

Marketing Communications and Sustainable Development in Africa

By Dr. Ikechukwu Nwosu

Abstract

This paper examines the search for reliable sustainable development models and approaches. It is also a re-exploration of old but persistent questions in the development equation: What is the role of communication in the development process, and how can marketing strategies be integrated with other promotional methods to engender sustainable development? It shows that development communication literature is replete with research reports, models, case studies and "thought pieces" which demonstrate that communication and the mass media are vital components of the development process, especially at the awareness creation level and with integrated multimedia approaches. Some works point out that at the attitude, opinion and behaviour change levels, the effects of communication and the mass media may not be much. The employment of integrated marketing communications in sustainable development projects is recommended.

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La Sensibilisation du Public à l'Importance de la Communication et le Développement Sustainable en Afrique

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Résumé

Ce chapitre est consacré à l'analyse de la Recherche des modèles de développement qui soient fiables et soutanables. On ré-examine également une vieille question qui revient sans cesse dans la formation de l'équation du développement: Quel est le rôle de la communication dans le processus du développement soutenable? On s'efforce de démontrer que la littérature de la communication est pleine de rapports, de modèles, d'études sur des cas particuliers, ainsi que d'autres "bonnes pensées", qui mettent à l'évidence le fait que la communication, et les masses média, constituent un aspect non négligeable du processus de développement. Cela s'avère notamment indiscutable au niveau de la sensibilisation du public, et dans l'application des approches multimédia intégrées. L'image qu'on retient à la fin de cette communication c'est que malgré le changement des attitudes, de l'opinion et du comportement à tous les niveaux, les effets de la communication et des masses média resteront toujours non fiables, à moins qu'ils ne soient intimement intégrés aux institutions sociales, pour fonctionner en harmonie avec les autres agents de la société.

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Introduction

Since development scholars like Everette Rogers (1976) and others proffered, in different ways, the need for the emergence of new development paradigms through reconceptualization of the existing ones which were considered inadequate, the search for new approaches to socio-economic development has continued unabated. Jo-Ellen Fair (1986), Andrew Moemeka (1994), Bella Mody (1991) and a host of others have come up with participatory development paradigms which emphasize the development of people's critical abilities in their cultural or social milieu, through their self involvement, self determination and readiness for self-involvement of their knowledge, attitudes and practices in the so-called KAP tradition, and with development agencies acting as facilitators of these processes. The emphasis of the participatory paradigms, therefore, is on the people or communities themselves, and what they can do to improve the quality of their lives, with development support systems only trying to facilitate this process.

Everette Kleinjans (1975) seemed to have captured and summarized the message of this new or "alternative" development paradigm quite clearly when he wrote that:

Creativity from within is the only answer, for development essentially is not a matter of technology or gross national product, but the growth of a new consciousness, the movement of the human mind, the uplifting of the human spirit, the infusion of human confidence.

Today, in addition to all these, the current development "war cry" seems to be that of the need for the achievement of "sustainable development" at all levels and in almost every continent. Sustainable development stripped of all complexities, is all about human beings and their survival in their environment. It can simply be described as the adoption or application of development approaches that are sensitive to man and his environment. Kamia Bhasin (1991) was thinking along these lines when he stated that "development has been a project

to conquer nature, rather than to live in harmony with it." He went further to point out that non-sustainable development paradigms "have been disastrous because they were based on obsessions with materialistic acquisition, obsession with economics and with profit and power." The search for reliable sustainable development paradigms, based on the above thought processes, must therefore continue.

There exists in the development communication and general communication literature some studies and scholars who question the above no-effect or minimal effect findings and conclusions. These scholars have called for the adoption of new research approaches which they believe will yield more positive results on the relationship between mass communication and development. Godwin C. Chu (1994) has, for instance, recently attacked the empirical and quantitative approaches adopted by those studies that consistently report these minimal effects. According to him:

To put it unkindly, the decades of empirical research and sophisticated statistical analysis seem to have dissected trees in great detail, but have somehow missed the forest. Partly because of its reliance on quantitative methods, research within what Rogers calls the dominant paradigm has rarely gone beyond the individual mode of analysis, and this has not been able to shift its attention to problems of social transformation and cultural change as major theoretical concerns of development.

He suggests the replacement of such empirical quantitative approaches with longitudinal studies of the social and cultural impact of communication, which he believes will yield more positive results.

Unfortunately, Chu's use of the longitudinal studies approach he suggested above in a study he conducted in rural Taiwan in 1992 did not yield significantly different results with respect to communication impact. This study, which lasted for fourteen years and applied a before-and-after comparison longitudinal approach using the same respondents, reported "significant changes in cultural values, attitudes and social relations among the respondents." For instance, after the develop-

ment communication campaign, according to him, people became less superstitious, childbearing practices had become less strict, there were more favourable attitudes towards women, life in the village became less personal and there was an unmistakable increase of political interest among the villagers.

But quite unfortunately and significantly, Chu and his research associates, like the quantitative empiricists they criticized, also reported that "The role of mass communication as a contributing factor (to all these changes) was found to be marginal" (Chu and Chaffee, 1992: Chu and Chi, 1984). This means that these changes may again have been more as a result of other societal factors, and possibly their interaction with other types of communication, just as in those past studies they criticized.

Even though Chu and his associates tried to discount their reported low influence scores of mass communication in their rural Taiwan study, it seems safe for us to still hold on to the fact that the knowledge (whether from the quantitative, critical, administrative, qualitative or the longitudinal studies) still seems to be the mass communication and mass media effects are still generally limited at the level of attitudinal, opinion and behavioural changes.

This is why the search for new ideas, new knowledge and new approaches on the role of various types of communication in development must continue unabated, as we intend to do in this paper. Here, we intend to examine one specialized aspect of communication known as marketing communication. We intend to examine its relationships and possible applications to sustainable development efforts, using essentially a critical, analytical, prescriptive and applicatory approach. Our basic assumption here is that it is necessary for us to fully understand the possible influence of all types of communication development before we can hope to come up with fully holistic and integrative approaches to the research and practices in all types of development and in different development contexts. Our thesis in this paper is that before marketing communication can have real influence on the development process and before this

influence can be understood, we need to explain and reconceptualise the concept of marketing communication as it is currently used. The task of this paper is, therefore, mainly to explain and conceptualise this concept, and move on from there to critically examine its possible applications to sustainable development efforts. We shall start with the explanation of the two major concepts in this paper, sustainable development and marketing communication.

Explaining Sustainable Development

Even though sustainable development is relatively new concept, there are now many standard definitions of the term. As early as 1971, UNESCO used its Man and the Biosphere (MAB) programme to draw attention to a new approach to development that stressed the role of man as a major environmental force, as well as the need for an integrated interdisciplinary, rather than multi-disciplinary, approach to development (Von Droste, 1987, pp.4-7).

The General Assembly of the United Nations threw more light on the concept of sustainable development when it adopted in 1988 a broad framework to guide national action and international cooperation on policies and programmes aimed at "achieving environmentally sound development" (Hornick 1988). At the same UN forum it was also agreed that sustainable development across the globe must include, or make allowances for futurity and equality. This UN broad framework, it must be noted, was based on a report presented by one of its agencies, the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP). That report was entitled *Environmental Perspectives to the Year 2000*.

But perhaps the organization that laid the most important foundation for our understanding of the concept of sustainable development was the Brundtland Commission. In its report entitled "Our Common Future," this commission stated that the critical objectives of sustainable development must include preserving peace, reviving growth and changing its quality, remedying the problems of population growth, conserving and

enhancing the resource base, reorienting technology, managing risks and merging environment and economics in development decision making. Pearce, et al. (1989) put the Bruntland Commission's conception of sustainable development most successfully when they stated that the commission holds that with this approach to develop, "it is possible to follow a path of economic development for the global economy which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the chances of the future generations to meet their needs." This is perhaps one of the most popular definitions of sustainable development.

For example, Mike Young (1992) adopted the above position in coming up with what he described as the three E's of sustainable development, which are environmental integrity, economic efficiency and equality pursuance which is defined to include present and future generations' interests and needs. To him, sustainable development must include thorough considerations of justice, rights and obligations in all their ramifications.

One other description of sustainable development that is worthy of note is its relationship to our derivation from the field of economy. In fact, sustainability is another word for resilience, which is indeed an ecological concept that tries to explain the process by which ecosystems respond to environmental changes. One current definition of the terms that is ecologically oriented is the one offered by the World Conservation Strategy. To this organization, "for development to be sustainable it must not interface with natural functioning of life support systems or natural ecologically processes and equilibria" (Crump, 1991).

Another point that must be noted in any attempt to understand the meaning of sustainable development is the attempt by some experts to distinguish between sustainable economic development and other conceptions of the concept. One of such experts, Barbier (1978) has for instance defined sustainable economic development as applied to the Third World as being directly concerned with increasing the material standard of living of the poor at the grassroots level, which can be quanti-

tatively measured in terms of increased food, real income, educational services, health care, sanitary and water supply, emergency stocks of food and cash etc; and only indirectly concerned with economic growth at the aggregate, commonly natural level. He went further to explain that the primary object i.e. of economic sustainable development, is "reducing the absolute poverty of the world's poor through providing lasting and secure livelihoods that minimize resource depletion, environmental degradation, cultural distortion and social instability."

Two other explanations of sustainable development that cannot be neglected are the ones that try to tie it to the sustainability of natural resources, and those that point out that it is a concept that applies to both developing and developed countries. Goodland and Ledoc (1987) lead the way in the nature resources perspective in the theory and practice of sustainable development. According to them, sustainable development implies using renewable natural resources in a manner which does not eliminate or degrade them, or otherwise diminish their usefulness for future generations. It also implies using non-renewable (exhaustible) mineral resources in a manner which does not unnecessarily preclude easy access to them by future generations. In addition, according to them, it implies depleting non-renewable energy resources at a slow enough rate so as to ensure the high probability of an orderly societal transition to renewable energy sources. And sustainable development's applicability to even the developed countries was pointed out by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1984, when they stated that sustainable development has become a goal not just for the developing nations, but for industrial ones as well.

And even more importantly, it is significant to note that in spirit and practice, the new concept of sustainable development is in accord with the now widely accepted participatory or people - oriented approach to development which emphasizes working with the people to achieve development objectives instead of trying to deliver development goodies to them through unin-

volved development agencies. Mustafa Tolba (1987) stressed this point when he explained that sustainable development encompasses the notion of people centered initiatives with human beings as the key resources in the concept; the idea of self-reliant development within natural resource constraints; help for the very poor who may be forced to destroy their environment in order to feed or survive; and the great issues of health control, appropriate technologies, food self-reliance, clean water and shelter for all.

Finally, the review of the literature on sustainable development shows that there are now emergent strategies for achieving sustainable development objectives. Among the popular ones are those suggested by Young (1992). According to him, the first strategy involves our learning to maintain the three dimensions of environmental quality--ecosystem functioning, soil, water and air quality and landscape amenity. He also suggested the adoption of conservation of resources such that less demand is made on new virgin resources. He has also suggested that the strategy of maintaining future options be adopted to ensure sustainable development. This includes ensuring such things as avoiding pollution of our rivers in order to preserve their use for future generations. The next suggested strategy is stopping population growth or at least putting it under control so as to reduce population pressures on the environment like depletion of forests to make way for houses, factories, roads, and farms (Pearce, et al, 1991).

Having examined the concept of social development in many ways, let us now explain and reconceptualize the marketing communication concept before explaining how it can be applied to achieving sustainable development objectives.

Explaining and Reconceptualising Marketing Communication

There are, at the moment, at least three dominant conceptions of the marketing communication which any sustainable development communicator who wishes to apply its techniques in

doing his job must be familiar with. Two of these conceptions are conventional ways in which many marketing communicators have looked at, understood and applied the concept for different purposes. The third conception is relatively new and is indeed a modification of the old or conventional thoughts on marketing communication. We shall examine them one by one starting with the first of the conventional conceptions of marketing communication, which we shall call communication-in-marketing approach to understanding and application of marketing communication.

The Communication-in-Marketing Scenario

In the above first scenario, communication is seen as being an intrinsic part of every aspect of the marketing process, including the social marketing process. In other words, communication is seen as a part and parcel of the marketing mix, which is best described as the 4Ps +S model of modern marketing. In this model which usually in practice begins with the consumer, 4Ps and S refer to product, price, place or physical distribution, promotions and after-sale services. This can be diagrammatically represented thus:

CONSUMERS —————>4Ps + S —————> CONSUMERS

In development communication terms the consumers at the beginning and end of the above diagram represent the target audiences or "consumers" of the development communication messages. The product "P" represents the development idea, innovation, change or project we want the target audiences to adopt in a transactional exchange or in a participatory manner. The price "P" refers to whatever sacrifices they make: inconveniences, discomforts or deprivations they may go through in trying to participate in the development communication process; the place "P" refers to the channels through which they can be exposed to the development communication message in order to participate or share in it; the promotional "P" refers to

any deliberate effort to make them aware of the communicated new development policy or project and adopt or embrace it. The "S" refers to post-project contacts or follow-up activities.

In this first conventional understanding and application of marketing communications in development and offer efforts, it is recognized that the above described five components of the marketing mix must interact and blend well through effective communication before positive results can be expected. Such communications are also expected to be from the perspective of data already gathered about the consumers or target audience to ensure their participation or involvement in the entire process.

But even more importantly, each of the 4Ps and the S must communicate some information if the development communication objective is to be achieved by using this model of marketing communication. This means that crucial two-way participatory communication decisions must be made in handling any of the critical components of the model.

The product or "P" component in the model as we described it developmentally above, for instance, can be used to communicate specific utilitarian, psychological and symbolic satisfaction values to the consumers or target audience. A new agricultural innovative technology or equipment that is being introduced to some farmers may also be presented not only as a facilitator of the farming process, a sure contribution to the eradication of the food crisis in Africa, but also as a symbol of lasting achievement in the farming community concerned. The Price or "P" component can be used to communicate a sense of patriotism, hard work, development consciousness, care or concern for the community's progress and readiness to make sacrifices towards this.

In like manner, the place "P", as we explained it developmentally above, can be used in development projects or programmes to communicate easy accessibility to, or availability of, the development project, material, equipment or idea being promoted through conflicting communication processes. And the Promotions "P" in the model is indeed made up of activities or practices

that are essentially communication-based and include advertising, public relations, publicity and other promotions. So, the development communicator that wants to apply this model of marketing communications (the communication-in-marketing approach), will not find it difficult to understand the place of communication at this promotional level of the application of the model. As we noted, the "S" component of the model refers to after-sale services in conventional marketing, and to post-project or follow-up actions in terms of development projects. It can be used to communicate the fact that the development agent or agency is not an uninterested and uninvolved "seller" of new development ideas, policies or projects; but rather a concerned and caring individual or institution that is interested in knowing how the target audience is using the "sold" innovative idea or material. This is what the participatory development and sustainable development version of it we examined earlier demand from development agents, agencies and communicators.

Furthermore, it is important to point out that this first scenario in the application of marketing communication to development recognizes that the concept and practice of marketing, when stripped of all technicalities is really by definition a transactional relationship between the marketer or "seller" (development agency) and the consumer (or target audiences, in development communication). As we know, such a transactional relationship cannot take place or be effective without effective communication. Marketing has been defined as a management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably (Jefkins, 1985, p.4). A close look at this definition, of course, shows that it is almost a near impossibility to identify, anticipate and satisfy customers' needs or requirements in the marketing process without interacting with the customers in one way or the other, and through one form of communication or the other. For the development communicator who wishes to apply techniques of the marketing communication approach to development, the message is clear: that he is on safe ground. Other marketing

experts seem to also concur, because Philip Kotler (1991, p.6) for instance, has defined marketing as "the set of human activities (including development communication and social marketing) directed at facilitating and consumating exchanges." The exchanged item could be money, materials, project ideas or innovations.

And Charles Schewe (1987) seems to have aptly tied up the spirit and major message of this first scenario of marketing communication for the development communicator when he stated that:

The entire marketing mix cooperates as a communication system. It communicates a position in the marketplace, an angle that is usually differentiated from those of competing products (or projects). Each marketing activity combines with the others to create that effect. At the same time, each individual marketing action is a communication in and of itself.

At this point, we must observe that in Africa, the message of this first scenario on marketing communication seems to be better understood and utilized by commercial marketers selling products and services. Social marketers and development communicators in government and development agencies or non-commercial organizations seem to be still oblivious of the potency of this marketing. This anomalous trend needs to be checked, because social marketers, development communicators and other officials in Africa need to properly understand and apply this communication-in-marketing approach as part of their strategies in participatory development efforts aimed at such things as ensuring that their citizens adopt democratic principles, new agricultural innovations and other desired sustainable development activities. Let us now move to the second scenario on marketing communication.

The Marketing Communication=Promotions Scenario

This scenario can be described as the "*Marketing Communication=promotions*" perspective. Here, some experts

erroneously equate marketing communications with the promotional "P" in the 4Ps+S model of marketing we described earlier. Viewed this way, marketing communications becomes reduced to just another name for the promotional support system in any type of marketing process, including the social marketing under which development communication fits. (Baker et al, 1983: 113-165).

But as can be seen from the contents of the first scenario or perspective we examined earlier, and the third or integrated marketing communication perspective we shall examine later in this paper, this is an overly narrow conception of marketing communication. It is better seen as the application of modern communication principles and practices to modern marketing to make it more functional, wider and more useful to non product or non-commercial types of marketing activities, which includes social marketing or development-oriented marketing efforts. This scenario, in fact, reduces the full import of marketing communication by overly restricting it to the use of one or two of the popular promotional tools, like advertising, propaganda, publicity, promotions and direct marketing, and stripping it of the exchange and transitional elements that make it a useful and generally applicable concept that can be by marketers and non-marketers alike.

This scenario is therefore definitely inadequate, and not recommended to social marketers and development communicators in Africa and other developing areas. For one thing, developed countries like the United States and Britain, who are the leaders in marketing communications, have since replaced this myopic conception of marketing communication with the more effective, up-to-date, integrated marketing communications approach. We shall now examine this under the third scenario in our attempt to reconceptualize the marketing communication concept to make it more useful for participatory sustainable development.

The Integrated Marketing Communication Scenario

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), in all its various

dimensions and ramifications, constitutes what might be rightly described as the new direction or new dimension in marketing communication practices and applications to commercial and non-commercial marketing efforts, including participatory development projects. Still open to various interpretations and definitions because of its relative newness, IMC can safely be described as an inevitable response to the new challenges posed by the promotional "P" in all marketing related activities by the demands of product, service and social marketing in the 1990's and beyond. In this sense, therefore, we can conceptually and operationally describe IMC as "Promotions-Plus." In other words, we believe that IMC can best be understood as a deliberate, systematic attempt to contextually expand the traditional or conventional promotional strategies or activities (e.g. advertising and public relations) and integrate them with other marketing communication activities to facilitate the achievement of defined marketing or social marketing objectives.

These other marketing communication activities include: event marketing, direct response marketing, direct media buying and brokerage, media review write-ups, promotions planning, in-house ad/PR services, corporate communications including corporate advertising, trade promotions, consumer psychology or consumer insights, graphic designing and creativity, "sixth sense" applications or strategic vision and so on. The list and opportunities or practices are inexhaustible, but largely depend on such factors as the marketing situation or context, the budget or appropriated fund, marketing objectives/plans, and the product or service being marketed.

The IMC is such a veritable tool to the modern social marketer and development communicator that there is now hardly any major marketing or development campaign whose objectives can be reasonably achieved without carefully selecting, integrating and applying the most appropriate conventional and new marketing communication or promotional tools to facilitate the social marketing and development processes. The selected marketing communication activities, in order to be effective,

must be planned and executed as holistic activities in which each activity is seen as a whole related to other larger wholes. None of the activities must be seen as an isolated or compartmentalized unit which hardly or marginally touches the other units in the larger whole.

It is encouraging to note at this point that the IMC "fever" is gradually but steadily catching up with progressive African promotions and development communication practitioners and experts. For instance, Nigeria's ZUS Bureau Agency Chief, who was for many years the Managing Director of Lintas Advertising in Nigeria, is reported as stating that IMC has a bright future in Nigeria. To him, IMC is "a combined way of communicating with consumers such that the techniques of advertising, public relations, publicity, sales promotions etc. are used together to achieve marketing goals. It is non-dependence on (any) one item of the promotion mix in marketing" (Okigbo, 1992:9).

Another Nigerian promotions, advertising and direct marketing giant that is reported to be an adherent of the new directions in marketing communications as enunciated by the IMC "movement" is Cornelius Tay of Direct Marketing Limited. We are, however, much more interested in his timely and insightful warning that IMC is not likely to flourish or grow normally in a developing country like Nigeria in the present situation in which the number of people who are adequately trained to handle its intricacies and special demand is still very limited. As far as he is concerned, "availability of the necessary expertise will be the critical path to the future of the IMC" (Okigbo, 1992:10). We cannot agree more. And this is why we must recommend at this juncture that intensive workshops be urgently organized for practitioners of marketing communications and development communications in all African countries. This will not only help to create the necessary awareness needed for the growth of these new directions on marketing communications, but will help to produce an increased and efficient corps of IMC adherents needed to revolutionize marketing and development communications practices in these countries. In addition, we recommend that the departments of marketing and mass communication in

the institutions of higher learning in these countries be made to expand their course offerings in the area of marketing communication, to include all the dimensions of the new IMC. The present situation in which most of these institutions still offer isolated courses in the narrow areas of advertising and public relations, which are sometimes taught under one course unit, must give way and be replaced with the different autonomous IMC courses.

Applying IMC to Sustainable Development

Having explained and reconceptualized the old conventional concept of marketing communication in the preceding sections of this paper, we can now go ahead to explain more directly how it can be applied to sustainable development efforts in Africa. It must be noted, however, that throughout the reconceptualization process in our earlier discussed First and Second perspectives or scenarios on marketing communication above, we had offered some tips on how the general concept of marketing communication can be applied to participatory and sustainable development. Essentially, the thrust of our suggestions had been that marketing communication strategies and techniques can be used to strengthen development communication efforts in Africa and other developing areas. It is our belief that, if properly understood and applied, marketing communications, especially its IMC variant, will help to reduce the marginal findings usually reported in the development communications literature on the contributions of communication to the achievement of development objectives.

In addition to the applicatory recommendations we have made in the earlier sections of the paper, we would like to make these further recommendations which address objectively how IMC can be applied to development communication projects in Africa. Firstly, we suggest that the earlier discussed strategies and techniques be used to combat the adverse effects of the old development approaches, which the new sustainable development paradigm we extensively explained earlier has drawn our

attention to. For example, the IMC concept of "Demarketing" can be used to participatorily achieve attitudinal changes among African citizens who still engage in development-related and other activities that deplete the environment.

IMC should also be used as one of the weapons to achieve the objective of persuading or helping African governments and other development agents to realize the importance of embracing the messages, practices and development approaches of the sustainable development paradigm. But as we pointed out earlier, for all these and a lot more to be achieved, the IMC concept, spirit, philosophy and practices must become well developed and embedded as a development communication concept in Africa.

Beyond all these, specific components of the IMC strategy can be employed in specific sustainable development communication efforts, provided it is not used as an isolated practice, but as part of a grand IMC long-term or short-term plan. In this regard, event marketing strategies can, for example, be used to market community festivals, anniversaries and other such events that are development-oriented. This will no doubt be found to be a veritable tool for mobilizing social support for participatory and sustainable development. Events marketing, which often takes the form of sponsoring major events for different communities and groups, can also extend to sponsorship of masquerade festivals, local wrestling matches and such cultural events that will create forums for sharing of development information and explaining participatory and sustainable development ideas or projects to various target groups.

Similarly, public relations, as an aspect of the IMC phenomenon, can help to build the much-needed goodwill, mutual understanding and acceptance between sustainable development agencies and agents and their targets. It will also help development agents analyze community problems and issues, and advise their headquarters and donor agencies appropriately. Public relations will, in addition, contribute in no small way to the building and sustenance of the right corporate reputation, personality, identity and image for organizations involved in

development efforts in Africa. Many crisis situations that arise in the development process, either within the development organizations or between them and their target publics, can be averted or properly managed through the application of public relations plans and technologies and as part of the IMC mix.

What about the advertising component of the IMC strategy? It is also applicable in development communication and sustainable development efforts. The most useful forms of advertising for these development purposes will be the variants of it that fall under development advertising, social-responsibility or public service advertising and institutional advertising. Advertising should not be seen in this context as a mere tool for product or service marketing that is narrowly aimed at profit maximization. The scope of modern advertising is much more than that.

The same is true of the field marketing and direct marketing aspects of the IMC phenomenon. Field marketing, which refers to personal selling, should not be used to market goods and services. It can be used in sustainable development efforts to have regular direct contacts with the target publics or audiences in all development projects. Its sampling and merchandising technique can, for instance, be used to introduce new innovations like new drugs or health practices, or demonstrate the efficacy of a new farming implement to the beneficiaries of our development projects. In like manner, in African countries where the mailing or postal system is fairly developed, the direct marketing component of the marketing communication mix can be used to send sustainable development messages directly to specific segments of the target publics of a project. These people can then be later contacted for face-to-face interactions and exchanges of ideas in the participatory development tradition.

Consumer research, which is an important component of the IMC, can also be used in sustainable efforts. We had made a reference to it earlier in this paper. It seems necessary to restate here that consumer research techniques are quite indispensable for the collection of right and sufficient data on the target audiences of our sustainable development projects. Such data,

as we know, help us to plan and communicate more effectively with these target audiences and so ensure maximum participation by them in the development process. This is the same with what has been described as consumer insights, by some exponents of the IMC strategy.

Finally, the application of packaging and other visual design principles, which are essential parts of IMC, are indispensable to development communicators, for achieving sustainable development objectives. Good application of packaging and visual principles helps to give identity to sustainable development agencies and projects.

Conclusion

The opportunities provided for the development communicator by the IMC version of the reconceptualised model of marketing communications are too many and varied to be given elaborate or exhaustive treatment in this paper. However, the ones examined above should give enough insight for the resourceful sustainable development communicator to guide him or her in the further search for more knowledge and practical techniques on this subject matter. If we have achieved that purpose in this paper, then we are more than gratified.

IMC is a new fast-growing and developing area in marketing and mass communication. Sustainable development is also a relatively new and fast-growing area in development studies. We all have a duty to contribute to the growth of these new and important areas of professionals' practice. And the best place to start in making this contribution is with ourselves, our establishments, our communities and our countries. As the popular cliché goes, charity begins at home. If we enhance these new trends and truly understand their principles and applications, we are more likely to better persuade others to also embrace

them and put them to practice in the interest of our personal, professional, natural and continental developments and in the true sense of sustainability of our attainments.

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