

Marketing communications: examining the work of practitioners in the United States, Japan and Chile

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This comparative paper supplements two previous ones, all focusing on comparisons of the manner in which corporate practitioners in the US, Japan and Chile manage marketing communications. In this study, respondents share insights on the time and attention they devoted to selected marketing communication activities and the extent to which various communication alternatives are considered when a campaign is being planned. Differences in management activities and alternatives considered are identified within and between countries. For example, integrated marketing communications were not nearly so important to practitioners in Japan and Chile as in the US. Personal selling was a function that received significantly more attention in Japan than in Chile or the US. While a good deal of similarity existed between practitioners in the three countries, a number of differences were found and explanations for these differences are advanced.

INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on two aspects of marketing communication management in Chile, Japan and the US which were not treated in two previous papers (Griffin *et al.*, 1998a and 1998b). Those studies dealt with advertising management and the role of the advertising agency in providing communication services. This study looks at the overall function of marketing communications in two ways; first by examining the time and attention managers give to selected tasks and tools in the course of their work, and second the extent to which these tasks and tools are considered in planning a total communication effort.

Operationally defined, marketing communications is the complex mixture of tools and techniques that managers employ in the best alternate combination in planning a marketing programme to fit a given product market situation. Advertising, various types of sales promotion activities, public relations and publicity, and direct response programmes are examples of common kinds of communications used by marketers.

BACKGROUND

In considering the subjects under investigation it would appear appropriate to first reflect on two questions. One, why include these countries? And two, what is the rationale for considering marketing communications?

With regard to the first question, while considerable differences exist in the population and size and scope of the economies in the three countries, each in its own right is a major participant in north-south and trans-Pacific trade and commerce. In Chile, for example, Japan and the US are the second and third largest export markets while the US is Chile's largest supplier and Japan is Chile's fifth largest (US Department of State, 1997). The US and Japan enjoy a strong, mature, bilateral economic relationship (Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, 1998). This could be said of Japan and Chile as well. In looking at Japanese import and export statistics provided by the Bureau, the US is second in importance on both counts behind south-east Asia. Due to the Chilean economy's relative

size compared to Japan (and the US) it does not rank among the top trading partners for either of the larger two economies, but two-way trade with both the US and Japan is of vital importance to the Chilean economy.

With regard to the second question, marketing communications can be considered in terms of infrastructure and as a functional element of business. The US network of communication (advertising) suppliers and media companies is well known for its large size and diversification. Do the communications infrastructures in Chile and Japan vary significantly? The 1998 International Advertising Association (IAA) *Annual Report/Worldwide Membership Directory* provides insight into this question. In Chile, advertising agencies and schools are members. This includes six multinational agencies like J. Walter Thompson, Grey, Ogilvy & Mather, and McCann-Erickson. Quite surprisingly, six schools of higher education are also members. This suggests that the advertising and marketing communication infrastructure is well developed in Chile and may still be influenced by its contact with academic institutions.

In Japan, the IAA Chapter is one of the world's largest with membership on the part of advertisers such as Ajinomoto, Seiko, Canon and Shiseido, and many of the well-known domestic and international agencies like Dentsu, Hakuhodo, McCann-Erickson, Ammirati Puris Lintas and Leo Burnett. It also includes major media players such as the Asahi Shimbun, Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Tokyo Broadcasting, *Time*, *Newsweek*, Forbes and Turner Broadcasting.

As a functional element of business, marketing communications and particularly 'integrated' marketing communications, of which advertising is a principal component, have been given considerable attention in the academic and trade press since the late 1980s in the US, and more recently in the UK and European press (Lucaire, 1989; Stanton, 1991; Tortorici, 1991; Duncan and Everett, 1993; Schultz, 1993; Finn, 1994; Mitchell, 1994; Schultz *et al.*, 1995; Hartley and Pickton, 1997; Borremans, 1998). UK, Dutch, US and Australian scholars two years ago launched a new *Journal of Marketing Communications* published by Routledge in London, sponsored the Third Annual International Conference on Corporate and Marketing Communications in 1998 and at that time established the Global Institute for Corporate and Marketing Communications. This points to a broadening interest in these business functions. As the titles of the conference and institute suggest, there is a movement, at least in

theory, from the integration of marketing communications (IMC) to the integration of all communication activities (IC) in firms – internal, external, financial, institutional as well as marketing (Borremans, 1998). While IC encompasses more than the scope of this study, there appears to be a void in the English language marketing literature with respect to IMC or IC practices in either a Latin American or Japanese context.

Comparative advertising and marketing communication studies have essentially been confined to content (Samiee and Jeong, 1994); the standardisation and adaptation of advertising messages (Harvey, 1993; Hill and James, 1990; Hite and Fraser, 1990); and the relationship between client and agency (Wackman *et al.*, 1986; Verbeke, 1989; Michell, 1988; Michell and Sanders, 1995). An exception to this was the Synodinos *et al.* study (1989) which explored budgeting methods, measures of advertising effectiveness and creative executional techniques across 15 countries.

The most significant remaining exception, however, is Griffin *et al.*'s three-way comparison of Chilean, Japanese and US advertising management practices (1998a, 1998b). In two papers dealing with ad agency evaluation, and campaign planning and control they argued that structural and cultural factors may account for international differences in criteria used by managers in approving advertisements. They supported and expanded findings by Synodinos *et al.* (1989) by concluding that advertising management practices involving approving ads, planning media, budgeting and measuring advertising effectiveness varied among the three countries (Griffin *et al.*, 1998a). In the other paper they found that the full-service ad agency was not the source and integrator of marketing communication services other than for creative and media, but that the Japanese placed more importance on the full-service advertising agency for providing marketing communication services than did the US and Chilean respondents (1998b).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

These findings leave several gaps in what is known about the work done by advertising managers in the three countries. This paper poses the following research questions with reference to how and through what means advertising managers control the flow of their firms' communications:

- 1) How are managers in the US, Japan and Chile dividing their time and attention among a selected list of 15 marketing communication tasks and tools?
- 2) How does the division of their time and attention compare on a country-by-country basis?
- 3) To what extent are each of 13 alternatives considered as being part of a total communication effort when a campaign is being planned in each of the three countries?
- 4) How do the 13 communication alternatives match up on a country-by-country basis?

RESEARCH METHOD

A 19-item questionnaire with additional classification questions was jointly developed by the US and Japanese partners in this project, then pre-tested in the US among seven subjects who otherwise would have been in the sample frame. After modifications suggested by the pre-test, the English language version was translated into Japanese by our collaborator there, then back-translated by another native Japanese instructor in the US. Differences in the resulting English translation and the original English version were reconciled and final versions were prepared in both languages. Subsequently, our Chilean partner, fluent in English and Spanish, and two assistants translated the final English language version into Spanish.

Samples were drawn from published lists of the leading national advertisers in each country. List sizes, distribution techniques and response rates varied. In Chile the sample was comprised of 109 of the top 130 advertisers. Cover letters and questionnaires were delivered by hand, and telemarketing was used to stimulate replies. This resulted in a response rate of 55 per cent. In Japan the sample was comprised of 360 of the top 500 advertisers. Questionnaires were

delivered by mail and picked up by hand, except for a small number in outlying areas where mail was used for inbound as well as outbound purposes. The Japanese response rate was 50 per cent. Finally, in the US a stratified random sample of 539 companies was drawn from the Leading National Advertisers (1994) list of the top one thousand advertisers. Mail was used for both delivery and return. After the initial and two follow-up mailings, 121 usable questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 22 per cent.

The type of business and actual duties of respondents were only partially controlled in sample construction by restricting the addressees. To reduce between-country variance due to within-country variables (Samiee and Jeong, 1994), such as type of business or respondent duties, analysis was limited to those respondents who reported that their core business was a consumer product or service and consumer advertising was an assigned duty. This reduced the final sample sizes.

To evaluate the non-response problem, annual media budgets of respondents and non-respondents were compared in each of the three countries. No significant differences were found between those that responded and those that did not from a two-tailed test of mean differences over the whole sample in each of the countries. A second means of evaluation was used on the US data due to the relatively low response rate. Armstrong and Overton (1977) maintained that a profile of non-respondents is likely to be more similar to late respondents than early respondents. Because three successive mailings were made about four weeks apart, early and late groups were readily identified. Comparing variables under discussion, the means of the last group did not vary significantly from that of the first group.

FINDINGS

Time and attention devoted to selected tasks and tools

With respect to research question number one, the time and attention devoted to 15 selected tools and tasks, respondents were asked to rank each variable on a five-point scale, from 1 ('received very little

attention') to 5 ('received a lot of attention'). Responses reported in Tables 1, 2 and 3 identify the relative importance of the 15 variables within each country by a ranking of mean scores.

DIVISION OF TIME AND ATTENTION WITHIN COUNTRIES

The US response is displayed in Table 1. This shows that managers there were primarily concerned with five subjects. Heading that list was 'the effect of advertising on sales' and the 'division of advertising expenditures among media alternatives'. The third ranking subject was 'integrated marketing communications' followed by 'mass media efficiency' and 'changes in customer activities, interests and lifestyles'. At the bottom end of the rankings were such subjects as couponing, regulatory matters in advertising, ratio of national to local advertising, interactive media/marketing, and social influences of advertising.

TABLE 1 US FINDINGS: TIME AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO SELECTED TASKS AND TOOLS

Advertising task or tool	Rank	n = 85
Effect of advertising on sales	1	3.74
Division of ad expenditure among media alternatives	2	3.64
Integrated marketing communications (IMC)	3	3.55
Mass media efficiency	4	3.41
Changes in customer activities, interests and lifestyles	5	3.41
Relationship of ad expenditure to market share	6	3.27
Relationship marketing	7	3.07
Special events	8	2.78
Divide budget between advertising and promotion	9	2.69
Comparative advertising	10	2.64
Social influences of advertising	11	2.48
Interactive media/marketing	11	2.48
Ratio of national to local advertising	13	2.46
Regulatory matters in advertising	14	2.44
Couponing	15	2.25

In Japan (Table 2, overleaf), the 'effect of advertising on sales and mass media efficiency' headed the list; then 'division of advertising among media alternatives', 'changes in customer activities, interests and lifestyles', and 'relationship marketing'. 'Couponing' ranked at the absolute bottom of the list. Also at the low end were 'comparative advertising', 'interactive media/marketing', 'ratio of national to local advertising' and 'special events'.

TABLE 2 JAPANESE FINDINGS: TIME AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO SELECTED TASKS AND TOOLS

Advertising task or tool	Rank	n = 76
Effect of advertising on sales	1	4.24
Mass media efficiency	2	4.17
Division of ad expenditure among media alternatives	3	3.87
Changes in customer activities, interests and lifestyles	4	3.80
Relationship marketing	5	3.61
Relationship of ad expenditure to market share	6	3.54
Divide budget between advertising and promotion	6	3.54
Integrated marketing communications (IMC)	8	3.42
Social influences of advertising	9	3.16
Regulatory matters in advertising	10	3.07
Special events	11	2.78
Ratio of national to local advertising	12	2.75
Interactive media/marketing	13	2.45
Comparative advertising	14	2.39
Couponing	15	1.58

TABLE 3 CHILEAN FINDINGS: TIME AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO SELECTED TASKS AND TOOLS

Advertising task or tool	Rank	n = 76
Mass media efficiency	1	4.34
Division of ad expenditure among media alternatives	2	4.32
Effect of advertising on sales	3	3.98
Relationship of ad expenditure to market share	4	3.93
Divide budget between advertising and promotion	5	3.71
Changes in customer activities, interests and lifestyles	6	3.41
Special events	7	3.37
Integrated marketing communications (IMC)	8	3.34
Relationship marketing	9	3.00
Social influences of advertising	10	2.78
Ratio of national to local advertising	11	2.76
Comparative advertising	12	2.61
Interactive media/marketing	13	2.59
Regulatory matters in advertising	14	2.37
Couponing	15	2.00

Chilean managers, as seen in Table 3, placed 'mass media efficiency' and 'division of ad expenditure among media alternatives' at the head of their list. Also important to them were effect of advertising on sales, relationship of ad expenditures to market share, and division of budget between advertising and sales promotion.

Coupons, regulatory matters, interactive media/marketing, comparative advertising and ratio of national to local advertising were relatively the least important subjects receiving their time and attention.

DIVISION OF TIME AND ATTENTION BETWEEN COUNTRIES

To answer the second research question, rank order was selected over mean differences to compare how time and attention was divided on a country-by-country basis. The former was chosen because scoring patterns and the range of means varied considerably between countries.

Table 4 shows the rank order of the time and attention devoted to selected tasks and tools by respondents in the three countries.

TABLE 4 TIME AND ATTENTION DEVOTED TO SELECTED TASKS AND TOOLS

Advertising task or tool	US rank	Japan rank	Chile rank
Effect of advertising on sales	1	1	3
Division of ad expenditure among media alternatives	2	3	2
Integrated marketing communications (IMC)	3	8	8
Mass media efficiency	4	2	1
Changes in customer activities, interests and lifestyles	5	4	6
Relationship of ad expenditure to market share	6	6	4
Relationship marketing	7	5	9
Special events	8	11	7
Divide budget between advertising and promotion	9	6	5
Comparative advertising	10	14	12
Social influences of advertising	11	9	10
Interactive media/marketing	11	13	13
Ratio of national to local advertising	13	12	11
Regulatory matters in advertising	14	10	14
Coupons	15	15	15

Overall, the rankings have considerable similarity. Differences which stand out concern:

- Integrated marketing communications – ranked third in the US and eighth in Japan and Chile;
- Mass media efficiency – ranked fourth in the US and first in Chile;

- Relationship marketing – ranked fifth in Japan and ninth in Chile;
- Special events – ranked seventh in Chile and eleventh in Japan;
- Comparative advertising – ranked tenth in the US and fourteenth in Japan;
- Regulatory matters in advertising – ranked tenth in Japan and fourteenth in the US and Chile.

Marketing communication alternatives

Findings pertaining to the second research question are presented in tabular and graphic form (Tables 5, 6, 7 and Figure 1). The tables are used to identify within-country differences. Information in Figure 1 supports differences between countries. The question asked respondents to relate the extent to which various marketing communication alternatives were considered when a campaign is being planned: 'always, frequently, seldom, or never'. (The choices offered were designed to spread rather than bunch responses.)

The tables list 13 alternatives and show the rank and percentage of the 'always/frequently' responses. Generally speaking, 'always/frequently' responses greater than 50 per cent favour consideration of the alternative. Responses below 50 per cent favour the opposite behaviour.

DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION ALTERNATIVES WITHIN COUNTRIES

As regards the US response (see Table 5), 'mass media' (87.4 per cent always/frequently) and 'point-of-sale material' (86.5 per cent) substantially outdistance consideration of all other alternatives. A second level of alternatives receiving consideration always or frequently and ranking three to seven included public relations, end-user programmes, product publicity, special events and direct response programmes. A substantial percentage gap exists before the remaining six alternatives are reported as being considered always or frequently: they are not given nearly as much consideration when a campaign is being planned, particularly so in the case of telecommunications.

The Japanese response (Table 6) was characterised by the high number of alternatives (10 in total) which were considered 'always or frequently' more than 50 per cent of the time with 'personal selling' heading the list. In fact, six of the 13 alternatives were given

consideration 84 per cent or more of the time. Below the midpoint were 'special events, exhibits/shows, and most notably, telecommunications' (10.8 per cent).

TABLE 5 US: MARKETING COMMUNICATION ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED 'ALWAYS' OR 'FREQUENTLY' IN CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Marketing communication alternatives	Rank	%	n
Mass media	1	87.4	87
Point-of-sale material	2	86.5	89
Public relations	3	69.3	91
End-user programmes	4	60.7	89
Product publicity	5	59.4	91
Special events	6	58.9	90
Direct response	7	58.8	90
Personal selling	8	39.3	89
Trade publications	8	39.3	89
Collateral material	10	35.6	87
Trade promotions	11	32.5	89
Exhibits/shows	12	30.3	86
Telecommunications	13	14.0	86

TABLE 6 JAPAN: MARKETING COMMUNICATION ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED 'ALWAYS' OR 'FREQUENTLY' IN CAMPAIGN PLANNING

Marketing communication alternatives	Rank	%	n
Personal selling	1	94.3	87
Mass media	2	91.1	89
End-user programmes	4	87.5	88
Product publicity	4	87.4	87
Public relations	5	85.1	87
Point-of-sale material	6	84.1	88
Trade promotions	7	69.9	83
Collateral material	8	63.1	86
Trade publications	9	54.6	86
Direct response	10	51.8	83
Special events	11	44.3	88
Exhibits/shows	12	37.1	89
Telecommunications	13	10.8	84

Among Chileans (Table 7, overleaf), the two top-ranking alternatives, at or approaching 100 per cent were mass media and point-of-sale material. Below these were end-user programmes and

then collateral material, special events, public relations and direct response, all above the 50 per cent mark. The remaining six alternatives falling below this mark were all given consideration 'always or frequently' in campaign planning in one-third or more of instances.

TABLE 7 CHILE: MARKETING COMMUNICATION ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED 'ALWAYS' OR 'FREQUENTLY' IN CAMPAIGN PLANNING

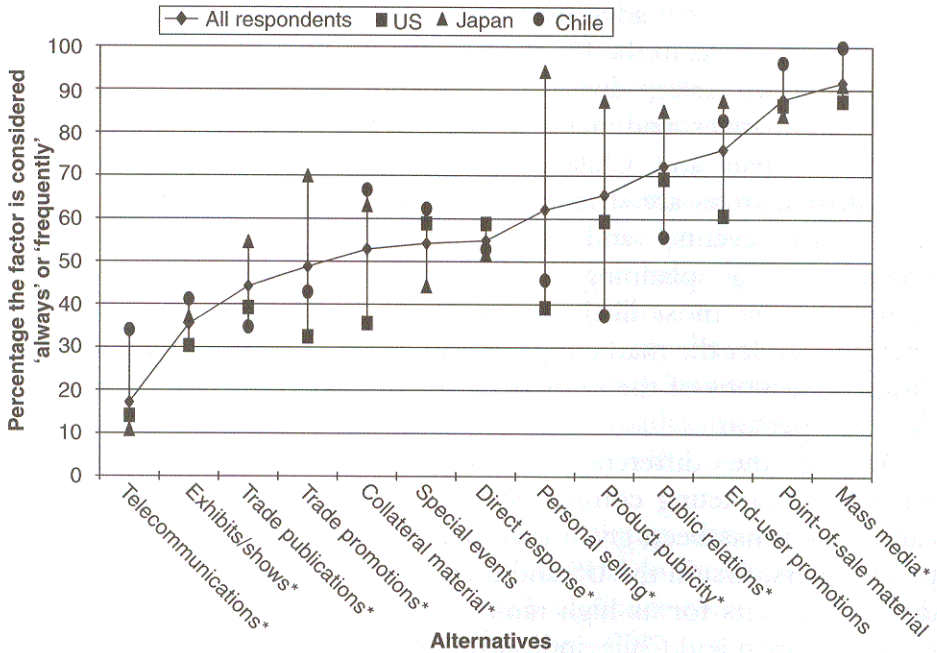
Marketing communication alternatives	Rank	%	n
Mass media	1	100.0	53
Point-of-sale material	2	96.3	54
End-user programmes	3	83.0	53
Collateral material	4	66.7	33
Special events	5	62.3	53
Public relations	6	55.8	52
Direct response	7	52.9	51
Personal selling	8	45.7	46
Trade promotions	9	42.9	49
Product publicity	10	37.5	48
Exhibits/shows	11	41.2	51
Trade publications	12	34.7	49
Telecommunications	13	34.0	47

DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION ALTERNATIVES BETWEEN COUNTRIES

To highlight differences among countries, research question 4, the 'always or frequently' percentages for each country and in total are plotted graphically in Figure 1.

As shown in Figure 1, it was determined that there were significant differences between countries in 11 out of 13 instances (Chi-square test of significance at the 0.05 level). The two alternatives where significant difference did not exist were point-of-sale material and special events. Visual observations reveal the relative differences between countries. The most striking divergence is seen with personal selling. The Japanese plot is well above those of Chilean and US respondents. This is also true of product publicity, where the Japanese plot is again well above that of the US and particularly Chile. This pattern holds true with public relations but to a lesser degree. At the upper end of the graph, the downward divergence of the US from Japan and Chile with respect to end-user programmes is also

noteworthy. Towards the lower end of the graph relatively large differences can be seen with respect to collateral material where the US finding is a deviant downwards, and to trade promotions and trade publications where the Japanese finding deviates upwards. Even though telecommunications is at the bottom of the graph, this form of communication is significantly more important for Chileans than for the US or Japanese.



(Percentage of all respondents and by country; Chi-square $p < 0.05 = *$)

FIGURE 1 MARKETING COMMUNICATION ALTERNATIVES: PERCENTAGE CONSIDERED 'ALWAYS' OR 'FREQUENTLY' IN CAMPAIGN PLANNING

DISCUSSION

In considering the research findings, differences in national markets, industrial and consumer cultures, channel configurations, communication alternatives, technology, and the diffusion of new management principles and practices impose limitations on this study.

Notwithstanding these uncontrollable factors, as mentioned at the outset, all three countries have well-developed marketing communication infrastructures and functional sophistication.

The 15 items that comprised the tasks and tools that respondents were asked to weight in terms of time and attention devoted to each (research questions 1 and 2) were activities in which US managers would customarily be engaged. The priorities assigned to each were similar for the most part in all three countries. The higher-ranking tasks were those that advertising managers would be expected to deal with. For example, in the US three of the four top subjects – effect of advertising on sales, division of advertising expenditures among media alternatives and mass media efficiency – are identical with those in Japan and Chile. Issues such as social influences and regulatory matters are strictly secondary, as are such tangential items as special events, and couponing. In the latter instances, non-advertising planning and implementation tasks in large companies are most likely to be handled by other individuals. If operating under the marketing concept, these individuals tend to be in different sections of the same department or division, all reporting to the same person.

Among the differences between countries that stand out, integrated marketing communications heads the list. As mentioned earlier on, it has been given considerable attention by academics and practitioners, first in the US and then in the UK and Europe. This, no doubt, accounts for its high ranking (third) in the US as opposed to eighth in Japan and Chile, indicating that the commotion this concept has stirred in North America and Europe at the time when the information was gathered for this report had not yet spread to respondents in the two other countries.

Other differences of note included relationship marketing, comparative advertising, mass media efficiency, special events, division of budget between advertising and sales promotion, and regulatory matters in advertising.

Relationship marketing, involving such activities as loyalty programmes and customer retention, has been given considerable attention in the US trade and academic press, and this attention continues (Unruh, 1996; Gordon, 1998; Gardener, 1999; Grayson, 1999). In Japan, where this subject ranked higher than in the US or Chile, it is felt that combining the words relationship with marketing trivialises the former, as relationships have much greater significance

in Japan than in the US – and this probably applies to Chile also (Hall, 1983, pp 102–107). The concept of relationships in Japan is discussed at further length when treating personal selling.

The finding that comparative advertising ranked much lower on the Japanese list is most likely due to the nature of the communication business in Japan, which is concerned with harmony: ‘Head-on conflicts in advertising with competition are usually avoided’ (Wagenaar, 1980).

Based on the differences in ranking of mass media efficiency, it would appear that managers in the US are less concerned with the ‘process of measuring the target audience size against the cost of that audience’ (Wells *et al.*, 1992) than in Japan and particularly Chile where this topic ranked at number one.

The finding that the division of budget between advertising and sales promotion received a lower ranking in the US than in Japan and Chile suggests a lesser involvement with the latter function on the part of US managers queried in this investigation.

The disclosure of more concern for regulatory matters in advertising in Japan than in the other two countries could be attributed to the enforcement of a new broadcasting law in 1988 which according to Dentsu Inc. (1989, p 191) was a drastic revision of the 1950 law.

One anomaly was the similarity in rankings between the three countries with respect to the ratio of national to local advertising. In Japan, nearly three-fifths of the total TV audience could be covered in three markets as opposed to less than one-fifth in the top three US markets (Grey Daiko, 1991). The situation in Chile is comparable to Japan (Northcote and Asociados, 1994). Because of this disparity, it would be logical to assume that significantly more attention would be paid to the ratio of national to local advertising in the US.

Turning to the relative importance of 13 alternatives considered when planning a marketing communication campaign (research question 3), all were given at least some consideration ‘always’ or ‘frequently’. The percentages of those responses were most widely dispersed by US managers and least so by the Japanese. In the latter instance only three alternatives were considered always or frequently less than 50 per cent of the time. Can we conclude from this finding that the Japanese are the most attuned to ‘integrated marketing communications even though the term itself was not widely recognised by respondents?’ Possibly. However, the Japanese have a

tendency to say yes and are 'extremely reluctant to say no directly' (Reed, 1987). This could account for a bias in favour of the top two question choices: always/frequently versus seldom/never.

As for specific alternatives, mass media was either number one or two in the three countries. This result is consistent with the conventional role of any manager of consumer advertising. Point-of-sale material and end-user programmes were also near the top of the alternatives on everyone's list. These alternatives are indicative of the importance of a pull versus push strategy on the part of respondents everywhere.

Telecommunications ranked uniformly at the bottom of the list in all three countries, even though this means of communication should be of prime concern in personal selling, servicing and customer retention (relationship marketing). In Japan, national culture may play a role as this nation is considered a high-context culture favouring indirect as opposed to direct communication (Hall, 1983). In the US this could be a function managed and budgeted for by another department. It could also be attributed to the unfriendly systems (mechanical voices and multiple menus) perpetuated by telecommunication companies in the name of – it is surmised – cost efficiency. While ranking lowest in Chile, it is not as obviously different from other low-end alternatives as in the US and Japan. In Chile, there has been considerable competition among telecommunication suppliers, domestic and international, and improvements in the system which could have raised the level of interest and attention given to this form of communication.

When it came to differences in specific subjects considered most often, personal selling ranked number one and significantly higher in Japan than in the US or Chile. This is consistent with anecdotal writings (Graham and Sano, 1984; Zimmerman, 1985) and also with sociological theories of Japanese behaviour in which the dependence on personal relationships between parties supplements economic rationales. Doi (1973) and Nakane (1970) both discuss the importance of personal relationships in different settings. In Chile and the US it is likely that personal selling is an assignment and responsibility of a different department than that of advertising. Additionally, due to the increasing cost of a sales call, alternatives to personal selling have become more important.

Already acknowledged was the major importance of mass media, point-of-sale material and end-user promotions in all three countries; and to a lesser degree public relations (PR) and its companion activity, product publicity. More disparity was found between countries among the latter two functions. The attention given to PR and publicity in Japan as it became a more important activity in the late 1980s (Dentsu Inc., 1989, p 249) could account for the significantly greater emphasis placed on these functions. The relatively low consideration given to product publicity in Chile may mean that because publicity is free it may be given less time and attention than elements that involve cash expenditures – essentially a cost-driven rather than opportunity-driven approach to marketing communication management.

Another difference calling for explanation is the significantly higher consideration given to trade promotions on the part of the Japanese, and to a somewhat lesser extent trade publications. Because the power balance swung away from producers in favour of retailers, according to Dentsu Inc. (1989, p 212), increasing efforts were 'directed to sell-in promotion to encourage retail stores to display products'. These efforts probably account for these differences.

Overall, findings indicate a good deal of similarity in regard to the manner in which managers in the US, Japan and Chile divide their time and attention and give consideration to marketing communication alternatives in campaign planning. There are also indications that Chileans, with five of their most important time and attention-getting subjects having financial implications, may be more cost conscious in their planning activities than participants in the other countries. In addition, findings suggest that US managers are most familiar with the term of integrated marketing but that the Japanese may have a better understanding of the fundamental meaning of the marketing concept, which is by definition integrative, as indicated by their heightened consideration of more marketing communications alternatives.

Rapid changes in marketing communication activities, their costs, channel structures, market sophistication levels and the declining degree of product differentiation challenge advertising managers within and between countries as new techniques become more important and the return on familiar tools declines. International comparisons serve, therefore, both a direct purpose – enabling more efficient practices in the present – and an indirect purpose –

suggesting to both practitioners and academics what future trends in best practices might be by the virtue of notions such as developmental life cycles. These are reasons why more work and study is needed in this field of endeavour worldwide.

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