Ralf Terlutter / Sandra Diehl / Shintaro Okazaki (Eds.)

Advances in Advertising Research (Vol. 1)
The objective of the European Advertising Academy (EAA) is to provide a professional association to academics and practitioners interested in advertising and its applications that will promote, disseminate and stimulate high quality research in the field.
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Cutting Edge International Research
The objective of the European Advertising Academy (EAA) is to provide a professional association to academics and practitioners interested in advertising and its applications that will promote, disseminate and stimulate high quality research in the field. The association particularly serves as a meeting and communication forum for its members. It offers a network for the exchange of knowledge on an international level and constitutes a framework allowing for a better dissemination of information on research and teaching.

The EAA is closely related to the yearly International Conference on Research in Advertising (ICORIA). The purpose of the conference is to create a forum where people studying advertising in the academic world could exchange ideas, and where they could meet with practitioners who have experience with advertising in the commercial world.

Every natural person that is professionally concerned with or interested in research or teaching in the field of advertising is, irrespective of nationality, eligible to become a full member of the organisation.

The EAA was founded in 2005. The current board members are: Peter Neijens (president, University of Amsterdam), Ralf Terlutter (president elect, University of Klagenfurt), Flemming Hansen (past president, Copenhagen Business School), Sandra Diehl (treasurer, University of Klagenfurt), Robert Heath (School of Management, Bath), Shintaro Okazaki (publication manager, Autonomous University of Madrid), Patrick de Pelsmacker (University of Antwerp) and Edith Smit (information manager, University of Amsterdam).

For further information please visit our website: www.icoria.org
Preface

We are pleased to introduce a new series focusing on advertising and communication from an international perspective. This book is the first volume in a series entitled *Advances in Advertising Research*, published by the EAA (European Advertising Academy). New volumes in this series will appear on an annual basis.

Research on advertising, branding and communication from an international perspective is essential in the face of the growing globalisation of markets, which requires academics and practitioners to take an increasingly international orientation in developing communication policies. Researchers as well as advertisers and marketers are confronted with an expanding, and above all changing, variety of both traditional and new media available for communication purposes, among them, advergames, mobile marketing and viral marketing. The goal of this book is to advance, from an international orientation, more systematic research in these fields.

Renowned communication researchers from around the globe have contributed to the making of this book. Contributors originate from countries throughout Europe, as well as from the U.S., Asia, Africa, and Australia. This international mix of authors offers the reader a comprehensive overview of current thinking and cutting-edge research in the area of international advertising and communication. The book includes cross-cultural investigations as well as studies representing the respective countries of the researchers. The contributions are selected expanded papers from the 8th ICORIA (International Conference on Research in Advertising; www ICORIA.org), which took place at the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt, Austria, in 2009.

The book addresses a number of important areas of communication research: strategic issues in advertising, branding and communication; advertising and communication content; the innovative fields of advertising and computer games (advergames), as well as advertising, branding and communication on the Internet; gender issues in advertising, branding and communication; communication and new media; international advertising and, finally, media placement,
brand placement, public relations and viral marketing. Despite of the great variety of issues covered, all papers are united in their desire to move international communication research forward.

We wish to thank all the authors for their willingness to contribute to this endeavour. We also want to express our gratitude to Simone Hochegger and Susanne Ortner from the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt who handled the formatting of the book. It is our hope that readers find the book both enjoyable and stimulating. If the material presented in this book generates constructive debates and subsequent investigations, then we have accomplished our goal.

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Part I

Strategic Issues in Advertising, Branding and Communication
Integrated Marketing Communications: A Test for Different Levels of Strategic Consistency

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1 Abstract

Strategic Consistency appears to be one of the main criteria to follow when developing an integrated marketing communication campaign. However, there is a wide body of research which also suggests that incongruent information may be more effective than consistent information. Due to these contradictory points of view, the present study analyzes what is the most effective level of strategic consistency in an integrated communication campaign. For this purpose an experiment is designed in which the level of strategic consistency is manipulated. A total of 227 undergraduate students participated in the study and were randomly assigned to one of three different levels of strategic consistency (high, moderate, low). Advertising and sponsorship were the communication tools used in the experiment. Cognitive and affective responses obtained from the study suggest that a moderate level of strategic consistency is the most appropriate to improve the effectiveness of an IMC campaign.

2 Introduction

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has received considerable attention during the last decade as a means to enhance communication effectiveness. In opinion of Schultz (1998), the brand is the very key to IMC which involves blending various communication tools (e.g. publicity, advertising, sales promotion, sponsorship…) into a unified and consistent brand image (Tsai, 2005). Central to the concept of IMC is the notion that strategic consistency is the most recommended approach to ensure this consistent brand image (Duncan and Mo-
riarty, 1998; Madhavaram et al., 2005) and protect it in a context of a fast-changing marketing environment (negative publicity, competitive action...).

From a strategic point of view, consistency refers to the existence of sharing common brand meaning among multiple tools of communication (“what is said” about the brand), because the messages may be focused on a host of different tangible or intangible aspects of the brand itself (e.g., physical, attributes, user or usage imagery, brand personality...) (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). Keller (2001, 2008) also posits that communication tools are strategically consistent if the information they convey share meaning and content with the purpose of sending and reinforcing common associations about the brand. To this respect, recent studies have demonstrated the more positive cognitive and affective effects derived from a strategic consistency based integrated campaign (Navarro et al., 2009).

Despite the basic recommendation that inconsistency should be avoided, the true is that a growing body of research has demonstrated the existence of positive cognitive and affective effects when people are exposed to an incoming information that is not consistent with previous expectations in consumer’s memory (for a review see Alden et al., 2000 and Arias-Bolzamann et al., 2000). Due to these contradictory points of view in the literature, an interesting research question is what level of strategic consistency is more effective on consumers when developing an integrated communication campaign.

From an academic approach this issue is under-researched due to the methodological difficulties of operating with several communication tools and designing different levels of consistency among their messages. In the literature on congruency, most of previous studies have analyzed the effects obtained from extreme congruency and incongruency (Heckler and Childers, 1992; Dahlén and Lange, 2004; Lange and Dahlén, 2003), but they have not included in their analysis a moderate level of consistency. In this sense, it is necessary to develop a methodological approach to test what effects can be obtained when using different levels of consistency among messages (Sjödin and Törn, 2006). This issue has been considered as a research priority by the Marketing Science Institute (2005) though it has not yet been investigated.

The purpose of this research is to fill this gap in the literature by analyzing consumers’ reactions to a strategic consistency-based integration campaign in which three different levels of consistency are designed. For this purpose, we develop a new methodology for addressing the design of the level of consistency in an integrated communication campaign. This methodology will allow us to evaluate the effects on consumer’s information processing and persuasion derived from each level of consistency in this integrated campaign.
3 Conceptual framework and hypotheses

Several studies have provided empirical evidences that there exist positive cognitive and affective effects when people are exposed to incoming information that is consistent with their previous schemata (Loda and Carrick, 2005; Smith, 1993). These evidences are based on theoretical postulates as the Integration Theory (Anderson, 1981), the Encoding Variable Principle (Melton, 1970) and the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986). More specifically, in the context of an integrated communication campaign these positive effects occur because consumer is exposed to several communication options that constitute different cognitive contexts of presenting the same message about the brand (Chang and Thorson, 2004; Edell and Keller, 1989).

Nevertheless, under a perspective of communication and persuasion, there exists a common industry practice of creating incongruent messages in order to challenge consumers’ expectations, foster their interest and motivation to process the messages and revive their interests in the brand. In this sense, previous studies in advertising and consumer behavior literatures have provided empirical evidences of the positive cognitive and persuasive effects derived from incongruent information (Alden et al., 2000; Arias-Bolzmann et al., 2000; Dahlén and Lange, 2004; Heckler and Childers, 1992; Törn and Dahlén, 2009). The theoretical foundations of these effects can be found in different theoretical perspectives. For example, Festinger’s Cognitive Dissonance Theory (1957) posits that inconsistency or disagreement between two pieces of information produces dissonance or tension that motivates individuals to seek ways of reducing it. Under the same line of reasoning, Consistency Theory (Hunt, 1963) also states that inconsistency causes arousal and that, depending on the degree of inconsistency, the degree of arousal can be either positive or negative. However, the fundamental theoretical foundations of these effects can be found in the Schema Congruity Theory (Mandler, 1982). Unlike others theories on (in) consistency, this theory is focused on how information that is not consistent with individual’s previous schema is processed and resolved (Lee and Schumann, 2004).

These contradictory points of view in the literature raise the question of whether inconsistent information is more effective than consistent information in an integrated communication approach. In other words, what should be the most recommended level of strategic consistency when people are exposed to an integrated marketing communication campaign?

For this purpose, this study analyzes consumers’ reactions to an integrated communication campaign in which the level of strategic consistency has been manipulated. Specifically, based on Schema Congruity Theory (Mandler, 1982) and the cognitive-response Model of Persuasion (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya,
1999), we formulate several hypotheses to analyze how consumers’ processing and attitudes are affected by different levels of strategic consistency among messages.

3.1 Effects of strategic consistency-based integration on information processing

Schema Congruity Theory (Mandler, 1982) proposes that people have several schemata in their memory that represent previous expectations and experiences with something (e.g. a brand, a product) or someone (e.g. a salesperson). The main argument of this theory is that consumers’ reactions to new information depend on the level of congruity between this incoming information and their previous self schemata because they expect certain information given their established schemata. According to this theory, when people are exposed to a message that conforms to their expectations there is little need to process the information in-depth because incoming information is coherent and confirms previous expectations in consumer’s memory (Heckler and Childers, 1992; Mandler, 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). In this situation, a high level of consistency in the message can be easily processed employing few cognitive resources.

However, when people are exposed to incoming information that is not coherent with previous expectations consumers need to resolve the conflict. Such resolution can generate positive effects on information processing because the need for resolution favors a more extensive processing and careful elaboration (Heckler and Childers, 1992; Fiske et al., 1983; Lee, 2000). Being so, the amount of elaboration and processing (cognitive responses) that people engage in will be higher if incongruity is successfully resolved. For example, it can be resolved by assimilating the new information in their memory without prompting an important change in previous schema (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). Such situation may occur at moderate levels of strategic consistency. However, extreme incongruity implies that conflict between incoming information and previous schema cannot be resolved without prompting this fundamental change in the established schema in consumer’s memory (Mandler, 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989). Due to this extreme level of incongruency, individuals are more likely to consider only the information that is congruent with previous expectations and further elaboration is impeded.
Based on this reasoning, we therefore hypothesize that people engage in more elaborative processing at moderate levels of strategic consistency:

**H1**: Moderate levels of strategic consistency-based integration result in higher consumers’ information processing than high and low levels of strategic consistency.

Judging from literature review, different levels of strategic consistency in an integrated communication campaign may have also impact on consumer’s persuasion. According to the cognitive-response Model of Persuasion (Meyers-Levy and Malaviya, 1999; Wright, 1980), persuasion is related to the net favourableness of the cognitive responses that people evoke as they elaborate on a message. It is not about the amount of processing that the consumer develops when he/she is exposed to the campaign, but about the favourableness of such processing. A new message that is congruent with previous knowledge leads to favourable responses because the encountered information conforms to expectations and allows predictability.

Nevertheless, the general prediction from Schema congruity Theory is that incoming information that is moderately congruent can be evaluated more favourably than strongly congruent or incongruent information. In this sense, previous research on inconsistency and advertising effects has demonstrated that information that defies expectations can enhance consumers’ persuasion as far as they successfully resolve the incongruency (Dahlén et al., 2008; Lee, 2000; Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989; Sjödin and Törn, 2006). These positive effects on persuasion can be explained by two main reasons:

First, the more thorough processing that occurs when there are inconsistencies leads to enhanced confidence in resolution judgments. Being so, whether the object of the processing is evaluated more positively or more negatively depends on how much effort is involved in resolving the incongruity (Orth and Holancova, 2003).

Second, incongruent information produces a kind of entertainment value, as it challenges consumers to solve a puzzle. Solving the puzzle produces positive responses and a sense of accomplishment (Peracchio and Meyers-Levy, 1994). Therefore, when consumers encounter new information that is incongruent with an evoked schema they are motivated to resolve the incongruity which may, in turn, contribute to more favourable responses than schema congruity. This only occurs in a congruent moderate level. In contrast, when inconsistency cannot be resolved, as occurs in a low level of consistency, consumers may elicit less favourable responses because this inconsistency produces a kind of frustration in solving the discrepancy (Mandler, 1982; Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989).
Consequently, we expect that moderate levels of strategic consistency result in higher persuasion than high and low levels of consistency:

**H2:** Moderate levels of strategic consistency-based integration result in more favourable consumers’ information processing than high and low levels of strategic consistency.

Regarding consumers’ information processing, it is also interesting to analyze what type of processing activity prevails when people are exposed to different levels of strategic consistency. Based on Edell and Keller (1989)’s study, after a first exposure, encoding activities are more prevalent while subsequent exposures to the stimulus divide consumers’ processing efforts between retrieval and encoding activities. Because limited processing resources are available, these cognitive activities must compete during subsequent exposures. Therefore, after a first exposure to a stimulus the cognitive activity could vary depending of the degree of strategic consistency provided by the second stimuli. Based on the above reasoning, when subsequent stimuli is congruent, retrieval activities are more prevalent because the second exposure conforms to previous expectations and it may serve as a retrieval cue for the information stored in consumers’ memory (Edell and Keller, 1989; Keller, 1987). In this retrieval process we expect that people will elicit the same thoughts than in the first exposure to the message. In contrast, when people are exposed to information incongruity (moderate and low levels of strategic consistency), the additional elaboration needed to resolve this incongruity may lead to a new encoding and processing of the message (Edell and Keller, 1989). In these cases, we expect that subjects will evoke fewer repeated thoughts than in high levels of strategic consistency:

**H3:** Moderate and low levels of strategic consistency-based integration result in less repeated processing than high levels of strategic consistency.

### 3.2 Effects of strategic consistency-based integration on consumer’s attitudes

Finally, traditional persuasion models state that cognitive and affective responses can mediate effects on consumers’ evaluations (MacInnis and Jaworski, 1989). Thus, more positive responses may lead to more favourable evaluations. Based on this reasoning, we posit that when subjects are exposed to a schema incongruity information that can be resolved attitudes are more favourable than attitudes generated under schema congruity, because this incongruity is resolved and more positive evaluation is derived from the success of resolution. However, when
incongruity is not resolved consumers will elicit more negative evaluations due to the feeling of frustration that result from not resolving the discrepancy (Meyers-Levy and Tybout, 1989).

Therefore, we expect that moderate levels of strategic consistency result in higher evaluation than high and low levels of strategic consistency:

\[ H4: \text{Moderate levels of strategic consistency-based integration result in more favourable attitude towards the communication campaign than high and low levels of strategic consistency.} \]

4 Methodology

4.1 Experimental design

To test the hypotheses we have used a between subjects experimental design composed by three levels of strategic consistency (high, moderate, low). The study has been developed for a soft drink. The main criterion when choosing the product was the adequacy of the product to the sample (i.e. undergraduate students). Soft drinks were selected for this experiment as they represent a product category highly demanded by the target individuals. In order to avoid bias, we used a fictitious brand name because unfamiliar brands do not have a strong and sophisticated schema in consumers’ memory (Sjödin and Törn, 2006). For the integrated communication campaign, we used two different tools (advertising and sponsorship). Sponsorship was selected because of the increasing efforts developed by companies to reinforce their communication strategies using this tool (Becker-Olsen, 2003; Sneath et al., 2005). In addition, sponsorship allows companies to improve brand knowledge and to reinforce the image created through advertising (Keller, 2008).

4.2 Pre-tests and factor manipulation

Before data collection, several focus groups and pilot studies with different samples of undergraduate students were conducted with the aim of designing the three levels of strategic consistency (see Figure 1). As we used a fictitious brand, the first step was devoted to identify a set of significant associations for a soft drink brand (first focus group). Forty subjects were asked to list associations they a) perceived as desirable for a brand of soft drink to connect with its target (young people) and b) perceived as conflicting with this target. The most com-
monly mentioned associations of each list were quantified with 10-point Likert scales and rated by 65 new subjects (first pre-test). The four associations of each list that received highest scores by all the subjects were chosen. The associations held with the brand were dynamism, enjoyment, boldness and extrovert; and the non desirable associations or perceived as conflicting with the brand were boredom, shyness, quiet, and traditional. In order to complete the creation of the brand, we needed to select a brand name that were coherent with the desirable associations and that it facilitated brand identification at the same time. FUNgo was selected as a brand name. An advertising agency helped in both brand name selection and ad creativity. The advertising agency designed two versions of a print ad simulating real-world ads for this product category (Dahlén and Lange, 2004; Heckler and Childers, 1992). For this purpose, the agency was instructed to consider the initial schema of brand associations to design both ads. These ads were named “attractions” and “tattoo” (see Appendix 1).

The four desirable associations held with the brand also constituted the initial brand schema that served as the reference point from which the different levels of strategic consistency were designed. More specifically, at a high level of strategic consistency both tools communicated these desirable associations. In contrast, at a low level of consistency the ad evoked the desirable associations while the sponsorship resembled the less desirable ones.

The second focus group (14 individuals) concerned the design of the moderate level of strategic consistency. With that purpose, a snowballing-technique (Suphellen, 2000) was used to elicit secondary associations with the brand. Each primary association of the initial schema was used as a stimulus word for subsequent elicitation of secondary associations with the brand. Again, the most commonly mentioned associations were rated by 54 new subjects (second pre-test). As a result, four secondary associations were chosen: improvement, individualism, freedom and personal enrichment.

With regards to sponsorship as the second stimulus in the integrated campaign, we needed to select three specific sponsorship activities extracted from different categories of events (sports, leisure or travelling) that resembled the schema of brand associations at each level of strategic consistency. For this purpose, we developed another focus group and a new pre-test to select and validate the events evoked. As a result, three sport events (rafting, hiking, and chess) and three leisure activities (gymkhana, snooker, and bowling championship) were pre-selected for the high, moderate and low level of consistency.

Finally, with the aim of selecting the three combinations of ad-sponsorship that better resembled the three levels of consistency, we conducted a new pretest with a sample of 108 individuals. They were instructed to rate the perceived congruency between the two versions of the ad and the two sets of sponsorship
activities (e.g., sport activities and leisure activities). As a result, we selected “attractions” as the ad for the first stimulus and the three sport events (“a rafting championship”, “hiking” and “chess championship”) for representing the stimulus in the three levels of strategic consistency (high, moderate, low).

4.3 Data collection, sample and procedure

Following Heckler and Childers (1992) and Singh and Rothschild (1983)’s procedure, the experiment took place in two separate sessions in order to avoid ceiling effects on consumers’ memory. Undergraduate students were selected based on their accessibility and the need for participating twice in the experiment. In the first session, subjects were told that we were interested in their opinions about a communication campaign for a new soft drink. In this session, all individuals were exposed to the ad. After ad exposure, subjects wrote down all the thoughts they had while they were exposed to the stimuli. In the second session, which took place two days later, individuals were randomly assigned to one of three experimental conditions and were exposed to a specific event depending on the level of consistency they were assigned to. The second stimulus was a description of the event sponsored by the brand (rafting, hiking, or chess) depending on the level of strategic consistency (see Appendix 2). After the second exposure, individuals were requested to fill the questionnaire including the main variables of the study. At the end of the second session students were thanked for participating and were paid €5 each.

4.4 Measures

In order to measure processing, subjects were instructed to report spontaneously all the thoughts that came to their minds while they were exposed to the communication stimuli (Briñol et al., 2004; Cacioppo and Petty, 1981). This processing was measured in each session just after the exposure. By doing so we can test how processing varies along the campaign. Total processing to the integrated communication campaign was measured following the next formula: total number of thoughts in the first session plus new thoughts elicited in the second session. To measure favourability of campaign processing a thoughts categorization was done by two independent judges. In this process, each thought was classified as positive, negative or neutral. Following Briñol et al. (2004) we operationalized this dependent variable as an index that was formed subtracting the number of negative thoughts from the number of positive thoughts and dividing this
difference by the total number of thoughts. For completing the measurement of campaign processing, we measured the type of cognitive activity developed during the second exposure. For this aim, the judges counted the thoughts elicited in the second exposure and that were repeated from the first exposure. Attitudes were measured with a differential semantic scale developed by Mackenzie et al. (1986). We used a four 7-point items anchored by negative-positive, unfavourable-favourable, I do not like it-I like it, bad-good.

Perceived consistency between the communication tools was assessed with a 7-point Likert scale extracted from the studies of Speed and Thompson (2000) and Gwinner and Eaton (1999). In order to avoid bias, two additional variables regarding sponsorship (congruency between product category and event and attitude towards the event) were measured in the study using 7-point Likert scales based on previous studies (D’Astous and Landreville, 2002; Speed and Thompson, 2000).

For all multi-item scales we used the mean value of the summed scale to test the research hypotheses.

5 Results

A sample of 227 students (44% male, and 56% female) participated in the study. Age range varied from 18 to 28 years old (mean value was 21). Results also suggested that individuals had a high knowledge and experience with soft drinks. The mean value for product knowledge is 5 on a 7-point Likert scale and subjects consume between 5 and 6 sodas per week. No significant differences were obtained for knowledge ($F_{(2,224)} = 0.051$, $p>0.05$) and for experience with product category ($F_{(2,218)} = 0.271$, $p>0.05$) across the three experimental conditions.

Before testing the hypotheses, we assessed the level of perceived strategic consistency between the two communication tools (advertising and sponsorship) in each experimental condition. As expected, ANOVA results indicated that the degree of perceived congruency was in agreement with each level of strategic consistency ($X_{high}=5.21; X_{moderate}=4.07; X_{low}=2.29$). As significant differences among these conditions were found ($F_{(2,224)} = 97.1$, $p<0.05$) the manipulation check was successful.

Univariate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to test the hypotheses (see Table 1). Based on the results obtained, we found empirical support for 3 of the proposed hypotheses. As suggested by H1 and H2, the amount ($F_{(2,224)}= 10.187; p<0.05$) and the favourability ($F_{(2,224)}= 12.139; p=0.00$) of information processing are higher in the moderate level of strategic consistency. In addition, individuals exposed to the moderate and low levels of strategic consis-
tency evoked fewer repeated thoughts in the second exposure than individuals exposed to the high level. This result gives empirical support for H3 ($F_{(2,224)} = 19.482; p<0.05$). Finally, the level of strategic consistency influences on consumer attitudes ($F_{(2,224)} = 7.616; p<0.05$). However, attitude towards the communication campaign does not significantly differ between the moderate ($M=4.71$) and the high level of strategic consistency ($M=4.81$). Therefore, H4 cannot be fully supported.

### 6 Conclusions

The present study contributes to the schema congruity literature in the area of IMC in order to offer empirical evidences about the effectiveness of different levels of strategic consistency when developing an integrated communication campaign. More specifically, we analyzed what level of strategic consistency is the most effective on consumers. Based on Schema Congruity Theory (Mandler, 1982), our point of view suggests that a moderate level of strategic consistency is more appropriate for improving the results of an integrated communication campaign than schema congruity. From a consumer perspective, our findings demonstrate that when people are exposed to a moderate level of strategic consistency several positive effects on processing occur. First, challenging consumers’ perceptions induces interest and attention to process the message more carefully. In this process, individuals engage in a greater cognitive elaboration compared to individuals exposed to a high level of consistency. Second, resolving this incongruity contributes to more favourability in the responses evoked. And third, individuals exposed to this moderate level are more likely to engage in a new elaboration and encoding of the incoming information during the second exposure. This process enriches consumer processing of the integrated communication campaign. In summary, the study concludes that the level of strategic consistency determines consumers’ processing and evaluation of the communication campaign. As expected, the low level of strategic consistency obtained the worst evaluations because incongruity could not be successfully resolved. However, our findings offer no clear results regarding how incongruity information implies more positive effects on consumer’s persuasion. Despite a moderate level of consistency based-integration results in more positive cognitive responses to the integrated campaign, our study show no significant differences on attitudes towards the communication campaign between the moderate and high level of strategic consistency. For this reason, the development of more studies is needed for providing further evidence about the effectiveness of these two levels of strategic consistency.
From a managerial point of view, the importance of this study relies on the increasing use of integrated communication campaigns. However, managers still have many practical doubts about how to effectively integrate communication tools and how to assess the results obtained. This study offers some evidence that might be helpful when designing IMC campaigns. Evaluating IMC programs requires an assessment of exactly how “integrated” the program is from the standpoint of how well different marketing communication options “fit together.” Our research offers an important contribution to this issue by developing a new methodological approach that serves as a guideline for managers in order to create and validate effects derived from three different levels of strategic consistency (including a moderate level) when using an integrated communication campaign. Compared to high and low levels of schema consistency, the operationalization of the moderate level of consistency is especially difficult because neither it represents the initial schema of associations of the brand (high consistency) nor it advocates for a radical and conflicting change in the brand schema (low consistency). For this reason, prior research on incongruity literature has mainly focused on the extremes of this consistency. However, a moderate level of consistency may be more common in real-life marketing communication.

In addition, results obtained in this study allow us to heavily recommend the use of these integrated campaigns as they have proven very efficient in improving the results obtained. More precisely, this paper helps managers in anticipating the results derived from different levels of strategic consistency. If the campaign aims at motivating consumers to process the message at a deeper level, at evoking favourable responses in consumers or at enhancing brand associations, a moderate level of strategic consistency should be selected. If the objective is more related to attitudes then moderate and high levels of strategic consistency get similar results. In this sense, the study may be helpful when executing the design and during the implementation of the integrated campaign.

Finally, branding literature may also be benefited from this research because we offer some empirical evidences that may expand researchers’ understanding of the role of communication in building brand equity under an integrated perspective. As far as different levels of strategic consistency among messages have different consequences in terms of information processing about the communication campaign and favourability of that processing, it is reasonable to expect that these effects could also be applied to the processing about the brand. Therefore, brand equity could be more benefited by moderately consistent messages because it may excite consumers and make them think more and positively about the brand. In this sense, this study may empirically relate both strategic brand management and IMC perspectives. This is an important contribution due to the lack of previous studies combining these two literatures (Tsai, 2005).
However, there are some limitations that need to be acknowledged regarding the present study. These limitations provide avenues for future research opportunities. First, this study uses an experimental methodology. Therefore, the limitations that are related to this type of methodology also apply in this study. It is likely that effects could be weaker or stronger depending on the specific context. In addition, the study used a student sample, a single product category and a single brand (fictitious). While this controls variation and aids reliability, it also limits the generalizability of the results to other populations and/or products. Future studies are necessary to evaluate the research findings in different situations and manipulating other variables that may influence on these results. For example, an important variable that can be considered in future studies is the type of brand (familiar vs nonfamiliar) with the aim of getting a better understanding about the influence of this variable in the development of integrated campaigns. This could help to determine whether the effects obtained in our research are the same depending of the brand familiarity. Finally, it is also necessary to note that this experiment has used only two communication tools and two exposures to create the integrated campaign. In this sense, different approaches, such as a variation in the number of exposures or tools used, could complement the present study.

References


Appendix I

Figure 1: Advert 1 “Attractions”

Figure 2: Advert 2 “Tattoo”
Appendix II

**Sponsored event in the high level of strategic consistency**

Fun-go, a new soft drink for young people, has announced that it will sponsor the next rafting championship to be held this summer in your city. Rafting is a sport practiced by bold and dynamic people who like to experience the feeling of adventure and risk while they fall whitewaters and are in contact with nature.

**Sponsored event in the moderate level of strategic consistency**

Fun-go, a new soft drink for young people, has announced that it will sponsor a series of outdoor activities including hiking in various rural areas in your city. This sponsorship is intended to boost the performance of this activity for people who want to get in touch with nature and to improve their physical and mental state.

**Sponsored event in the low level of strategic consistency**

Fun-go, a new soft drink for young people, has announced that it will sponsor the next chess championship to be held this summer in your city. The organisers hope that national chess players take part in the championship.
**Table 1:** Effects of different levels of strategic consistency based-integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experimental condition</th>
<th>Experimental condition</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High N=76</td>
<td>Moderate N=76</td>
<td>Low N=75</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Total number of thoughts related to the communication campaign</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>9.34</td>
<td>7.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Favourability of thoughts related to the communication campaign</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>70.37%</td>
<td>38.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Number of repeated thoughts</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Attitude towards the communication campaign</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>4.71</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3:** Focus groups and pre-tests