Chapter 11

To consolidate your learning, the key points from this chapter are summarized here:

■ Describe the role and configuration of the marketing communications mix.

Organizations use the marketing communications mix to convey messages and to engage their various audiences. The mix consists of five tools, four main forms of messages or content, and three forms of media. These elements are mixed and adapted to meet the needs of the target audience and the context in which marketing communications operate. Tools and media are not the same: the former are methods or techniques; the latter are the channels through which the messages are conveyed to the target audience.

■ Explain the characteristics of each of the primary tools, messages, and media.

Each of the tools—that is, advertising, sales promotion, public relations (PR), direct marketing, and personal selling—communicates messages in different ways and achieves different outcomes. Media can be classified according to whether they are paid, owned, or earned. Each medium has a set of characteristics that enable it to convey messages in particular ways to and with target audiences. Messages are a balance of informational and emotional content. Some content can be branded, whilst some can be generated by users.

■ Set out the criteria that should be used to select the right communications mix.

Using a set of criteria can help to simplify the complex and difficult process of selecting the right marketing communications mix. There are five key criteria—namely, the degree of control over a message, the credibility of the message conveyed, the costs of using a tool, the degree to which a target audience is dispersed, and the task that marketing communications is required to accomplish.

■ Discuss the changing marketing communications landscape.

Advancements in digital media and changes in consumer behaviour now enable audiences not only to generate their own content but also to discuss and consider the opinions and attitudes of others. This means that advertisers no longer have control over what is said about their brands, who says it, and when. The rise of online communities and social networking sites, blogging, wikis, and RSS feeds enables users to create content and become more involved with a brand. Recently, there have been substantial changes in the digital media landscape. These include the development of automated ad buying, convergence, and increasing levels of ad avoidance and the use of ad-blockers.

■ Consider the principles and issues associated with integrated marketing communications.

Rather than use advertising, PR, sales promotions, personal selling, and direct marketing separately, integrated marketing communications (IMC) is concerned with working with these tools (and media) as a coordinated whole. So organizations often use advertising to create awareness, then involve PR to provoke media comment and sales promotion to create trial, and then reinforce these messages by means of direct marketing or personal selling to persuade audiences. The Internet can also be incorporated to encourage comment, interest, and involvement in a brand, yet still convey the same message. Mobile communications are used to reach audiences to reinforce messages and to persuade audiences to behave in particular ways, wherever they are.