information, creating interest, establishing credibility, and building desire.

c. Find a copy-heavy print ad, make a copy of it, and on the copy in red ink identify the headline and the body copy. If any of the following are used in the ad, then identify them as well: captions, subheads, overlines, underlines, taglines, or call-out quotes. Finally circle the brand identification elements and label them as a logo or signature.
    Answer: Student responses will vary widely on this question, but one suggestion is to take an ad from the chapter, make a transparency and ask students to direct you in identifying the names of each design element with a colored marker directly on the transparency. This would be an interactive and effective way to demonstrate the different types of design elements art directors can employ in a print ad layout.

d. What is a script? How does it differ for audio and video media?
    Answer: A script is basically the copy used in electronic media, including radio and television messages. It outlines the critical elements and the structure of the brand message. An audio script uses recognizable sounds (e.g., the sound a pop tab opening, then the sound of pouring a drink over ice) to add audio imagery to the message and, possibly, music to connect with listeners. A video script uses many of the standard techniques of an audio script; however, it can go beyond suggesting sounds and recommend visual images that can attract attention and describe something better than words—by showing it. Video copywriters use action, music, sound effects, settings, casting, and special effects, all of which can add an element of drama to the message.

e. Find a broadcast announcement that you think is particularly intrusive. Why is it irritating? What might be done to soften the irritation and still keep the message on strategy?

   Answer: Answers to this question will vary widely, and the likely response will be for one student to cite an example and for others to agree and say "oh yeah, that one!" One way to focus the discussion would be to secure an example of an annoying ad (try recording spots car dealer spots around the local news) and play it for the class. Then, have students "rebuild" the ad in two steps: First, list the key elements of a creative message strategy on the board and try to have the students discern what the annoying commercial is really trying to accomplish. Then, have the students refer to the 13 storytelling formats listed in the chapter as a resource, and suggest alternative ways this commercial could have been executed—without being annoying.

f. Find an ad that you think is particularly well written and one that isn't. Compare the two and explain your evaluation.

   Answer: This is another question which could result in a wide variety of responses. To make the exercise more interactive it might be interesting to ask the students to briefly page through their text and identify examples of a "well written" ad an example of "poorly written" ad. Then, ask the students for their comments first on the poor example, prompting them with some of these considerations: Does the headline entice you to read the ad? Is the body copy easy to read? Does the copy work synergistically with the visuals of the ad to communicate the intended message? Then, guide the discussion in the same fashion for the well written example.

3) Art and Design

a. What is art direction? Explain the role of an art director.

   Answer: Art direction is the process of selecting photos, illustrations, photos and filming, logos, and so on—anything that has to do with the look of the brand message. Art directors and other graphic artists must decide on a theme and then must translate that concept into visual elements

b. What is visualization?

   Answer: Visualization refers to the first step in turning the message strategy into a visual. To accomplish this, creative professionals put their imagination to work in the four-step creative process (exploration, insight, execution, and evaluation) outlined in the last chapter.

c. What is a layout? What information does a layout provide?

Answer: A layout refers to an orderly arrangement of the elements making up an MC message: visuals, headlines, subheads, body copy, captions, trademarks, slogans, and signatures. Layouts can be very simple, such as a thumbnail sketch, which is just a basic drawing of an ad depicting the general placement of the visuals and copy. They can also advance to progressively more refined pieces beginning with a rough layout, proceeding to a comprehensive layout, and, if approved, the mechanical, which is essentially the ad as it will be processed by the printer.

d. What is a storyboard? What information does a storyboard provide?

Answer: A storyboard is the first step in video design process. A completed storyboard presents all the design decisions in such areas as scene, setting, characters, action, lighting, props, camera movements, and film editing techniques. Using the script, the art director draws a series of frames on a storyboard to present the look of the image and the flow of the action sequences, or shots. The art director sketches the video image scene by scene and establishes the nature of the action. He or she carefully designs how each scene should appear, arranging actors, scenery, props, lighting, and camera angles to maximize impact, beauty, and mood.

4) Consistency

a. What is one-voice, one-look consistency, and how does it differ from strategic consistency?

Answer: One way to think of one voice, one look consistency is that everything is integrated at the execution level. On the other hand, strategic consistency is a much broader concept which speaks to the core brand identity the company has created. At the strategic consistency level, some individual MC messages may differ, but all of them will contain certain elements. For example, no matter who the audience is, the brand name and logo should be integrated into all message executions

b. Collect all the communication materials you can find from a local bank. Analyze them and your experiences using the bank in terms of the Consistency Triangle. Can you identify any gaps between the say, do, and confirm messages?

Answer: This question will draw different responses in different cities. To help focus the discussion, it might be helpful to assemble materials for a bank close to campus that you patronize, perhaps even the on-campus credit union to which many students may belong. Then present the materials to the class visually (post print ads and brochures on the board and project the bank's website on the board). Then discuss the following three topics: First write down the top 3-5 "say" messages are that appear to be delivered by the MC materials. Second, using your own knowledge of the bank, indicate how well the bank "does" (performs) on each of the key messages noted in the first step and record the responses. Third, poll the students about their impressions of the bank on each of the 3-5 dimensions touted in the messages to get a read on the level of the "confirm"

messages delivered by public opinion, and record these. Finally, compare the three sets of information to identify where the disconnects in the consistency triangle are, if any.

c. Find a product or service that demonstrates inconsistency in the materials developed by the various marketing communication areas. Redesign the materials using a one-voice, one-look approach to create more consistency in these planned messages. Explain your changes

   Answer: This is a relatively involved question that could the subject of an "executional consistency" workshop, held in class. As part of this exercise, the instructor would provide the same 2-3 examples of MC materials (perhaps a print ad, a brochure, and a print out of the brand's homepage) for a single brand to each of several small groups. As part of the workshop, each group would be required to create thumbnail sketch layouts of how they would redesign the materials to achieve a higher level of "one-voice, one-look" consistency and then present them to the class.

Chapter Challenge

Writing Assignment
Collect all the MC messages you can find for one of your favorite brands. Analyze them in terms of their creativity, big idea, writing, and design. How is the brand image being expressed in these pieces? What might be done to strengthen the presentation of the brand image and personality? Present your analysis to your classmates.

Presentation Assignment
Adopt a local client, either a store, a manufacturer, or a nonprofit organization. Analyze the strategy behind this organization's marketing communication messages. In particular, look for IMC issues such as the four sources of messages, the messages the organization is communicating, and what messages the organization is sending to its stakeholders. Using the consistency triangle in Figure 9–6, identify any gaps in consistency among these various messages. Prepare your analysis for presentation to your client.

Research Assignment
Review books and articles focused on advertising you can find in your library, and compile a set of guidelines for the creative team working on IMC projects. In other words, what rules of thumb from the advertising area are universal in application and could help an IMC team develop creative ideas, write effective copy, and design impactful visuals?

IMC Plan Team Assignment
At this stage in their semester-long project, students should begin to consider ways of executing the brand message strategy they developed in the last assignment. This assignment asks the team to think about creative "big ideas" they may have and to identify storytelling formats they are considering.

IMC Final Project Checklist #10

Due Date:_____

☐ **Your Agency Name:**

   ☐ **Creative Big Ideas**
Has your agency experienced any "big ideas" to execute the creative message strategy? The ideas could be early in their development process, but list any thoughts that have come to mind in regards to each of the following creative elements:

1) Message Visuals *(including photography, artwork, use of white space, etc.)*

2) Message Copy *(including slogans, headlines, taglines, etc.)*

   ☐ **Creative Execution Direction**
Which of the following storytelling formats would you consider for use in this campaign?

1) News announcement	8) Comparison
2) Inherent drama	9) Picture caption
3) Testimonial/endorsement	10) Jingle
4) Talking head	11) Humor
5) Lifestyle	12) Animation/cartoons
6) Problem/solution	13) Special effects
7) Demonstration	