



# Integrated marketing communications in tennis

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## ABSTRACT

The objective of this article is to serve as a support for the many tennis stakeholders interested in promoting their services or strengthening their brands through a combination of marketing and communication strategies, with special emphasis on digital tools. This will allow them to achieve their goals more efficiently and at a lower cost.

**Key words:** marketing, public relations, communications, promotion, brand

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## INTRODUCTION

The advancement of technology in the last 20 years has changed the way we carry out our daily tasks, thus it has also permeated different areas of knowledge, with communications having the highest impact (Gruber, 2014).

This reality, with the Internet as the main ally, has driven blogs, websites, social media, Wi-Fi, and others that did not exist two decades ago or were just in the making. Each of these elements (Estrella and Segovia, 2016) are currently used, both in public relations and in marketing. These two areas sometimes bifurcate and in others come together with their own methods promoting a product or institution to the target audience.

To avoid conceptual discussions, whether public relations belongs to marketing or vice versa, I want to focus on the modality of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), which, as the name indicates, integrates marketing and public relations or communications to transmit its messages with the implicit intention of winning clients or consolidating the brand, depending on the place from where it is applied.

In tennis, for example, a federation/association can use the IMC to attract more players or to improve her image through the promotion of programs and services, without the need for profit. However, in a tennis club or academy, by using the same methods, the aim may be to attract more and better players, which could translate into a direct increase in customers and indirect in business, which is the same as saying sales.

Several investigations have addressed this topic in tennis. Bennett et al. (2006) studied the application of this methodology in the measurement of marketing communications during a professional tennis tournament. In another work, Kim et al. (2009) studied innovation and strategic improvement through marketing, communication and the study of the tennis racket market. Schoenstedt and Reau (2013) investigated the use of social marketing



in professional tournaments, Tufekci (2013) analyzed the role of the brand on the audience of a women's professional tournament and Smolianov et al. (2014) compared USTA practices for increasing tennis participation with those of an integrated marketing and communication model. For their part, Chmait et al. (2020) analyzed the "influencers" in tennis and their role in social networks when it came to increasing public attendance at a professional tournament.

The versatility of the IMC is as wide as tennis itself is, since not only clubs and federations can benefit from it, but also players who can use it to create or strengthen their brand and tournament owners to promote their activities and identity and even the International Tennis Federation can also add more value to the ITF brand and attract more resources to further develop tennis in the world.

## FROM THE BEGINNING

When executing successful marketing and communication strategies, the main thing is to know what audience we are targeting (preferences, demographics, socio-economic variables, etc.), what will be the approach and by what channels. This is before determining the realistic and

measurable objectives adjusted to a specific time so that once the application of the strategy is concluded, its success can be measured (Báez, 2000).

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- What audience we are targeting (preferences, demographics, socio-economic variables, etc.);
- What will be the approach;
- By what channels to go through.

The 2019 ITF Global Tennis Report noticed that 87 million people play tennis in the world. This is based on the number of players and possibly does not include the tennis followers in junior, senior or professional tennis. Same for Grand Slam only followers. The target audience most certainly needs the significant others (Family and Friends) also.

Another vital aspect is the available budget to get the most out of the project. This is, in practical terms measured by the size of the target audience we have to reach for each dollar invested.

For example, a billboard on the busiest avenue in any city would cost thousands of dollars because it can be seen by hundreds of thousands of people, but how many of those people are part of our target? It is difficult to measure. On the other hand, in social media, search engines or websites and the advertisement of a campaign are only seen by the people who have considered the target.

There are several methods to know the audience to which we are directed and the media to which they are linked. To do this it is necessary to carry out a psychographic analysis. This is in addition to demographic data, to know their preferences, their lifestyle, their hobbies and even what they do in their spare time. For budgetary reasons, we will apply the method "one day in the life of", which is based on an observation process to know these variables.

So, with the audience defined and the budget assigned, the next step is to work on what we want to achieve. Our strategy can be one of more visibility, but it can also be to attract new clients in a tennis academy, sell tickets to a tennis tournament or get contacts (engagement) for promotional purposes. According to the objective, we have four options to invest in Internet advertising:

- Cost per 1,000 views.
- Cost per engagement.
- Cost per clic.
- Cost per acquisition.

It is extremely important to be clear about the purpose of a campaign, because with the wrong choice of a channel, objective or investment mode, the results can be very different from the goals initially proposed.

The last thing we have to define is the platform by which we will carry out the campaign. Yes, we said it was online, but not defined whether it would be through social media, search engines, websites or the institutional portal. Although there are many media choices, a small budget with the right strategy can still involve the many media options.

In today's world, the best cover letter for an entity is the website, which must be linked to social networks. In websites where the vision, values and objectives are exposed, it also offers the facility of creating a blog (Tironi and Cavallo, 2004), a space that serves to achieve better positioning of the web in search engines and also transmit its own content. That information disseminated by social media helps to gain media, that is, tv channels, radio programs or newspapers becoming multipliers of that message that we want to carry, as long as the content is presented in an attractive way for the public.

So, having our social media accounts and the institutional web, and taking into account that we will work to attract others, making use of keywords, tags, etc., we have to invest in different websites that our public visit, search engines and even a small boost investing in the networks would not hurt.

**RESULTS**

Once we have distributed our budget in the different media and we have executed it through weeks or months of digital advertising, it is time to measure the results, depending on the type of campaign we have worked on. The measurement tools can also be different, although if it is about sales it is much easier to measure. If the objective was to make the brand visible or expand its reach in the public then it can be verified with the number of people who enter the institution's website or those who interact on social networks per day, or current followers compared with those that existed in the period prior to the execution of the strategy.

These measurements are possible thanks to constant monitoring within each social network or with the hiring of software that is responsible for extracting that data.



Figure 1. Communication campaigns could be different according to the objectives set by the institutions or companies.

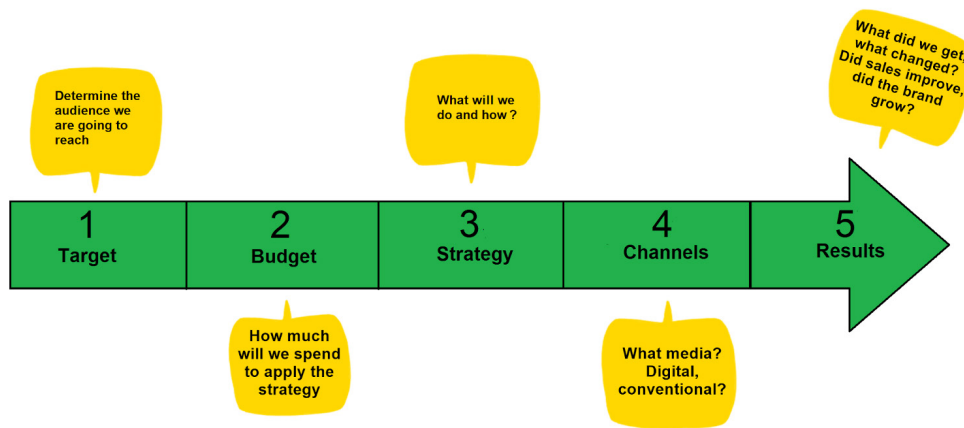


Figure 2. The analysis after the end of the campaign is crucial to know the results that have been obtained.

The exposure of the brand in the traditional media also counts, it even affects the image of what is promoted, since it means that our strategy crossed digital borders and reached a larger audience than we planned.

**CONCLUSION**

Along with the application of a good marketing and public relations strategy, the tender care of the brand must always be present. With the democratization of communication (Venturino, 2011), users are more likely to express their considerations about a product or current service, which can multiply to create a reputation by itself.

That is why good customer service still works much or better than advertisement, because by offering a good deal, the client becomes a spokesperson for that positive experience, which will reflect to other people as well.

Changing a negative perception is one of the most difficult challenges faced by marketing and public relations, so preserving a good image is already a plus in the success of any communication strategy.

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