

8

Message – key communication

This chapter strives to improve the ways in which you communicate with your Target audiences, providing a planning framework that facilitates a superior level of consumer engagement through experiential marketing campaigns.

In this part of SET MESSAGE we will look at the importance of your campaign Message – key communication, covering the process of integrating components of your brand message into your experiential marketing campaign, starting with the live brand experience. It is then recommended that you utilize the other marketing communication channels to amplify the live brand experience, which in itself becomes content for the broader campaign message.

The purpose of the Message – key communication section is to provide you with a systematic approach for ensuring that participants interpret your live brand experiences as intended. Then, when the other marketing communication channels are integrated to form the complete experiential marketing campaign, the Message and key communication of those channels will be led by the live brand experience. When members of your Target audience see or hear of your live brand experience, even if they themselves are not participants, they will still identify that your brand is reaching out to them, trying to benefit their lives. The feeling that the brand cares for them enough to go out of its way to create a positive experience that is catered to them will be enough to plant the brand and this positive message deep in their memories. This communication process is demonstrated in Figure 8.1.

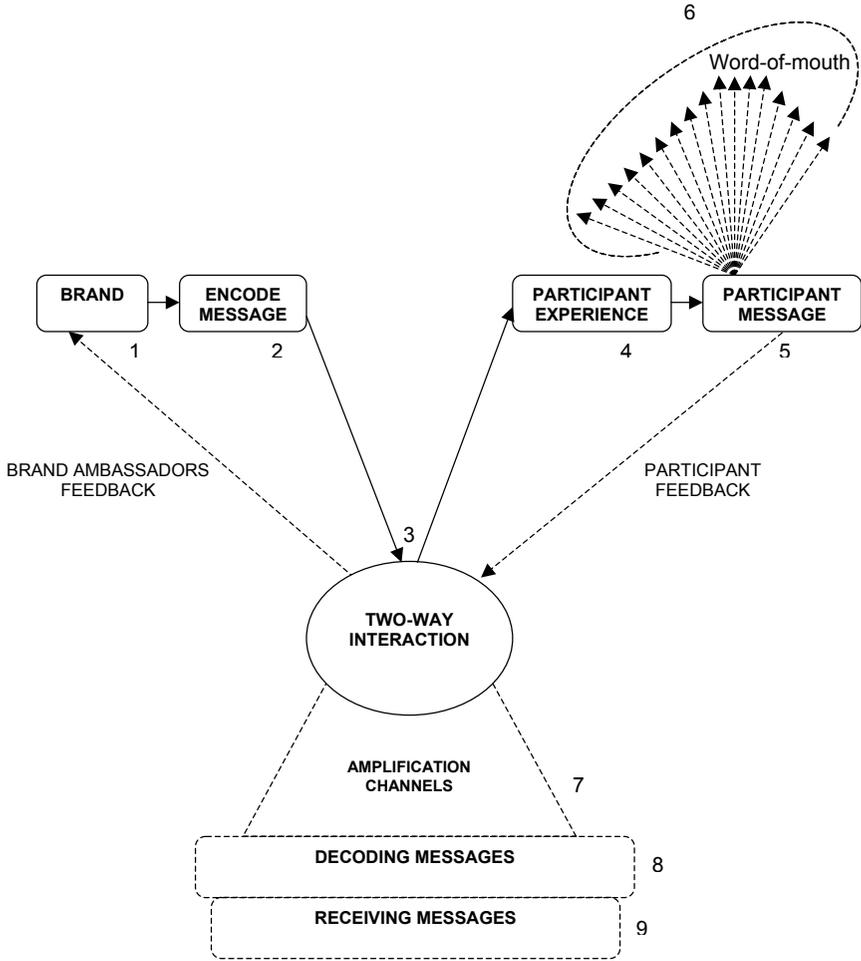


Figure 8.1 The communication process

It may be that you have already planned your brand’s Message and key communication, as these messages are usually already integrated across all your marketing and advertising. If you already have a brand Message and key communication, then this is the time to bring it into the planning process.

Verbal Messages (strap lines) and key communications are important in every type of campaign. Marketing materials and adverts translate the Messages and key communications of the brands they are promoting

into emotional messages, rational messages or a combination of both. Rational messages tend to focus on conveying the features and benefits of a product or service, and are therefore product-focused. Emotional messages tend to relate to the aspirational lifestyle of the Target audience as well as aiming to generate moods and feelings, and are therefore customer-focused. This choice between a rational or emotional message often relates to whether the product or service is a low-involvement or high-involvement purchase. Often successful communications combine both emotional and rational messages.

Whether you decide to use a rational message, an emotional message, or a combination of both, you will need to encode the message that you wish to convey into the two-way interaction (the live brand experience). The message should be consistent and clear enough that the participants properly decode it during their experience. While the consumer is participating in the two-way interaction, the message will need to be successfully conveyed to them both mentally (how they feel and think) and physically (through their senses and the environment).

Live brand experiences provide excellent opportunities for bringing to life the different components that form your brand's Message and key communication. At this stage, you need to dissect your generic messages to extract their very essence. By breaking generic messages into various essential components, then encoding those components into your live brand experience's interaction and environment, you will increase the likelihood that the participants' experience will embody the message that you aim to communicate. If the live brand experience succeeds in this respect, then you heighten the chances that its participants will proceed to disseminate the desired key communication to their peers.

Ask yourself the following question: what is it that we want our Target audience to understand, believe or identify with about our brand? Once you have your answer, you can identify and focus on these elements and integrate them into the live brand experience. You need to refine your live brand experience to ensure that the brand message is communicated effectively and concisely, in a way that will be correctly interpreted by its participants. The message must also be relevant to the activity they are engaging in, though this should not be an issue because the activity itself should reflect the brand personality. The message should represent the identifying nature of what you want the consumer to know, act on and believe in. You can adapt your brand Message and key communication to suit the capacity of the live brand experience environment. The communication can be different to that of a traditional advertising message, because the message forms part of a dialogue, and allows immediate feedback and input from consumers. It is always important to adopt a coordinated approach; hence, the

message used in the live brand experience channel should be consistent with the messages used in the rest of your communication channels. To keep messages consistent across all channels, I recommend that you first adapt the message to suit the live brand experience, and then amplify it across the other selected communication channels.

The authentic, genuine part of your brand's Message and key communication should become the sources of inspiration for many elements throughout the live brand experience. If you understand what your brand truly stands for and believes in, you are on track to reflecting that philosophy through the messages communicated in your campaign.

Bringing the message to life

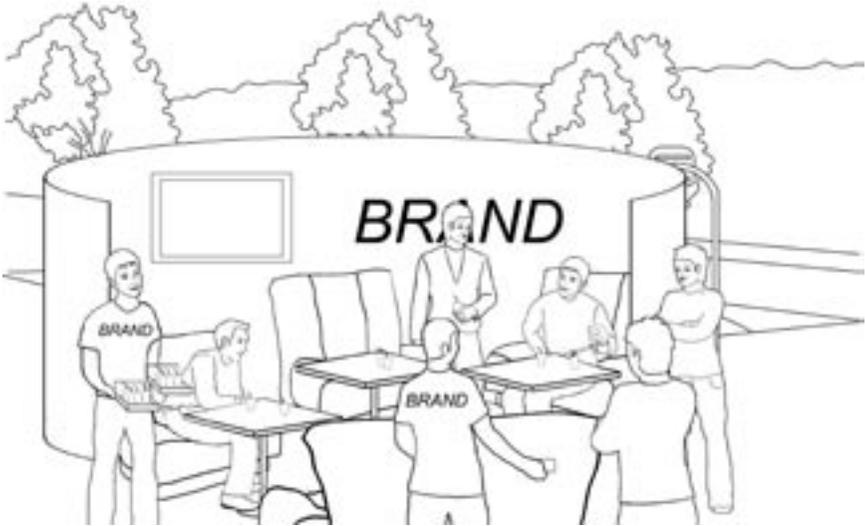
A brand of vitamin water

A vitamin water brand's message is 'Quench your soul'. Breaking this message down into its essence, these good-for-the-soul components were discovered: rehydration, vitamins, natural extracts, a good body, natural relaxation and invigorating effects. The brand wanted to communicate its message effectively while also promoting three different flavour options. When this brand created a series of live brand experiences at holistic fairs and music festivals, it brought to life the brand message components of each of its products through the atmospheres and interactions of each experience.

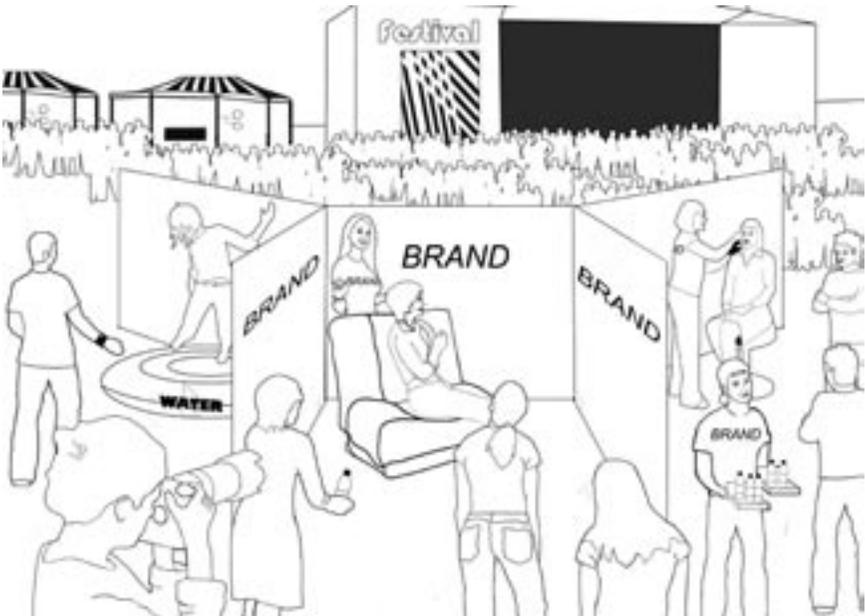
One experience featured a 'Relaxation zone' where guests could enjoy a relaxing massage, smell a lavender aroma, and be exposed to relaxing mood lighting and music. At the same time, they would enjoy a sample of the 'Relax' variety of the water. There was also an 'Invigoration zone', where consumers had the opportunity to bounce on a branded trampoline to energizing music, while smelling the invigorating aroma of citrus and rosemary essential oils, prior to receiving a sample of the 'Invigorate' variety of water.

As well as the 'Relaxation' and 'Invigoration' zones, the brand also had a 'Refreshing Zone' where consumers were invited to have a mini aromatic-cleanse facial, before being given a cool-gel eye-mask to wear. While they engaged in the facial, refreshing smells of freshly chopped grass would fill the moist room (the moisture was emitted from a humidifier). After having their refreshing mini aromatic-cleanse facial, they received a sample of the 'Refresh' variety of water.

While festival goers waited their turn, plasma screens showing the brand's TV advertisement (featuring the key communication 'Quench



your soul’) lit up the reception areas of the live brand experience tents. In addition, Brand ambassadors wearing yoga-style clothing were inviting festival guests to come and ‘Quench their souls’ while giving out branded gifts such as cleansing wipes (Refresh), stress balls (Relax)



and skipping ropes (Invigorate), all featuring the ‘Quench your soul’ message.

The overall effect was completely immersive, bringing to life all of the components and elements that formed the Message and key communication of the innovative water brand. This all ensured that when the live brand experience’s participants spread word-of-mouth, they would pass on a message that reflects the brand’s essence.

A brand of washing powder

An example of a brand that also integrates a rational message into its communication is a washing powder with environmental credentials. Its message ‘Get clean, be green’ is designed to communicate that the washing powder combines superior cleaning performance with environmentally friendly ingredients and packaging. The key communication aims to relate to two of the key aspects that are important to its Target audience, the first aspect being that it can succeed in cleaning their clothes effectively, the second that it can make them feel that they are doing something positive for the environment.

The washing powder brand’s campaign involved converting hundreds of previously coin-operated launderettes into live brand experience sets, where consumers were invited to have their washing done for them. The message’s components were brought to life through the environment and service at the launderettes. First, the brand gave the launderettes a design makeover by wrapping every surface with printed vinyl, ensuring that the visual decor matched the brand identity. Then, they emblazoned the key communication ‘Get clean, be green,’ on every washing machine and dryer. By using recycled wood to construct the waiting benches, and minimizing wastage (by encouraging consumers to bring their own bags to carry their laundry), they succeeded in conveying their environmental awareness. They even installed new, environmentally efficient washing machines, courtesy of a leading white-goods manufacturer with whom the brand had formed a partnership. Aside from the green component of the message, the clean component of the message was also vital to communicate. Therefore, the brand invested in ensuring that the launderettes were immaculately clean with a fabulous fragrance.

The Brand ambassadors, who were responsible for washing and drying the participants’ laundry and engaging them in relevant dialogue, had previous experience working with environmental charities. They were carefully selected, and trained to produce perfectly clean clothing and maintain their uniforms in pristine appearance. After completing the laundry, the Brand ambassadors would give the neatly folded ‘Clean



and green laundry' back to the consumers, with a free sample of the washing powder and a sales promotion voucher. The voucher offered a discount against future purchase of the product and a promise that a percentage of sales would be donated to an environmental charity.

In addition to the makeover it provided to the local laundrettes, the brand also gave the laundrette owners training on environmentally friendly systems, such as recycling and energy-saving practices, and helped to set up donation boxes, allowing their customers to continue contributing to local environmental causes. The relationships that the brand formed with the laundrettes and their customers continued, and by helping the small businesses to adopt the brand's 'clean and green' philosophy, they strengthened the impact of their key communication. The participants of the experience had previously been used to manually operating the machines themselves and waiting while they completed their cycles. The immersive environmentally themed locations, combined with clean ready-to-collect laundry were more than enthusiastically welcomed. After the initial setup costs, the ongoing live brand experience proved to be very cost-effective, with word-of-mouth and media mentions (the PR amplification channel generated huge coverage) helping to increase sales for the brand by over 50 per cent.

A skincare brand

There is a skincare brand whose key communication message is ‘beauty secrets from Japan’. The message was created with the aim of conveying important concepts that form the brand identity: elegance, beauty and Japanese tradition. The message also implies that beauty secrets are passed on in the form of personal recommendations. The inspiration for this process is the brand’s holistic philosophy. Product sampling is in fact one of the main marketing communications objectives. Distributing samples is important to this brand because they found that when people try the product, they discover ‘beauty secrets’ and then tell those ‘secrets’ to their friends.

This brand places great emphasis on the live brand experience channel, because it facilitates the tangible communication of beauty secrets (through product sampling) and provides a great platform for bringing the Message and key communication to life. The core elements of the message are integrated, both physically and mentally, into every aspect of the live brand experience’s communication, from its Brand ambassadors, their uniforms, and the packaging of its samples, to its literature, verbal dialogue and physical environment.

Summary

When you are at the Message – key communication stage in SET MESSAGE, it is time to refer to your organizational philosophy, existing straplines, and to key messages that you want to communicate throughout your marketing. You should break down these messages into their most important components and then recode those components into the live brand experience. The live brand experience itself can then become the message for amplification across selected channels.

What you want the participants of your live brand experience to know, believe and do about your brand should be at the heart of the two-way interaction, in order for them to communicate your message effectively through word-of-mouth.

Part of what is so special about having your message recoded into the experience is that your Target audience will have the opportunity to interact with your key messages. The messages will be internalized by your Target audiences through real-life experiences, which they are far more likely to appreciate and pass on than the one-way messages they receive from many traditional media channels.

To achieve this desired response, we need to build multiple sensory or emotional elements (inspired by the brand message) into the concept to create a genuine link between the sensory motor, feelings, and thoughts. These three areas, in harmonious interaction, generate lasting impressions in the mind of the participant that lead to action; this is because they align four of the key areas of the whole person (feeling, thinking, being and doing).¹ The first principle that stems from the psychodynamic theory is that all action that has been triggered by communication is a result of the emotional translation (of the brand's message) because it is perceived, not consciously, but subconsciously through the filtering of the participants' 'inner world'.²

Notes

1. Errica Moustaki, Psychoanalytic Psychotherapist MA
2. Isaacs, S (1952) The nature and function of phantasy, in *Developments in Psycho-analysis*, ed M Klein, Haygarth, London