
Department of Media and Information

**Integration of Marketing Communications in Historical Development:
Informational Content Analysis of Websites and Magazine
Advertisements in Australia**

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Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

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Abstract

It has taken advertisers many years to develop integrated advertising communication strategies that could incorporate many or all traditional marketing communication channels that developed separately, such as billboards, magazine advertising, television and radio. All of the marketing communication channels were usually integrated with one another in order to produce messages that were comprehensive as well as unified across all of these channels. However, the rapid development and growth of Internet communications resulted in the need to review traditional approaches towards advertising to accommodate the new communication medium. Initially (in the late 1990s) there appeared to be a lot of confusion about the role Internet communications were to play in advertising campaigns and whether they were destined to supplement traditional marketing communications or to replace them. It was also not clear how to combine interactive communications with non-interactive ones. The thesis investigated and compared content of both traditional (magazine advertisements) and emerging (websites) advertising communications in Australia at the turn of the century. The focus of this investigation was on the identification of the informational content of magazine advertisements and websites as well as the degree of integration between these two marketing communication channels. The thesis addressed arguably two of the most critical (if not the most critical) areas of marketing communications of the time: informational effectiveness and identification of key informational content elements in both magazine advertisements and websites as well as integration between magazine advertisements and website marketing communications during the early days of the Internet marketing. Informational content analysis of magazine advertisements and websites identified a number of content-related differences between the two types of marketing communications. It also revealed that content of web-linked magazine advertisements was likely to differ from the content of magazine advertisements that did not include a link to a website.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis	1
1.1 Background to the Research	1
1.1.1 Defining Marketing Communications	1
1.1.2 Marketing Communication Objectives	2
1.1.3 Integration of Marketing Communications	4
1.1.4 The Internet	6
1.2 Research Summary	9
1.2.1 Research Outline: Reasons for Undertaking the Research	9
1.2.2 Scope of the Thesis	11
1.2.3 Research Outcomes and Benefits	12
1.3 The Research Question and Objectives	16
1.3.1 The research Question	16
1.3.2 Research Framework & Methods	17
1.4 Methodology for the Research	19
1.4.1 Research Techniques: Primary Data Collection Methods	19
1.4.2 Data Analysis Methods	21
1.5 Research Outline	23
Chapter 2: Literature Review	25
2.1 Introduction	25
2.2 Marketing Communications and IMC: 2001 Perspective	27
2.2.1 Marketing Communications in Historical Development	27
2.2.2 Integrated Marketing Communications in 2001	31
2.2.3 Integrating Traditional and Online Marketing Communications: Terms, Concepts and Definitions	37
2.2.4 Background to the Integration of Marketing Communications	40
2.2.5 Media Selection for Marketing Promotions	48
2.3 Internet Marketing Communications	51
2.3.1 Introduction to Internet Marketing Communications	51
2.3.2 Internet: 2001 Perspective	54
2.4 Adding Internet Marketing Communications to the Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy	64
2.4.1 The Internet As a Marketing Communication Channel	64
2.4.2 Managing Integration of Online and Offline Marketing Promotions	66
2.4.3 Hoffman-Novak Communication Channel Efficiency Evaluation Framework	69
2.4.4 Integrating Online and Offline Marketing Strategies: Year 2000 Experience	72
2.5 Literature Review Summary and Outcomes	76
Chapter Three: Research Methodology	77
3.1 Methodology Selection	77
3.1.1 Introduction to Methodology Selection and Design	77
3.1.2 Research Design Overview	78
3.1.3 Background to the Methodology Selection	80
3.2 Content Analysis as a Research method	88

3.2.1 Content Analysis in Historical Development	88
3.2.2 Content Analysis of the Worldwide Web	93
3.2.3 Content Analysis of Commercial Websites	96
3.2.4 Content Analysis of Traditional Advertising Materials	100
3.2.5 Informational Content Analysis (Conclusion).....	107
3.3 Research Methodology	112
3.3.1 The Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure.....	112
3.3.2 WebQual Conceptual Model for Content Analysis of Commercial Websites.....	119
3.3.3 WebQual vs. Other Website Content and Functionality Analysis Models	122
3.4 Magazine Advertisements: Sample Selection	127
3.4.1 Identifying Magazine Circulation Figures	127
3.4.2 Establishing Sample for the Resnik-Stern Analysis of Magazine Advertisements.....	128
3.4.3 Application of the Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure.....	129
3.5 Concluding Remarks.....	131
Chapter 4: Findings	132
4.1 Introduction	132
4.2 Content Analysis of Australian Magazine Advertising.....	133
4.3 Content Analysis of Australian Websites as Advertisements	168
4.4 Measuring Integration between Magazine Advertisements and Websites and Comparing Informational Content of the Two Marketing Communication Channels	176
4.5 WebQual Analysis of Websites.....	192
4.6 Conclusion.....	208
Chapter 5: Discussion.....	210
5.1 Introduction	210
5.2 Informational Content Analysis of the Advertising Communications	212
5.2.1 Stating Availability of Products and Services	212
5.2.2 Linking Magazine Advertisements to the Websites.....	215
5.2.3 Incorporating Pricing Details of the Products and Services	217
5.2.4 Incorporating Special Offers into the Advertising Communications.....	219
5.2.5 Use of Performance and Components-related Information	221
5.2.6 Incorporating Nutrition and Taste Information into the Advertising Communications for Food and Beverage Products	223
5.2.7 Provision of Quality and Warranty Assurances.....	226
5.2.8 Use of New Ideas and Advertising Concepts	228
5.2.9 Presenting Company Research and Independent Research Information.....	229
5.2.10 Packaging and Safety Information in the Advertisements.....	231
5.2.11 Resnik-Stern Analysis of the Magazine Advertisements and Websites: General Observations.....	231
5.3 Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites.....	234
5.4 Role of Web-Related Informational Cues in the Magazine Advertisements	236

5.5 Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites	240
5.5 Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites	240
5.5.1 Popular Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites	240
5.5.2 Rare Informational Cue Combinations.....	245
5.5.3 Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites (Summary).....	247
5.6 Use of Principal Cues in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites	248
5.6.1 Use of Principal Cues in the Magazine Advertisements.....	248
5.6.2 Use of Principal Cues in the Websites	252
5.6.3 Impact of the Principal Cues on the Advertising Communications	255
5.7 Websites for Informational Content-Exclusive Magazine Advertisements	256
5.7.1 Comparing Websites for Content-Inclusive and Content-Exclusive Magazine Advertisements	257
5.7.2 Comparing Use of Informational Cues in Websites for Content-Inclusive and Content-Exclusive Magazine Advertisements	258
5.8 Use of WebQual Informational and Functionality Elements in Websites.....	260
5.8.1 Media Communication Capability Assessment.....	260
5.8.2 Marketing Channel Capability Assessment	287
5.8.3 Relationship Enhancement Capability Assessment.....	296
5.8.4 Website Performance Capabilities Assessment (WebQual Extras)	302
5.8.5 Website Capabilities Overview	304
5.9 Measuring Informational Content Integration Between the Magazine Advertisements and the Websites.....	306
5.9.1 Identifying Degree and Nature of Content Integration between the Magazine Advertisements and the Websites.....	306
5.9.2 Magazine Advertisements and Websites Content Integration Patterns..	310
5.9.3 Integration Summary	313
Chapter 6: Research Implications.....	315
6.1 Introduction	315
6.2 Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns	316
6.2.1 Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns in the Magazine Advertisements.....	316
6.2.2 Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns in the Websites	320
6.2.3 Comparative Analysis of the Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites.....	324
6.3 Informational Content Integration between the Websites and the Magazine Advertisements	326
6.3.1 Points of Integration	326
6.3.2 Magazine Advertisements and Websites Integration Overview.....	327
6.4 Website Functionality and Marketing Communication Trends and Patterns....	330
6.4.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Commercial Websites in Australia ...	330
6.4.2 Website Development Trends.....	333

6.5 Research Implications and Overview	335
6.5.1 Research Overview.....	335
6.5.2 Implications for Further Research	338
6.6 Thesis Conclusion	340
References	341

List of Figures and Tables

Figure 3.1 Traditional Marketing Communications Model.....	83
Figure 3. 2 Online Marketing Communications Model.....	83
Figure 3. 3	109
Figure 3. 4.....	110
Table 3.1 Resnik-Stern Advertising Informational Content Categories (Core + Modifications)	118
Table 3.2 WebQual Conceptual Model for Commercial Website Performance Analysis	121
Table 4.1: Advertising Population of the Magazines, May 2001, by magazine	133
Table 4.2: Advertising Population of the Magazines, May 2001, by frequency.....	134
Table 4.3: Magazine Advertising Referencing URL, May 2001, % of URL Inclusions.....	135
Table 4.4: Appearance of Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by the Total Number of Cues Used.....	137
Table 4.5 Comparative Roles of Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements	139
Table 4.6: Comparative Analysis of Informational content of 6 Print Advertising + Websites Marketing Communication Categories, Sorted by Total Cue Appearance	141
Table 4.7: Comparative Use of Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites.....	142
Table 4.8: Comparative Analysis of Web-Enhanced (Integrated) Magazine Advertisements and Unlinked Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by Websites + Ads Combinations.....	144
Table 4.9: Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Web- Linked and Unlinked Magazine advertisements	146
Table 4.10: Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Web- Linked and Unlinked Magazine advertisements by %age of Cue Type.....	146
Table 4.11: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Universal and Limited Cues in 6 Print Advertising + Websites Marketing Communication Categories, Sorted by Total Cue Appearance	147
Table 4.12: Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites.....	148
Table 4.13: Comparative Analysis of Use of Universal and Limited Cues in Web- Enhanced (Integrated) and Unlinked Magazine Advertisements	149
Table 4. 14: Total Cue Inclusion by URL-inclusive Magazine Advertisements	150
Table 4.15: Use of Web Related Informational Cues in Magazine advertisements	150
Table 4.16: URL's Functions in Magazine Advertisements	151
Table 4.17: Informational Focus of URLs in Magazine Advertisements.....	152
Table 4.18: Common Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements.....	153
Table 4.19: Rare Informational Cue Combinations	154

Table 4.20: Total Principal Cue Inclusion by Advertisement, Sorted by Total Principal Cue Usage.....	155
Table 4.21: Comparative Use of Principal Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by %age of Total Use	157
Table 4.22: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Principal Cues in Six Print Advertising + Websites Marketing Communication Categories, Sorted by Total Principal Cue Appearance	159
Table 4.23: Comparative Use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites, Sorted by %age of All Cues Appearing in Ads + Websites.....	161
Table 4.24: Overall Use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites, Sorted by Combined use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites	163
Table 4.25: Frequency of Content Elements Being Used as Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by Total Cues.....	165
Table 4.26: Principal Cue Inclusion by %age of Cues Used, Sorted by % of Total Cues Used.....	166
Table 4.27: The Resnik-Stern Cues Appearing on Websites Referred by Print Advertising.....	169
Table 4.28 Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Websites by %age of Ad Presence.....	170
Table 4.29: Common Informational Cue Combinations in Websites.....	170
Table 4.30: Rare Informational Cue Combinations in Websites.....	171
Table 4.31: Total Resnik-Stern Informational Cue Inclusion into Websites for Content Exclusive Magazine Advertisements.....	173
Table 4.32: Total Principal Cue Inclusion by Website by %age of Principal Cues Use	174
Table 4.33: Principal Cue Inclusion by %age of Cues Used.....	175
Table 4.34: Degree of Integration between Magazine Advertisements and Websites in Australia in 2001: Use of Individual Informational Cues as a Basis for Integration by Repetition.....	177
Table 4.35: Integration of Magazine Advertisements and Websites by Degree of Integration by Repetition.....	178
Table 4.36: Comparative use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites (as %age of total number of ads).....	179
Table 4.37: Comparative use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites (as %age of the total number of informational cues)	179
Table 4.38: Integrated by Repetition Informational Content Combinations.....	180
Table 4.39: Integrated by Repetition Principal Cue Inclusion by number of Cues Used	181
Table 4.40 Website Functionality Assessment: Integrated (by Repetition) Marketing Communications Vs. Disintegrated Marketing Communications	183
Table 4.41: Degree of Integration by Difference between Magazine Advertisements and Websites in Australia in 2001: Use of Individual Informational Cues as a Basis for Integration.....	184
Table 4.42: Use of Integrated by Difference Informational Cue for Content Referral	185

Table 4.43: Comparative Use of Integration by Difference and Integration by Repetition Content Integration Methods	187
Table 4.44: Integrated by Repetition Content Elements: Relationship Assessment	188
Table 4.45: Content Similarities with the Integrated by Difference Content Elements (Sorted by Frequency)	189
Table 4.46: Integrated (by Difference) Principal Cue Inclusion by the Number of Cues Used	190
Table 4.47: Comparative Use of Integrated by Difference and Integrated by Repetition Principle Cues, Sorted by Alphabetical Order	191
Table 4.49: Use of the Resnik-Stern Informational Cues in Menu Tabs	195
Table 4.50: Length of Meta Tags for Search Engine Submissions (Sorted by Popularity)	196
Table 4.51: Software Add-Ons Download Times	197
Table 4.52: Website Layout Consistency	198
Table 4.53: Use of Magazine Advertisement-Related Images in Websites	198
Table 4.54: New Media Communication Capability, by Average Score	199
Table 4.55: WebQual Marketing Channel Capability	201
Table 4.56: Marketing Channel Capability, by Average Score	202
Table 4.57: Transaction Tracking Shortcomings	202
Table 4.58: Price Incorporation Methods	203
Table 4.59: Relationship Enhancement Capability, by Average Score	204
Table 4.60: Communication Capability Shortcomings	205
Table 4.61: Use of Marketing Communication Functions in Websites	206
Table 4.62: References to Traditional Marketing Communications in the Websites	206
Chart 4. 1: Informational Content Exclusive Websites: URL Searchability	172

Dedication

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Thesis

1.1 Background to the Research

The main objective of this thesis is to investigate integration of magazine advertisements and websites in Australia at the turn of the century. More specifically, the research aims to find out what was the amount of informational content of magazine advertisements and websites, identify the degree of integration by repetition and by difference between these two marketing communication channels and to reveal the specific areas where integration was not occurring. The research also compares informational content of web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements to see whether having a logical link to a relevant website for the product or service advertised is likely to affect overall informational content of the message or not. Finally, it identifies the lessons that today's communication architects can learn from the historical data available.

1.1.1 Defining Marketing Communications

By the year 2000, the area of marketing communications was no longer new to academic research. Back in 1976, DeLozier (pp.166-173) suggested that the broad definition of marketing communications could be given as a continuing dialogue between buyers and sellers in the market place. This definition could be treated as a "macro" (general) definition of a marketing communication process. From an individual firm's point of view, marketing communication was the process of presenting an integrated set of stimuli to a target market. The integrated set was presented with the intent of evoking a desired set of responses from consumers within that target market. Marketing communications can also be interpreted as a process of setting up channels to receive, interpret and act upon messages from the target market with the aim of modifying present company messages and identifying new communication opportunities. Thus, companies or other organizations behind these communications could be considered as both senders and receivers of market-related messages (De Lozier, 1976, pp.168-169; Cornelissen, 2000).

At the turn of the century, the role of marketing communications in business had also been established and recognized. For instance, Gladish (1998) stressed the importance of having long-term marketing communication objectives. Companies initially became involved in marketing communications in order to persuade consumers to purchase their brands and consequently achieve higher levels of profit. Therefore, as a sender of marketing communications, an advertiser had to attune itself to its target market first, in order to be able to align its messages with its market targets. This allowed advertisers to adapt their communications to constantly changing market conditions and to continue to identify new business opportunities as they developed. It was equally important to keep all marketing communications as a two-way communication process, rather than a one-way one. The two-way communication option could offer a variety of different ways to choose from for communicating their specific needs to the company. And there was a lot of evidence (e.g. Abernethy et al, 1997; Belch and Belch, 1998; Gladish, 1998) that at the turn of the century, consumers preferred to be given an option to respond to marketing messages.

Thus, it could be concluded that by the turn of the century, advertisers needed to become not only senders but also sensitive receivers of the market needs in order to survive and achieve further expansion (G.Belch and M. Belch, 1998). If companies paid little or no attention to collecting feedback and queries from their consumers they could be gradually driven further and further away from them. In such instances, quality of marketing communications would eventually degrade and the communications were likely to end up having negative impact on the company's business operations rather than a positive one.

1.1.2 Marketing Communication Objectives

Marketing communications are as ancient as the world itself and they have always been an integral part of economic and social environments of societies all over the world. For instance, Walle (1988) suggested that a close reading of the Gospels of The New Testament revealed that the authors of the gospels were already clearly aware of certain

key principles of marketing and advertising which were successfully rediscovered by companies in the twentieth century. Marketing communication programs were built around companies' communication objectives. On the other hand, communication objectives were obviously not the same for everyone, so critical functions of marketing communications tended to vary significantly from company to company. G. Belch and M. Belch (1998, pp.27-28) pointed out that communication objectives could usually be defined in terms of the nature of the messages that were to be communicated to the consumers and of the specific effects, the company was aiming to achieve through its marketing communications. Therefore, when companies were setting their communication objectives, it was beneficial to ensure that the objectives were both realistic and affordable. There was little point in establishing a communication objective that could not be fulfilled due to financial or some other restraints.

The nature and purpose of marketing communications appeared to be changing dramatically over time. In the 1970s-1980s, companies were mainly preoccupied with increasing their market share. The growth of market share used to mean that the company's marketing communications had been successful in expanding the target market. However, by the 1990s the times were changing and so were the approaches to marketing communications. According to Schultz et al (1997, pp.17-18) the majority of large companies were no longer able to deal only with mass markets. In order to be successful in such a competitive business environment, they had to become increasingly customer focused. Companies needed to treat their customers as individuals, rather than as a faceless element of a consumer group. Every single customer (as opposed to previously common larger target groups) had to be treated as a valuable asset. The mass market was becoming almost non-existent as it was splintering into many separate, individual and highly unique markets. The individual markets were driven by a wide range of factors such as consumers' lifestyles, ethnic backgrounds, income, geography, education and gender.

Thus, in the light of the processes described above, by the year 2000, the focus of marketing campaigns was clearly shifting. Instead of expanding the product range by

tailoring products to the customers' needs more closely, the marketers had to identify the best compromise designs for their products. They were hoping for the designs to be acceptable to as many customers as possible rather than making an effort to tailor the designs to individual's needs.

At the end of the twentieth century, one of the key issues in planning an integrated marketing communications strategy that was appropriate for an organization was selection of adequate channels for transmission of its marketing communications to consumers (Harrison, 1987, pp.107-113; Chaston, 1993, pp.96-99; Tynan, 1994, pp.31-39; Belch and Belch, 1998, pp.296-338; Percy and Rossiter, 1998, pp.446-502). The very first step that companies needed to take was to identify a basis for making this decision. Tynan (1994, pp.31-39) believed that selection of appropriate channels for marketing communications was based mainly on a marketing strategy chosen by the company. Every company had a unique set of requirements and these requirements had to be taken into account. There was no such thing as a complete solution for channel selection that would be equally suitable for all companies. Percy and Rossiter (1998, p.446-502) suggested that in the selection of a marketing communications channel, preference had to be given to a channel with a capacity to engage customers in one-to-one relationships as it could enable both a company and its customers to join forces and to work together on finding solutions that were best tailored to the customer's needs. This was yet another reason why back in year 2000, the Internet appeared to be the most suitable channel for making such a relationship convenient.

1.1.3 Integration of Marketing Communications

Integrated marketing communications referred to a fully coordinated approach towards marketing communications. Integration of all marketing communications implied presentation of information to the target audiences through a single uniform message. The message could be delivered through a variety of different media, events and practices. Integration of marketing communications was instrumental in enabling

organizations to reach their targeted consumers more efficiently (Tynan, 1994, p.4) and could be achieved by the way of the merger of all communication functions within an organization under a single organizational unit (Cornelissen, 2000, p.599). Integration of marketing communications was regarded in the marketing literature as one the most effective mechanisms of maximizing power of the communications and consequently achieving feasible competitive advantage (Tynan, 1994; Boyd, Walker, and Larreche, 1998; Cornelissen, 2000; Eagle and Kitchen, 2000, p.668; Cornelissen and Lock, 2001; Kitchen and Eagle, 2002). Keeping all marketing messages under one umbrella offered many significant benefits to companies. It was ineffective both in terms of cost and performance to promote a product or service by producing a variety of messages that were not integrated with each other. It could be concluded that integration of marketing communications could ensure that the companies were able to come up with one controlled message (Tynan, 1994; Kitchen and Eagle, 2002). The message could be received by consumers from a variety of different sources. If informational content of the message was changed for one of the media, the positive impact of the message could be diminished. Developing one unified message and continually repeating it in an integrated marketing campaign was a very effective move but in most cases, it could deliver greater results than a sum of individual messages (Tynan, 1994, p.4).

According to Pulford (1993, p.7) and Kitchen and Eagle (2002), integration of marketing communications implied all the various elements of promotion had to be devoted to informing, persuading or inducing action, from a range of target audiences. At the same time, working towards integration of marketing communications was recognized as the most efficient approach that companies could adopt to manage their marketing programs. It was the optimal way of obtaining maximum effectiveness from a limited promotional budget. Thus, it could be said that the overall need to integrate all marketing communications was well understood and perceived by industry and academia (Cornelissen and Lock, 2001, p.425; Baron, 2003).

Overall effectiveness of marketing communications depended on the extent to which the marketing communications were integrated. Fitzpatrick (2000) suggested that

at the time, there were three different levels of media integration. Fitzpatrick's classification encompassed all the companies that utilized a mix of media rather than a single marketing communication tool. The first level of integration of online and traditional marketing communications was applicable to the companies that treated their online and offline marketing communications as two separate entities. It was difficult to draw parallels between the communication channels as each of them was functioning autonomously. The first level of integration suggested that relationships between the companies' communications were minimal. Thus, integration was almost non-existent.

The second level of integration encompassed cases where integration of marketing communications occurred for the purpose of fulfilling a particular marketing campaign. In such instances, partnership between the media was short-term only. In other words, both types of media were eager to coordinate their messages for the time being, but they had no intention to adopt the integrated approach to marketing communications for a long-term purpose. Once a particular project was completed, such integrated marketing communications mix would inevitably come to an end (Fitzpatrick, 2000).

The third level of integration allowed advertisers to be consistent in their messages. Reaching the third level of integration meant that all of the marketing channels were well coordinated with one another to promote the same consistent brands and response-evoking messages (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Consistency of marketing communications was arguably the most critical issue for advertisers to tackle. The main difficulty was not so much in completing the process of achieving integration of marketing communications successfully but in maintaining the integrated environment for a long time. Every single message needed to be viewed in a broader context. The only way of achieving an integration of marketing communications on an ongoing basis lay in focusing on implementation of practices and procedures, necessary for controlling all of the communications through one channel rather than approaching integration of each set of advertising releases as a new task.

1.1.4 The Internet

Despite its growing popularity and worldwide exposure back in year 2000, the Internet could then still be considered a relatively new medium. Nevertheless, the Internet was already becoming an increasingly popular and effective medium for companies to carry out marketing communications with their customers. According to Geissler (2001) the website was already recognized as an essential tool for establishing, building and maintaining continuous relationships with customers.

The Internet is defined as a cooperatively run and a globally distributed collection of computer networks. The Internet users belonged to the communication forum that they could access from all over the world (December, 1996). This global community was no longer divided as much by geographic boundaries and distance was no longer an obstacle to communications. Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996) characterized the Internet by outlining its five defining qualities: multimedia, hypertextuality, packet switching, synchronicity and interactivity. In the year 2000, the five principal qualities could be best attributed to the net-based communications. It did not mean that all of the five characteristics were definitely going to occur in any one instance of behavior or application on the Net. However, they appeared to be the main highlights of communicating via the Internet. The rest of the marketing media were not able to match all of the five qualities of the Internet at the time. Thereby, the Internet could be rightfully considered as one of the most powerful, if not the most powerful media of all (Newhagen, Rafaeli, 1996). When it came to marketing communications it was an invaluable channel for delivering companies' messages to consumers.

Chaffey, Mayer, Johnston and Ellis-Chadwick (2000, pp.33-34) pointed out that with traditional marketing communications, organizations had to work very hard to push information to their consumers. Internet marketing communications were different as advertisers were not required to adopt such a proactive approach. On the Internet, the roles were reversed. In the online environment, it was usually the customer who initiated contact as he was seeking information from an organization. This was possible because the Internet was a digital medium mediated by software on the web server that had the job of hosting the web content. Unlike traditional media such as magazines, radio and

television broadcasts, the Internet provided companies with real opportunities for interaction with their customers.

By the year 2000, benefits of the Internet communications to businesses were already easy to illustrate. If an identifiable (registered) customer requested some sort of information or ordered a particular product from a company and did so online, the supplier was able to use the data collected to make future contacts with the customer via e-mail. The e-mails could contain complete details of new offers related to the specific interests the customer had. From the customer's perspective, the benefits were also evident as it was always better to receive targeted promotions, tailored to one's unique needs rather than irrelevant messages that did not take the customer's individual characteristics into account and focused on mass markets.

As it is evident from Section 1.1.3 above, by the year 2000, integration of marketing communications was no longer a new issue as the concept of informational integration was introduced long before the Internet was conceived and developed into a powerful communication tool. Companies had already been facing the ongoing need to implement integration of marketing communications for over two decades (Tynan, 1994; Shultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn, 1997; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Kotler et al, 2001). However, in the year 2000, using the World Wide Web for marketing communications was a fairly novel concept due to the fact that the Internet itself was a relatively young tool that was added to the family of media in the mid 1990s. Consequently, integration of the World Wide Web and other forms of marketing communications was still a relatively unexplored area. Nevertheless, the WWW had already gained a lot of popularity among marketers by then. It was regarded as an important element of designing any marketing communications campaign regardless of the type of business the company was in.

1.2 Research Summary

1.2.1 Research Outline: Reasons for Undertaking the Research

The thesis title is “Integration of Marketing Communications in Historical Development: Informational Content Analysis of Websites and Magazine Advertisements in Australia at the Turn of the Century”. The research will investigate the effectiveness of both traditional (magazine advertisements) and emerging (websites) advertising communications in Australia. The focus of the investigation is on the identification of the informational content of magazine advertisements and websites as well as the degree of integration between the two marketing communication channels. The project addresses arguably two of the most critical (if not the most critical) areas of marketing communications at the time: 1) informational effectiveness and identification of key informational content elements and 2) integration of online (websites) and traditional (magazine advertisements) marketing communications during the early days of the Internet marketing.

The research project focuses on this particular period for a number of reasons. First of all, this was the time when the so called “revolution in marketing communications” was taking place. Integration and comparison of marketing communications was already a fairly common practice. It had already been around for a number of years and it had already been a subject of considerable research (Smith, 1993; Tynan, 1994; Duncan and Moriarty, 1997; Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn, 1997; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Schultz, 1998; Cornelissen, 2000; Grönstedt, 2000). However, with the ongoing rapid development of the Internet as an effective communication medium, the very nature of marketing communications (advertising communications in particular) was changing.

By the year 2000, the use of Internet communications (such as websites) for promotional purposes had already proved to be a popular way of delivering messages to consumers. This shift of the paradigm from traditional communication channels towards the new interactive one could be explained not only by significant cost savings but also by consumers' desire to communicate with the vendors at a faster pace and in an interactive manner. Therefore, the time period considered in this research project was arguably critical to both a) for the Internet to become accepted as a major communication medium and b) the integration and/or coordination of the Internet marketing communication channels (such as websites) to become integrated and/or coordinated with the traditional marketing communication channels such as magazine advertisements). As the times were changing, it was interesting to see whether the nature and content of marketing communications were changing with the times. The Internet was not to be approached as a separate entity and kept disintegrated from the rest of the marketing communications.

As was evident from the paragraph above, back in the year 2000, the ultimate objective that companies had to achieve was to have all of the communication channels working together to deliver unified messages. It was ineffective to rely on a single channel for all of the companies' communications, no matter how effective the channel was (G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998). However, a lot of questions remained open. On the one hand, it was clear that the Internet had a role to play within the marketing communication mix, on the other hand, it was not so clear what this role was and how different or similar the Internet communications (such as websites) were when compared or combined with the traditional marketing communications. Thus, by investigating marketing communications of the time, it became possible to not only establish specific features and characteristics of the communications (such as informational content elements used and relationships between the informational content elements as well as between various marketing communication channels) but also to see how the evolution of marketing communications was taking place.

1.2.2 Scope of the Thesis

The thesis examined the informational content of both magazine advertisements and websites in Australia at the turn of the century as well as relationships (such as content integration by repetition and/or by difference) between the two marketing communication channels. It also aimed to identify the major problems that companies tended to experience on the way to achieving integrity of online (websites) and printed (magazine advertisements) marketing communications by basing the comparative analysis on established advertising content analysis frameworks and revealing specific informational cues that were not being employed effectively by advertisers and/or were not integrated across the advertising media.

When marketing communications chosen for the study were examined, special emphasis was placed on informational content delivered by the messages. The research was carried out on the basis of two recognized content analysis models – Resnik-Stern advertising procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977) and WebQual conceptual model for content analysis (informational + functionality) of websites (Adam and Deans, 2000). The two content analysis models were chosen for the research, because they offered clear and straightforward frameworks for measuring informational content and functionality of marketing communications of the time, thus minimizing the subjectivity factor of the content analysis and ensuring validity and reliability of the research findings.

When establishing and comparing informational content of magazine advertisements and websites, emphasis was placed on analyzing these marketing communications from the year 2001 (the year when the magazine advertisements and the websites considered in this study were published) perspective rather than from a contemporary (2008) one. In these seven years, marketing technologies have progressed significantly. Consequently, a number of new models and tools for content analysis of marketing communications emerged. Furthermore, functional expectations that companies place on these communications today, are not necessarily the same as they were in the past. This ongoing evolution is particularly evident with the new generation of

marketing media such as websites, as web technologies have been developing at a very fast pace. Consequently, it would be unreasonable to benchmark the content of the 2001-published magazine advertisements and websites against today's standards. Interestingly though, both content analysis models used in this study (Resnik-Stern advertising procedure and WebQual website performance analysis model) are still regarded as valid tools for content and performance assessment of magazine advertisements and websites and are still in use by both academics and industry practitioners confirming these methodologies as both reliable and time-resistant.

1.2.3 Research Outcomes and Benefits

The research was completed with the aim of making a significant contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the area of both integrated and online marketing communications. It covered a wide range of issues involved in the integration of online (websites) and printed (magazine advertisements) marketing communications. There were a number of clear-cut benefits that the international business community (Australian business community in particular) was expected to gain from the research findings. The first stage of the research incorporated all major (at least half-page in size) magazine advertisements from the top twenty Australian magazines with the highest circulation (subject to their availability). The analysis was aimed at the collection of the primary data that could be used to reveal the levels of integration and informativeness of print (magazine) and online (websites) marketing communications in Australia in the early days of the Internet marketing.

The focus of the thesis was on the degree of integration by both repetition and by difference between traditional (print) and online (websites) marketing communications in Australia at the turn of the century. The degree of informativeness of both magazine advertisements and websites was also looked at. While examination of the similarities, differences and integration between magazine advertisements and websites was the primary objective of the thesis, there were also other beneficial outcomes such as: identification of key content elements used in advertising communications in Australia at the time and trends and relevance of informational cues identified to a particular medium.

Furthermore, the methodology that has been put together and used to complete the research project does not have to be restricted to this particular study. While the study has been conducted on the basis of a limited (sample frame) selection of magazine advertisements and respective websites from the year 2001, it is of relevance and interest not only to marketing communication historians, but also to contemporary companies interested in building an effective integrated marketing communications strategy. Due to its generic nature, the study is of relevance to every single company, interested in the successful integration of its online and print marketing communications. Times have changed, but virtually all of the key content elements that companies needed to consider at the time when designing their communications (such as for example product or service price or availability-related information) remain relevant today. Thus, there are many benefits that both academia and industry can derive from the research. Companies/industry associations can utilize the methodology and the findings of the project to benchmark themselves against the historical (2000-2002) integration standards revealed by the research. By doing so, they will be able to compare their current advertising communications and the degree of integration between these communications with the level of integration in the early days of the Internet. They will also be able to identify differences and similarities between the two as well as establish what positive and/or negative trends have been occurring. This will enable organizations to address barriers to both effective informational content development and content integration identified by the research.

Furthermore, companies will be able to see if any of the barriers to integration identified by the thesis are still of relevance to them and make necessary improvements and adjustments to their existing integrated marketing communication strategies by means of achieving optimal informational content mixes in their marketing communications. More specifically, companies can also use the proposed content evaluation method to reveal which particular informational content elements (e.g. special offers or product or service performance-related content) they are missing out on. Once shortcomings and discrepancies are identified, they will be able to improve effectiveness of their marketing communications through achieving greater integration (either by

repetition or by difference depending on their communication objectives) of these communications and including relevant content elements while excluding the unnecessary ones. Importantly, the methodology proposed in this study can easily be extended to marketing communications other than magazine advertisements or websites. For example, if a company wants to assess informational content integration of websites with billboards or TV commercials rather than with magazine advertisements, no adjustments to the methodology proposed in this thesis will be required.

There is yet another dimension to the findings. Similarly to analyzing one's own marketing communications, it is also possible for companies to use the methodology and findings from this research project to analyze content and effectiveness of marketing communications produced by their competitors. It is possible because successful acquisition of information of this kind can be turned into a very useful element of competitor analysis. Developing an understanding of the major strengths and weaknesses of competitors' marketing communications can be very helpful in identifying competitive advantages and disadvantages. A good knowledge of competitors' integrated marketing communications can be instrumental in establishing superior communication practices with customers and identifying measures that are necessary for expanding their customer base at the competitor's expense.

In the long term, the benefits of the research project are not limited to Australian industry and organizations only. The findings also make a significant contribution to the ongoing academic and industry-based research that has already been carried out in the area of integrated marketing communications both in Australia and overseas (Tynan, 1994; Schultz et al, 1997; Schultz, 1998; Pardun and Lamb, 1999; Eagle and Kitchen, 2000; Lace, 2004). While this particular research project (thesis) is limited to an examination of the of integrated marketing communications (magazine advertisements and websites) in Australia at the turn of the century, it has scope for further expansion and it may eventually lead to further (post-thesis) studies such as for example comparative studies of integrated marketing communications in Australia with those in other countries and/or regions during that time span. While this particular study focuses

on Australian advertising communications only (all of the magazine advertisements considered in this research have been collected from magazines published in Australia), there is no reason why a similar approach can not be applied to studies of integrated marketing communications for products and services in other countries or to studies of global trends in the area of integrated marketing communications.

Furthermore, history repeats itself! There are a lot of lessons to be learned from this historical study by contemporary advertisers. Companies interested in achieving an optimal integrated marketing communications mix will find the value of this study even greater if they look beyond its historical findings as the research also offers a clear methodology mix for evaluation of both informational content and the level of integration of marketing communications.

1.3 The Research Question and Objectives

1.3.1 The research Question

The main question the research seeks to answer: “What was the degree of integration achieved between magazine advertisements and websites for products and services in Australia at the turn of the century and what were the main features and shortcomings of the two marketing communication channels?”. The research question encompassed the following aspects:

- Were magazine advertisements integrated by repetition and/or by difference with websites and to what extent did the integration of the two media occur at that point in time?
- How did the informational content of magazine advertisements compare with that of websites and what were the differences and similarities between the two marketing communication channels?
- What were the key differences and similarities between web-linked (URL-inclusive) and unlinked magazine advertisements?
- How many of the websites referred to magazine advertisements and was the referral related to a particular informational content element or not?
- How informative were the websites in comparison with the magazine advertisements?
- What were the differences (if any) between principal cues in different types of magazine advertisements (web-linked and unlinked) and websites?
- What were the most common/uncommon informational content combinations in the magazine advertisements and the websites?
- What were the main differences between content elements integrated by difference and by repetition?

1.3.2 Research Framework & Methods

The research involved content analysis of magazine advertisements and websites. The content analysis was carried out through the use of two established analysis tools: Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977) and WebQual Conceptual Model (Adam and Deans, 2000). These tools assessed informational effectiveness of advertising communications by breaking content of the communications down into measurable elements.

Measurability of the content elements enabled the researcher to address the research questions listed above (see 1.3.1) in an accurate manner. Both of the content analysis tools used in this research had been around for many years and had already been used extensively for many studies of informational content in a wide selection of advertising communications (as discussed in detail in the literature review), ranging from promotional slogans written on billboards to interactive Internet-supported communications. This made the assessment of informational content considered in this study both valid and reproducible. Validity of the assessment was evident from the fact that even though these tools were previously used in over 100 different studies (with the literature review making variety and diversity of these studies evident) involving informational content analysis of marketing communications, none of the researchers has ever reported any discrepancies related to difficulties in classifying any kind of advertising content under the assessment frameworks available. For example, all content expressions in magazine advertisements could be associated with at least one of the sixteen informational content assessment cues proposed by Resnik and Stern (1977) irrespectively of whether the content was expressed in the form of images, slogans or large chunks of text. This meant that the content analysis procedure was capable of incorporating every single piece of informational content included into the advertisements.

Reliability of the informational content (in cases of both magazine advertisements and websites) and functionality (in cases of websites only) assessments were also confirmed by reproducibility of the analysis results. Consistency of the analysis tools,

methodology and application ensured that whenever content analysis of the marketing communications was carried out, it was easy to double-check its accuracy by repeating the assessment procedure all over again. Outcomes of the repeat assessments never deviated from the original ones, therefore confirming reliability and reproducibility of the content assessment tools used.

1.4 Methodology for the Research

1.4.1 Research Techniques: Primary Data Collection Methods

The study was completed by means of carrying out informational content analysis of online (websites) and print (magazine advertisements) marketing communications. Informational content analysis tool Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977) was applied to the advertising communications as the main research method for studying promotional messages. Since the research focused on marketing communications for products and services in Australia, all of the messages selected for the content analysis appear in Australian publications and were identifiable as marketing. It did not mean that all of the advertisers should be identified as Australian organizations. Some of the magazine advertisements featuring in the thesis were for international companies rather than Australian ones. However, since all of the advertisements appeared in Australian magazines it was fair to state that in this particular instance – they were oriented predominantly at Australian consumers.

The first stage of the primary data collection for the research project involved putting together a portfolio of print advertisements for branded products and services published at the turn of the century. The study was based on a selected sample of advertisers, as it is not possible to collect and analyze data from all current Australian publications. At the turn of the century, the Australian media sector was already a substantial industry. According to the Australian Media Guide (O’Halloran (ed.), 2000) by the end of year 2000, there had already been 3247 registered media in Australia. The lion’s share of the entries in the Australian Media Guide (AMG contained a complete list of all of the officially registered media in Australia) belonged to printed media. Under these circumstances, it was impossible to have every single publication represented in the research. The sample frame for the research had to be limited to a reasonable amount of data. Furthermore, a random sampling of Australian magazines of the time would be a

very unreliable method of data collection. It was likely to deliver speculative results that would not be reflective of the overall state of magazine advertising in Australia. Choosing a random sampling of the magazines as a research method could lead to a potentially confusing situation when some of Australia's most popular publications with greater circulation would not be represented sufficiently in the study. If this were the case, the research would then have to focus on less relevant publications, ones with significantly lower circulation and hence of lesser value.

If a publication had low circulation, it did not represent the best value for advertisers owing to only very limited exposure for the goods or services it was promoting. Thus, a collection of randomly chosen publications (e.g. local directories or professional publications, aimed at a limited circuit of readers etc.) would not be representative of the overall trends in Australian magazine advertising of the time. Any resultant content analysis of the magazine advertisements could produce findings that would be neither reliable nor valid. Thus, selection of data resources for the study had to be both consistent and systematic. By focusing on magazine advertisements from the most popular magazines of the time (in the year 2000, the Australians' reading preferences were different from what they are now), the study achieved the objective of maximizing potential value of the research.

The first stage of the research involved content analysis of magazine advertisements for products and services in Australia. This initial research was based on a sample of twenty Australian magazines with the greatest circulation at the time. Margaret Gee's Australian Media Guide (O'Halloran (ed.), 2000) was used as the main source for circulation figures. In order to avoid inaccuracies and increase reliability of the data collected, the circulation figures for the top magazines were double-checked with Leo Burnett Connaghan & May (VIC) Pty. Ltd. – Melbourne branch of Leo Burnett Pty. Ltd. Staff of the Leo Burnett Connaghan & May kindly edited the data and made a number of corrections to the circulation figures available from the Margaret Gee's Australian Media Guide as their historical data for the year 2000 was more reliable. The

data collected from the publications chosen, could then be examined closely by means of subjecting it to detailed informational content analysis.

1.4.2 Data Analysis Methods

The research was carried out through a number of established and recognized content analysis tools and procedures. Validity of the tools and procedures was evident as it had been confirmed by their use by other academics as well as the author's own publications (Baron, 2001; Baron, 2003; Baron, Torlina and Unnithan, 2003; Baron and Wibowo, 2003). The two key data analysis methods employed by the author in this thesis were:

- The Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure for informational content analysis of advertising communications (Resnik and Stern, 1977)
- The WebQual Conceptual Model for evaluation of website performance (Adam and Deans, 2000)

During the initial stage of data analysis, the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was applied to a sample of 490 print (magazine advertisements) marketing communications in order to complete informational content analysis of the advertisements. The purpose of the application was to identify the informational content of the magazine advertisements on the basis of a clear-cut measurement tool. On completion of this task, the author was able to put together a set of primary data that was necessary for carrying out the consequent stages of the research. The primary data collected during the study included: total informational content of the magazine advertisements and use of informational cues and references to websites for product and services featuring in the magazine advertisements. Therefore, identification of web-linked magazine advertisements enabled the author to put together a list of respective websites. The next stage of the data analysis focused on gaining similar (to the magazine advertisements) insights into informational content of the websites. Websites were analyzed through application of the same informational cues, minus two irrelevant cues, namely URL and E-mail. In magazine advertisements, both URL and E-Mail were

important informational content elements as they provided linkage between the advertisements and the respective websites (URL) and/or online communication channels (E-Mail). However, it was clear that every website was going to have a URL and almost every website will have an e-mail address. Therefore, a comparison of use of URLs and E-Mail between the websites and the magazine advertisements would not be a valid one. On completion of the data analysis stage, the author was able to put together tables for use of various informational content elements in websites (e.g. quantity of the cues used, relationships between the cues, principal cues etc.) as well as for comparative use of these content elements by the two marketing communication channels.

The next stage of data analysis was completed with the objective of benchmarking informational content of web-linked magazine advertisements against informational content of the respective websites for products and services advertised. The comparative analysis of magazine advertisements and websites was instrumental in establishing differences and similarities between informational content of the two and in assessing whether informational content of websites was richer than that of magazine advertisements. The comparison also identified level of integration (by repetition and by difference) between the magazine advertisements and the websites at that point in time.

The final stage of data analysis involved applying WebQual conceptual model (Adam and Deans, 2000) to websites in order to analyze not only the informational content but also the functionality of these websites. WebQual analysis enabled the author to identify both the areas where the websites were performing strongly and areas where shortcomings and discrepancies were occurring. Importantly, the data analysis framework provided by WebQual incorporated both technical and communication aspects of the websites. Therefore, it was possible to collect and analyze a complete set of data that incorporated not only content analysis of the websites but also functionality analysis.

1.5 Research Outline

The thesis identifies the degree of integration (both by repetition and by difference) achieved between print (magazine advertisements) and online (websites) marketing communications in Australia at the turn of the century. It also examines informational content of these advertising communications and investigates what are the content-wise differences and similarities between the two. While doing so, the thesis reveals the degree to which all of the informational content elements were being used by advertisers at the time. The comparison is made both in terms of overall informational content of the communications and usage of individual informational content elements, content combinations and principal cues by advertisers. With the magazine advertisements, a comparison between web-linked and unlinked advertisements is also carried out to see if the two types of advertising messages differ from each other.

With the websites, not only does the thesis investigate their informational content but also functionality of this marketing communication channel. Website performance analysis is instrumental in revealing key features of website performance at the time as well as main shortcomings and discrepancies.

To sum up, the thesis reveals the historical state of integrated marketing communications (magazine advertisements and websites) in Australia at the turn of the century and examines all major elements of advertising informational content. It identifies informational content elements that serve as a basis for integration between the two types of media. It also identifies the key informational content elements that were yet to be incorporated into the marketing communications of the time and investigates how the emerging marketing media channel (websites) were fulfilling the marketing function when compared with magazine advertisements.

The thesis also opens a new chapter in the area of integration of traditional and electronic marketing communications and measuring communication effectiveness. Findings from the thesis have already led to a number of important studies of marketing

communications in Australia and overseas (Baron, 2001a; Baron, 2001b; Baron et al, 2003; Baron and Wibowo, 2003). Hopefully, it will also lead to further investigations of advertising content.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides background to the thesis by examining the state of marketing communications (both traditional and electronic) at the turn of the century as well as perceptions of the communications that were common among the academics at the time.

The literature review consists of four parts. The first part contains an overview of the critical concepts in marketing communications relevant to the research. While some of these concepts are outdated by now and are no longer so critical, back in 2001 (period in time examined in this thesis) they were instrumental in determining strategies and patterns for marketing communication development. The second part of the literature review discusses integration of marketing communications at the turn of the century. The focus of this discussion is not only on establishment of what integration is and was and what the perceived benefits of integration were at the time but also on explaining how those integration concepts were relevant to the specific marketing communication channels considered in the research (magazine advertisements and websites).

The third part of the literature review looks at electronic marketing communications (with particular emphasis being placed on electronic marketing communications in historical development). It discusses the progress electronic communications had made by the year 2001 (as it was still a fairly early stage in the WWW development) as well as attempts to summarize key features and perceptions of the communications at the time. Special emphasis is placed on the ways the Internet (websites in particular) was used for fulfillment of marketing communication functions. The discussion includes comparative analysis of the WebQual website performance assessment model (Adam and Deans, 1999; Adam and Deans, 2000) and of the alternative methods of websites performance assessment available at the time.

The forth and final part of the literature review examines issues involved in adding the Internet to the traditional integrated marketing communication (IMC) mix. In this section, the emphasis is placed on identifying benefits, issues and concerns revealed through such integration as well as attitudes towards the integration that were prevalent in the marketing literature of the time.

2.2 Marketing Communications and IMC: 2001 Perspective

2.2.1 Marketing Communications in Historical Development

Survey of marketing communication literature (Molenaar, 1996; Duncan and Moriarty, 1997; Hanson, 2000; Rowley, 2001; Eagle et al, 2007) revealed that from WW2 to the mid-1990s companies were focusing on various elements of the marketing mix as ingredients for a competitive communications strategy. Initially, the range of the marketing mix ingredients did not tend to be too diverse. However, as Monenaar (1996) pointed out, traditional marketing communications were changing dramatically over the 1980s and 1990s and by the turn of the century, traditional marketing communications could no longer justify their existence. Companies could no longer produce a product, price it, place it, promote it and expect the product to sustain its pole position in the marketplace unless it was absolutely unique. As a result, by the late 1990s, marketers were starting to focus on value adding activities for identifiable customers of the firm rather than on generic promotional programs (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997). Thus, marketing communications started to place less emphasis on delivering promotional information about products, prices and distribution channels to consumers. The paradigm was shifting towards relationship management and examination of the value of customers to a firm. Rather than advertise a product or a service, companies were starting to aim to create greater brand values as they could lead to creation of long-term, profitable brand relationships with customers (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997, p.ix). Relationship management was emerging as a new efficient process that could be used to build brands by utilizing the concept of customer relationships to the full (Pearson, 1996, p.23).

As it is evident from the discussion above, by the 1990s, mass marketing was no longer the most effective way of promoting one's brand. As Hanson (2000) pointed out, consumers were starting to become more interested in receiving personalized solutions from companies. Personalization was becoming recognized as a special form of product differentiation. Personalization transformed a standard product or service into a specialized solution for an individual that was tailored specifically to the individual's

needs. It changed product design and marketing from an inherent compromise to a process of deciding what features could be most beneficial to the particular individual. Combined with innovative distribution, it could do a better job of matching consumer tastes than a product that was not tailored specifically to the needs of the consumer. Consequently, the individual was at the center of personalization (Hanson, 2000, pp.189-191).

Furthermore, it was argued (Sterne, 2000, pp.10-12) that if companies wanted to sustain their position in the marketplace, they had no other alternative but to adopt a progressive approach towards managing their customer relationships. The changing attitudes could be attributed to the fact that companies finally recognized the real value of creating and maintaining loyal customers. Winning over customer loyalty was starting to count much more than momentary profitability. Working towards short-term profitability inevitably pushed companies into spending as little time and resources on each of their customers as possible. Instead, the focus was shifting towards turning each and every one of the customers into a lifelong consumer of the company's products and/or services (Sterne, 2000, pp.10-12; Toor, 2009).

As discussed above, in the 1990s, a paradigm shift took place in marketing communications. The shift led to a rise of new marketing communication technologies. One of them (and arguably, the most important one) was the Internet. Rapid development of the web-enabled public Internet resulted in substantial changes to the ways marketing communications were handled (Molenaar, 1996; Duncan and Moriarty, 1997). According to Molenaar (1996, p.ix), implementation of the new technologies, such as the Internet enabled companies to establish direct interaction with their customers. On the other hand, companies had to accept the new environment in which customers were becoming the ones to control the marketing communication process.

Despite the fact that these significant changes to marketing communication technologies and patterns occurred in the 1990s only, review of the marketing literature of the time (e.g. Rohner, 1998; Hanson, 2000; Melewar and Smith, 2003) as well as well

as review of the more recent studies of the internet marketing in historical development (e.g. Duffy, 2005; Christencen et al, 2007; Schibrowsky et al, 2007) indicated that by the year 2001, the new marketing communication technologies were already recognized and utilized by many companies. Thus, at the time, attitudes towards marketing and marketing communications were changing at a very fast pace. New resources and new techniques were used proactively. Implementation of these technologies was carried out with the customers' help and for the customers. Consequently, companies were required to tailor their marketing communications to specific needs of their customers rather than adopt a "traditional" (as discussed above) promotional strategy.

Duncan and Moriarty (1997, p.ix) highlighted the important role new communication technologies were playing in the dramatic shift of marketing communications from a one-way to a two-way interactive marketing relationship environment. They argued that in the 1990s managing the two-way interactivity was becoming more important than creating and promoting products themselves. Thus, brand value was not only determined by how efficient the companies could be at creating, but also at retaining and growing their brand relationships.

To sum up Duncan's and Moriarty's (1997) point - the new personalized approach was becoming more customer-focused rather than product or service-focused. Specific (often unique) needs of customers had to be taken into account. Companies had to keep track of all of their customers as opposed to keeping track of products and services sales figures. Furthermore, they also had to identify strategies and patterns for sustaining those customers by identifying upcoming changes to their needs and the ways they perceived marketing communications. More than ever before, companies had to focus on taking advantage of customers' both the present and future needs both through direct interaction with the customers and by acting on their behalf. This point was also confirmed by more recent studies, therefore, making it time-resistant (Christencen et al, 2007; Schibrowsky et al, 2007).

As (Molenaar, 1996, p.ix) pointed out, the “new breed” of marketing communications changed the impact those communications were making in the marketplace. From the 1990s onwards, companies no longer had to look for markets for their products and/or services. The paradigm shifted towards looking for the right products for their customers and clients. Companies started to collect and use vast amounts of data to analyze the wishes and needs of their customers and with the assistance of the rapidly developing information systems it was becoming possible to involve customers directly in the operational and production processes (Molenaar, 1996, p.ix). There was a lot of evidence (Sanderlands, 1997; Breitenbach and Van Doren; Hoey, 1998; Culkin et al, 1999; Christencen et al, 2007; Schibrowsky et al, 2007) that by the year 2001, many companies were already utilizing this option effectively.

Before 1990, companies used to emphasize mass marketing communications. The shift of the paradigm led to concentration on individual customers and their needs. Given difficulties and cost ineffectiveness of personalizing traditional marketing communications, (e.g. it was impossible to personalize a TV commercial, a radio announcement or a TV advertisement), the Internet and other interactive technologies became increasingly instrumental in assisting companies in doing so. Within a networked society, it was only logical for marketing communications to become fundamentally digital. As a result, they evolved to become independent of space and time as well as interactive, dialogue-oriented and strongly fact-related. It was evident from the marketing literature of the time, that the market performance started getting geared directly to the customer (Rohner, 1998, p.40; Rowley, 2001).

As new technologies and formats created new ways for marketers to reach their target customers, not only were they affecting the modern media such as the Internet, but also more traditional media. Television, radio, magazines and newspapers were gradually becoming more diverse and capable of reaching smaller and more selective audiences. As G.Belch and M.Belch (1998, p.11) pointed out, by the 1990's - many traditional media experienced a significant decline in their audiences. Consequently, marketers had to start

dealing with a serious problem of consumers being less responsive to traditional advertising communications.

2.2.2 Integrated Marketing Communications in 2001

Integration of marketing communications was, is and will always be one of the most debated areas of marketing. According to Holm (2006, p.23) the emergence of integrated marketing communications became a significant example of development in the marketing discipline. It clearly influenced thinking and decision-making among all types of companies and across all industries. By 2001, the notion of “integration” appeared to take central stage within the marketing literatures (Coomilissen, 2000, p.597). Integration of the marketing communications was approached and discussed in a number of different ways. (Nakra, 1991; Tortorici, 1991; Duncan and Everett, 1993; Reitman, 1994; Tynan, 1994; Linton, 1995; Linton and Morley, 1995; Duncan and Caywood, 1996; Moriarty, 1996; Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn, 1997; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Schultz and Kitchen, 1999; Cornilissen, 2000; Sheehan and Doherty, 2001; Kitchen and Eagle, 2002; Duffy, 2005; Holm, 2006; Christensen et al, 2007).

Coomilissen (2000, pp597-598) pointed out that “integration as a term” was considered ambiguous when referring to organization of the communication function, as well as to planning, execution and creation of communication programs. The concept of integration could be associated with many diverse constructs (Cornilissen, 2000, Holm, 2006; Toor,2009). Those constructs included consistency in messages, co-ordination or orchestration of media, planning approach, developing a close client-agency relationship, growing convergence between various disciplines of public relations and marketing, and systematic links between corporate, marketing and marketing communications functions (Cornilissen, 2000). As a result of such ubiquity, the term “integration” and its various conceptualizations arose (e.g. Christensen et al, 2008).

Thus, the terrain covered by notions of “integration” appeared to be broad, all-inclusive and imprecisely articulated. The “integration” territory taken as whole appears to be a little bit chaotic. However, marketing literature (Tynan, 1994; Cornielssen, 2000; Sheehan and Doherty, 2001; Christensen et al, 2008) contained a number of clear definitions of integrated marketing communications (IMC). Tynan (1994, p.4) suggested that “integrated marketing communications” referred to a fully coordinated approach to marketing communications that allowed organizations to present promotional messages to their target audiences through a broad variety of media, events and practices. Tynan’s definition of the integrated marketing communications appeared to be all-inclusive as it covered all of the diverse aspects of integrated marketing communications outlined by Cornelissen (2000, pp597-.598).

Sheehan and Doherty (2001, p.49) offered an even broader definition of the integrated marketing communications. They defined integration as a concept of thought from which all communications were to originate. This concept of thought could be expected to materialize and gradually lead companies to determining how, in which particular medium and why every single message was to be created. According to Moriarty (1996), this concept of thought incorporated both identification of communication objectives and planning of the communication campaign. Thus, an integrated marketing campaign was capable of assigning respective objectives to the communication areas that were going to be most efficient in accomplishing the promotional tasks successfully.

As Bickerton (1997) rightfully stated, marketing communications’ task was usually significantly greater than simply informing customers about products and services available for consumption. They provided products and services with a personality and a character, helping to communicate an understandable message. Thus, marketing communications were particularly effective when the same message was being transmitted via different media channels and the messages reinforced rather than contradicted each other. The returns on an integrated marketing communications program were greater than the sum of the impact that the individual media created. This synergy

could be achieved by means of reinforcement, mutual support and enhancement among the messages (M. Bickerton, 1997, p.167; Fitzpatrick, 2000).

By the turn of the century, marketing literature (e.g. Fitzpatrick (2000)) identified three levels of media integration that marketing communications could be classified under. The first level of integration of marketing communications could be best illustrated by an advertiser who developed a really impressive online campaign that was in no way related to the company's offline efforts. Thus, no efforts to establish integration between the communication channels were evident.

To sum up, the first (basic) level of integration between marketing communications was not regarded as sufficient for keeping the communications effective. In the instances where integration of marketing communications was at the basic level only, advertisers were able (Fitzpatrick, 2000) to develop a separate offline campaign to promote the online destination but failed to integrate online and offline communication channels. Advancing to a higher level of integration was regarded as essential. Furthermore, a number of researchers (e.g. Bickerton, 1997; Fitzpatrick, 2000) argued that while companies could also change things for the better and improve the integration by promoting its URL on printed materials and in broadcast media, unfortunately companies that were confined to the first level of integration and were not usually able to realize that while promoting their URLs and creating offline campaigns to drive traffic to their websites were all marketing necessities, they did not really constitute a fully integrated marketing mix. Thus, no higher level of integration was achievable without a coordinated approach towards the management of marketing communication channels.

The second level of integration was usually described (Fitzpatrick, 2000) as being more promotional in its nature and at the same time less relationship-oriented than the first one. Companies did integrate their marketing communication channels but for a short-term purpose only. For example in 1999 "Coke Card" advertising campaign featured a mysterious "iydkydg" – "if you don't know you don't go" tagline. The message did attract a lot of attention and was delivered by all marketing communication

channels (magazine advertisements, TV, radio etc). However, that particular offer was short-lived and consequently, so was the integration (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Thus, the second level of integration referred to instances where an integration of marketing communications did exist but was a temporary measure only.

At the third and highest level of integration marketing messages were consistent. The messages were delivered across all media that lead to building brand equity and drove long-term sales. The third level of integration had the distinct advantage of being able to leverage the benefits of each media channel to promote a consistent brand and response-evoking message. It pulled the marketing communication channels together rather than separated them (Fitzpatrick, 2000). Today, the 3rd level of integration is a norm rather than an achievement (Holm, 2006). However, back in the year 2001 many companies were yet to get used to the concept of complete integration between the new and the old media (Poon and Swatman, 1997; Rowley, 2001 Holm, 2006; Christensen et al, 2007).

Marketing literature revealed that at the turn of the century, introducing integrated marketing communications usually represented a considerable risk (Linton, 1995 p.36). However, majority of prominent academics (e.g. Linton, 1995; Schulz et al, 1997; Fitzpatrick, 2000) accepted that transition to integrated marketing communications was going to be beneficial in the long term. Linton (1995) listed creative integrity, consistency of messages, unbiased recommendations, better use of all media, greater marketing precision, operational efficiency and cost savings as the main benefits, companies could get from integrating their marketing communications. Later studies (Reid, 2002; Christiansen et al, 2008) tended to confirm this viewpoint.

Creative integrity of integrated marketing communications could be instrumental in enabling companies that produced a broad range of different campaigns, publications and other marketing support material for a large, complex product range to introduce and maintain adequate creative and visual standards. As a result, the companies tended (as suggested by majority of writings (e.g. Reid; Holm, 2006; Christiansen et al, 2008 etc.)

successful in presenting a strong unified identity and support all of their products and services with powerful branding. If the creative treatment of each message was different, it would inevitably lead to lack of impact and confusion among consumers. Thus, it appeared to be absolutely vital for the messages to reinforce each other (Linton, 1995, pp.28-29; Holm, 2006). Lack of reinforcement could lead to the reduction of the brand identity. As far as consistency of the messages was concerned, Linton (1995; Christiansen et al, 2008) argued that integrated marketing communications allowed all messages to be written and edited centrally as opposed to disintegrated communications. Furthermore, there were particular characteristics that could be applicable to all integrated messages. Those integrated messages could be positioned in a way that stressed generic customer benefits such as quality of service, customer focus corporate strength and other key factors. On the other hand, it has been rightfully argued (Christiansen et al, 2008) that separate production of messages would make such consistency impossible.

Another point transparent from the marketing literature was that an integrated marketing communications strategy should ideally incorporate the complete range of the media available. For example, Holm (2006) argued that in an integrated marketing communications strategy it was essential to know that every single element of the marketing mix was working hard and contributing to the overall success of the campaign. Furthermore, Waller (2004) and Jong and Den Hartog (2007) pointed out that one of the options companies could exercise for receiving unbiased recommendations on how to maximize effectiveness of their marketing communications was to let an integrated marketing agency to handle the full range of their communication tasks for them. Such an approach would put the marketing agency into a strong position to offer unbiased advice on the solution that was most suitable for a particular marketing task a company was facing. In integrated marketing communications different techniques and media could be used to support each other to improve marketing effectiveness.

To sum up the points discussed above (Linton, 1995; Holm, 2006; Jong and Den Hartog, 2007), each media could be utilized to its best advantage. When approaching the

turn of the century, choosing an optimal mix of media for marketing communication was expected to increase the impact and the effectiveness of every marketing communications campaign (Linton, 1995, p.31) as well as to greaten operational efficiency (Waller, 2004; Jong and Den Hartog,2007) as fragmentation of media markets had already resulted in a decrease in interest towards mass media such as TV, by the late 1990s, the focus tended to shift to more targeted media alternatives (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998, p.13; Lagrosen, 2005; Wilkinson, 2006). Thus, it was evident from the readings that integrated marketing communications could assist companies in avoiding the pitfall of committing all the resources to one particular media through implementation of a more diverse approach to marketing communications.

2.2.3 Integrating Traditional and Online Marketing Communications: Terms, Concepts and Definitions

Prior to moving towards the discussion of the main issues involved in integration of two types (traditional and online) of marketing communications, it was important to define the concepts and processes that were instrumental in determining the ways integration of traditional and online marketing communications was occurring. As Tynan (1994, p.7) pointed out, centuries ago, there was no such word as “marketing” but trading pelts of fur for a supply of food has always required identifying a prospect and fulfilling a need – marketing at its most basic. Therefore, marketing could be defined as a social and managerial process by which individuals and organizations obtain what they need and want by the way of creating and exchanging products and value with others (Kotler et al, 2001). Furthermore, marketing literature (Schultz, 1997; Kotler et al, 2001; Holm, 2006; Eagle et al, 2007) was suggesting that marketing goals were to be established on the basis of determined wants and needs of the target markets. More specifically, Schultz (1997) and Kotler et al, 2001) saw the main role of contemporary marketing as achieving the highest possible level of consumer satisfaction.

Communication was a concept with several levels of understanding. As the thesis is preoccupied with the investigation of marketing communications rather than marketing in general, it was not only important to establish the role of marketing in general but more specifically, the role of marketing communications. Business Communications could be best explained (Rohner, 1998, p.52) as a transfer of data from one party to another. Moreover, it was argued (Rohner, 1998, p.52; Eagle et al, 2007) that quality of understanding of how the role of communications was to be perceived could be to a great extent, although not exclusively, characterized by the grade of the levels of understanding regarding the content. Therefore, Rohner’s definition could be expanded through acknowledging that all marketing communications have a task of informing and persuading consumers. At the most basic level all of the marketing communications inform the consumer of the brand name of the sponsor, but beyond that some of the

messages may become quite complex in the level of information that they make available to the consumer. . By paying for a message to be delivered to the target audience, the firm that pays for the message gets to present its point of view (Rothschild, 1987, p.4; Eagle et al, 2007).

It was also argued (G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Rohner, 1998) that the nature of communication depended on the company's communication objectives. Communication objectives referred to what a firm was aiming to achieve through its marketing communications program. Communication objectives could include: creation of awareness or knowledge about a product or a service offered, its major attributes and benefits, creation of an image or developing positive attitudes, preferences, or purchase intentions. Therefore, many of the academics were arguing that communication objectives were the guiding forces behind the development of an overall marketing communications strategy for a company (G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998, p.27).

Similarly, marketing literature turned out to contain many interpretations of what integrated marketing communications were (e.g. Reiman, 1994; Cornelissien, 2000). According to Reitman (1994), it was difficult to come up with a precise definition for integrated marketing communications. Understanding and perception of what integrated marketing communication is varies depending on one's personal perspective rather than on a unilaterally agreed-upon approach. Therefore, consistent definition, description, or process that could be utilized to explain integrated marketing communication was still non-existent in the year 2001. It was one of the processes that were difficult to explain in a few words. Schultz and Kitchen (1999) also believed that identifying what integrated marketing communication was and what it was not was a very problematic task since integration of marketing communications was a result of the merger of all communication functions under a single organizational unit (Cornelissen, 2000, p.599). Nevertheless, despite all the variations between the definitions there appeared to be a consensus that integrated marketing communications were based on the concept of appreciating all of the elements of the promotional mix and putting together an integrated marketing plan that was able to combine the best features offered (Cornelissen, 2000; Jakacki, 2001, p.5).

To sum up, integration of marketing communications could ensure that consumers were going to receive one controlled message from various sources. If the message was changed for one of the media, the whole impact of the message could be diminished. Sticking to one message and repeating this message all through the integrated marketing campaign usually tended to bring greater results than a sum of individual messages (Tynan, 1994, p.4).

In this thesis, the scope of the marketing communication analysis was limited to investigation of advertising communications (magazine advertisements and websites). There were a number of definitions of “advertising” as a term (Wiechmann, 1993; Kotler et al, 2001). The Dictionary of Advertising (Wiechmann, 1993, p.4) suggested that advertising could be defined as a process that involves calling the public’s attention to the availability of goods, services or causes. Textbook definitions of advertising (Kotler et al, 2001; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998, p.711) described advertising as any paid form of non-personal presentation of ideas, goods or services by an identified sponsor. Advertising communications were commonly regarded as an indirect form of persuasion that was based on informational and emotional appeals about the benefits of a product or service. As Percy and Rossiter (1998, p.3) were pointing out, advertising communications aim to impress customers and influence their perception of a product or a service by” turning the mind” toward purchase of one. In other words, advertising was an effective form of promotion. Furthermore, Percy and Rossiter (1998, p.3) regarded advertising communications as a more direct form of persuasion as promotions were often based on external incentives rather than on inherent product benefits.

If advertising communications were to be perceived as promotions (and that is how they were perceived by majority of the advertising studies and books of the time (e.g. G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Kotler et al, 2001) their role was appearing to be self-explanatory. There was a consensus among the marketing scholars that promotions attempted to trigger immediate response in the form of instant purchase of goods or services and to speed up the process of selling (Percy and Rossiter (1998, p.3). In the light of the emerging marketing technologies (Canavan et al, 2007;

Wen et al, 2007), promotions were expected to become particularly effective through the use of real-time communications that were impossible 10-15 years ago.

To sum up the perception of advertising communications that was dominant at the time (G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Kotler et al, 2001), advertising communications and associated promotions could be used and combined successfully in order to achieve the same communication objectives for the brand. Some of the authors (e.g. Percy and Rossiter, 1998) also argued that on top of it, advertising communications could be used effectively to generate awareness, establish and change attitudes and stimulate purchase intentions. Furthermore, advertising communications and promotions had a lot of potential for building brand equity in the form of so-called “customer franchise” of people with a relatively permanent preference for the brand. They could also be credited with creating “non-franchise” effects in the form of temporary buyers of the brand (Percy and Rossiter, 1998, pp.3-4).

2.2.4 Background to the Integration of Marketing Communications

This section of the literature review is devoted to discussion of integrated marketing communications the way they were in the year 2001 as well as to the identification of the integration trends and patterns that were dominant at the time. As it was established in section 2.2.1 of the Literature Review, “Integrated marketing communications” referred to a fully coordinated approach to marketing communications that allowed organizations to present their messages to their target audiences through a broad variety of media, events and practices uniformly (Tynan, 1994, p.4). From a practical perspective, there was a lot of evidence that this definition was correct. Evidence included case studies that clearly illustrated how integration of marketing communications allowed companies to build their marketing campaigns around media channels that were best suitable for the company’s needs (Linton and Morley, 1995; Eagle et al, 2007), maximize returns on investments (Tortorici, 1991) and protect integrity of the products and services marketed (Nakra, 1991). Furthermore, Six (2000) suggested that no matter what kind of business a

company was involved in, sooner or later – it would inevitably run into the hot issue of integrated marketing.

According to the marketing literature of the time, all marketing communication tools and technologies can be classified under one of the four categories: mass communication, targeted communication, in-store communication and one-to-one communication (e.g. Cornelissen, 2000; Kotler et al, 2001). Mass communication referred to the use of mass media. Free-to-air television, radio, magazines and newspapers, cinema and outdoor advertising were all considered to be media for mass communication. Advertising was considered to be the main element of mass communication and an integrated promotional strategy was being described as an advertising plan that utilized multiple media to augment the effectiveness and returns on the marketing campaign (Bhaskaran and Sukumaran, 2007).

On the other hand, it was acknowledged by a number of marketing academics and practitioners (e.g. Kotler et al, 2001; Eagle et al, 2007; Gurau, 2008) that mass marketing was not always the most effective form of advertising. Targeted communication allowed marketers to tailor their communication messages to suit various market segments (Kotler et al, 2001). While marketers' communication was usually specifically targeted at particular market segments, target communication category provided customers with an opportunity to either self-select the message, product or service involved (Kotler et al, 2001) or have the advertisers select the messages more carefully and with the target audiences' needs in mind (Gurau, 2008). Media tools and technologies that could be utilized to deliver targeted communication messages included a wide range of options such as for example: all forms of Pay-TV, home shopping channels on both FTA-TV and Pay-TV, public relations campaigns, door-to-door selling, catalogue distribution, telephone directories, special events, sponsorships, trade exhibitions and even automatic vending machines (Pamphrey, 2006; De Jong and Hartog, 1997; Chan, 2008).

The marketing literature researched (e.g. Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Carpenter, 2000; Kotler et al, 2001; Eagle et al, 2007) also appeared to acknowledge a number

difficulties in integration of marketing communications with one another. Both Tynan (1994, pp.vii-viii) and Percy and Rossiter (1998) agreed that achieving such an integration required much more than a simple coordination of content elements such as graphics and tag lines. It usually involved sorting through hundreds of media channels available as well as considering dozens of options available to shape a communications' mix that was able to deliver powerful, cost-efficient and targeted messages. Also, in the final years of the last century, some organizations tended to associate integrated approach to developing a marketing communications strategy with the development of the Internet technologies and adoption of the Internet as a marketing medium (Carpenter, 2000). However, as a number of authors (Nakra, 1991; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998) were rightfully pointing out, the integration of marketing communications was introduced long before the Internet marketing (as well as general awareness and understanding of contemporary Internet technologies) has come to life.

According to G. Belch and M. Belch (1998, pp.9-12) the first efforts to integrate marketing communications occurred during the 1980's, as this was the time when many companies started to realize that there was a serious need for a substantial strategic integration of their promotional tools. Tynan (1994, p.5) also pointed out that between 1980 and 1990, virtually every single traditional category of advertising experienced a decrease (in some cases a really significant one) in its share of the marketing pie. As time was going by, companies were becoming increasingly focused on all of the marketing variables involved, as the combination was capable of producing a synergic effect and significantly increase the returns on every advertising dollar (Cunningham and Murphy, 1993, pp.28-29). Furthermore, Tynan (1994, p.4) also suggested that the most successful marketing communications were communications that allowed consumers to receive one controlled message from various sources. On the other hand, if the message was changed in one way or another, while transmitted by one of the media, it could create a lot of confusion among the consumers and the positive impact of the marketing exercise would be damaged.

Similarly, Slingsby (1994) and Cornelissen (2000) believed that a truly integrated approach was based on combination of all of the skills available, with each and every one of the disciplines getting an equal say in devising marketing strategies. As Slingsby (1994) pointed out, it had been suggested that when planning an integrated advertising campaign companies could often be better off by obtaining assistance from an advertising agency as there was a growing number of integrated advertising agencies in the 1990's that were able to fulfill companies' marketing objectives. According to Linton (1995, pp.28-35) and Eagle et al (2007), the key benefits of channeling all of the marketing programs through one coordinator and/or by a single agency included: creative integrity, consistency of messages, unbiased marketing recommendations, better use of all media, greater marketing precision, operational efficiency and cost savings. Thus, integration of marketing communications required not only creation of unified messages that could be transmitted across a selected range of channels but also unified management of all marketing communications across the channels. As far as recognition of integrated approach to marketing communications was concerned, it appeared to have taken place long before the year 2000. For example, Anders et al (1993) reported that by the year 1991, 83% of US major advertisers already believed that their communication functions were fully integrated or anticipated integration to occur within the next five years (Anders et al, 1996).

It was important to be able to outline a specific framework for integration. Organizations needed to choose some basis for integration. This basis usually varied depending on the company's strategy and objectives. However, in most cases, integrated marketing communications strategy was built around the "brand" (Percy and Rossiter, 1998 pp.6-8; Schultz, 1998). In this particular context the term "brand" was being used in reference to whatever product or service was being promoted (Percy and Rossiter, 1998, p.6). Schultz (1998) agreed with the definition provided by Percy and Rossiter (1998). He also expanded and strengthened their argument by suggesting that brand was the major integrating factor and that it was the glue that was keeping organizations, their customers and their stakeholders together. Therefore, according to his logic, in the market place –

“brand” was also a unifying force and promotion of a particular brand was the ultimate goal that an integrated marketing campaign should be serving.

Back in 1997 Komenar (p.45) pointed out that the integrated approach to developing a marketing communication strategy had already been adopted by many global and multi-national companies. Komenar’s list of examples of major brands that had already realized the power of integrated marketing communications by the time included many well-known companies such as MCI, McDonalds and Time Warner. Thus, by the year 2000, global and multi-national companies had already appreciated the positive impact of having their marketing communications integrated. They understood and fully appreciated the need to coordinate all of their marketing activities within their organizations. According to Schultz (1998), companies were becoming aware of discrepancies caused by marketing messages that were coming from one of company’s departments and were contradicting the messages that had been previously sent by some other department of the company. Many companies were also showing their commitment to integration by restructuring their marketing departments. They were putting together one unified team of marketers, so they could create all of the company’s marketing messages. Once the messages were created, they could be delivered by a variety of different media, chosen by the company.

Thus, it could be argued (Schultz, 1998, Cornelissen, 2000; Eagle et al, 2007; Christensen et al, 2008) that by coordinating their marketing communication efforts, companies were able to avoid duplication, take full advantage of synergy among various communication tools available to them and develop marketing communication programs that are more efficient and effective. This shift of the paradigm also appeared to be reflective of the overall changes to the international business environment. The new (post-Internet) environment required companies to change the way they were marketing their products and services. To sum up, companies had to adopt a new attitude towards consumers, technology and media, as major changes had occurred among their consumers with respect to demographics, lifestyles, media use, and buying and shopping patterns (G. Belch and M.Belch, 1998, pp.9-11). The core principles of such integration

can still be regarded as valid when applied to contemporary marketing communications (Eagle et al, 2007; Christensen et al, 2008) .

Another benefit of the integration of marketing communications suggested by the books and papers discussed above was an instrumental role of such integration in strengthening corporate identity of the organizations. According to Jefkins (1990, pp.56-58), corporate identity was based on how the organization was perceived by consumers. Initially, companies had to work hard to establish a positive and easily recognized corporate identity. The greatest value of having such a strong corporate identity lied in its communication strength. Furthermore, it was agreed (Jefkins, 1990; G.Belch and M.Belch,1998) that if marketing communications were disintegrated with one another, building a positive and an easily identifiable corporate identity could become a very difficult task as consumers were likely to become too confused about the identity the company was trying to present to them. On the other hand, integration of marketing communications ensured that all media channels were working together.

According to the above definitions of integration (Slingsby, 1994; Tynan, 1994; Cornelissen, 2000), as long as coordination between marketing channels was established and content of the messages transmitted across the channels was unified/collaborated, the communications could be regarded as integrated with each other. Interestingly, majority of the pre-2001 books and articles researched (e.g. Linton and Morley, 1995; Schultz, 1998; Cornelissen, 2000) considered integration by complementation only. The content of the integrated messages sent across different communication channels was expected to match. However, none of the authors at the time was suggesting other forms of integration such as integration by difference. Integration by difference involved arranging advertising messages in a way that would enable them to compliment each other rather than duplicate. Strangely, even from today's (2008) perspective, such approach to integration remains uncommon and very few marketing specialists (Eagle et al, 2007; Hauser, 2007; Christensen et al, 2008; Wang and Krakover, 2008) mention possibility of complementary integration. Furthermore, none of the writings explains why integration by complementation has been given such dissident status by marketing theorists.

Thus, many of the authors (e.g. Schultz, 1998; Fitzpatrick, 2000) did not regard integration by difference (complementation) as a “legitimate” type of integration between different marketing communication channels. From their perspective, if communications did not show a unified message – they were not integrated with each other. Other authors (e.g. Slingsby, 1994; Tynan, 1994; Cornelissen 2000) were simply ignoring integration by difference (complementation) option altogether!

The marketing literature also identified a number of barriers to making marketing communications effective. As evident from the discussion above, by the 1990s, the integrated approach to marketing has proved to be a very popular way of promoting organizations. The advantages of developing an integrated marketing strategy were acknowledged and well publicized (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998). However, there were (and there still are) two sides of the coin and certain problems associated with the integration also had to be considered. Many marketers (Anders et al, 1996; Enos and McDonald, 2000) warned that while integration had many features that were very appealing to both companies and consumers, it could by no means be considered an easy path to success. Furthermore, at the time (turn of the century), complete integration of marketing communications was not easy to accomplish. Therefore, a number of serious obstacles to the integration were identified.

Anders et al (1996) suggested that three main barriers that organizations had to overcome in the 1990s on the way to achieving integration of marketing communications were: 1) Marketing decisions were usually treated as lower-level line functions, 2) Vertical organizational structure (traditional “hierarchy” was difficult to change) 3) Many organizations practiced functional specialization. Another very serious obstacle to integration could be attributed to a rather unfortunate negative attitude towards integration that was occasionally displayed by some of the parties (e.g. companies behind the communications) involved. Barry (1986, pp.662-665) made a fair comment that integration was often difficult to achieve due to the fact that executives within an organization were unable to reach consensus among themselves on how to run their

marketing campaign. As a result of such disintegration, managers would simply start pulling the blanket in their own direction and keep on insisting that all the marketing funds should go towards the tasks that they were responsible for. They tended to focus on their own needs only and completely disregarded the needs of other departments. As pointed out by Barry (1986, p.662), advertising managers would get very involved with their own advertising plans, as did many sales managers and publicity managers.

With the development of Internet marketing communications, the integration barriers were becoming even more transparent. In the early days of the Internet, the integration of online and traditional marketing communications was a painful process. It did not happen as smoothly as some organizations wished it would. Enos and McDonald (2000) referred to the Jupiter Communication's report on the state of development of the Internet advertising. The report revealed that integration of the old and new media could be listed among the most significant hurdles to making the Internet a superior global communication tool. This report appeared to be in line with some of the other integration studies (e.g. Anders et al, 1996; Winer, 2000). In addition, in some organizations, competition for resources between various departments was subjected to cutthroat competition. Some of the departments within such an organization eventually ended up "competing" not only against their obvious competitors but also against other departments within the same organization. This problem appeared to be particularly typical of larger organizations. However as Winer (2000) pointed out, it was hardly surprising, given that as a rule, larger organizations tended to consist of many departments. Some of the departments had a very high level of autonomy and coordination of integrated activities was likely to require overcoming a number of communication barriers (Winer, 2000). Burnett and Moriarty (1998) agreed that since growing specialization in all areas of business, including marketing and its various specialties, eventually led to internal competition for resources and significantly greater isolation of various departments within organizations, unification of goals and objectives was yet another advantage of having an integrated approach to developing a marketing communications strategy.

As it was evident from the marketing literature of the time (G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Schultz, 1998; Cornelissen, 2000; Enos and McDonald, 2000), achieving a fully coordinated environment within an organization required a lot of time and effort. For example, G.Belch and M.Belch (1998) and Enos and McDonald (2000) argued that it was impossible for the integration to happen overnight as the road to integration could at times get very rocky. However, by mid 1990s despite having to overcome many serious obstacles on the way to the integration of their promotional activities, the vast majority of the companies, which decided to adopt the integrated approach, had been successful in developing an effective integrated marketing strategy (G.Belch and M. Belch, 1998). The outcomes of their decision to integrate their promotional activities were generally positive. The integrated marketing strategy usually proved to be the optimal and the most convenient way of managing their marketing operations (G.Belch and M. Belch, 1998; Cornelissen, 2000; Eagle et al, 2007). Once the switch to the integrated marketing strategy was made, companies were more unlikely to go back to the old way of managing their promotional campaigns and to disintegrate their marketing promotions.

2.2.5 Media Selection for Marketing Promotions

By the turn of the century, the majority of marketing communication publications appeared to agree (G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998, pp.296-338; Chaston, 1993, pp.96-99; Harrison, 1987, pp.107-113; Percy and Rossiter, 1998, pp.446-502; Tynan, 1994, pp.31-39) that media selection process was the starting point for integrating marketing communications. Therefore, media planning was rightly considered one of the most important steps in developing an integrated marketing strategy. According to Tynan (1994, pp.31-39), media selection was based on the marketing strategy chosen by the company and had to take into account the company's specific needs. The process of selecting the right media to be used by a company involved two stages. The first stage was mainly about gathering all the necessary information (Tynan, 1994; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998). Companies had to consider all of the media options available to them and identify difficulties in marketing their product or service, as well as to draw a

demographic profile of their customers, such as age groups, income level, size of the customers' households, number of children, level of education etc. After that, companies were advised to identify some of the main lifestyle characteristics that their customers had in common, such as for example, if they were professionals or tradesmen, or whether they had personality of leaders or followers. This approach was also shared by (Harrison, 1987), who expanded this point by suggesting that companies also had to consider what kinds of activities were popular with their customers, whether they liked to play sports, or go to church, or attend opera concerts etc.. After all the information was collected, the first stage could be wrapped up by identifying and acknowledging the inevitable limitations that were to be faced and summarizing information about marketing campaigns their competitors were carrying out at the time. The second stage usually involved clear identification of the company's marketing goals, development of communication goals, positioning, selection of the largest customer groupings that were to be targeted and finally, integration of all of the segments and marketing options (Tynan, 1994).

Overall, it was evident from the marketing literature of the time (Tynan, 1994; Harrison, 1997; G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998) that adoption of the Tynan's approach to selection of suitable media (Tynan, 1994, pp.31-39) could assist organizations in making two main decisions regarding their media strategy. The first decision was regarding choice of the media in which to advertise the organization's products and/or services. The second decision to be made was to do with establishing intensity of the marketing campaign. More specifically, the medium or media selected had to be capable of transmitting the creative content required of the communication objective selected, with sufficient frequency to achieve the objective (Percy and Rossiter, 1998, pp.442-444).

Choice of suitable marketing communication media could also be influenced by creative requirements (Harrison, 1987, p.112-113). In some cases, there could be specific qualities and features of products or services that the marketing campaign could be aiming to highlight. Harrison (1987) came up with an example, where a very good

reproduction of color was required. Under the circumstances the media that were not capable to reproducing colors well were ruled out of the marketing campaign automatically. As a result of applying these specific (yet essential in that particular instance) criteria, no newspapers could be considered as a possible choice of medium, since newspapers did not have the ability to reproduce colors very well.

Another point transparent from the marketing literature was that integration of marketing communications was about quality not of quantity of marketing communication channels. The real purpose behind developing an integrated marketing strategy was not to integrate as many different media as possible into marketing campaign simply for the sake of demonstrating “diversity”. Instead, the marketing strategy was to be built around integration of all the media that were best suitable for achieving the goals and objectives that the campaign was set to fulfill. According to Shimp (1990, pp.367-371) it was essential for every company to have a clearly defined set of media objectives. Therefore, it could be concluded from the marketing literature that when developing a media strategy, companies needed to address the issues of reach, frequency, continuity and cost of their marketing communications. Reach referred to the proportion of the target audience that was going to be exposed to the message (Shrimp, 1990, G.Belch and M.Belch, 1998). Frequency of marketing communications needed to be examined with the aim of working out the optimal number of times that the message was to be delivered. Continuity referred to identifying the best time to reach the target audience and the issue of cost had to be taken into account to identify the most economic way of delivering the message (Shimp, 1990, pp.367-371).

2.3 Internet Marketing Communications

2.3.1 Introduction to Internet Marketing Communications

The Internet has been defined as a co-operatively run and a globally distributed collection of computer networks. The Internet provides its users with a communication forum that is accessible worldwide (Slevin, 2000; Rau, 2007). It has no physical boundaries and represents a mix of cultures, countries and communities (Rau, 2007). In the 1990s the Internet was regarded as an extremely important new technology and it was receiving a lot of attention from business people. Internet-enabled technologies provided better opportunities for companies to establish distinctive strategic positioning in comparison with the previous generations of information technology (Slevin, 2000; Rau, 2007). Initially, the Internet was often mistakenly perceived as a “discovery of the 1990s”. However, it was started out back in 1969 as a special project initiated by the Advanced Research Project Agency (ARPA) of the U.S. Department of Defense (Shields, 1996; Porter, 2001).

The Internet network has originally been developed with a primary purpose of linking various computer systems together. The computer systems that could be connected to the network had capability to be installed and scattered all over the US (and eventually with some further technical development all over the world). ARPA’s project was conceived and implemented with the aim of creating a well-supported global, electronic, collaborative environment. Initially, it was expected to be used primarily by scientists, key military personnel and educators (Fellenstein and Wood, 2000). However, the project had not been oriented at making the network accessible for use by the worldwide audiences. The initial communication network was limited to military personnel and selected academic communities and groups only. Other potential users (such as for example business and general communities) were not able to take advantage of the benefits offered by the new network. Development and adoption of the new networking model was gradual. Over the time, online communications were also adopted

by a number of American universities. However, it took the Internet a long time to reach the phase of rapid growth and development (Shamim, 2007).

As pointed out by Newton (2000, p.ix), in 1991 the Internet was still a collection of fifty-six kbps, T-1 and T-3 lines. The lines spanned across Western Europe, Canada and Australia, and most of all, the United States. The networks experienced their first wave of growth in the early 1990s (Benjamin and Wigand, p.64; Hoffman, Novak and Chatterjee, 1995; Miller, 1999). In the late 1980s, the Internet consisted of approximately eight hundred unrelated networks. Some of the networks were still lacking inter-connectivity options as the systems were run with the help of many different operating systems and programming languages consequently making it more difficult to have the networks compatible with each other (Rowan, 1999). The networks were also lacking accessibility and outsiders (e.g. those not belonging to specific communities behind the networks) did not have the option of joining the Internet yet. It was only after, WWW (World Wide Web) was developed that the concept of having a unified worldwide network emerged.

The World Wide Web (WWW) was usually defined as a distributed information system that operates on the basis of a hypertext paradigm, and is currently serving as the main navigation tool for accessing resources available on the Internet (Hoffman et al, 1995; Dholakia and Rego, 1998, pp.724-725; Amor, 1999). According to Amor (1999) the creation and consequent development of the WWW turned over a new leaf and from there onwards Internet technologies were to start developing at an enormous speed. Amor also pointed out that over the late 1990's, the Internet rapidly evolved from being a purely scientific network used predominantly by academics, to a platform that was turning out to be instrumental and indispensable for a new generation of businesses. At the turn of the century, there appeared to be a consensus (Poon and Swatman, 1997; N. Adam, 1999; Schubert and Seltz, 2001) that electronic commerce could be defined as the complete set of processes that aim to support commercial activities on a network and involve information analysis. The list of these activities incorporated product information and display events, services, providers, consumers, advertisers, support for transactions,

brokering systems, security of transactions, user authentication, etc. Therefore, it involved enablement of a business vision supported by advanced information technology. The ultimate reasons for embracing electronic commerce appeared to be improvement of efficiency and effectiveness within the trading process (N. Adam et al, 1999, p.1) and/or expansion of business into new marketplaces (Poon and Swatman, 1997). According to Schubert and Seltz (2001, p.83), at least from the technical point of view, the Internet could be considered the closest approximation of a perfect market and a limitless economy. Furthermore, availability of ubiquitous information was making the online market appealing for consumers. Buyers could take advantages of the expanded market by comparing offerings from sellers worldwide.

Contemporary e-commerce trading systems (Jackson and Sloane, 2007; Gimenez and Lourenco, 2008) are obviously significantly more advanced both in terms of business process efficiency and user-friendliness than their predecessors. However, historical studies of the electronic commerce (Poon and Swatman, 1997; N.Adam et al, 1999) showed that by the turn of the century, sufficient trading systems and practices had already been developed. While some of the contemporary authors (e.g. MacGregor and Vrazalic, 2005; Jackson and Sloane, 2007) do not appear to share previously popular anticipation of a possibility of having an Internet-based “perfect market place” (as was advocated in earlier studies of e-commerce (e.g. N.Adam et al, 1999; Schubert and Seltz 2001)), they do agree with the original (as proposed in the late 1990s) concept of the Internet making commercial activities easier and more efficient.

Furthermore, from the very start, the vast majority of people viewed their involvement with the Internet as a positive experience. The Internet’s interactivity was usually regarded as second to none and it was considered to be one the most democratic and open environments of all (Baron, 2000, p.12). Consumers got instant access to goods, services and knowledge. However, there was more to come as the Internet market was just beginning to gain momentum. It was gradually getting bigger and it could be expected to explode soon (Morath, 2000).

2.3.2 Internet: 2001 Perspective

In the early days of the Internet (late 1990s), Internet communications had five defining qualities: multimedia, hyper-textuality, packet switching, synchronicity and interactivity (Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996). The five qualities could be attributed to the Net-based communications only and there are made the Internet the most powerful medium of all. While none of the five characteristics had to occur in any one instance of behavior or application on the Net, they were definitely the main highlights of communicating via the Internet (Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996; Bajay and Nag, 1999). In the 1990s Internet communications were already not restricted by a particular transmission method. There were a number of ways, in which the Internet could deliver the sender's messages to the receiver. Some of the main communication mechanisms suggested by December (1996) were:

- Point-to-point: Point to point communication occurred when a single user was linked to a single receiver. A message sent by electronic mail was a classic example of point to point communication (December, 1996)
- Point-to-multi point: Point to multi- point communication took place when a single user sent the same message to a group of receivers. Point to multi-point communication appeared to be one of the most popular methods of running an online promotion campaign. Putting together an Electronic mailing list of potential customers was considered to be one of the most effective ways of implementing point-to-multi-point marketing communications program (December, 1996; Chase, 1997; Mara, 2000; Wilner, 2000)
- Point-to-server broadcast: Point to server broadcast involved a single user sending a message to a server. The main advantage of sending messages directly to a server lay in the server's capacity to make the message available to any user. The only requirement that the user had to satisfy was access to a software that would enable him to download the message (December, 1996; Porter, 2001)
- Point-to-server narrowcast: Point-to-server narrowcast occurred when a single user sent a message to a server, but unlike with point to server broadcast, the

message was accessible only to a specific group of users. The users required a direct authorized connection to the server. It was common for point to server narrowcast networks to supply authorized users with a login and ID. If the users did not have a login and/or a password to identify themselves access to the message would be denied (December, 1996; Von Uthmann and Speck, 1998)

- Server broadcast: Server broadcast took place when a server was storing information that should be accessible by any user with an appropriate client. Unlike with point to server narrowcast, the user could access the information anonymously (December, 1996; Prescott, 1997).
- Server narrowcast: Server narrowcast communication method involved transmitting information only to a strictly limited list of authorized users. In order to access the information from the server, users were usually required to provide authentication information through their client (December, 1996; Shields, 1996; Slevin, 1996)

In the later years (post-2001), definition of the Internet's functionality and purpose has obviously been reviewed several times in the light of the ongoing technical and commercial developments of the Web. For example, the concept of anonymity (as outlined by December (1996) and Newhagen and Rafaeli (1996)) is no longer valid as in recent years, security concerns proved to be too serious to ignore (Fong and Hui, 2003; Castaneda et al, 2007). The concept of having point-to-server broadcast is also not as critical as it was in the year 2001 as today's communications are aiming at reaching multiple users rather than specifically selected ones (Wanner, Beaubien and Jeske, 2007; Razzou, Seitz and Wu, 2008). Therefore, from today's (2008) perspective, December's interpretation of the "required functionality of the Internet" may appear to be misrepresentative of cotemporary web's requirements and functionality but at the point in time where effectiveness of the Internet communications was to be measured (year 2001), the traditional definition discussed above was still remaining valid.

In 2001, the key notable feature that immediately distinguished the new communications media (the Internet) from its traditional counterparts (e.g. television or

print advertising) was its unique ability to facilitate direct contact between message sender(s) and receiver(s). This capability of the Internet was very valuable in design and delivery of products and services (Peters, 1998, p.23). The Internet offered its users the benefit of making the communication process interactive. It provided both person-to-person and person-to-application interactivity. Interactivity of the Internet could be taken advantage of in a number of ways. From the late 1990s onwards, Internet communications could benefit users by means of:

- Retention of customer attention that could be translated into more sales opportunities (Kenny and Marshall, 2000; Pascale, 2000; Wanner, Beaubien and Jeske, 2007; Razzou, Seitz and Wu, 2008)
- Greater knowledge of customer profile (demo/socio-graphics, preferences), creating new opportunities for better targeting (including one-to-one marketing and repeat sales (Andersen and Lindstrom, 2000; James, 2000; Wanner, Beaubien and Jeske, 2007; Razzou, Seitz and Wu, 2008).
- Making it easier to collect customer feedback, for example to improve product design and presentation and increase customer involvement and loyalty (Fitzpatrick, 2000; Hanson, 2000; Timmers, 2000).
- Enabling customers to engage into self-navigation. Customers could guide themselves to the information that they believed to be most relevant and interesting, thus saving sales costs (Peters, 1998; Hisham, 2001; Lanseng and Andreassen, 2007; Ho and Ko, 2008).
- Customer self-selection, (that was also referred to as consumers' ability to control content of the communications (Spalter, 1995; Peters, 1998, pp.24-25; Meskauskas, 2001; Lanseng and Andreassen, 2007) making it possible for the interaction offer to be tuned to the type of customer that was able to appreciate it (Timmers, 2000, p.16; Ko and Ho, 2008).

Interestingly, (unlike technical features of Internet communications) these communication-defining features still appear to be relevant in contemporary business environment. Recent Internet marketing publications (e.g. Lagrosen, 2005; Wind, 2006;

Lanseng and Andreassen; Ko and Ho, 2008) still refer to initially outlined benefits of Internet communications such as opportunities for having a greater knowledge of customer profile (Lagrosen, 2005) or customer self-selection (Wind, 2006). Therefore, by the year 2001 – some of the aspects of marketing communication functionality of the Internet appeared to be compatible (obviously it was nowhere as developed as it is today) with contemporary features possessed by interactive communications.

On the other hand, not every company that was on the web at the time was successful in utilizing the Internet for achieving interactivity of its communications with the customers. Peters (1998, pp.23-24) admitted that many of the early offerings available to consumers online were not supposed to be interactive at all. Instead, (and this was probably one of the main contrasts between the pre-2001 (Peters, 1998; Sweeney, 2000; Timmers, 2000; Wilson, 2000; Wong, 2000) and contemporary (Lagrosen, 2005; Wind, 2006; Ko and Ho, 2008; Ouversloot, 2008) Internet communications) they were designed to serve as trivial extensions of the more traditional marketing communications media. Thus, the main benefit that such communications delivered to consumers was ability to access all the necessary information through a computer.

At the turn of the century it was believed (Chaffey et al, 2000, pp.449-450; Timmers, 2000) that the main factors that affected consumer adoption of the Internet at the time were: value proposition, cost of access, ease of use, security and fear of the unknown. 1998 survey of the Internet users (Chaffey, 2000, pp.449-450) in the UK showed that many people were still not on the Net and did not intend to utilize the medium in the near future. Out of the respondents aged over 55 (and today this is one of the fastest growing Internet user group (Vuori and Holmlund, 2005; Juznic et al, 2006; Chun and Huhn, 2007; Reisenwitz et al, 2007), 85% said they were not going to get an Internet connection. The survey showed that at the time, many of the non-users of the Internet still did not perceive a need to be online. Now that the Internet has matured and gained more publicity, this perception has obviously changed. However, in the late 1990s the future of Internet marketing communications was still not as clear as it is now. Thus, companies' and consumers' reservations about the new medium were justifiable.

The cost of accessing the Internet was also a major barrier to getting connection for households that did not already own a computer. The Internet connection charges were quite affordable (even though it was more expensive to be connected back then than it is now) and there were also some free Internet Service Providers (ISPs) worldwide. Using the Internet was already becoming a fairly routine task that computer-literate consumers could handle without much difficulty. As Chaffey et al (2000, p.450) pointed out, few consumers would argue at the time that using the Internet was a task of greater difficulty than recording a program using a videocassette recorder. Security was a problem for the users that shopped online only. However, many news stories and publications (e.g. Meaden, 2007) appeared to be generating a perception that those connected to the Internet were risking security of their personal and credit card details. The fear took many years to diminish, as online purchasing of goods and services was yet to become a standard. Some people also had a general fear of the technology and the new medium.

Early Internet marketing literature (Bajaj and Nag, 1999; Weiner, 2000; Phillipsohn, 2001) confirmed that the Internet was quickly recognized for its ability to run highly effective marketing campaigns and it fully deserved its reputation of a truly marketing medium. Internet marketing quickly developed into one of the key areas of marketing as pro-active use of the Internet was allowing organizations to turn over a new leaf and completely restructure their marketing activities. From the very start, online marketing strategies were very different from traditional ones. Traditional media usually addressed its appeals to masses. It aimed to deliver messages to a broad community of consumers. Traditional marketing communications scenarios were based on an understanding that consumers were not being targeted as individuals. In contrast to the traditional marketing strategies, the new medium's approach to marketing was based on the concept of targeting individuals rather than masses (Helmstetter and Metivier, 2000; Ouwensloot, 2008).

Thus, in the late 1990s, the world of marketing appeared to be undergoing a constant change, as new technologies created new and innovative means companies could use to interact with their customers. Development of the web was triggering a new revolution in marketing by providing much more than just another medium for organizations to communicate with the public. The Rapid development of Internet marketing led to the creation of a brand new marketing arena, complete with a new distribution structure, moving organizations closer to their customers. No wonder that the Internet was very successful in winning over many advertising dollars from other media. For example, Rohler (1998, p.11) viewed the Internet as the embryonic vessel of virtual reality and felt that Internet marketing had a lot more to offer compared to traditional marketing communications, and Wilkes (2000) believed that being pro-active about establishment and design of an Internet marketing team could assist organizations significantly in taking advantage of the web's true potential.

Mass media did not appear to benefit from the comparison with the web. Peppers and Rogers (1997, p.10) considered mass media to be as bland as hospital food, or any other meal that had to be served to everybody in exactly the same way. This definition appeared to withstand the test of time and contemporary marketing communications were also trying to focus on personalized communication strategies. Companies found it difficult to monopolize mass media. On the other hand, the web turned out to be much more suitable for targeting potential customers with tailored messages. Diversification was the key to online success. The web did not have to be perceived as a mass market. It could be utilized more effectively if it was broken down into a series of niche markets (Gurau, 2008; Ouwensloot, 2008).

At the time, some interesting comparisons between developing (online media) and traditional media were carried out. In the 1990s, it was quite common for a mass medium to be carrying messages from two or more competing companies at the same time. Such clashes were unlikely to add up to the effectiveness of a marketing campaign. Mass media carried a rising cacophony of competing messages and each and every one of the messages was usually being promoted in a very aggressive way. Furthermore, as

suggested by Peppers and Rogers (1997, p.10), every company was intent on being heard above the surrounding noise that was made by marketing communications of its competitors. However, not many organizations were able to do something about controversy in messages delivered across the market place, as running one's own mass medium appeared to be virtually the only way to secure oneself from conflicting messages, coming from competitors. Only very few companies had both desire and resources to run a mass communication channel on their own (Peppers and Rogers, 1997, p.10). Curiously, contemporary marketing communications management proposals (Duffy, 2005; Gurau, 2008; Ouwersloot, 2008) do not appear to differ too much from the ones considered at the time (Brady et al, 1997; Oikle, 1997).

By the turn of the century, differences between traditional and Internet marketing communications were already considered quite frequently (e.g. Janal, 1998; Rohler, 1998; Timmers, 2000). Janal (1998, pp.21-26) outlined six key differences that can be drawn between traditional marketing and Internet marketing in the late 1990s. The differences outlined were: space, time, image creation, communication direction, interactivity and call to action. Janal argued that traditional marketing images were developed primarily through the use of static or motion pictures, music, lighting and action. These images were created with words and pictures that were capable of triggering emotions. However, the images rarely had a task of carrying sufficient information. Therefore, it was Internet marketing that started creating images that were complete with information. Internet marketing communications were also the first communications to become generally free of space limitations. There was no limit to how much information could be incorporated into an online advertisement. It was up to the advertiser to establish how much information was to be included.

Brady et al (1997) appeared to agree with Janal by pointing out that traditional marketing simply delivered images and messages to consumers who either listened to the messages or ignored them, whether Internet marketing was based on the concept of making all the necessary information available. Furthermore, according to Peppers and Rogers (1997), two-way communication allowed consumers to get back to the advertisers

and consequently turn the communication process into a dialogue. It was not only going to deliver better immediate results but could also become a stepping stone for building an ongoing relationship between the company and the consumer. Benefits offered by online marketing communications were obvious. Internet marketing provided companies with realistic potential to create a customer for life (Peppers and Rogers, 1997; Janal, 1998).

Another argument in favor of the “new wave” of marketing communications was that the interactivity of the Internet was considered to be second to none. No traditional marketing medium had a capability to match it. Lack of interactivity did not mean that the message was ineffective, but even if a consumer got really excited by a television commercial or a printed advertisement, he would arguably find it easy to respond to the ad immediately (Brady et al, 1997; Peppers and Rogers, 1997; Parks, 2000). On the other hand, responding to an online advertising communication was much easier. It did not require any real effort from the consumer. All it took was just one click. Benefits of online marketing communications could also be viewed from the consumer angle. Brenner and Pearson (1997) felt that in the 1990s, the Internet already had many benefits to offer not only to the advertisers (companies), but also to the potential consumers of goods and services advertised. From the customers’ side, the Internet was a highly effective tool for bringing various goods and services together. It also had a lot of potential for providing high quality customer service to both new and existing customers and making online interaction a dynamic and enjoyable experience. Finally, the Internet could also be instrumental in accessing rich new sources of customer data and developing new collaborative relationships between companies and their customers (Brenner and Pearson, 1997; Peppers and Rogers, 1997; Janal, 1998).

To sum up the discussion above, by the end of the 1990s, Internet marketing had not been around for a very long time. It was still a relatively new area for advertisers to tap into. However, it was developing at a very fast pace. By the time, Internet marketing already had a very solid body of knowledge. There were already many fundamental textbooks on Internet marketing (J. Ellsworth and M. Ellsworth, 1995; Sterne, 1995; Bayne, 1997; Brady, Forrest and Mizerski (ed.), 1997; Komenar (ed.), 1997; H. Lewis

and R. Lewis, 1997; Adam and Westberg, 1998; Janal, 1998; Hanson, 2000; Adam and Clark, 2001) not to mention enormous number of journal articles, research papers and online publications. In brief, Internet marketing was developing at a fast pace and it was clearly becoming more and more common over the time. Perry (2000) viewed Internet marketing as a growing industry. Companies kept investing significant share of their marketing budgets into their Internet marketing programs. In the third quarter of the year 2000 only the total expenditure on the Internet marketing reached the impressive figure of \$1.8 billion (Perry, 2000).

The concept of promoting goods and services online was equally appealing to traditional brick-and-mortar companies. At the time, there was still some confusion about the impact Internet marketing communications were going to make on traditional marketing communications. For example, Nemmers (2000) did not see any future for traditional marketing media. According to Nemmers's observations, traditional marketing channels were outdated and were no longer able to offer companies any value. They could be compared to twitching dinosaurs that were about to become extinct, since they had no valuable contributions to the balanced natural environment and were "awaiting their doom".

From today's prospective (when it is evident that traditional marketing communications have obviously survived and are developing along with interactive communications), Nemmers's point of view (2000) is hard to agree with. As it was obvious from majority of the other writings (e.g. Brady et al, 1997; Rohler, 1998) it was much more common for the Internet to be viewed not as a substitute for other marketing media but as a welcome addition to the existing marketing mix. Organizations needed to be prepared to run integrated marketing campaigns, as no single medium was able to penetrate all of the target audiences successfully. The Internet still had to share marketing assignments with traditional marketing media (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998). Today, all of the main forms of traditional advertising communications are still very much around. There is still plenty of evidence of the effectiveness of TV (Panwar and Agnihotri, 2006)

and magazine advertising (Nelson and Paek, 2007) in the contemporary business environment.

2.4 Adding Internet Marketing Communications to the Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy

2.4.1 The Internet As a Marketing Communication Channel

Internet advertising and promotions started out in the mid-1990s. According to Emerick (1997) and Janal (1998) some companies were taking a long time before accepting and adopting the Internet as a new marketing medium. However, pioneers of integration of the Internet marketing into the promotional mix of their companies were able to take advantage of the development of this truly “revolutionary and very exiting mediums” (as described by Janal, 1998) as it did not take them very long to show to the rest of the world how companies could utilize remarkable potential of the new technology effectively and make the Internet instrumental in achieving their marketing goals and objectives. By 2000, the reputation of Internet communications was already established and marketing literature started to underline essentiality of its proactive use. For example, Janal (1998, pp.7-17) believed that there was a definite need in integrating Internet marketing into the marketing mix. Furthermore, he felt that the integration of online and off-line marketing strategies could assist companies greatly in expanding their sales base by helping them build brand identity and create awareness of both the online and offline world.

Similarly, Glassberg (2000) and Wilner (2000) pointed out that it was absolutely vital for companies to ensure that online marketing activities were tied into the goals that were commonly set by traditional marketing activities rather than go off on their own tangent. Even dot.coms (fully online ventures that had no online presence e.g. companies that were selling through a website only) were expected to take advantage of offline promotional opportunities. Likewise, off-line companies could consider using online marketing communications as a tool for strengthening their position in the market place. According to G.Belch and M.Belch (1998, p.464) and Wilner (2000) by the year 2000, the Internet had already developed very good direct response sales capabilities that were

easily recognized. It did not mean that the Internet was to become the only marketing media for organizations to use. Integration of the Internet advertising with other advertising program elements could only enhance the potential for sales and produce even better results. Ideally, advertising on the web was to both support and to be supported by other advertising media.

Similar to traditional communications, perceptions of Internet communications were recognizing not only the pros but also the cons. At the turn of the century, some of the problems associated with Internet communications were transparent. For example, Emerick (1997, p.107) believed that Internet marketing had a number of limitations that had to be considered. The low cost of using the Internet for worldwide communications for consumers was seen as the greatest advantage that Internet marketing could boast over its offline counterparts. As for disadvantages, according to Emerick, one of the main limitations of Internet marketing was the fact that not all of the people who would potentially be interested in purchasing products and/or services from e-enabled organizations were online at the time.

Emerick's article (1997, pp.93-110) was written 12 years ago. However, popularity of the Internet has grown dramatically since then. Over time, the Internet managed to win over many new users and while Emerick's comment is still fair, the extent of the exposure that Internet marketing can deliver to organizations is undoubtedly significantly greater, compared to what it was in 1997. However, even recent studies (Eastman and Iyer, 2004; Reahinia and Azimi, 2008) showed that some user groups were still not very responsive to online communications. Emerick (1997, p.107) also made a comment that the Internet was generally not very well coordinated with other media due to the fact that the formal links between the Internet and the rest of the marketing media had not been developed yet at the time. This statement was hard to disagree with. The Internet's inclusion into the family of marketing media has been very recent and has taken place at an extraordinary pace. As a result, even some of the undoubtedly monumental works on integration of marketing communications (Schultz, 1997; Percy and Rossiter, 1998) didn't appear to pay adequate attention to the Internet marketing

despite the fact that both of these books were published in the late 1990s. It shows that it has taken time for the Internet to become a recognized and appreciated medium for becoming a significant part of integrated marketing campaigns and by the year 2000 – the role of the Internet in the integrated marketing communications was not accepted by all.

Interestingly, while many of the leading marketing theorists of the time (e.g. Shultz, Percy, Rossiter) viewed effectiveness of the internet marketing communications with a great deal of caution some companies already had the vision to realize the great potential of using the Internet for their marketing purposes. They were successful in marketing their products and services online long before the Internet could boast of “official” recognition. As pointed out by Kent et al (1998) and Eagle et al (2007) the first attempts to accomplish integration of online and offline marketing communications occurred very shortly after the first Internet services came to life. At the time, lack of existing tools and techniques for Internet promotions left the pioneers of electronic marketing with no other choice but to experiment with their selections of promotional techniques so these first promotional efforts were based mainly on a trial-and-error approach.

Since the early days of the Internet, companies got an opportunity to integrate it into their existing mix of marketing communications. The new start-ups had the benefit of being able to consider integration of the online and offline marketing communications from the very beginning. Many of the Internet-based business entities aimed to develop fully integrated marketing communications from the day they were founded. So did the traditional brick-and-mortar companies that were started in the late 1990s. The above points confirm that by the turn of the century, integrated use of a complete range of marketing communication channels could be fully anticipated (Kent et al, 1998; Wilner, 2000).

2.4.2 Managing Integration of Online and Offline Marketing Promotions

As pointed out by Eagle et al (2007) and Owersloot (2008), the integration of the promotional mix elements did not happen by itself. It was a man-managed process. Therefore, organizations needed to have a clear and reliable approach to managing integration. It could enable them to stay in control and ensure that coordination of their promotional campaigns did not get out of hand. If a company wanted to integrate its promotions, a well-developed strategy to manage the integration was a must. On the other hand, lack of such strategy could eventually result in negative, rather than positive outcomes. At the same time it was acknowledged that managing an integrated promotional campaign was a demanding task. At the turn of the century, it was even more challenging than it is now. According to Anders et al (1996), the main problem that organizations were facing lay in the need to create an organizational structure that could allow specialists with various kinds of expertise such as public relations, advertising, sales promotions, the Internet advertising, direct marketing etc., to get together and form successful marketing communication teams.

On the other hand, while the integrated approach to marketing promotions was definitely working very well for the majority of large and medium sized organizations (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998), some of the smaller companies were still struggling to embrace the concept of integrating online promotions into their promotional mix. According to Smart (2000), examination of the business models adopted by the smaller organizations at the time may not provide the full picture. The reasons behind the reluctance of smaller companies to include online promotions into their lists were social rather than commercial. For some of the small brick and mortar companies (e.g. Beardy, 2000; Black, 2000; Cheng, 2000; Flass, 2000; Greenberg, 2000; Lanphear, 2000; Rasmusson, 2000; Swoyer, 2000), the issue of establishing pro-active web presence and getting started with online promotions was (and still is e.g. Gazzoli et al, 2008) not as much about money as it was about the time they required to absorb the new concepts and ideas.

As it was evident from marketing literature of the time, some marketers felt that online marketing communications had to be very different from those that existed in

more traditional media of the time (Bickerton et al, 1997, p.144; McTiernan, 2000). For example, McTiernan (2000) argued that approach to integrating marketing promotions and the extent to which a particular medium was to be used, should vary depending on whether the organization's efforts were aimed at developing B2C (business-to-consumer) relationships or whether the emphasis was on building B2B (business-to-business) relationships. According to McTiernan, organizations were not very likely to utilize the online channel for their B2B promotions as much, as they were using more traditional channels. At the same time, when organizations got involved in B2C promotions, they were very keen to use the online channel extensively. The reality was that the online channel was already becoming one of the main sources of information for many decision-makers. It meant that while in B2B cases, online promotions were sometimes behind the offline ones in terms of volume, they should have remained as an element of the organizations' promotional mix. Therefore, Smart (2000) was right in saying that B2B audiences were generally more focused and if an organization that was marketing some product or service to them showed a clear lack of integration in its promotional activities, the promotional campaign failed to work.

As it was evident from the discussion above, integration of online and traditional marketing communications (as well as integration of communication channels at the root level!) was far from smooth. Anstead (1999) admitted that there were some companies that did not really fully understand what the concept of integration of offline and online promotions was all about. From their point of view, integrating online and offline promotions was a primitive task that required nothing more, but to slap their web address on a print or TV advertisement. There was obviously (as discussed by Belch and Belch, Percy and Rossiter, Shultz and many others) much more to developing an integrated promotional campaign but at that point in time, companies were yet to acquire an understanding of the Internet as an effective channel for marketing communications.

Times are changing very fast. The attitude towards integration, described by Anstead (1999) does not appear to be very common among companies any longer (Holm, 2006). For many companies the need to integrate online and offline promotions has long

been acknowledged and the question they are trying to answer today (2009) is not whether to integrate or not to integrate their marketing communications. Instead, they are now trying to work out the best way to manage integration (Aziz and Yasin, 2004; Eiriz and Wilson, 2006; Holm, 2006). In fact, even by the year 2000 it was already evident that in most cases, integration of online and offline promotional strategies work well. It had already been acknowledged and adopted by many companies all over the world (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998). There were many examples of offline companies successfully integrating online promotional strategies into their promotional mix. There were also many online ventures that were equally keen to promote themselves not only online, but also offline and vice-versa (Beardy, 2000; Black, 2000; Cheng, 2000; Flass, 2000; Lanphear, 2000; Rasmusson, 2000; Swoyer, 2000; Wilner, 2000).

On a negative side, as it has been already pointed out above, many small and even some medium-sized businesses did not see how they could benefit from getting online (Smart, 2000). They were still relying on the tested marketing strategies they had been using for years (throughout 1970s and 1980s). As a result of this “comfortable setting” they tended to avoid taking any risks involved in adopting a new marketing medium. However, majority of the case studies involving analysis of marketing communication efforts at the turn of the century showed that the integrated approach to online and offline marketing communications did work. It had already been adopted successfully by many companies (Black, 2000; Cheng, 2000; Flass, 2000; Lanphear, 2000; Rasmusson, 2000). In those particular case studies, the positive impact of adopting and integrating both online and offline marketing promotions spoke for itself. The case studies showed that by the year 2000, while brick-and-mortar companies could benefit from integrating online communications into their marketing communications mix, their Dot.com counterparts needed to embrace offline communication channels!

2.4.3 Hoffman-Novak Communication Channel Efficiency Evaluation Framework

In the mid-1990's Hoffman and Novak (1995) proposed a framework for comparing traditional (pre-Internet) and online marketing communications. This framework was

aimed at enabling comparative studies of traditional and online marketing communication models by establishing critical differences between these two marketing communication channels. Initially, the proposed comparative assessment framework (Hoffman and Novak, 1995; Hoffman et al) was focusing predominantly on explaining how the traditional and the online marketing communication channels were to differ from one another at the time. Initially, online communications were perceived as very different communication products from the traditional ones. It was anticipated that the online marketing communication channel will develop further over the time, therefore making the Hoffman-Novak framework obsolete and outdated, since with the emergence of new technologies, there was a possibility of online and traditional marketing communication channels being driven further away from each other. However, recent studies (Vescovi, 2000; Harris and Cohen, 2003; Sanchez-Franco and Rey, 2004; Williams and Dargel, 2004; Wu and Chang, 2005) showed that while online marketing communications have obviously been changing along with the new marketing and information delivery technologies being developed, no new significant differences have been emerging. Therefore, it can be said that apart from some functional differences (as outlined by Novak and Hoffman) online and traditional marketing communications still serve same or similar purpose and objectives.

Hoffman and Novak's proposed model for marketing communications could be best described by outlining main functional differences between online and traditional marketing communications. It has been acknowledged (Adam and Deans, 1999) that the model proposed contained a major shortcoming, namely lack of comprehensive discussion of similarities between the two. This shortcoming could be interpreted as either lack of interest of what the similarities were or the authors' belief in insignificance of these similarities for convergence and consequent integration of marketing communications. In any case, in the mid-1990's online marketing communications were of particular interest to marketing researchers and practitioners mainly because they could extend the reach and improve the scope of the communication process as well as potentially increase the target audiences rather than for ability to replicate the performance of traditional marketing communications. Some of the marketing

researchers and industry practitioners even considered a possibility of online marketing communications replacing the traditional ones (consequently making them disappear) altogether.

Interestingly, despite the shortcomings outlined above, the Hoffman-Novak framework has been regarded as one of the key models for explaining the differences between these different marketing communication types. It has been used in studies of a wide range of industries and communities, such as for instance online travel communities (Wu and Chang, 2005), personal online communications (rather than marketing communications only), (Sunchez-Franco and Rey, 2004) and small business enterprises (Vescovi, 2000).

According to Hoffman and Novak (1995), the older generation (pre-Internet) of marketing communications tended to lack directionality, while online marketing communications could on the contrary target different market segments more accurately by taking into account their unique needs and desires. Furthermore, Hoffman et al (1997) argued that if contacted via an interactive communication channel, it was more likely that customers would be inclined to go beyond remaining passive recipients of marketing messages. Online messages encouraged them to become proactive participants in the communication process by turning one-way B2C marketing communications into dialogues. It was also pointed out (Hoffman and Novak, 1995, Deans and McKinney, 1997; Hoffman et al, 1997; Wu and Chang, 2005) that interactivity was taking online communications to the next level as prior to use of the Internet as a marketing media, direct interactions with customers were possible in cases of personal (e.g. over the phone or face to face) communications only, consequently making them too expensive and time consuming to pursue on a regular basis.

As evident from Figures 3.1 and 3.2 (available in chapter 3 of the thesis) unlike the traditional media, the Internet could always enable organizations to create opportunities for development of many-to-many marketing communications and do so at a low cost (Hoffman and Novak, 1995; Hoffman et al, 1997). Therefore, Hoffman and

Novak concluded that as marketing and advertising communication channel, the Internet communications were clearly superior to the traditional ones as they could modernize the ways firms could stay in touch with their customers, by the means of combining publishing, real-time communication broadcast and narrowcast under one umbrella (Hoffman et al, 1997). To sum up, according to Hoffman's and Novak's predictions, online marketing communications were communications of the future.

2.4.4 Integrating Online and Offline Marketing Strategies: Year 2000 Experience

To sum up, the literature review showed that at the turn of the century it was still uncommon for organizations to embrace integration of online and offline marketing communications, unless they could anticipate and fully appreciate the potential benefits of the multi-medial marketing strategy. Advertising campaigns should have had very clear objectives. According to Glassberg (2000) advertising was all about delivering organization's brand messages to the right consumers. In all of the case studies mentioned in this section of the review (Black, 2000; Cheng, 2000; Flass, 2000; Glassberg, 2000; Greenberg, 2000; Lanphear, 2000; Rasmusson, 2000; Swoyer, 2000; Wilner, 2000) the brand had always been a unifying factor for marketing campaigns, regardless of whether the campaign did or did not involve integration of online and offline communications or not. The majority of leading integration theorists of the time (Schultz, 1997; G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Schultz et al, 1998) also shared the view that organization's key messages should serve as unifying factors for all marketing activities. It lead to a logical conclusion that if an organization wanted to integrate both online and offline marketing communications into its marketing campaign, the best way to do it was to build an integrated marketing communications strategy around the organization's brand or slogan or particular feature that could be associated in consumers' eyes with the company and/or its products and services (Poon and Swatman, 1997; Lefton, 2000).

Interestingly, Internet Advertising Bureau published a report, based on the survey of senior executives, responsible for implementing online promotional activities for their companies, showed that at the time, more than 70% of all of the respondents admitted to using online ads with the primary purpose of driving more traffic to their websites. At the same time only 46% of all of the advertising executives polled turned out to use online promotions because they believed, it was going to increase their e-commerce activity directly. Therefore, it could be concluded that was no right or wrong answer to the question of which medium was most suitable for the purpose of running a marketing campaign. Each and every one of the media appeared to have its advantages and disadvantages.

The key decision that an organization had to make was how suitable was the particular media for the marketing campaign it intended to run was the choice of media depended largely on what the goals and objectives of a particular marketing campaign were and which media would be most helpful in assisting the company in achieving the planned outcome (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998; Percy and Rossiter, 1998). While limiting marketing communications to one or two media was unlikely to deliver sufficient results, it was equally ineffective to go to the opposite extreme. It was evident from the literature that some organizations were making a serious mistake by dispersing their marketing communications budget between far too many different media channels. In such instances, it was better to opt for concentration of marketing communications in a limited number of media. Therefore, returns on concentrated marketing communications were more predictable and it was a healthy alternative to risking limited exposure to larger audience by advertising in many media (M.Bickerton et al, 1997, p.168).

Another important concluding remark for this section of the literature review is that one of the main reasons behind the need to integrate marketing communications by promoting an organization's brand both online and offline lay in the fact that in most cases neither online nor offline promotions were able to achieve the required marketing objectives single-handedly. No matter how powerful a medium was there were always going to be some target audiences it was not able to reach. At the same time the target

audiences could be reached easily with the help of some other media. In order to build a successful integrated marketing communications program, companies needed to find the right mix of promotional tools and techniques and define their role and the extent to which they could or should be used. They also needed to co-ordinate their use on an ongoing basis (G. Belch and M. Belch, 1998, pp13).

Another important lesson to be learned from the review is that every single marketing media had (and still has!) its limitations. Due to the limitations, many companies found it difficult to fulfill the goals they had set for themselves by using the Internet marketing or traditional marketing only (Mara, 2000; Wilner, 2000). Tynan (1994, p.32) emphasized it was important to bear in mind that it usually took more than one medium to reach the target audience. It was unlikely that one particular media channel was having a sufficient scope for delivering the company's message to all of its existing and potential customers. Furthermore, Fischer (2000) pointed out that one of the weakest areas of the marketing communications of the time was not complete lack of integration but the way online and offline marketing strategies were usually integrated. The very best website and the most carefully planned print or broadcast campaigns were both significantly hobbled if they were not tightly interwoven.

On a positive note, the Internet was able to add more flexibility to marketing communications. Online promotions were easy to personalize and at the same time, they could be used for targeting mass audiences. In addition, online promotions had no geographic constraints. It was equally easy to market to potential customers internationally as it was locally (Greenberg, 2000; Henriks, 2000). As noted by Carpenter (2000), there were particular promotional activities that could be best conducted online. For example, the Internet had the superior ability to serve as an excellent marketing medium for companies, wishing to pursue one-to-one marketing activities. Internet marketing was increasing its popularity day by day. According to the Cambridge Mass business consultancy, spending on Internet marketing was on a steady increase throughout the 1990s. In the year 2000, organizations spent \$1.8 billion on Internet promotions alone.

Thus, it was evident from the marketing literature that the electronic marketplace was getting bigger as demographic characteristics of the web users were also changing in a positive way. During its early days (mid-1990s), the Internet was considered to be an effective medium for marketing to young people only (teenagers in particular) (Gately, 2000). Older generations generally did not show too much interest in going online at the time. However, according to the Media Metrix's report on the Web demographics, the times were changing and in the late 1990s, increasing numbers of elder people as well as other previously "web-disabled" groups (e.g. middle-aged women) started to surf the web (Cook, 2000). Recent studies (Eastman and Iyer, 2004; Reahinia and Azimi, 2008) confirmed that this was and still is an ongoing trend.

To sum up, traditional marketing media entered the new millennium with a clear benefit of having a very long history of being successfully integrated with one another (Percy and Rossiter, 1998). Adding the Internet to the existing mix of fully integrated marketing media could only compliment an organization's marketing strategy. It made much more sense to combine online and offline marketing strategies instead of viewing online promotions as a replacement for the offline ones or treating the media behind these strategies as mutually exclusive.

2.5 Literature Review Summary and Outcomes

The literature review identified a clear need for investigating comparison and integration between informational content of magazine advertisements and websites. As evident from the discussion above (sections 2.2-2.4 of this chapter), by 2001, informational content of traditional marketing communications was already a well-researched area (e.g. Molenaar, 1996; Pearson, 1996; Duncan and Moriarty, 1997; Hanson, 2000). However, the Internet marketing communications were still relatively new and consequently less exposed to academic and industry-based studies (e.g. Emerick, 1997; Poon and Swatman, 1997; Janal, 1998; Lefton, 2000), while few of the studies were focusing specifically on informational content of online messages.

Even more importantly, the two types of marketing communication channels were usually treated as separate disconnected entities. Therefore, the literature review showed a clear gap between studies of the traditional and the Internet marketing communications that needed to be addressed. More specifically, the shortcomings identified at that point in time (2001) included:

- Lack of comparative studies of informational content of the two marketing communication channels where all of the key content elements were considered
- Lack of studies assessing informational content integration between magazine advertisements and websites
- Lack of recommendations/models for comparative studies of informational content of magazine advertisements and websites

The shortcomings outlined above were instrumental in establishing direction for this thesis, as they uncovered areas where further research was required.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

3.1 Methodology Selection

3.1.1 Introduction to Methodology Selection and Design

The third chapter of the thesis examines research methodology and data/content analysis tools used in this research. As Krippendorff (1980) pointed out, the validity of content analysis studies (such as the study of informational content of magazine advertisements and websites) always depended on fulfillment of three critical requirements: stability, reliability and reproducibility of the analysis. Thus, the study required the use of established tools that had previously been used for content analysis of communications and had withstood the test of time. Furthermore, content analysis tools had to deliver consistent results irrespectively of type of media used. Websites and magazine advertisements had to be assessed by the use of an informational content analysis tool that was equally applicable to both of them. As discussed in literature review, many content assessment tools and procedures were developed with a specific medium in mind. There were also tools that were applicable to all types of traditional advertising communications (e.g. TV, radio, print publications) but were completely unsuitable for informational content analysis of websites. In many ways, websites could be compared with other communication channels. They could carry similar types of information and fulfill identical purposes with traditional communication channels.

While the ways information could be expressed in websites were different from traditional communication methods, the differences did not affect communication objectives dramatically. Unlike traditional communication channels, online communications (such as websites) were unlimited in space and offered interactive features that no other communications were able to match. Consequently, online communications appeared to enable companies to design and deliver all-inclusive advertising messages that were clearly superior to their traditional counterparts. However, the impact of these functional differences on the nature of online advertising

communications was more apparent rather than significant. Despite having unlimited advertising space at their disposal, online communications could not be regarded as all-inclusive. Consumers were not prepared to read through numerous web pages describing companies' products and services. Thus, from an informational content perspective, both website and magazine advertisements could be assessed through the same parameters (informational cues).

3.1.2 Research Design Overview

The methodology for this research was developed with research techniques already used in studies of content analysis of magazine marketing communications, such as magazine advertisements and online marketing communications. During the methodology selection process, particular emphasis was placed on studies involving a comparative analysis of the two advertising communication channels outlined above.

The study examined 490 magazine advertisements for branded products and services. The advertisements were collected from twenty Australian magazines. The magazines were selected for the research on the basis of their circulation figures and availability to the researcher. The magazines chosen for the study were regarded as "the most readable" ones at the time as they had the highest circulation figures for the year 2000. (O'Halloran(ed.), 2000). Inclusion of the top twenty magazines into the research project was subject to their availability as year 2001 issues of the magazines had to be available for collection from an accessible location in Melbourne (State Library of Victoria, Universities' library collections etc).

The need to access relevant magazines presented the author with a number of problems. Unlike majority of articles that could be located via online databases and magazines' websites, advertisements from the respective publications were no longer accessible online. It made data collection a challenging task. In order to incorporate a publication into the project, the author had to be able to access hard copies of the

publication. As a result, many of the initially selected publications (particularly the ones published outside of Victoria and not available from the State Library of Victoria) could not be accessed. Once a magazine proved to be unavailable it would be substituted by a publication that was next on the circulation list (the circulation list is available from the thesis appendix). All circulation figures used for this study came from an independent source of data (O'Halloran (ed.), 2000). Using independently-collected data was a necessary measure, since many publishers were not prepared to disclose their real circulation figures.

Nearly all of the magazines examined in this section of the thesis were for the month of May 2001. However, a number of factors had to be taken into account during the data collection stage. Some of the magazines examined in the study were not monthly publications. For example, the *New Idea* magazine was a fortnightly publication. Consequently, there were two issues of the *New Idea* magazine available for the month of May 2001. In such instances, preference was given to the first issue of the month. If the first issue of the month was not available from public libraries (e.g. the desk copy had been lost or stolen) or other sources, a consecutive issue had to be used for collection of the advertising data. Some of the publications were quarterly or bi-monthly. In such instances, preference was given to issues incorporating the month of May 2001 (e.g. April/May or May/June). It was also not possible to access May issues of all of the monthly magazines. For example May issues for the *Woman's Day* magazine were missing from the State Library of Victoria. As a result *Woman's Day* was represented in this study by the first issue for the month of June.

Representation of advertisers and repetition of the advertisements across the sample magazines was another factor to be taken into account. In the course of this study, it became apparent that some of the advertisements included into the research appeared in more than one magazine. There were even occurrences of two 100% identical advertisements appearing in the same issue of a magazine. If the same advertisement was published across a number of different magazines, it made no sense to treat each and every one of the advertisement's publications as a separate piece of primary data since

the content of such advertisements was fully duplicated. The study's objective was to examine informational rather than overall content of magazine advertisements at the time, so in cases of multiple publications, the advertisements were accounted for just once. During the data processing stage of the content analysis, the advertisements were classified as belonging to the magazine, where the initial publication took place.

3.1.3 Background to the Methodology Selection

By 2001, the critical difference between integrated and disintegrated marketing communications lay in uniformity of integrated messages. Integration of marketing communications ensured fulfillment of communication objectives by means of targeting consumers through sending them one controlled message from various sources. As Tynan (1994, p.4) pointed out, content of a truly integrated message was not to be changed by any of the media. If one of the media changed the message in some way, the whole positive impact of the message could be diminished. Sticking to one message and repeating it in an integrated marketing campaign usually tended to bring greater results than a sum of individual messages.

In the 1990s, the Internet opened new possibilities for marketing communications. Prior to development and rapid growth of the Internet, integrated marketing communications had to be transmitted to consumers via non-interactive media only. Initially, establishment of a two-way communication channel appeared difficult and expensive to achieve. Selection and integration of a good mix of online and traditional marketing communications has arguably been one of the most critical issues both for companies and academics since the Internet was introduced (Schultz et al, 1997).

The web appeared to be having a significant impact on the evolution and subsequent growth of integrated marketing communications. Realization of the Internet marketing capabilities resulted in further investigations of its use for promotional purposes (Ducoffe, 1996; Dreze and Zufryden, 1997; Dholakia and Rego, 1998). Mass recognition and adoption of the Internet as an effective marketing communications tool

made companies consider the need to review their traditional marketing communication strategies. Thus, development of the Internet turned over a new leaf in marketing communications. Traditional perceptions of integrated marketing communications had to be reviewed significantly in the light of online marketing communications' availability as yet another option for companies to consider.

The very first comparative studies examining functionality and/or informational content of online and traditional marketing communications were carried out in the late 1990's (Hoffman and Novak, 1995; Hoffman et al, 1997; Dholakia and Rego, 1998; McLachlan, 1998;) followed up by some influential studies after the turn of the century (Adam and Deans, 2000; Bauer and Scharl, 2000; Sheehan and Doherty 2001). These studies were instrumental in triggering further research into website performance analysis.

The studies outlined above provided the author with a conceptual ground for the thesis. McLachlan's research (1998) examined the degree of standardization in advertising. McLachlan's research was of particular relevance to the author's thesis, because similarly to this study, it relied on magazine and online advertisements as the main sources of primary data for content analysis. The main objectives of McLachlan's study were: 1) to measure the degree of standardization that existed in magazine advertisements at that particular point in time across various regions and various product categories, 2) to measure the degree of standardization in the web advertisements across regions and product categories, 3) to compare the degree of standardization between magazine advertisements and the web advertisements 4) to follow the direction of web advertisement format, applications and design (McLachlan, 1998, p.117).

When considering outcomes of the McLachlan's study discussed above, the author felt that the research contained many shortcomings with in methodology and analysis. Furthermore, interpretation of the data was not clear enough and did not address some of the potentially critical advertising communications-related issues. However, despite all the problems, the study untapped enormous research potential in the area of

integrating online and traditional advertising communications. It revealed the scope of the issues that needed to be considered as well as provided other researchers with a sample methodology for assessing informational content of the advertisements.

Hoffman et al (1997) also suggested a framework for comparative studies of traditional and online marketing communication models. The framework was developed with the aim of identifying and underlining key differences between traditional and online communications that marketers needed to take into account at the time. Hoffman's proposed model for marketing communications could be best illustrated by outlining main functional differences between the two types of marketing communications discussed in the paper (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). Interestingly, while focusing on the differences between the two marketing communication models, the paper was not considering and discussing similarities between traditional and online communications. Therefore, it did not appear to provide a complete framework for a comprehensive comparison of the two that could be used in this research.

The author's own investigations of website effectiveness (Baron, 2001a; Baron, 2001b; Baron et al, 2003a; Baron and Wibowo, 2003) also appeared to be logical choices to serve as methodology providers for informational content analysis of websites. All of the studies were completed on the basis of slightly different assessment models. The models varied from each one another depending on research objectives but all of them incorporated both the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977) and the WebQual conceptual model for performance analysis of commercial websites (Adam and Deans, 2000) to one extent or another. However, some of the modifications to the traditional performance/content assessment models implemented in the studies were dictated by research objectives other than informational content and commercial viability assessment (Baron, 2003). It ruled out duplication of the models in the thesis as they would not be able to answer the research questions fully.

Identifying differences between traditional and online communication (marketing communication in particular) models was another critical aspect of the methodology

development. The methodology used for the study aimed to acknowledge both similarities and differences between the two types (traditional and online) of communications. The basic framework for communication effectiveness and performance effectiveness identification was proposed by Hoffman, Novak and Chatterjee (1997). In 2001, the framework was still regarded as a critical definition of the communication channels' functionality.

Figure 3.1 Traditional Marketing Communications Model

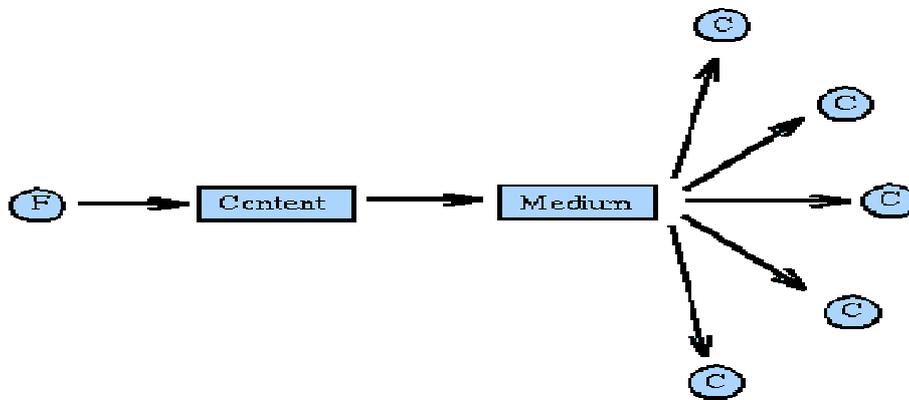
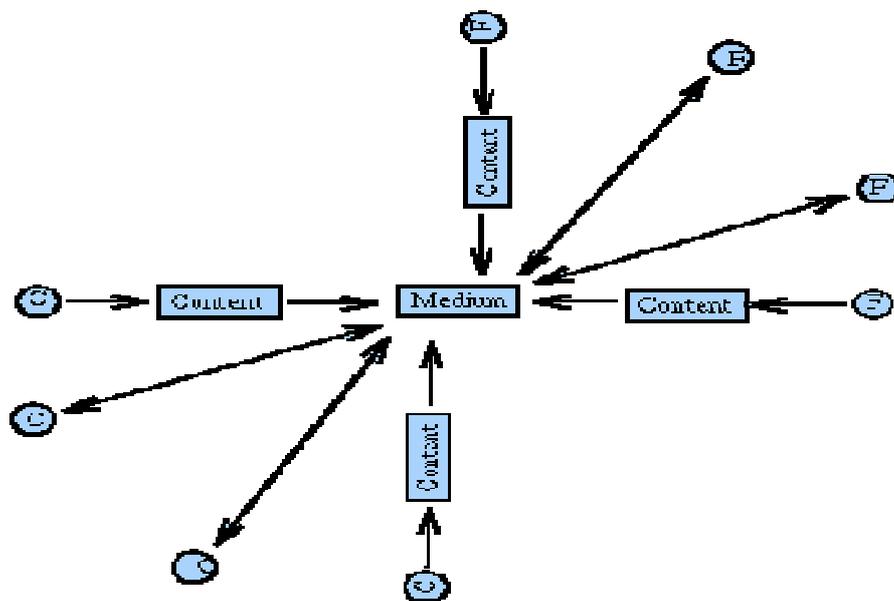


Figure 3.2 Online Marketing Communications Model



Adopted from: Hoffman, Novak and Chatterjee (1997)

The models illustrated by figures 3.1 and 3.2 above, made differences between traditional and online marketing communications evident. They illustrated how online marketing communications transformed traditional relationships between firms (F) and consumers (C) in the 1990s and took them to a new, more advanced level by making marketing communications interactive. While, traditional marketing communications generally appeared to lack directionality, online ones could on the contrary maximize effectiveness of communications with customers by making them better targeted (Hoffman et al, 1997). The most appealing feature of online marketing communications was that customers were strongly encouraged to go beyond being passive recipients of promotional messages and get actively involved in a dialogue with firms. Furthermore, Figures 3.1 and 3.2 above showed that traditional communications were lacking interactivity the online ones were offering.

Unlike websites, magazines and other carriers of print advertising communications had been investigated by researchers for a long time. By 2001, they had already served as a basis for many studies of informational content. Over the years, a

number of approaches to content analysis of magazine advertisements were investigated and implemented by researchers. When searching for tools required for the informational content analysis of websites, it was important to bear in mind that the nature of online marketing communications was fairly unique. As a result, many of the methodologies applicable for the analysis of traditional marketing communications such as magazine advertisements, turned out to be useless when tried on websites. Thus, when evaluating performance of online marketing communications, researchers had to come up with methodologies developed with specific characteristics of online marketing communications in mind. Otherwise, some of the communication features specific to the WWW would not be accounted for.

While traditional content analysis methodologies were mostly unsuitable for studies of the WWW, most of the tools developed for the analysis of the WWW were of no relevance to studies of traditional communications as they could not address specific characteristics of both types of media. For example the methodology for the WebQual study (Adam and Deans, 2000) was not applicable to marketing communications other than online. However, in some instances, content analysis of a wide range of traditional marketing communications (e.g. magazine advertisements, TV commercials, radio announcements etc.) could be nevertheless carried out by means of utilizing one single methodology, as long as the methodology was equally applicable to all of the traditional marketing media, such as for example the Percy-Rossiter Grid (Percy and Rossiter, 1998) or the Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure (Stern and Resnik, 1977). Consequently, these methodologies could be considered for use in this research.

Research methodology selection for the thesis was carried out in accordance with the established content analysis standards (Krippendorff, 1980; Weber, 1985). Krippendorff (1980) emphasized the importance of ensuring content analysis was carried out in a valid way. Thus, all of the methodologies considered for this research had to pass a “validity test”. If at any stage of a study, content analysis tools or procedures were lacking sufficient validity, the findings could not be trusted and would consequently hold no real significance for industry or academia. There were three critical elements to a valid

content analysis. A valid content analysis had to be able to demonstrate: stability, reliability and reproducibility of the study. Furthermore, a valid content analysis study needed to include all the three elements outlined above. If on examination of a content analysis study one of the elements (e.g. stability) was not evident, it was enough for the study not to be recognized as a valid contribution to the existing body of knowledge.

Stability of a content analysis commonly referred to invariability of research findings over the time. Reproducibility of a content analysis referred to consistency of the results produced by the study. The findings also had to be consistent regardless of the coding methods used by the researchers. If a content analysis study was fully reproducible, it was always possible to confirm validity of the findings by simply duplicating the study and carrying it out once again. Accuracy of a content analysis study commonly referred to the extent of correspondence of text or other content carriers analyzed to the established standard or norm. Thus, content analysis could be recognized as valid only if its stability, reliability and reproducibility were definite and beyond any doubt (Weber, 1985).

Selection and implementation of research techniques for content analysis of online (websites) and printed (magazine advertisements) marketing communications for the thesis was based on compliance with the content analysis validity fundamentals outlined by Krippendorff (1980). Research methodology chosen for the content analysis of marketing communications was aimed to ensure that the research was carried out in a way that made it possible to have the study duplicated at any point in time, without compromising stability, reliability or reproducibility of the research findings. Methodology chosen for the content analysis of online and print (magazine) marketing communications complied with all of these criteria.

The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure qualified as a valid research tool for content analysis of communications. Prior to 1991, it had already been utilized by researchers on many occasions and had proven to be reliable and consistent (as discussed in the Literature Review). It meant that accuracy of the research findings was not going to

vary depending on interpretation of the data. All of the above also applied to the WebQual –conceptual model for content analysis of commercial websites (Adam and Deans, 2000). Thus, both content analysis procedures that were selected for the research were fit for the purpose – informational content analysis of magazine advertisements and websites. Unlike alternative procedures and tools available for the research, their validity and reliability were difficult to question as both procedures had been successfully utilized for tasks of similar nature previously. The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure had already been used for nearly a hundred well-known academic studies of informational content up until 2001. WebQual had also been employed previously for fundamental studies of the commercial use of the web in Australia and New Zealand.

3.2 Content Analysis as a Research method

3.2.1 Content Analysis in Historical Development

By the year 2001, content analysis could already boast of a very long and equally colorful history. Carney (1972) pointed out that the roots of the contemporary content analysis could be traced back to over two-hundred-and-fifty years ago (makes it two-hundred-and-eighty by now). In 1744 British religious scholars conducted one of the earliest and a fairly sophisticated analysis of messages' content. Obviously, content analysis methods and techniques were evolving significantly over the time. By 2001 standards, content analysis methods that had been used by scholars centuries ago were unlikely to be widely accepted. Those methods were very different from the ones used by modern researchers. However, some parallels between the early studies and contemporary content analysis studies could still be drawn. Initially, (in its early days) content analysis was usually based on the examination of religious texts and concepts and was focusing on a wide range of "hot" issues, such as disputed authorship, statistical analysis and even background of religious texts by analyzing sources of writers' ideas (Carney, 1972).

Over the years, a number of definitions of content analysis as a research method have been developed. Berelson (1952) described content analysis as a systematic, objective and quantitative method for studying communication messages. According to a more recent definition, content analysis was a research technique that could be used for making replicable and valid inferences from data into their context (Krippendorff, 1980). Furthermore, early works completed in this area (Berelson and Lazarsfeld, 1948; Berelson, 1952) proved content analysis to be a valid tool that could be utilized to study the content of messages and as reported by Lin and Ware (2000), content analysis has been adopted over the years by a very wide range of academic disciplines such as communications, psychology, sociology, organizational theory and political science.

Content analysis literature review showed that evolution and development of content analysis has been gradual. The principal use of content analysis as a research

method has been constantly re-formulated and added to (Berelson, 1952; Krippendorff, 1980; Lin and Ware, 2000). By the year 2001, content analysis had already been used in a very broad context. Modern applications of content analysis were not limited to a particular culture, industry or method (Krippendorff, 1980). On top of that, content analysis as a research method was acknowledged and utilized by researchers all over the world and its popularity as a research method was growing significantly over the years (Casty, 1973; Rosengren, 1981; Kinnier and Ostlund, 1997; Lin and Ware, 2000).

Content analysis literature contained a lot of evidence of diverse use of content analysis methods and tools. For example, Casty (1973) used content analysis to study American popular culture, Flournoy (1992) conducted content analysis of the major contemporary Indonesian newspapers and Kinnier and Ostlund (1997) applied content analysis to examine lyrics of the selected love songs and the messages that these songs were delivering. Their study involved in-depth examination of messages from some of the America's most popular songs of the 1950s, the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s. The study looked at twenty-five of the most popular songs for each of the decades. The main findings, the researchers arrived at were that in each of the four decades they examined, the theme of romantic love was most influential and it was constantly overshadowing all other themes.

In recent times, content analysis studies appeared to become more "market-oriented". For instance, Seitz (1998) carried out content analysis of fashion products: perfumes, women's apparel, cosmetics etc. by studying the informational content of advertisements in the *Vogue* magazine. In the early 1980s, a number of industry-commissioned studies involving content analysis techniques were also completed in Scandinavian countries (Rosengren, 1981). A few classic content analysis studies (George, 1959; Namenwirth, 1973; Stone and Kelly, 1980) revealed that content analysis techniques were generally not restricted to a particular area of study. Furthermore, majority of the content analysis techniques could be very flexible depending on the nature of the study conducted. Flexibility of content analysis techniques meant that they could be used to study a very wide range of subjects.

A wider cross-industry search for content analysis-related publications revealed that the possibilities for application of content analysis as a research method were almost limitless. For example, Stone and Kelly (1980) referred to a highly original study conducted by Ogilvie that was based on a comparative content analysis of real and simulated suicide notes. The content analysis showed that it was possible to distinguish and reveal the real suicide notes from the fake ones in over 90% of all of the cases examined by the researchers. Krippendorff (1969) also successfully illustrated that content analysis had a lot of scope. It was not limited to the analysis of verbal or written data only. Its applications were in fact much broader. Scope of the content analysis was not restricted to those particular forms of communication. There were many other message carriers that could also be studied by means of subjecting them to detailed content analysis.

The Application of content analysis as a research method for studying communications could take various shapes and forms (Stone and Kelly, 1980). In the past, it was mostly common to use content analysis to study particular types of communication messages, such as magazines, newspapers, political speeches, letters and other printed media products. However, the same approach could be successfully used to study paintings, facial expressions, speech intonations, music and all the other forms of communication that may very well be non-linguistic (Krippendorff, 1969). Content analysis was not limited to a particular structural framework. There were many ways of structuring a content analysis study. Obviously, structure of any content analysis could vary depending on the specific requirements of the research question raised (Lin and Ware, 2000).

Content analysis has long been considered as a valid research method. Lin and Ware (2000) believed that research questions that could be effectively addressed by utilizing content analysis as a research method were almost limitless. Content analysis tools could be applied equally effectively in many different environments. Up to the year 2001, the major issue that researchers were facing was the issue of developing a set of clear guidelines for all of the procedures that were necessary to validate the research and

to ensure that the research was conducted with complete objectivity and accuracy (interestingly, today (2008) such guidelines still appear to be non-existent).

From a researcher's perspective, it was important to be able ensure the validity of content analysis conducted. Krippendorff (1980) believed that validity of a content analysis study was based on three key factors. Those factors were stability, reliability and reproducibility. Krippendorff's fundamentals appeared to be equally applicable to the studies of all communication channels from ancient rock-paintings to the latest impulse-transmission technologies. Weber (1985) explained that as a rule, stability of a content analysis study referred to invariability of results of the content analysis over the time, since interpretation of the findings (in cases where the findings were genuine) was not to be time-sensitive. Reproducibility of a study usually referred to consistency of the results achieved, regardless of the coding methods used by the researchers for processing of the data. Accuracy of a content analysis study commonly referred to the extent of correspondence of the text analyzed to the established standard or norm. According to Weber, a valid content analysis had to comply with all of the three requirements listed above.

Approaches and methods that could be used for conducting content analysis were changing significantly over the years, with technology being the major reason for the changes. Therefore, new upcoming technologies (such as computer-aided content analysis tools) were instrumental in improving the quality and the validity of content analysis. Technological developments were enabling researches to take content analysis to a new, more advanced level (G. Gerbner et al, 1969; Krippendorff, 1980; Lin and Ware, 2000). Content analysis scholars appeared to agree that the major breakthrough in computer-aided content analysis took place during the 1950s-1960. During the two decades, computers were able to make a giant step forward towards developing into powerful research tools for content analysis. Eventually, multiple advantages of using computers for content analysis were becoming more and more obvious. By the late 1960s, computer-aided content analysis had already been recognized as a very effective,

and in a way revolutionary approach to studying communications (G. Gerbner et al, 1969).

Krippendorff (1980) claimed that proactive use of computers was instrumental in revolutionizing some of the most important and most critical aspects of content analysis. Furthermore, Krippendorff believed that computers could be particularly helpful when it came to number crunching. If a content analysis study was conducted in the area of statistical (quantitative) analysis, computers were usually the most valuable tools available to researchers. According to Krippendorff (1980) and Stone and Kelly (1980), computer-aided content analysis clearly had the advantageous capacity of being able to analyze large volumes of data at a high speed. It could boast of more than just a superior speed of processing information as at the same time, it could also be instrumental in ensuring a very high level of accuracy that would otherwise be impossible to achieve.

Back in 1980, computers were already been considered indispensable tools for content analysts. Since the statement was made over 25 years ago, the computer-aided content analysis was able to make a further significant step forward. As a result of ongoing development of new, more advanced computer applications, the benefits that researchers could derive from using computer-aided content analysis were becoming even more significant (Lin and Ware, 2000). By the year 2001, while in some cases, computer-aided content analysis was still not able to address some of the critical issues (Minnik, 2000), Lin and Ware (2000) stated that computers were getting faster and content analysis software packages were getting more advanced, thus consequently leading to creation of the new generation of precise and powerful tools for the analysis of various kinds of communication messages (Deans and McKinney, 1997; Fan, 1997; Ho, 1997; McTavish, 1997; Miller, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999;). Another advantage of computer-aided content analysis led in the fact that researchers were finally becoming able to gain access to the data that had previously been inaccessible or alternatively too expensive to access. The researchers could do so with the help of global networks and electronic databases (Lin and Ware, 2000.)

Thus, it could be concluded that by the year 2001, content analysis had clearly withstood the test of time successfully. It proved to be a solid method of analyzing content of communication messages that was both valid and reliable. At that point in time, Krippendorff's definition of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1980) was still relevant and it was applicable to the academic and industry-initiated studies that relied on content analysis as a research method (in fact, in the year 2008, it still appears to be relevant to contemporary content analysis research projects). As a result, content analysis was remaining a popular research method. Reliability and validity of content analysis kept on being confirmed over and over again by a number of studies that were taking place at the time (Deans and McKinney, 1997; Fan, 1997; Ho, 1997; McTavish, 1997; Miller, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999; Lin and Ware, 2000; Baron, 2001; Baron et al, 2003; Baron and Wibowo, 2003). In all of the studies mentioned above, researchers were successful in utilizing content analysis as their major method of analysis and interpretation of the data they were working with.

3.2.2 Content Analysis of the Worldwide Web

The World Wide Web appeared to have a significant impact on evolution of informational content analysis as a research method. The definition and perceptions of content analysis as a research method evolved over the time. Krippendorff's early definition of content analysis (Krippendorff, 1969) had to be expanded with the introduction and development of the World Wide Web. Ever since WWW was added to the existing list of communication tools, content analysis has been considered one of the standard and most popular methods of studying websites and other online communications (Rafaeli and Newhagen, 1996; Pavlik, 1999; Ju-Pak, 1999).

Lin and Ware (2000) believed that while the WWW did pose a number of challenges for content analysts, it did not undermine validity and reliability of content analysis as a research method. The majority of the initial challenges derived from the fact that the sheer size of the WWW was always colossal. Size and structure of the Internet

were rather chaotic than well organized. Nevertheless, by the year 2001, it was already evident that content analysis of the WWW could be accomplished. Many of the early studies of the content of the World Wide Web (Deans and McKinney, 1997; Fan, 1997; Ho, 1997; McTavish, 1997; Miller, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999; Lin and Ware, 2000) were completed successfully, thus showing that the challenges, content analysts of the WWW were facing at the time were manageable and the tools and methods available to the researchers had sufficient scope to deal with the challenges posed by web-specific issues.

Based on the WWW content analysis studies of the time, there were five major distinctions that appeared between WWW-based communications and traditional mass media. The five distinctions were as follows:

- The WWW's ability to mix multiple media (Rafaeli and Newhagen, 1996; Lin and Ware, 2000)
- Lack of tyranny of author over reader (Rafaeli and Newhagen, 1996)
- No one could control audience's attention (Rafaeli and Newhagen, 1996)
- The Internet could make communication process continuous (Adam and Deans 1999; Lin and Ware, 2000)
- Interactivity of the WWW (Rafaeli and Newhagen, 1996)

Today, all of the five characteristics that were instrumental in shaping out Internet communications in the year 2001 still appear to be valid and relevant. In the late 1990s when content analysis of the web-hosted communications was just starting out, it was already acknowledged (Rafaeli and Newhagen, 1996; Lin and Ware, 2000) that web-based content could not always be assessed through the use of traditionally-acceptable tools and patterns. Content analysts needed to make sure that the distinctions listed above (Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996) were recognized and taken into account. The five distinctions clearly demonstrated that it was not always possible to treat online and offline communications in the same manner. In some instances, content analysis of the WWW could require a different approach as well as a different set of tools.

Out of the five factors outlined by web content analysts, the first two appeared to be playing a particularly vital role in developing a sound and reliable methodology for content analysis. The first one was the World Wide Web's unique capacity to integrate multiple media, including text, animation, video and graphics. Ju-Pak's content analysis of advertising on the WWW (Ju-Pak, 1999) showed that some of the major content dimensions, such as creative appeal/strategy used, the amount and particular type of information contained as well as certain descriptive characteristics were absolutely unique and could be utilized on the WWW only. While that particular study was limited to one category of messages (advertisements) only, Ju-Pak's observations were of a conceptual nature, so they could be used for a general comparison of the WWW against other types of media.

The second critical distinction that a number of researchers (e.g. Newhagen and Rafaeli, 1996) were pointing out was the WWW's role in development of hypermedia. Hypermedia took communication to a new advanced level. Hypermedia allowed its users to link all the objects to one another and it was up to the consumer/user to decide on the sequence and context in which the materials should be consumed. By 2001, hypermedia provided consumers with an opportunity to exercise control over content and attributes of the messages they were interested in from the receiving end. Consequently, consumers could start being selective and make their own choices regarding what they wanted or did not want to view. Newhagen and Rafaeli's observations were confirmed and developed even further when Pavlik (1999) came up with a suggestion that the Internet was much more open compared to all of the traditional mediums. Furthermore, Pavlik believed that one of the main results of the Internet's rapid development was a change in attitude towards functionality of media. Traditional approaches to media were consequently undergoing complete transformation.

Finally, (and this appeared to be one of particularly defining features of web communications) Lin and Ware (2000) suggested that one of the main effects of the development of the Internet as a communication medium lay in the fact that websites were clearly idiosyncratic and individualistic in comparison with the more traditional

forms of media. Unlike with traditional communications, it was harder to develop/find content analysis tools that could be equally applicable to a wide range of web communications rather than to a small selection. Therefore, it could be argued (Ho,1997; Ju-Pak, 1997; Lin and Ware, 2000) that content analysis of the WWW-based communications was usually more challenging when compared with content analysis studies of traditional communications.

3.2.3 Content Analysis of Commercial Websites

Distinguishing between commercial and non-commercial websites and developing an approach that would allow to identify which of the websites were being used commercially was the first step in ensuring validity and reliability of a commercially focused (e.g. study of commercial online materials rather than WWW content in general) content analysis study. As pointed out by Ho (1997), non-commercial websites should be excluded from business studies because the purpose they serve may be influenced by factors other than commercial success. www.sellweb.com (2000) (one of the very first websites devoted to e-commerce) defined "commercial website" as a "website that offers goods or services for sale or a website for a business other than a non-profit organization".

At the turn of the century, there appeared to be various approaches to content analysis of commercial websites (Ho, 1994; Dholakia and Rego, 1997; Hoffman et al, 1997; Ju-Pak, 1997; Dholakia and Rego, 1998; Palmer and Griffith, 1998; Adam and Deans, 1999; Deans and McKinney, 1999; Ju-Pak, 1999; Bauer and Scharl, 2000; Deans and McKinney, Baron, 2001; Schubert and Selz, 2001; Sheehan and Doherty, 2001).

Differences and similarities between the approaches were quite interesting to compare. For example, Lin and Ware (2000) pointed out that categorization was the key to successful content analysis of the World Wide Web. Development of comprehensive and at the same time mutually exclusive categorization scheme, by which individual

recording and context units could be described, was the single most important component of any WWW content analysis. Hoffman et al (1997) defined six functional categories of commercial web pages. The six functional categories were: 1) online storefront, 2) the Internet presence (flat ad, image and information), 3) content (fee-based, sponsored, searchable database), 4) mall, 5) incentive site, 6) search engines. Ideally all of the six functional categories listed should be part of an integrated website building strategy.

Schubert and Selz (2001) offered a model for the measurement of the functional effectiveness of websites. The web assessment model did not focus on the electronic commerce strategy from a company's perspective or assist the company in making a decision whether to go or not to go online. Instead, it provided analysis of the quality of the commercial website from a consumer's perspective. At the time (2001) it was believed, that both researchers and Internet marketers could use the model. Companies could use the model to evaluate status of their current websites and outline opportunities for improvement. Researchers could use the model for identifying best practice examples and make comprehensive lists of strengths and weaknesses of existing websites from consumer perspective. Furthermore, Schubert and Selz also suggested that market transaction to the WWW could be divided into three separate phases: information, agreement and settlement. During the information phase, customers collected information about potential products and services. They tried to identify possible suppliers as well as prices and conditions. The information phase satisfied consumers' need for information to reconcile his or her demand for a product or a service. The agreement phase involved negotiations between suppliers and customers. The phase was important to establish a firm link between suppliers and buyers that would eventually lead to formal contracts. The settlement phase included delivery (either physical or virtual) of the product/service ordered, as well as after-sales contacts such as guarantee claims or availability of help desk services (Schubert and Selz, 2001, p.85). The model also took into account the important role community component and personalization were playing in today's market. In this particular context "community" referred to the communication that was taking place among customers.

Another content analysis model was proposed by Ho (1997) who introduced a classification of commercial websites for evaluation purposes and suggested that there were three different categories of commercial websites. According to this model, all commercial websites could be classified as: 1) websites that specialized in promotion of products and services, 2) websites that specialized in provision of data and information, 3) websites that specialized in processing business transactions. On top of that, Ho identified four different ways in which commercial websites were able to create value. The four types of value creation were: 1) timely, 2) custom, 3) logistic and 4) sensational. According to Ho, such combinations of website categories and value creation activities could provide a sufficient framework for a comprehensive content analysis of commercial websites.

However, Ho's (1997) approach did not appear to be embraced by many of the other researchers. In fact, it was attracting some (seemingly valid) criticism. For instance, Adam and Deans (1999) questioned validity of a number of aspects of Ho's study. They felt that Ho's findings appeared to lack reliability due to the insufficient feedback from the customer side. Adam and Deans also pointed out that under the circumstances further research was required to confirm validity of Ho's findings (Ho, 1997). Interestingly, Ho's initial study was not followed by any further studies employing a similar kind of content analysis methodology. Therefore, reservations expressed by Adam and Deans could be regarded as fully justifiable.

Around the same time, Deans and McKinney (1997) used commercial website content analysis to establish the level of website sophistication in New Zealand. The analysis was conducted on the basis of nine assessment criteria. Each criterion was assigned a particular weight that could vary depending on its significance. Shortly after, Adam and Deans (1999) appeared to develop the Deans-McKinney model further as they chose to employ content analysis of commercial websites as part of their WebQual project (Adam and Deans, 1997). The project was based on content analysis of three hundred commercial websites that were to be selected randomly. The content analysis included an assessment of commercial websites by organizations that had been chosen for

the study as well as qualitative assessments by independent researchers. The WebQual Audit was carried out as a longitudinal study and aimed to compare organizational use of the Net and the web across a number of countries (Adam and Deans, 2000). The conceptual model for the content analysis included eight criteria: URL, coding, brochureware/non-linear, design, order processing, service, pay and global.

Bauer and Scharl (2000) offered yet another methodology for classification of websites. The methodology was equally adequate for analyzing content and hypertext structures of commercial, educational and non-profit organizations. The research process encompassed three phases: web mirroring, extracting classification criteria and analysis and clustering mechanisms. The study was of a particular interest because the researchers were using a combination of manual website content analysis techniques and the WebAnalyzer software. The researchers believed that their approach towards content analysis, based on the development of web content oriented software could lead to the creation of opportunities for automated studies of thousands of websites at a given time. Bauer and Scharl (2000, p.42) concluded that their model was most appropriate for the assessment of the “real world” web information system. At the same time the researchers admitted that manual classification of websites generally tended to be more content oriented than reliant on automated evaluations.

Sheehan and Doherty (2001) employed content analysis of websites to examine integration between print and online communications. The study explored two separate areas of integration: strategic integration and tactical integration. Strategic integration section of the study looked at a number of factors. The first stage involved an examination, of whether a consistent concept of thought could be found in both print advertisements and the website. The next stage involved an assessment of whether the objectives for print advertisements and the company’s website were complimentary. This was followed by an assessment of the target audiences and the way the audiences perceived the advertisements. The final stage of the strategic integration evaluation involved analysis of whether the websites contained an interactive component that allowed them to collect valuable data about their visitors (Sheehan and Doherty, 2001,

pp.54-55). Tactical integration between websites and printed advertisements was measured by means of examining specific creative elements used in both print advertisements and websites. Visual elements analyzed by the researchers included: product or service logo, key visuals, product pictures and statements by spokespeople. Verbal elements covered by the researchers included: specific support for the promise or single most important message, slogan and specific copy from the advertisement (Sheehan and Doherty, 2001, p.54). According to the researchers, their study was successful in identifying elements that advertisers appeared to integrate successfully and areas where integration left a lot to be desired.

As Lin and Ware (2000) pointed out categorization and approaches to content analysis were rarely (if ever) constant and therefore they were hard to compare with one another. These approaches were dependent on the nature of the specific research questions that were to be addressed by a particular study. In case with WWW content analysis, setting a benchmark was even harder as this field of study was fairly new at the time and was still in its infancy. The web-based business models were still developing and at that point in time, there were no obvious criteria that could be used for evaluation of the effectiveness of commercial websites (Ho, 1997). However, a fairly large number of developed frameworks for the evaluation of commercial websites (Ho, 1997; Hoffman et al, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999; Bauer and Scharl, 2000; Sheehan and Doherty; Schubert and Selz, 2001) clearly demonstrated that while content analysis of the WWW was undoubtedly a very challenging task, it could nevertheless be accomplished successfully.

3.2.4 Content Analysis of Traditional Advertising Materials

When searching for pre-2001 content analysis studies, a lot of relevant studies of traditional advertising materials could be identified. Therefore, it could be concluded that it was used a lot across the advertising industry worldwide. Interestingly, not all of the studies were of academic nature. Content analysis tools and patterns were also used by

private companies (e.g. advertising agencies) and consumer groups. Content analysis studies of traditional advertising materials were not limited to print publications as some of them also incorporated TV and even radio commercials, billboards etc. It showed that virtually any advertising message (irrespective of the communication channel used to deliver it) could be broken down into content elements and consequently analyzed.

By the turn of the century, there were many different approaches researchers could use for applying content analysis to the studies of traditional advertising materials. For instance, Javalgi et al (1995) completed a comparative analysis of visual components in US and Japanese magazine advertisements. The study was conducted with the aim of examining a number of various elements such as product portrayal, inclusion of price information, process appeal types, content appeal, headlines, ethnic groups portrayal, sex roles portrayal, portrayal of the elderly and children and participation of people in product use in advertisements (Javalgi et al, 1995).

Cutler et al (1993) used content analysis techniques for a comprehensive investigation of magazine advertising. The advertisements for the study were selected from three different magazine categories: women's magazines, business magazines and general interest magazines. The emphasis of the research was on comparing the degree of emotional appeal in advertisements for services and product advertisements. The research findings confirmed the hypotheses suggested:

H1: The frequency of emotional and content appeals' usage in service advertisements differed significantly from emotional product appeals in advertisements for products.

H2: The frequency usage of emotional process visuals usage in service advertisements differed significantly from usage of emotional process visuals in product advertisements.

H3: Frequency of headlines with emotional content usage in advertisements for services differed significantly from that of advertisements for products (Cutler et al, 1993).

An earlier study by Cutler et al (1992) was also based on content analysis of printed advertisements. The study compared visual components of printed advertising in

the US and in the European community. Results of the content analysis indicated that product mix varied substantially across the countries. The study also revealed that the successful standardization of printed advertisements was not dependent upon the product category the goods advertised belong to. It illustrated dominance of country differences over similarities and suggested that standardization of printed advertisements in the European community was not going to be easy to accomplish. The standardization of advertising in the EU member countries had not yet taken place at the time and it was a complex process that could not be completed overnight (Cutler et al 1993).

Shortly after, the content analysis studies of the US and European printed advertisements were followed by similar studies in the rest of the world. Al-Olayan and Karande (2000) investigated differences in informational content between printed advertisements in the US and in the Arab world. The study of Arab magazines incorporated publications from twelve Middle Eastern and ten African countries. The study examined differences between depiction of men and women in the advertisements, the extent of comparative advertising, the extent of informational content and the extent of price information. Other factors that were taken into account were impact of religion on formation of values, level of individualism, whether the culture the advertisement was aimed at was high or low content and economic differences between the US and the Arab markets. The study revealed that in the Arabic advertisements people were depicted less frequently, compared to the US advertisements. At the same time, in the advertisements in which people were shown, there were no significant differences between the two in the extent, to which women were depicted (Al-Olayan and Karande 2000).

Hornik (1980) conducted content analysis of printed advertisements from a very different angle. His content analysis study looked at the ways printed advertisements were perceived by consumers. The research was based on a sample of twenty-one printed advertisements by established carpeting companies. The study involved presentation of the advertisements to hundred-and-forty-five Israeli housewives. These advertisements were presented to the housewives in random order and one advertisement at a time. The study emphasized that the efficiency of a printed advertisement should be measured in

terms of perceived benefits it was capable of communicating to consumers. As for the findings, the study demonstrated that in order to maximize perceived benefits for consumers and thus achieve optimal returns on printed advertisements, companies needed to keep their advertisements as informative and factual as possible.

At the turn of the century, the Resnik-Stern system for content analysis of advertising materials was one of the most commonly applied methodologies for analysis of informational content in advertisements. By the year 2001, it was already successfully employed by many researchers around the world (Resnik and Stern, 1977; Stern et al, 1981; Taylor, 1983; Martenson, 1987; James and Van Den Bergh, 1989; James and Van Den Bergh, 1990; Noor Al-Deen, 1991; Stern and Resnik; 1991; Biswas et al, 1992; Dholakia, Rego; Fay and Currier, 1994; Chan, 1995; Abernethy et al, 1996; Elliott and Lockard, 1996; Abernethy and Franke, 1998). For example, Stern et al (1981) conducted content analysis of information content in printed (magazine) advertisements. The study focused on the approaches advertisers adopted for informing the readers of magazine advertisements. The main objective for the study was to determine if magazine advertising at the time was predominantly informative or persuasive.

Content analysis of magazine advertisements could be conducted on the basis of the Resnik-Stern information classification system (Stern and Resnik, 1977). The system set out fourteen informational categories. All of the categories could be considered informative. Inclusion of content classified under the informational categories allowed consumers to make intelligent choices among the alternatives available to them after reading the advertisement (Stern et al, 1981). The informational content categories outlined by the Resnik-Stern system were: price, quality, performance, components or contents, availability, special offers, taste, packaging, guarantees, safety, nutrition and new ideas (Stern and Resnik, 1977). The research findings showed that of all the magazine advertisements examined could be considered informative as they included at least one element from the Resnik-Stern informational classification system. The amount of information in the advertisements, chosen for the study varied depending on the magazine category depicted. The research also demonstrated that there was no obvious

correlation between size of the advertisements and amount of information they contained (Stern et al, 1981).

Shortly after, many other studies involving the Resnik-Stern content analysis methodology appeared to follow. For instance, James and Van Den Bergh (1989; 1990) carried out a comparative analysis of relative information value in advertisements on the basis of the Resnik-Stern informational cues. Their study involved a comparison of direct response advertisements, product/store images and institutional advertisements from eighteen magazines chosen for the study. Informational content analysis of eight-thousand-four-hundred-and-seventy advertisements from the magazines showed that direct response advertisements generally tended to differ significantly from both product/store images and institutional advertisements. The main differences were in numbers of informational cues the advertisements contained and in kinds of information they conveyed to consumers (James and Van Den Bergh, 1989).

Cross-country studies of advertising content involving the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure were also taking place. For example, Noora Al-Deen (1991) compared content of magazine advertising in the USA with content of magazine advertising in Saudi Arabia. The study was an example of how the Stern-Resnik informational cues could be customized depending on the nature of research and research objectives. Furthermore, the researcher added the 15th (extra) category - “energy” to the existing content analysis mix, thus modifying the Resnik-Stern system to suit the research needs. The findings showed that the US magazine advertisements had more informative content than that of Saudis and the lower literacy rate in Saudi Arabia had led to a decrease in the number of informative categories in magazine advertisements. At the same time, a comparison on the basis of type of product and information content for each of the advertisements indicated that Saudi advertisements were generally more informative than the US ones.

Other interesting examples of comparative content analysis of advertisements from two or more countries were studies completed by Biswas et al. (1992) and

Martenson (1987). The study by Biswas et al (1992) compared the US advertisements with French ones. The study showed that French advertisements contained greater number of Resnik-Stern informational cues than the US ones. Martenson (1987) used a similar approach to examine differences between advertisements in the US and Sweden. In this instance, the Resnik-Stern informational cues were used to determine whether American or Swedish commercials contained greater amount of information. Fay and Currier (1994) looked at the extent to which advertisers chose to make use of “informative copy” or “copy points” as a persuasive and communicative technique in the light of evolution of advertising over the time. The frequency in use of the techniques was studied in the light of the changing environment advertisers had to operate within. Some researchers (Fay and Currier, 1994) used the Resnik-Stern methodology to study impacts of the changing business environment such as changing media technology, changing popular culture and changing advertising fashions on models of effective advertising over the time. The study was of particular interest because it managed to cover gradual evolution of informational content of advertising over a period of forty years.

It was also possible to use the Resnik-Stern methodology for both cross-industry and intra-industry studies. For example, Taylor (1983) examined advertisements from four women’s magazines with the highest circulation (UK). The objective of this study was to compare informativeness of advertisements across various product categories. Application of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure to the advertisements selected showed that 83% of all the advertisements could be considered informative in one way or another and personal care category turned out to be represented by the least informative advertisements.

To sum up, by 1996, almost 60 different content analysis studies had already used the Resnik-Stern methodology. It showed that the application of the Resnik-Stern cues for content analysis of advertising communications was very wide. It was fully applicable across different media, countries and product categories. It turned out to be a technique equally suitable for carrying out studies in many diverse fields of research, such as

advertising, marketing, journalism and international business (Abernethy and Franke, 1996). The operational definition of the Resnik-Stern content analysis model was based on perspective of information as facts, or cues about specific aspects of a product or service. It aimed to provide a clear measure of objective information content rather than a measure of subjective information use. The perspective shifted the paradigm away from individual elements towards more general aspects of the advertisement (Abernethy and Franke, 1996).

Content analysis literature contained a lot of evidence that the Resnik-Stern methodology was suitable for this particular study and could be used for analysis of advertising content (in this case, content of magazine advertisements and websites) more effectively than alternative methodologies available. The methodology was obviously not perfect. While quantity of content analysis studies involving the Resnik-Stern informational cues spoke for itself, the technique was subjected to some criticism over the years. For example, Abernethy and Franke (1998) believed that Resnik-Stern system was not the ultimate solution for content analysis of advertising materials. In order to support their statement, they conducted meta-analysis of advertising content studies and it (according to them) spotted a number of inconsistencies in research findings across countries and industries. Size and scope of the research project was really impressive as the total number of advertisements examined by Abernethy and Franke in the course of their study exceeds sixty-six thousand. Meta-analysis of advertising materials allowed researchers to develop common norms for information levels and research procedures, reveal systematic sources of variation in reported information levels across the studies analyzed and identify main areas that were examined in depth as well as areas that were requiring further research. However, while some limitations of the Resnik-Stern procedure were identified, overall, it could still be recognized as a valid research technique for studying informational content of advertising materials (Abernethy et al, 1996).

An important argument in favor of the Resnik-Stern procedure was the fact that despite the criticism outlined above, it was still remaining an extremely popular tool for

informational content analysis of advertising communications. None of its popularity has diminished in the recent years as many contemporary researchers still heavily rely on it (Okazaki, 2004; Bang, et al; Huhmann and Bhattacharyya, 2005; Harrison et al, 2006). Importantly, the wide scope of the procedure makes it possible for researchers to compare virtually all advertising communications to one another. “Nationality” of an advertising message, its scope or communication channel used to deliver it to consumers has proved to be insignificant. This made (and still makes) the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure arguably the most flexible and reliable advertising content analysis tool of all.

3.2.5 Informational Content Analysis (Conclusion)

By the year 2001, informational content analysis was one of the most common research methods applicable for studies of communications. It had long been recognized as a valid approach to researching communication messages (Berelson and Lazarsfeld, 1948; Berelson, 1952; Budd et al, 1967; Carney, 1972; Krippendorff, 1980). As it was evident from the studies discussed above, content analysis was a flexible and a multi-functional research method. It was not limited to a particular medium and was constantly evolving over the time and embracing new communications as they were coming on board. Centuries ago it could be used by scholars of religious songs or ancient manuscripts (Carney, 1972) and while relevance of these particular studies to contemporary society is not as critical as at used to be, time has not undermined validity of content analysis as a research method.

By the year 2001, (as well as today), informational content analysis was an equally effective and recognized approach to the studies of new generation of communications. Many of the recent content analysis studies of the World Wide Web showed that content analysis was still a fully functional research method and could be used to analyze new generation of communications, such as online communication messages (Fan, 1997; McTavish, 1997; Miller, 1997; Lin and Ware, 2000). Post-2001 studies only confirmed its validity as a research method when dealing with the new wave

of communications (both commercial (e.g. marketing) and non commercial) (Okazaki, 2004; Bang, et al, 2004; Huhmann and Bhattacharyya, 2005; Harrison et al, 2006). It was really fascinating how centuries-old research techniques could still be applicable in a contemporary environment while principal fundamentals of the analysis (e.g. reliability, validity and reproducibility) remained intact.

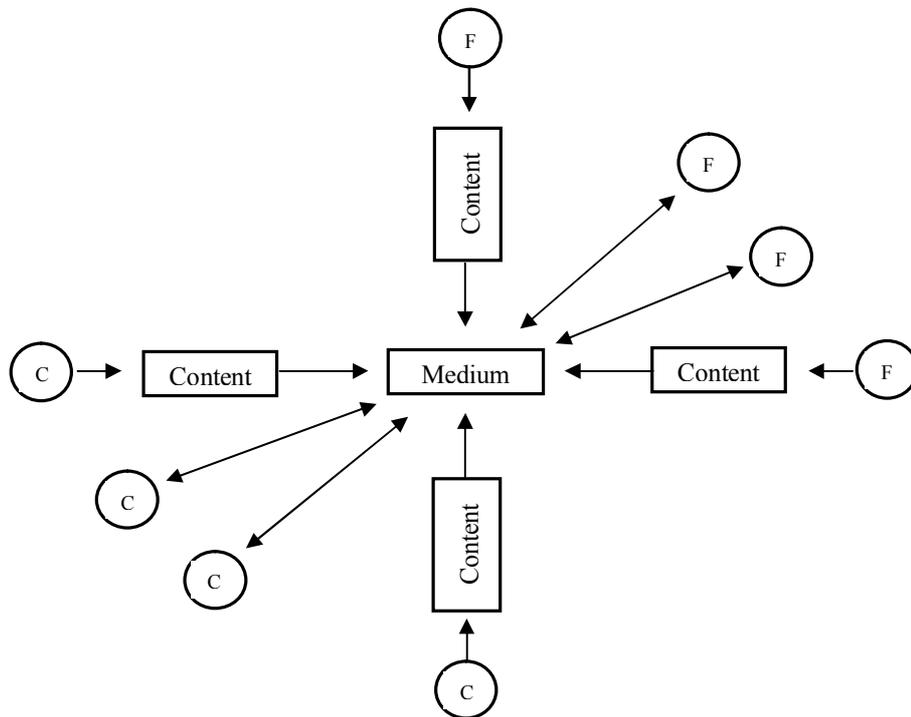
Reasons for subjecting the new wave of communications (and Web communications in particular) to content analysis) were transparent. Lin and Ware (2000) pointed out the great impact the WWW was (and still is!) having on the way global communications were evolving. This was due to the exposure one could achieve by transmitting a message online. The WWW raised many consequential questions concerning the nature and possible effects of communicating messages through the powerful channels, offered by global, hyper-linked multimedia. By the turn of the century, WWW was rightly considered to be second to none in incorporating many communication elements into one message. WWW was capable of integrating text, graphic, and audio media into a single categorization scheme (Lin and Ware, 2000). It was also evident from the literature (e.g. Okazaki, 2004) that from its very start, structure and format of the WWW differed significantly from older generation of communications. Therefore, in order to conduct an objective and valid content analysis of a WWW document, it was important to acknowledge the key differences between hypermedia and traditional communications. Hypermedia communications did not share structure and format of traditional communications (Hoffman and Novak1995; Deans and McKinney, 1997; Hoffman et al, 1997).

Hoffman et al (1997) suggested a pair of functional communication models that were illustrative of the ways communications were developing at the time. The models were developed to compare key characteristics of different types of marketing communications available in the 1990s. The first model illustrated traditional marketing communications, while the second one illustrated marketing communications on the WWW. The comparison showed that by the late 1990's the Internet turned out to be a superior marketing media (Adam and Deans, 1999). Hoffman et al (1997) based the

models on the assumption that marketing communications had to fulfill three main functions: to inform, to remind, and to persuade.

Figure 3.3 (as reproduced below) showed traditional one-to-many marketing communication model for mass media. According to this model, firms (denoted by F) could use a traditional medium of their choice to provide content to a mass market of consumers (denoted by C). The traditional marketing communication model was capable of performing the first two functions of marketing communications (to inform and to remind) very efficiently. Unfortunately for the traditional marketing media, the third function (persuasion), necessary for differentiating company's product or brand was limited due to traditional marketing media's lack of directionality (Hoffman et al, 1997).

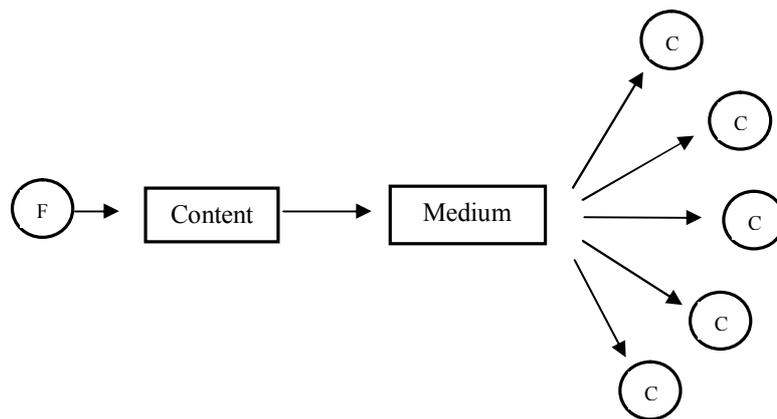
Figure 3.3 Traditional Marketing Communications Model



Unlike the traditional media, the Internet could always provide organizations with an opportunity to increase the number of participants to the communication process dramatically. Figure 3.4 (below) showed how the new many-to-many marketing

communications model was structured (Hoffman et al, 1997). The model offered companies an alternative to the traditional mass media communication. As a marketing and advertising medium, the World Wide Web had tremendous potential to bring a radical change to the ways companies could do business with their customers, by being capable of blending together publishing, real-time communication broadcast and narrowcast (Hoffman et al, 1997).

Figure 3.4 New Marketing Communications Model



Studies of commercial websites clearly had to be differentiated from studies of non-commercial ones. Prior to commencing a content analysis study of a commercial website, it was always important to have a clear set of evaluation criteria that could be applied to assess the website's content. Framework of the content analysis had to be based on specific requirements of a particular research question researchers had to address. The comparative study of traditional and WWW marketing communication models (Hoffman et al, 1997) could give researchers that were interested in content analysis of marketing communications another reason for developing an all-inclusive and

very clear set of criteria for the assessment of commercial websites (as discussed by Adam and Deans, 1999). It also assisted researchers in identifying WWW functions, relevant to marketing communications. Therefore, it was evident from the literature that prior to commencement of a content analysis it was to be clearly defined, whether the study was to be taking into account the message itself, or whether it was to include a detailed examination of the website's functional characteristics.

The literature review also identified some "administrative" factors relevant to handling website content analysis studies. As well as understanding specific features of a communication channel (e.g. web or print), there were also other equally important issues that a valid content analysis study was to address successfully. Allocation of a time frame for a content analysis was clearly one of such critical factors. The time frame for conducting a content analysis could also vary depending on the research objectives. It was up to the researchers to choose an appropriate time frame for carrying out their study. There appeared to be no such thing as "right" or "wrong" time frame for a content analysis study. A content analysis-based research project could be conducted equally successfully as a short study of strictly limited material (Kinnier and Ostlund, 1997) or as an ongoing long-term project (Adam and Deans, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999; Adam, 2000; Adam and Deans 2000; Adam and Deans, 2001).

To sum up, by the year 2001 content analysis had been rightfully recognized as one of the oldest forms of scientific inquiry. It had a long and eventful history. However, its development and diffusion were primarily spurred by the speedy rise of mass media. If the nineteenthth century could be rightfully credited with triggering a rapid development of printed mass media, the 20th century was fully responsible for development and growth of electronic media (Lin and Ware, 2000). Furthermore, by the year 2000, it had become evident that the WWW's rapid development was in many ways more spectacular than the development of electronic and printed mass media. The WWW was a truly global, decentralized network of hyper-linked multimedia objects. From the mid-1990's onwards, it had been having a great impact on the structure of existing communications and opening new realms for content analytic research (Lin and Ware, 2000).

3.3 Research Methodology

3.3.1 The Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure

Content analysis of magazine and online marketing communications was carried out through application of the Resnik-Stern informational cues for content analysis of advertisements (Stern and Resnik, 1977). The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure for measuring informational content of advertising communications was developed in 1977. The procedure gained popularity and recognition as a valid research method fairly quickly. Ever since, it has been used extensively not only by its creators but also by many other scholars of advertising content (Stern and Resnik, 1977; Laczniak, 1979; Dowling, 1980; Stern et al, 1981; Aaker and Norris, 1982; Healy and Kassarian, 1983; Taylor, 1983; Pollay, 1984; Pollay, 1985; Johnstone, Kaynak and Sparkman, 1987; Martenson, 1987; James and Van Den Bergh, 1989; Laband, 1989; Weinberger and Spotts, 1989; James and Van Den Bergh, 1990; Keown, Jakobs, Shmidt, and Ghymn, 1990; Mueller, 1990; Noor Al-Deen, 1991; Biswas et al, 1992; Fay and Currier, 1994; Chan, 1995; Elliott and Lockard, 1996; Abernethy and Franke, 1998; Dholakia and Rego, 1998; Okazaki, 2004; Bang, et al; Huhmann and Bhattacharyya, 2005; Harrison et al, 2006). Even now (2008) it is still regarded as a valid and reliable procedure for carrying out informational content analysis. Recent studies (Okazaki, 2004; Bang, et al; Huhmann and Bhattacharyya, 2005; Harrison et al, 2006) show that the procedure has not been subjected to aging and its validity is beyond any doubt.

Continuous use of the procedure also showed that all of the fourteen core informational cues implemented by Resnik and Stern in their original study had withstood the test of time successfully. By 1996, the procedure had already been successfully utilized for nearly sixty content analysis studies to measure the information content of advertising (Abernethy et al, 1996). More importantly, the studies for which the procedure had already been utilized covered a wide spectrum of marketing communications and research propositions. There was hardly a marketing communication

channel left that had not been scrutinized by the procedure. Absolute majority of the researchers tended to keep the core fourteen cues and the ways these cues were interpreted unchanged.

Thus, the ongoing extensive use of the Resnik-Stern informational cues confirmed validity and reliability of the content analysis procedure (Baron et al, 2003; Baron and Wibowo, 2003; Okazaki, 2004; Bang, et al; Huhmann and Bhattacharyya, 2005; Harrison et al, 2006). Applications of the Resnik-Stern procedure also showed that the advertising information content categories that Resnik and Stern came up with were very flexible. They were not limited to a particular communication channel. The informational cues could be applied across a wide range of marketing media. It made the procedure a perfect tool for comparative advertising studies involving two types of media or more as it made it possible to measure informational content of communications through the same set of assessment cues irrespectively of a communication channel used. It allowed to compare magazine advertisements with websites, TV commercials with radio commercial announcements, etc.

As it has already been pointed out above, any research tool or method that had been around for a long time was likely to attract some criticism from researchers. The Stern-Resnik procedure was no different, so while the feedback collected from the users over the time was mostly positive, some critical remarks regarding functionality, reliability and validity of the procedure also had to be considered. However, there were sufficient reasons (as discussed below) to confirm invalidity of this criticism. Understandably, many changes took place in the advertising industry between 1977, the year the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was first introduced (Stern and Resnik, 1977), and 2001. During these years, the procedure was applied in many different contexts and to a massive range of marketing communications. It allowed creators of the original Resnik-Stern informational cues to collect a lot of feedback from users of the procedure worldwide. Some of the comments and suggestions made by academics over the time were instrumental in encouraging further development of the procedure.

Not all of the feedback could be regarded as positive. As mentioned above, the procedure did attract some healthy criticism. Some scholars (e.g. Taylor, 1983; Abernethy and Franke, 1998) argued that major limitation of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure lay in its narrow perception of the purpose of advertising. Furthermore, Taylor (1983) believed that it was often researchers' mistake to make use of this tool in some of the studies, where it played a significant part. According to Taylor, the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure did not examine advertisements in the overall context. Instead, it presented an oversimplified view of advertising's function and it did not fully appreciate the role advertisements played in creation and maintenance of brand image and position in the market place.

However, this negative feedback did not appear to be very convincing. Despite showering the informational content analysis tool with strong criticism, Taylor (1983) also admitted that the advertising procedure provided researchers with an objective framework for analyzing advertisements carried in any medium (something that few other content analysis tools could boast of at the time). It was also important to point out that these limitations did not stop Taylor from using the Resnik-Stern procedure for a study of his own (the study examined informational content of women's magazines in the UK in the early 1980s') (Taylor, 1983). This alone was a big contradiction since he would obviously never have employed the procedure in his research if he did not trust its accuracy and validity.

Therefore, there was sufficient evidence to believe that the Resnik-Stern approach to informational content analysis of marketing communications was both valid and reliable. The procedure was an effective content analysis tool whenever it was not misused. Vulnerability of the Resnik-Stern approach depended on the research objective. The procedure was well developed and reliable but it had a limited scope. It did not have sufficient capacity to examine and evaluate the impact that an advertising communication (e.g. magazine advertisement) was making on the overall marketing strategy for a brand. The problems (whenever they occurred) lay in unnecessary expansion of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedures' scope. However, it did not undermine the procedure's

validity as a research tool. It was just that instead of being applied to all facets of marketing communications, it had to focus on fulfillment of the limited task it was originally developed for.

Applications of the Resnik-Stern approach were not to expand beyond pure analysis of informational content of a message the advertisement was aiming to communicate to consumers. The limitations outlined were significant but they did not affect overall validity of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure. They simply limited the procedure's scope. The Resnik-Stern procedure was clearly not a complete performance evaluation model but an informational content analysis tool and it was up to researchers to ensure that it was applied accordingly.

According to Resnik and Stern (1977), informational content of advertising communications could be divided into an all-inclusive selection of content elements. The original (and the best known) version of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure (modifications excluded) consisted of fourteen identifiable categories of informational content. The categories used for classification and analysis of advertising content were as follows: Price, Quality, Performance, Components, Availability, Special Offers, Taste, Nutrition, Packaging, Warranties, Safety, Independent Research, Company Research, New Ideas. All of the fourteen categories above were assumed to be of equal value as the procedure did not identify any of the categories as particularly vital compared to the others.

A number of different variations of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure have been tried successfully over the years. The procedure could (and was in some instances) be expanded further by the means of developing additional informational categories the advertisements could be examined for. However, despite the fact that the original content categories were suggested back in 1977, all of the categories listed above were still relevant elements of marketing communications at the turn of the century. None of them had become outdated, so inclusion of each and every one of the relevant informational

cues into an advertisement was still a definite bonus for an advertiser (Okazaki, 2004; Bang, et al; Huhmann and Bhattacharyya, 2005; Harrison et al, 2006).

The specific research objectives of the study were addressed by means of introducing necessary modifications to the Resnik –Stern advertising procedure. In this research the fourteen core Resnik-Stern informational cues were interpreted in accordance with the original advertising procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977). The core procedure was enhanced with two additional web-oriented informational cues: URL and E-mail. The URL and E-mail cues were aimed at establishing whether the magazine advertisements considered in the research were linked to websites. When the Resnik-Stern informational cues were originally developed twenty-six years ago (Stern and Resnik 1977), the creators of advertising procedure could not possibly foresee some of the further developments of advertising communications that were to take place in fairly distant future. At the time, the issues behind integration of online and traditional marketing communications were still non-existent as there were obviously no online marketing communications as such.

Thus, in order to account for the expanding range of marketing communications available to modern organizations, the advertising procedure was modified by adding two extra (URL (website address) and E-mail) informational cues. The modified version of the content analysis procedure appeared to be more comprehensive as it acknowledged the value newly emerged content categories represented for advertisers. Prior to this study, URL and E-mail had never been incorporated into the Resnik-Stern model before. None of the pre-2001 studies of the WWW appeared to incorporate them for informational content analysis. However, this was not the first instance of modifications being made to the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure. In fact, one of the first suggestions regarding possible modifications of the procedure belonged to Resnik and Stern, who eventually started adding “energy” as an additional informative category in some of their later studies. The “energy” informational cue was also adopted as an informational category by Noor Al-Dean (1991). Thus, the advertising procedure was open for modifications and adjustments.

The informational content analysis methodology outline was compiled and written on the basis of interpretations of informational cues available from Resnik and Stern (1977) and Abernethy et al (1996). Furthermore, interpretation of the informational cues was adjusted in order to make these cues applicable to services as well as goods. A brief explanation of scope and effectiveness of the Resnik-Stern informational cues is given below:

Table 3.1 The Resnik-Stern Advertising Informational Content Categories (Core + Modifications)

Price	How much does the product or service cost? What is its value-retention capability? What is the need satisfaction capability? Is there a dollar value assigned to it?
Quality	What are the product's or service's characteristics that distinguish it from competing products based on an objective evaluation of workmanship, engineering, durability, excellence of materials, structural superiority, superiority of personnel, attention to detail or availability of special services?
Performance	What does the product or service do and how well does it do what it is designed to do in comparison to alternative purchases available to consumers?
Components	What is the product or service comprised of? What ingredients does it contain? What ancillary items are included with the product?
Availability	Where can the product or service be purchased? When will the product be available for purchase? Are there any limitations for purchasing?
Special Offers	What limited time non-price deals are available with a particular purchase? Are there any discounts offered?
Taste	Is evidence presented that the taste of a particular product is perceived as superior in taste by a sample of potential customers? (Advertiser's own opinion is inadequate).
Nutrition	Are specific data given concerning the nutritional content of a particular product, or is a direct specific comparison made with other products? If yes, is it evident the product represents greater nutritional value?
Packaging	What packaging is the product available in which makes it more desirable than alternatives? What special shapes is the product available in?
Warranties	What post-purchase assurances of ongoing support or warranties accompany the product or service?
Safety	What safety features are available on a particular product or service compared to alternatives?
Independent Research	Are the results of the research gathered by an independent research firm presented in the advertisement?
Company Research	Is data gathered by a company to compare its product or service with a competitor's product or service presented in the advertisement?
New Ideas	Is a totally new concept introduced during the commercial/in the advertisement? Are its advantages of the product or service presented in an original innovative manner?*
URL	Does the advertisement include URL for the brand?
E-mail	Does the advertisement include contact e-mail address?

3.3.2 WebQual Conceptual Model for Content Analysis of Commercial Websites

In this research, website performance analysis was carried out through the use of WebQual (Adam and Deans, 1999). The WebQual conceptual model was originally developed for a study that aimed to compare levels of commercial use of the Internet across standard industrial classifications (SIC) and used the data collected to contrast intent and outcomes by organizations. The initial phase of the study involved limiting research to Australian and New Zealand organizations only. However, during the course of the study, Adam and Deans indicated multiple opportunities for further expansion of the research. There was clear-cut potential for extension of the study by means of involving collaborators in the Americas, Asia and Europe (Adam and Deans, 1999). Most importantly, the WebQual framework confirmed its validity and reliability as a tool for functionality and informational content analysis of commercial websites.

Designing methodology for performance analysis of websites for the magazine advertisements in this study, made it transparent that without WebQual, website performance analysis could not be regarded as complete. The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was a sufficient tool for content analysis of informational content in traditional advertising communications, such as magazine advertisements. When applied to websites, the procedure could still assess informational content as effectively as it would with traditional advertising communications. However, it was not suitable for assessments of websites' functionality.

To sum up, complete performance analysis of websites could be carried out only with the help of tool/tools developed specifically for studies of the Web content. In order to insure completeness and validity of the research, such a tool was introduced to supplement the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure for content analysis of websites. The tool was commonly known among researchers as WebQual Conceptual Model for content analysis of commercial websites (Adam and Deans, 1997, 1999, 2000). Thus,

comprehensive analysis of the websites could be completed through combined use of the WebQual conceptual model and the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure only.

The WebQual Conceptual Model consisted of forty-six assessment cues covering all facets of website performance. It was summarized in Table 3.2 below:

Table 3.2 WebQual Conceptual Model for Commercial Website Performance Analysis

1	URL Guessability
2	Not Browser Restricted
3	“ALT” Tags
4	Menu Tabs
5	Navigation
6	Media Releases
7	FAQs
8	Related Product Links
9	Search Tags
10	In-site Search
11	Product/service Images and Text
12	Add – ons/Plug-ins Linked
13	Graphics
14	Layout
15	Image
16	Aesthetics
17	Administrative Details
18	Multilingual Display/Information
19	Multi-site Office Online Directory
20	Multi-site Office Offline Details
21	Multi-site Vendor Details
22	Webmaster Details
23	Links Updated Date
24	Order Processing
25	Tracking or Customer Service Enquiry Line
26	Online Pricing Details
27	Price in Foreign Currency or Converter Provided
28	Multilingual Online Ordering (Multi-sites)
29	Payment and Delivery Online (Multi-sites)
30	Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by E-mail/Form
31	Links Only to Third Parties in Other Countries
32	Multi-site Details Non-Electronic
33	Product/Service Complaints or Difficulties
34	Communication (Form, E-Mail or Both)
35	Opt-In/Opt-Out Adaptive Messaging on Company or Product Services
36	Web Community Creation or Maintenance
37	Financial Status of the Firm
38	About the Company or Site/Products/People/Customers or Projects
39	“People” Phone/E-mail Details
40	“What is New”
41	“Multilingual Choice”
42	“HelpDesk”
43	References to Traditional Marketing Communications
44	Portal
45	Special Offers
46	Warranties

As pointed out above, the WebQual conceptual model was complimentary to the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure rather than its substitute. Thus, it was difficult and unnecessary to draw any comparisons between the WebQual conceptual model for content analysis of commercial websites and the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure. The two tools differed in their approaches to content analysis, as they were developed to serve different research objectives. As, the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was developed as a tool for analysis of informational content in all kinds of advertisements and across all communication channels, it was not limited to a particular media. It was equally applicable to any advertising communication channel. However, the procedure was limited in its scope. It could not be used for tasks other than studies of informational content of advertising.

Unlike the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure, the WebQual model for content analysis of websites was developed for a much broader range of purposes. Its scope reached well beyond studies of informational content. However, WebQual had limitations of different nature as it was applicable for studies of one medium only. It was designed as a complete framework for assessment of website functionality. Thus, WebQual was a specialized tool that could be used for content analysis of websites only. As far as website performance analysis was concerned, category selection for the WebQual model was attempting to be all-inclusive. At the same time, the WebQual categories (assessment cues) could not be utilized for content analysis of traditional advertising communications. Furthermore, the WebQual model was also unsuitable for content analysis of online advertising communications other than websites, such as e-mails. However, none of the limitations discussed above could impact this research negatively as the WebQual model was used exclusively to analyze website performance, so fairly narrow scope of the model was no obstacle to its effective implementation.

3.3.3 WebQual vs. Other Website Content and Functionality Analysis Models

Website performance assessment model selection was critical for the success of the study. Finding an adequate website performance assessment model/tool was a fairly difficult task. By the turn of the century, not many models for content analysis of websites had a marketing focus. Suitable models were few and far between (Ho, 1997; Palmer and Griffith, 1998; Ju-Pak, 1999; Adam and Deans, 2000; Bauer and Scharl, 2000; Sheehan and Doherty, 2001; Schubert and Selz, 2001). Furthermore, not all of the models incorporated both functionality and informational content assessment cues.

In the light of the issues outlined above, the choice of a content analysis model for the study was based on two key factors: reliability of the model and its applicability to this particular study. Reliability of content assessment referred to past studies involving the model. The model chosen had to have a proven track record in content analysis of commercial websites. Applicability referred to how suitable the content analysis model was for special needs of the particular study. Initially, WebQual was not the only website content analysis model considered for the study. There were a number of other content analysis models available for critical assessment of online communications (Ho, 1997; Palmer and Griffith, 1998; Schubert and Selz, 2001; Scheehan and Doherty, 2001). All of them were reviewed and considered very carefully. Unfortunately (as discussed below), they appeared to be less suitable for this research than WebQual and could not be regarded as feasible alternatives to it.

Palmer and Griffith (1998) suggested a website content analysis model that could be used for identifying weaknesses and improving website efficiency. Their model examined use of websites for provision of marketing support such as promotional activities, sales, availability of quality service and support. The model was aimed at identification of optimal technical dimensions for website marketing. While the model did cover informational content analysis of websites, its main focus was not on the actual content but on various elements of website design and technical functionality. It made use of the Palmer-Griffith website performance analysis model for this particular study problematic.

Ho (1997) proposed a framework for evaluation of commercial websites from a customer's perspective. This was a very different approach to website performance analysis as the framework focused on evaluation of the role commercial websites played in adding value to companies' operations. Four types of value creation were identified: timely, custom, logistic and sensational. Ho's initial study was based on evaluation of a thousand North American websites (Ho, 1997). The study examined websites for companies in forty different industries (twenty-five websites for each of the industries considered) and identified value-adding features for each and every one of them. The initial study was recognized as a success. It was followed-up by similar studies in Australia, Hong Kong, France, the UK, Italy and Germany.

Unfortunately Ho's research (1997) appeared to be one-sided. It did not incorporate any feedback from the companies behind the websites examined. The feedback was either not collected at all or left outside the scope of the study. Adam and Deans (1999) pointed out that lack of such feedback from the customer side made Ho's findings unreliable. Unlike Ho's website performance analysis model, WebQual incorporated feedback from the company's end, consequently confirming its validity and reliability.

Another reason for not using Ho's (1997) model for content analysis of websites in this particular study lied in irrelevance of some of its elements to the research objectives set. Ho's content analysis model was originally developed with aims other than informational content analysis of marketing communications. The website elements Ho's model was focusing on were rather functional than informational. It made the model an ineffective tool for detailed examination of informational content of websites. Thus, it was not as comprehensive as WebQual. Using Ho's model would require use of some kind of additional tool that could link informational content and functionality of the websites together. Increase in the number of assessment tools used would also contribute towards making the website performance analysis study more complex and reducing reliability of the findings.

With the website content analysis framework suggested by Schubert and Selz (2001), the problem was very much the same as with Ho's model. Schubert and Selz's model for measuring effectiveness of e-commerce websites also did not single out informational content as a separate research area. Instead, the model provided a platform for analysis of quality of a commercial website from a consumer perspective. Companies and researchers could use the platform to assess current status of the websites and develop strategies for website improvement as well as list all strengths and weaknesses of the websites (Schubert and Selz, 2001, p.84). However, the model measured website performance only, while ignoring (similarly to Ho (1997)) value delivered by informational content of the sites. Furthermore, Schubert's and Selz' model lacked clarity and consistency of WebQual.

The models and tools discussed above were the main contenders (other than the Resnik-Stern and WebQual models) for incorporation into the thesis. Other models available for website content analysis at the time were even less feasible. For example, Sheehan and Doherty (2000) approached integration of print and online communications from yet another angle. They investigated tactical and strategic integration between online and printed advertisements. Bauer and Scharl (2000) introduced software tools for computer-aided analysis of websites. Manual classification tended to be more content-oriented than automated evaluations. In the textual analysis section of the paper, the authors admitted that from a linguistic point of view, analysis of the WWW information systems was mainly concerned with syntax (relationships between words in sentences), semantics (meanings of words) and pragmatics (associations between utterances and circumstances of communications (Bauer and Scharl, 2000, p.40). Informational side of the website textuials did not play a significant role in their research. Thus, while informational content was assessed comprehensively the model did not provide any scope for assessment of website functionality.

To sum up, comparative analysis of the website content analysis models described above (Ho, 1997; Palmer and Griffith, 1998; Adam and Deans, 2000; Bauer and Scharl, 2000; Sheehan and Doherty, 2001; Schubert and Selz, 2001) showed that WebQual

(Adam and Deans, 2000) was the most suitable methodology to be used in combination with the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure available for the purposes of this particular study.

Based on the comparative analysis and discussion of website performance tools and models above, WebQual was not to be proclaimed as “the very best” model for website performance analysis. Value offered by the other methodologies and tools was by no means to be underestimated. It was just that WebQual appeared to address the particular research objectives of the thesis better than any other model. Its scope was sufficient to carry out complete evaluation of both website functionality and informational content. A link between integration of informational content and website performance was worth identifying, as it was the best evidence of value adding role, integrated marketing communications could have in organizations at the time.

In 2001, website performance analysis was a fairly new yet rapidly developing field of research. Thus, new methodologies, conceptual models and tools for website performance assessment kept emerging (Mbambo and Cronje, 2002; Bodkin and Perry, 2004; Shelstad, 2005; Ritter, 2006). However, application of a contemporary (2005 onwards) website performance assessment procedure to historical websites could not deliver accurate results as the assessment framework and cues had to focus on the technologies and online marketing techniques that were regarded as ‘contemporary’ in 2001.

At the turn of the century, requirements and expectations of websites were significantly different from the functionality and content requirements that are predominant today (Ritter, 2006). Contemporary website performance assessment methodologies (Shelstad, 2005; Ritter, 2006) are arguably significantly more advanced than their predecessors but they are not applicable to historical data due to the shift of technologies and expectations from the websites that has occurred since then. It would not do justice to the websites as the scores would not be indicative of their performance at the time.

3.4 Magazine Advertisements: Sample Selection

3.4.1 Identifying Magazine Circulation Figures

In order to maximize the study's relevance to Australian industry and academia, the sample population for the content analysis of magazine advertisements was limited to Australian magazines. In this instance "Australian" only referred only to magazines published in Australia. If a magazine was sold in Australia but was published overseas, it did not qualify to be part of the study as content of such magazines was not necessarily representative of advertisers' goals and objectives in the Australian marketplace.

In order to define scope of the study clearly, it was important to differentiate between "print advertising" and "magazine advertising". Historically, the two terms could be considered as synonyms. However, over the 1990s', print advertising was expanding its horizons significantly. Advertisers continuously kept on trying out new shapes and forms for print communications. The word "print" was no longer referring to traditional "publications" only as it once did. Companies and their advertising agencies kept on trying out new innovative concepts.

By the year 2001, print advertising developed to the point where it could take many unorthodox shapes and forms. For example *Retail World* magazine (Anon, 1998) reported that Scrolls Advertising managed to come up with a new original advertising concept. The company was developing and producing an unusual toilet tissue which featured various advertising materials. It turned out to be a very interesting and successful experiment. The Scrolls Advertising example showed that at the turn of the century, there was virtually no limit for creative expansion of print communications. However, despite ongoing development of new original forms of print advertising, the major share of all print advertisements was still published by magazines and newspapers. Thus, study of the Australian print advertising was limited to magazine advertisements.

Magazine circulation figures are available in the appendix. The sample was established on the basis of circulation figures available from an independent source of data - Margaret Gee's Media Guide (O' Halloran, 2000). The data was also submitted to Leo Burnett Connaghan & May (VIC) Pty. Ltd. (one of the leading advertising communications agency at the time) for correction and editing. Therefore, the final version of the circulation data used in this thesis represented the edited version of the figures. All the figures given were for November 2000.

3.4.2 Establishing Sample for the Resnik-Stern Analysis of Magazine Advertisements

The study was based on a sample of twenty magazines. The magazines were selected for the study in accordance with the level of exposure they were able to offer to Australian advertisers at the time. The study examined Australian magazines with the highest level of circulation. The magazines were represented in the study by one issue each. Circulation figures used for selection of sample frame for the study came from an independent source, as collecting data directly from the magazines was not the best option available due to likelihood of bias by the publishers. According to Donation (2001) publishers were well-known for trying all sorts of tricks to artificially inflate circulation of magazines so they could charge advertisers higher fees. Media buyers also tended to encourage that practice implicitly. As a result, advertisers ended up paying to reach marginal readers rather than promising large target audiences. Thus, Australian publishing industry generally perceived reduction of circulation guarantee as a sign of weakness and publishers would be unlikely to provide honest circulation figures.

Advertising has traditionally been defined as a paid, one-way communication through a medium in which a sponsor was identified and messages were controlled by the sponsor. Consequently, for a message to be considered an advertisement – “sponsorship” had to be transparent. In order to keep the study objective and non-biased, every single ad of acceptable size, published in the issues selected was subjected to informational content

analysis. The only limitation that had to be applied to the advertisements was size of the ads. It was unreasonable to expect small ads to match informational content offered by half to full-page advertisements. Thus, all of the advertisements examined were at least half-page in size. Other than that, the advertisements had no other prerequisites to comply with.

3.4.3 Application of the Resnik-Stern Advertising Procedure

Using the Resnik-Stern Procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977), the author aimed to investigate, whether content of the advertisements was or was not informative and if it was, the extent of informativeness. The study was based on fourteen traditional informational cues plus two additional ones (URL and E-mail). The advertisements that contained at least one informational cue were recognized as informative. Quantity of information carried by the advertisements was measured by adding up all the informational cues utilized by the advertisers. The procedure did not measure the extent to which the cues were represented. The focus was on the number of cues used. For example, if an advertisement contained four informational cues, it was recognized as a carrier of greater amount of informational content than an advertisement containing three informational cues.

It was unrealistic to expect an advertisement to incorporate every single one or most of the informational cues outlined by Resnik and Stern (1977). The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was designed as an all-inclusive framework for informational content analysis of advertising communications. Ideally, the procedure was supposed to aim to incorporate every single piece of informational content of an advertisement. As a result the procedure went beyond outlining seven or eight general cues that could be applicable to all of the advertisements in one way or another.

Some of the cues were not applicable to all of the products or services advertised. For example “taste” and “nutrition” informational cues were usually relevant only for assessment of advertisements featuring food and beverage products. The categories were

not applicable to majority of services and non-edible goods. However, every product or service advertised was able to relate to at least to some of the informational cues. Irrelevance some of the other cues for certain advertisements did not mean that they were to be excluded from the procedure. The cues were considered as relevant as long as at least some advertisers for the brands examined could benefit from including them into informational content of their advertisements.

Identification of informational content in individual advertisements was not the only possible application of the Resnik-Stem methodology. The procedure could also approach informativeness of advertising content from a different angle. Once the data was fully collected and processed, it was possible to study use of informational cues in advertising not only per advertisement but also per informative category such as price, safety etc. Furthermore, the study of advertising categories revealed levels of usage of different informational cues. It showed categories perceived by advertisers as the most important ones.

3.5 Concluding Remarks

Content analysis tools and procedures selected for the thesis included: the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure for informational content analysis of advertising communications (Resnik and Stern, 1977) and WebQual conceptual model for content analysis of websites (Adam and Deans, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999; Adam and Deans, 2000). WebQual conceptual model and the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure were compatible as the scope of the assessment cues incorporated into these tools made them complimentary (since both informational content and functionality were essential elements of commercial websites) with each other.

The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was used to measure informational content of magazine advertisements and informational content of websites, so the two advertising communication channels could be compared with each other. Application of the universal procedure to both magazine and online communications made it possible to determine degree of integration between magazine advertisements and websites. The content assessment procedure incorporated fourteen traditional informational cues and two more cues were added to the traditional set of assessments in order to reveal, whether magazine advertisements included URLs and e-mail addresses for the brands. The extension enabled the procedure to determine the degree to which magazine advertisements were integrated with websites for respective brands at a basic level (linking the two advertising communication channels with each other).

WebQual conceptual model was developed in 1997 (Adam and Deans, 1997) to measure informational content and functionality of commercial websites. The main objective behind bringing WebQual into the research was to investigate a hypothesis that at the time, there was already a clear link between having integrated, rich informational content and website functionality, thus confirming the role of successful advertising communications in the overall website performance.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the content analysis of the magazine advertisements and websites designed to determine the informational content of these two forms of the marketing communication. As described in Chapter Three, the method used was an updated form of the Resnik-Stern informational content analysis procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977). The procedure involved examining advertisements for the presence or absence of a series of cues which allowed judgments to be made about the quality and features of the marketing communication contained within advertising. Developed first in 1977, the procedure was updated in the current research to include additional cues which specifically addressed the emergence of the Internet as an alternative communications channel for marketing.

Firstly, the chapter reports firstly the data found in analyzing magazine advertisements, providing information on the number of the Resnik-Stern cues, their distribution, relationship and other key findings. Secondly, the websites referred to in the magazine advertisements are looked at. The websites are treated as if they were advertisements, with the same Resnik-Stern cues utilized for their analysis. Thirdly, in light of a major difference in the quality of the websites and magazine advertisements analyzed, data from a functionality assessment of those websites is presented, which, in combination with the second step, allows conclusions to be drawn about the effectiveness of those websites for marketing communication. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is simply to present findings derived from applications of research methodologies outlined in chapter three. Further discussion of the data presented here will be conducted in chapter five.

4.2 Content Analysis of Australian Magazine Advertising

490 advertisements from twenty magazines selected as a sample of Australian magazines available, were collected and assessed. The magazines chosen and the number of advertisements from each are shown in Table 4.1 below, along with the number of advertisements selected from them for the informational content analysis

Table 4.1: Advertising Population of the Magazines, May 2001, by magazine

Magazines	Number Of Advertisements in the Magazine
<i>Australian Geographic</i>	25
<i>Australian Good Taste</i>	50
<i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	43
<i>Business Review Weekly</i>	23
<i>The Bulletin</i>	12
<i>Cleo</i>	40
<i>Dolly</i>	22
<i>Family Living</i>	34
<i>First Steps</i>	6
<i>House and Garden</i>	47
<i>Living Now</i>	16
<i>Mornington Peninsula</i>	36
<i>New Idea</i>	18
<i>NW</i>	12
<i>Readers' Digest</i>	13
<i>Royal Auto</i>	14
<i>Shares</i>	31
<i>Time Australia</i>	13
<i>TV Week</i>	8
<i>Woman's Day</i>	27
Total	490

On average, there were 24.5 advertisements per magazine. However, as shown in table 4.2, advertising population of the magazines was not consistent and differed widely from the average.

Table 4.2: Advertising Population of the Magazines, May 2001, by frequency

Magazines	Number Of Advertisements in Magazine
<i>Australian Good Taste</i>	50
<i>House and Garden</i>	47
<i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	43
<i>Cleo</i>	40
<i>Mornington Peninsula</i>	36
<i>Family Living</i>	34
<i>Shares</i>	31
<i>Woman's Day</i>	27
<i>Australian Geographic</i>	25
Average	24.5
<i>Business Review Weekly</i>	23
<i>Dolly</i>	22
<i>New Idea</i>	18
<i>Living Now</i>	16
<i>Royal Auto</i>	14
<i>Readers' Digest</i>	13
<i>Time Australia</i>	13
<i>The Bulletin</i>	12
<i>NW</i>	12
<i>TV Week</i>	8
<i>First Steps</i>	6

Table 4.3 below showed level of URL inclusion into the magazine advertisements. Collection of the data was instrumental for identifying websites required for both further investigation of the marketing communications (website performance analysis) and for establishing whether there were any trends (e.g. magazines with greater advertising population having a greater level of URL inclusion). The table showed figures for URL inclusion/per magazine. Furthermore, this data also illustrated the basic level of integration (URL inclusion) between magazine advertisements and websites considered in this study. Thus, since a significant component of the research involved a consideration of web-based and print marketing communications' integration, it was also

important to know the degree to which the advertisements did or did not refer to a website, thus enabling them to be subjected to further analysis and comparison.

Table 4.3: Magazine Advertising Referencing URL, May 2001, % of URL Inclusions

Magazines	Number Of Advertisements in Magazine	Number Of Advertisements with URL	%age of URL-inclusive advertisements
<i>Australian Geographic</i>	25	14	56%
<i>Australian Good Taste</i>	50	11	22%
<i>Better Homes and Gardens</i>	43	18	42%
<i>Business Review Weekly</i>	23	16	70%
<i>The Bulletin</i>	12	9	75%
<i>Cleo</i>	40	16	40%
<i>Dolly</i>	22	11	50%
<i>Family Living</i>	34	15	44%
<i>First Steps</i>	6	0	0%
<i>House and Garden</i>	47	25	53%
<i>Living Now</i>	16	10	63%
<i>Mornington Peninsula</i>	36	19	53%
<i>New Idea</i>	18	9	50%
<i>NW</i>	12	8	67%
<i>Readers' Digest</i>	13	3	23%
<i>Royal Auto</i>	14	6	43%
<i>Shares</i>	31	24	77%
<i>Time Australia</i>	13	11	85%
<i>TV Week</i>	8	4	50%
<i>Woman's Day</i>	27	6	22%
Total	490	235	48%

Of the 490 advertisements, 235 made clear reference to a website. The remaining 255 magazine advertisements contained no links or references to websites. Thus, less than half of the magazine advertisements published in the sample magazines and considered in this study included a URL.

Another trend that was shown in table 4.3 above was lack of evidence that magazines containing a greater amount of advertising content were more likely to contain

URL-inclusive advertisements than those with lower advertising population. On the other hand, publications aimed at business and professional target audiences (and consequently companies that used them as marketing communication channels) were more likely to link magazine advertisements with the respective websites. All four of the magazines that had advertising content URL inclusion level of 70% or above (*Time Australia, Bulletin, Shares, BRW*) could be classified as business/professional publications. At the same time, all of the magazines where level of URL inclusion into the advertising content was 40% or below (*Cleo, Readers Digest, Woman's Day, Australian Good Taste and First Steps*) could be classified as publications aimed at general target audiences. In case of *First Steps*, not a single magazine advertisement included a URL!

What then was the relative frequency of appearance in the advertisements selected of the Resnik-Stern informational cues (including the additional cues required in the Internet age)? All of the magazine advertisements were sorted into one of the following two categories: Advertisements that incorporated a link to the Web (URL) and those that were not linked to the Web. Table 4.4 presents this data with informational cues being sorted by overall frequency of the informational cues' usage.

Table 4.4: Appearance of Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by the Total Number of Cues Used

Informational Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Total times appearing in print
Availability	192	138	330
URL	235	0	235
Price	83	20	103
Special Offers	36	49	85
Performance	44	2	46
Nutrition	13	30	43
Taste	3	32	35
Components	23	7	30
Quality	5	14	19
E-Mail	13	2	15
Warranties	10	5	15
New Ideas	3	11	14
Company Research	8	1	9
Independent Research	3	1	4
Packaging	3	0	3
Safety	0	3	3
Total	674	315	989

As it is evident from Table 4.4 above, availability turned out to be the most popular informational cue of all. It appeared in 330 magazine advertisements (67.3% of the total number of the ads). URL turned out to be the second most popular informational cue appearing in 235 (almost half) of the advertisements and consequently accounting for nearly 24% of the total number of the cues in the advertisements as well as appearing in 48% of the ads. However, price and special offers were the only other cues to appear in more than 10% of the advertisements. On the other hand, seven of the informational cues

(quality, e-mail, warranties, new ideas, company research, independent research, packaging and safety) appeared in the magazine advertisements very infrequently.

A comparison between how informational cues were used by the web-linked advertisements and by the advertisements that were not URL-inclusive also delivered some interesting results. Despite an even slightly lower number of advertisements (235 vs. 255) web-linked magazine advertisements contained a greater amount of informational content (674 informational cues in web-linked advertisements vs. 315 informational cues in the unlinked ones). Even if URL cue (that appeared in 235 ads) was counted out, the remaining number of the cues in URL-inclusive advertisements (439) was still significantly greater. However, when use of individual cues in web-linked advertisements was compared with unlinked ones, the contrast did not appear to be dramatic as web-linked advertisements were making greater use of eight of the common informational cues that were applicable to both types of ads, and the unlinked ones contained a greater number of the six remaining cues (special offers, nutrition, taste, quality, new ideas and safety).

Comparative use of different informational content elements (informational cues) by web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements was indicative of how different or similar these two types of the magazine advertising communications were to one another. Therefore, a comparison between these communications was carried out.

Table 4.5 Comparative Roles of Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements

Informational Cue	This cue as %age of all cues from web-linked ads	This cue as a %age of all cues from unlinked ads	This cue as a %age of all cues appearing in all ads
URL	34.87%	0%	23.76%
Availability	28.49%	43.80%	33.37%
Price	12.31%	6.35%	10.41%
Special Offers	3.64%	15.56%	8.59%
Performance	5.34%	0.63%	4.65%
Nutrition	1.93%	9.52%	4.35%
Taste	0.45%	10.16%	3.54%
Components	3.41%	2.22%	3.03%
Quality	0.74%	4.44%	1.92%
E-Mail	1.93%	0.63%	1.52%
Warranties	1%	1.59%	1.52%
New Ideas	0.45%	3.49%	1.42%
Company Research	1.19%	0.32%	0.91%
Independent Research	0.45%	0.32%	0.40%
Packaging	0.45%	0%	0.30%
Safety	0%	0.95%	0.30%
Total Cues	674	315	100.0%

As evident from Table 4.5 above, there were some differences between web-linked and unlinked advertisements in the ways the informational content elements were used. The table showed that for web-linked advertisements – availability accounted for over 28% from the total number of cues. Price was also quite a popular cue accounting for over 12% of the total. For unlinked magazine advertisements – availability was even more popular as it alone was responsible for over 43% of the informational content. On the other hand, special offers cue (that appeared to be fairly insignificant for the web-linked ads as it was behind 3.64% from the total number of cues only) accounted for 15.56%

(nearly five times more than in web-linked advertisements) of the cues in unlinked advertisements.

Once URL addresses of the websites were identified, it became possible to analyze websites for products and services promoted in the magazine advertisements and establish how content of the websites was linked (or not linked) to the content of the magazine advertisements and how effectiveness of the resulting marketing communication categories ranked when compared against one another. In table 4.6 below, all of the communications were sorted into six categories based on how different content elements were used by: magazine advertisements, websites and combinations of the magazine advertisements and the websites.

Table 4.6: Comparative Analysis of Informational content of 6 Print Advertising + Websites Marketing Communication Categories, Sorted by Total Cue Appearance

Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Websites of 235 web-linked ads	Unique cues in print only	Unique cues in web only	Instances where the cue appears in both print and web	Total cue appearance for print + web for 235
Availability	192	192	40	40	152	232
E-Mail	13	212	13	212	0	225
Price	83	130	62	109	21	192
Performance	44	129	7	92	37	136
Special Offers	36	90	29	83	7	119
Components	23	69	14	60	9	83
Quality	5	58	3	56	2	61
Warranties	10	31	10	31	0	41
Nutrition	13	25	11	23	2	36
Safety	0	32	0	32	0	32
Company Research	8	19	8	19	0	27
Taste	3	16	0	13	3	16
Independent Research	3	10	3	10	0	13
New Ideas	3	5	3	5	0	8
Packaging	3	3	1	1	2	4

Table 4.6 above contains some interesting revelations. The total cue appearance for websites + magazine advertisements was always going to be greater than separate use of these cues by the two marketing communication channels. However, the total number of the informational content elements for websites alone (1021) was not very far behind the total number of combined (websites + magazine advertisements) informational cue appearance figures. On the other hand, magazine advertisements were clearly containing significantly lesser (439 in total) amounts of informational content. It was also interesting that unique instances of informational cues appearing in websites (786 instances in total) were significantly greater (nearly double) than the overall number of cues appearing in magazine advertisements.

Comparative analysis of the use of informational cues in the magazine advertisements and the websites was indicative not only of roles and overall content of different marketing communication channels and content combinations between the channels but also of relative roles of the individual informational content elements.

Table 4.7: Comparative Use of Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites

Cue	This cue as %age of all cues from web-linked ads	This cue as a %age of all cues from websites	This cue as a %age of all cues appearing in ads + websites
Availability	43.73%	18.81%	26.30%
Price	18.91%	12.73%	14.59%
Special Offers	8.20%	8.81%	8.63%
Performance	10.02%	12.63%	11.85%
Nutrition	2.96%	2.45%	2.60%
Taste	0.68%	1.57%	1.30%
Components	5.24%	6.76%	6.30%
Quality	1.14%	5.68%	4.32%
E-Mail	2.96%	20.76%	15.41%
Warranties	2.28%	3.04%	2.81%
New Ideas	0.68%	0.49%	0.55%
Company Research	1.82%	1.86%	1.85%
Independent Research	0.68%	0.98%	0.89%
Packaging	0.68%	0.29%	0.41%

As shown in Table 4.7 above some of the content elements were utilized by websites and magazine advertisements to a similar extent while others played a significantly greater role with one of the communication channels. For example, web-linked magazine advertisements were using availability and price informational cues to a significantly greater extent than websites (43.73% and 18.91% as opposed to 18.81% and 12.73%). On

the other hand, websites contained not only significantly greater amount of E-Mail-related information (that could obviously be expected) but also more Quality-related information (5.68% as opposed to 1.14% in the magazine ads). However, while the differences (as discussed in the previous passage) were evident, majority of the informational cues were utilized by magazine advertisements and websites to a similar extent and variations between the two communications channels were not too dramatic. For example, special offers, nutrition, independent research and company research cues were used by the magazine advertisements and the websites to an almost similar extent.

As it was evident from the analysis above (Tables 4.4-4.7) a link to a website could enhance advertising communications by making them content-rich. The data collected during a comparative analysis of the two types (web-linked and unlinked) of magazine advertisements made it possible to compare value added by the websites in relation to specific informational content elements.

Table 4.8: Comparative Analysis of Web-Enhanced (Integrated) Magazine Advertisements and Unlinked Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by Websites + Ads Combinations

Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads AND their websites (from Table 4.7 above)
URL	235	0	235
Availability	192	330	232
E-Mail	13	15	225
Price	83	103	192
Performance	44	46	136
Special Offers	36	85	119
Components	23	30	83
Quality	5	19	61
Warranties	10	15	41
Nutrition	13	43	36
Safety	0	3	32
Company Research	8	9	27
Taste	3	35	16
Independent Research	3	4	13
New Ideas	3	14	8
Packaging	3	3	4
Total	674	989	1460

As shown in Table 4.8 above, websites were usually (not always though) enhancing content of magazine advertisements significantly. Overall, web-enhanced communications contained over double (1460) the number of informational cues in web-linked magazine advertisements (674) did. In some instances (e.g. special offers, performance and components), content elements were rarely expressed in the magazine

advertisements but the websites were there to complement the content of the advertisements and expand it in a particular direction.

Another important finding was described by considering the presence or absence of the two new cues (URL and E-mail), that were added to the original Resnik-Stern procedure to take account of the emergence of the Internet and which are a special focus for this thesis. As demonstrated above, while URL was well represented, being a cue used 48% of the time, and appearing in 235 advertisements, E-Mail appeared in fifteen magazine advertisements only.

It was also important to understand the nature and role of the cues in evaluation of informational content of the magazine advertisements. All of the sixteen informational cues used for the informational content analysis of magazine advertisements and the fourteen cues used to analyze the websites could be classified as either universal or limited. The differences between the two were as follows: universal informational cues could be applied to advertising communications relating to virtually any product or service. It meant that all of the advertising communications could benefit from incorporating at least some of the cues into their informational content. On the other hand, limited informational cues could be utilized in advertising communications for specific products or services only.

Differences between universal and limited informational cues were usually transparent. For example, availability of products/services advertised was often likely to be of interest to consumers, as they always needed to know how to purchase or examine the product or service they were interested in. On the contrary, taste was an informational cue that was applicable only to edible products (food and beverages). Likewise, packaging-related information was not something that most service providers had to consider for incorporating into their advertisements. In other words, the scope of use for the informational cues was limited to certain products or services. Majority of the cues (thirteen for magazine advertisements and eleven for websites) could be regarded as

universal while the remaining three (taste, nutrition and packaging) could be regarded as limited due to obvious scope limitations.

Table 4.9: Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Web-Linked and Unlinked Magazine advertisements

Cue Type	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads AND their websites (from Table 4.8 above)
Universal	655	253	908
Limited	19	62	81
Total	674	315	989

Overall, a comparison between the uses of universal and limited informational cues in magazine advertisements (Table 4.9 above) showed that universal cues were responsible for majority of the informational content in both web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements. In case of the web-linked advertisements, dominance of the universal cues was particularly evident as 655 of the 674 cues were universal. %age wise, content distribution between universal and limited cues in the web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements was as follows:

Table 4.10: Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Web-Linked and Unlinked Magazine advertisements by %age of Cue Type

Cue Type	This cue type as %age of all cues from web-linked ads	This cue type as a %age of all cues from unlinked ads	This cue type as a %age of all cues appearing in all ads
Universal	97.17%	80.32%	91.81%
Limited	2.83%	19.68%	8.19%
Total Cues	674	315	100%

Table 4.10 above made differences between use of limited and universal cues by web-linked and unlinked advertisements transparent. With the unlinked advertisements, three limited cues alone (with one of the cues (packaging) not used as much as others) accounted for nearly 20% of the total content. On the other hand, the magazine advertisements that did contain a link to a website were unlikely to use limited cues even when the cues appeared to be suitable for enhancing their content (e.g. nutrition and taste in advertisements for food and beverage products).

Content distribution between universal and limited cues varied across different marketing communication categories.

Table 4.11: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Universal and Limited Cues in 6 Print Advertising + Websites Marketing Communication Categories, Sorted by Total Cue Appearance

Cue Type	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing on website of 235 web-linked ads	Unique instances of cue in print only	Unique instance of cue in web only	Instances where cue appears in both print and web	Total cue appearance for print + web for 235
Universal	487	1220	243	976	244	1463
Limited	19	44	12	37	7	56
Total	506	1264	255	1013	251	1519

As shown in Table 4.11 above, all of the marketing communication categories (irrespective of whether they involved or lacked linkage to web communications) were focusing on universal content elements rather than on limited ones. Therefore, when incorporating web communications, overall content of the marketing messages still focused on the core (universal) content.

As both types of content elements (universal and limited) were equally applicable to all of the marketing communication types, irrespective of the communication channel

used, it was possible to compare how similar and/or different magazine advertisements and websites were in utilization of the content categories when compared to one another. Therefore, web-linked magazine advertisements were compared with websites for those advertisements on the basis of the content element types used.

Table 4.12: Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites

Cue Type	This cue as %age of all cues from web-linked ads	This cue as a %age of all cues from websites	This cue as a %age of all cues appearing in ads + websites
Universal	95.68%	95.69%	95.69%
Limited	4.32%	4.31%	4.31%
Total	439	1021	1460

The comparison of the use of universal and limited informational cues in magazine advertisements and websites showed that both marketing channels were using the cue types to an almost identical level (4.32% of the cues were limited in the magazine advertisements and 4.31% in the websites). Such consistency suggested that the role of the limited cues in marketing communications did not vary too dramatically depending on the marketing communication channel used.

As it was established (see Table 4.12 above) that both magazine advertisements and websites (whenever linked to one another) were using universal and limited cues to a similar extent, it was interesting to see if an analogous equilibrium existed between web-linked and “stand alone” magazine advertisements and whether integration of web-linked ads and websites led to an increase or decrease of limited content elements.

Table 4.13: Comparative Analysis of Use of Universal and Limited Cues in Web-Enhanced (Integrated) and Unlinked Magazine Advertisements

Cue Type	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads AND their websites (from Table 4.12 above)
Universal	655	908	1404
Limited	19	81	56
Total	674	989	1460

A comparison of how web-linked ads, unlinked ads and integrated (magazine advertisements + websites) communications were using universal and limited content elements delivered some surprising outcomes. Unlinked magazine advertisements turned out to contain more limited cues than combinations of web-linked magazine advertisements + websites. This showed that in that while magazine advertisements and websites were utilizing universal and limited cues to a similar extent, where a link to a website was not provided, the amount of limited cues would increase significantly!

It was also important to consider the frequency of cues, of any kind, within the URL-inclusive magazine advertisements. The following table showed the number of advertisements containing various quantities of cues, noting that no advertisements (out of the 235 URL-inclusive ads considered in the study) had more than seven cues in total and all of them had at least one informational cue:

Table 4. 14: Total Cue Inclusion by URL-inclusive Magazine Advertisements

Number of cues	Advertisements with this many cues	As %age of all advertisements
Seven	1	0.43%
Six	3	1.28%
Five	7	2.98%
Four	40	17.02%
Three	69	29.36%
Two	99	42.13%
One	16	6.81%

As shown in Table 4.14 above, over 70% of the URL-inclusive magazine advertisements incorporated either two or three informational cues while URL-inclusive advertisements containing over four cues were few and far between (in fact, very few of the advertisements (4.69%) contained five informational cues or more, while nearly 90% of the advertisements contained between two and four cues).

When analyzing content of magazine advertisements, particular emphasis had to be placed on identification of web-related cues as they were the key to establishment of websites behind the products and services advertised. Table 4.15 below shows how web-related informational content elements (URL and E-Mail) were used in the magazine advertisements.

Table 4.15: Use of Web Related Informational Cues in Magazine advertisements

Use of Cues	URL	E-mail
Combined	13	13
Isolated	222	2
Print Ad Inclusion	235	15
Integration % age	5.53%	86.70%

Table 4.15 above showed that E-Mail was usually used in the magazine advertisements in a combination with an URL rather than by itself. While E-Mail was utilized to a

significantly lesser extent than URL, thirteen out of the fifteen (86.7%) E-Mail inclusive magazine advertisements contained a URL! On the other hand, isolated (URL alone but no E-mail address) use of URLs was very common.

When published in magazine advertisements, URLs had a particular contribution to make to the overall advertising content. They were enhancing magazine advertisements by expanding the informational content provided. The roles URLs were playing in content of the magazine advertisements are shown in Table 4.16 below:

Table 4.16: URL's Functions in Magazine Advertisements

URL's Function	Score	%Age of the Total
Link to a Particular Cue	87	37.0%
Point of Contact	83	35.3%
Link to Further Information	57	24.3%
Miscellaneous	8	3.4%
Total	235	100%

Nearly all of the URLs listed in the advertisements (227 out of 235) could be classified under one of the first three functional categories. 37% of the URLs were included in order to inform consumers that they could learn more about a specific feature or opportunity related to products and services advertised (e.g. special offers or warranties/money back guarantees available from the website). Over 35% of the URLs referred to the websites as sources of contact details, while 24.3% of the addresses referred to the websites as sources of further general information (not focusing on specific information expressed through particular informational cues) about the products and services.

As shown in Table 4.16 above, 87 out of the 235 URLs (37%) had a specific informational focus. Having an informational focus involved placement of a URL into a

magazine advertisements' body with the aim of redirecting consumers to a website where further information about a specific facet of the product/service advertised was available.

Table 4.17: Informational Focus of URLs in Magazine Advertisements

Information Cue	Times used in total	As % age of all cues appearing
Availability	40	45.98%
Price	14	16.09%
Special Offers	12	13.79%
Performance	5	5.75%
Nutrition	5	5.75%
Taste	4	4.60%
Components	2	2.30%
Quality	2	2.30%
Warranties	2	2.30%
New Ideas	1	1.15%
Company Research	0	0.00%
Independent Research	0	0.00%
Packaging	0	0.00%
Safety	0	0.00%
Total	87	100.00%

In the advertisements where URL was pointing to a website as a source of further information about a particular cue, product or service availability information was by far the most common reason for URL inclusion. Price and special offers information was also fairly common for linking magazine advertisements to websites. On the other hand, the remaining cues were rarely linked to the websites and four of the cues (independent research, company research, packaging and safety) were never mentioned in relation to the URL.

While all magazine advertisements considered in this thesis contained unique informational content, certain consistent trends could be observed. Some of the informational cue combinations revealed clear patterns for advertising content development that were typical at the time. Table 4.18 below outlines the informational cue combinations that were particularly common in the magazine advertisements considered. The Cue Combination column lists the cues involved in the respective combinations, Times Used column shows the number of times this particular combination occurred while the %age of Total columns shows %age of the cues utilized in this particular combination from the total number of the cues used in the magazine advertisements considered in the study.

Table 4.18: Common Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements

Cue Combination	Times Used	C1 %age of Total	C2 %age of Total
PA+W	3	100%	20%
U+A	214	91%	65%
T+N	28	80%	65%
NI+S	10	71%	12%

As shown in Table 4.18 above, some of the informational cues were used predominantly in specific combinations with one another. For example, while the packaging cue was used to a limited extent (three times) only, in all of the instances (100%) it was used in combination with the warranties cue. Similarly, URL cue was usually (91% of the time) used in combination with availability. Predictably enough, taste and nutrition were also common to combine in an advertisement (80% of the taste-inclusive advertisements also contained nutritional information), while new ideas were usually (71% of the time) accompanied by descriptions of the special offers available.

On the other hand, some of the “complementary-looking” informational cues were surprisingly not used in a combination with one another to a very large extent. In the Table 4.19 below, %age of the total columns show respective levels of combined use

for C1 (abbreviation used for the first of the cues listed e.g. packaging in the PA+ SA combination) and C2 (abbreviation used for the second of the cues listed e.g. safety in the same combination).

Table 4.19: Rare Informational Cue Combinations

Cue Combination	Times Used	C1 %age of Total	C2 %age of Total
PA+SA	0	0%	0%
P+Q	4	3.9%	21%
PE+W	3	6.5%	20%
CO+I	1	11%	25%

As shown in Table 4.19 above, advertisers did not always consider previously recognized logical links (as was initially defined by Resnik and Stern (1977)) between some of the informational content elements useful in enhancing magazine advertising content. For example, despite clearly complementary content, packaging and safety were not combined in any of the ads. A similar lack of integration could be observed between price and quality cues. Only 3.9% of the price-inclusive advertisements incorporated product or service quality information. Other complimentary cue combinations that turned out to be very rare were performance + warranties and company research + independent research.

As every magazine advertisement had a particular focus some informational cues played a greater role in the advertising content than others. For example if an advertisement contained four informational cues, not all of the cues had to have equal representation. Thus, one particular (principal) cue (e.g. independent research or nutrition) could be responsible for communicating the main message the advertiser wanted to deliver to his target audience, while the remaining cues supported the key message through provision of additional (complimentary) information. Thus, some of the advertisements did have a principal cue (supporting a clear identifiable key message) while the others advertisements did not focus on delivering a specific key message.

Table 4.20: Total Principal Cue Inclusion by Advertisement, Sorted by Total Principal Cue Usage

Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Total times appearing in print
Availability	29	40	69
Special Offers	40	29	69
Price	26	30	56
URL	27	0	27
Taste	6	9	15
Performance	6	7	13
Nutrition	5	5	10
Quality	4	4	8
Warranties	3	4	7
New Ideas	2	5	7
Components	2	3	5
Company Research	3	2	5
Independent Research	1	1	2
Safety	0	1	1
E-Mail	0	0	0
Packaging	0	0	0
Total	154	140	294

Table 4.20 above identifies principal cues from the magazine advertisements considered in this study. The table shows that 294 out of the 490 (60%) of the magazine advertisements analyzed contained a principal cue while the remaining advertisements did not emphasize any particular informational cue as the principal one. Availability and special offers were most frequently used as the principal informational cues (69 times each). Price was also frequently used as the principal cue. Nine of the informational cues

(nutrition, components, quality, warranties, new ideas, company research, independent research, packaging and safety) were used as the principal ones in ten instances or less.

Despite having a slightly smaller overall sample (235 advertisements as opposed to 255 advertisements for unlinked ones) web-linked advertisements turned out to contain a greater proportion of principal cues. Furthermore, URL (the very cue that was providing a web link for the advertisements) itself was a principal cue in 27 of the advertisements. However, if URL was to be excluded from the comparison (as it was obviously applicable to web-linked advertisements only rather than to the total sample) unlinked advertisements were to have a higher proportion of principal cues than the web-linked ones. The only content category (other than URL) where web-linked advertisements had significantly higher proportion of principal cues than the unlinked advertisements was special offers. Interestingly, despite the fact that URL was the second most common cue after availability (as shown in the table 4.4) and fairly often had a specific informational focus (as shown in the table 4.9), it was nevertheless used as a principal cue in 27 of the advertisements only! Thus, it was more common for the advertisers to use a link to a website to support some other content element (e.g. statement of product or service availability or performance) rather than to emphasize importance of the website itself.

In order to understand, how likely the cues were to be used as principal cues, it was necessary to establish %age of the principal cues from the total number of the informational cues identified as well as what were the relative percentages of these cues in web-linked and unlinked advertisements. In the table 4.21 below, the cues are sorted by frequency (%age-wise) of use as principal cues.

Table 4.21: Comparative Use of Principal Informational Cues in Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by %age of Total Use

Cue	This cue as a %age of all principal cues from web-linked ads	This cue as a %age of all principal cues from unlinked ads	This cue as a %age of all principal cues appearing in all ads
Availability	18.83%	28.57%	23.47%
Special Offers	25.97%	20.71%	23.47%
Price	16.88%	21.43%	19.05%
URL	17.53%	0.00%	9.18%
Taste	3.90%	6.43%	5.10%
Performance	3.90%	5.00%	4.42%
Nutrition	3.25%	3.57%	3.40%
Quality	2.60%	2.86%	2.72%
New Ideas	1.30%	3.57%	2.38%
Components	1.30%	2.14%	1.70%
Company Research	1.95%	1.43%	1.70%
Warranties	1.95%	0.00%	1.02%
Independent Research	0.65%	0.71%	0.68%
Safety	0.00%	0.71%	0.34%
E-Mail	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Packaging	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Total Cues	154	140	294

Table 4.21 above shows that with the unlinked advertisements, three of the cues (availability, price and special offers) were accounting for over 70% of the total number of informational cues used while all of the remaining cues accounted for less than 30% only. With the web-linked magazine advertisements, while only one cue (special offers) accounted for over 20% of the principal cues (as opposed to three cues with over 20% use in case of the unlinked advertisements), similarly to the unlinked advertisements,

minority (availability, special offers, price and URL) of the cues accounted for majority (well over 75%) of the principal content.

As both websites and magazine advertisements contained principal cues, it was possible to compare levels of usage of various content elements as principal cues across the two marketing communication channels. As URL cue was applicable to web-linked ads only and not applicable (due to its obvious irrelevance to website content assessment) to assessment of the remaining communications.

Table 4.22: Comparative Analysis of the Use of Principal Cues in Six Print Advertising + Websites Marketing Communication Categories, Sorted by Total Principal Cue Appearance

Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing on website of 235 web-linked ads	Unique instances of principal cue in print only	Unique instances of principal cue in web only	Instances where principal cue appears in both print and web	Total cue appearance for print + web for 235
Availability	29	32	40	24	8	53
Price	26	30	30	23	7	49
Special Offers	40	17	29	8	9	48
Performance	6	31	7	29	2	35
Taste	6	1	9	1	0	7
Quality	4	3	4	2	1	6
Nutrition	5	1	5	1	0	6
Components	2	4	3	3	1	5
Warranties	3	2	4	2	0	5
Company Research	3	0	2	0	0	3
New Ideas	2	1	5	1	0	3
Independent Research	1	0	1	0	0	1
Safety	0	0	1	0	0	0
Packaging	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	127	122	140	94	28	221

Table 4.22 above shows that there was a lot of consistency across the marketing communication categories. Majority of the content elements were used by the communication channels to a similar extent. For example, packaging and independent research cues were unlikely to be utilized as principal cues irrespective of the communication channel messages were delivered through. On the other hand, availability

and price always appeared to be popular choices for principal cues. Cues like special offers (where their use as principal cues varied depending on the marketing communication channel used) were few and far between. Overall, four of the cues (availability, price, performance and special offers) were accounting for majority of the principal cues in all of the marketing communication categories.

It was interesting to compare relative frequency of content elements as principal cues in magazine advertisements and websites. In Table 4.23 below, informational cues were sorted by the %age of all principal cues appearing in the magazine advertisements and the websites.

Table 4.23: Comparative Use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites, Sorted by %age of All Cues Appearing in Ads + Websites

Cue	This cue as %age of all principal cues from web-linked ads	This cue as a %age of all principal cues from websites	This cue as a %age of all principal cues appearing in ads + websites
Availability	18.83%	22.86%	19.92%
Price	16.88%	21.43%	18.42%
Special Offers	25.97%	12.14%	18.05%
Performance	3.90%	22.14%	13.16%
URL	17.53%	0.00%	10.15%
Taste	3.90%	0.71%	2.63%
Nutrition	3.25%	0.71%	2.26%
Quality	2.60%	2.14%	2.26%
Components	1.30%	2.86%	1.88%
Warranties	1.95%	1.43%	1.88%
Company Research	1.95%	0.00%	1.13%
New Ideas	1.30%	0.71%	1.13%
Independent Research	0.65%	0.00%	0.38%
E-Mail	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Packaging	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Safety	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Total	154	140	266

As evident from Table 4.23 above, there were some content elements that were significantly more common to be used as principal cues with a particular marketing communication channel. For example, performance accounted for over 1/5th (22.14%) of the principal cues in the websites, but in the magazine advertisements it accounted for 3.90% only. Similarly, special offers-related content (despite fairly low level of overall use when compared with some other cues) was responsible for over 25% of all the

principal cues in the web linked advertisements – more than half of the share it was occupying with the websites. Overall, three content elements (availability, price and special offers) accounted for 55% of the total number of principal cues in web-linked advertisements and websites. The division between “common” and “uncommon principal cues was transparent. Five of the cues (availability, price, special offers, performance and URL (despite URLs applicability to magazine advertisements only and therefore, greater difficulties in achieving a high score) accounted for over 10% of the total number of the principal cues each and none of the remaining eleven cues accounted for 3 or more % of the principal cues! Therefore, it could be said that there was a small but consistent group of content elements that were critical for informational content development of the websites and the magazine advertisements. Not all of the content elements were equally critical for both of the marketing communication channels considered (as in example with performance that was clearly much more popular with the websites than with the magazine advertisements), but if some cues were to be used a lot with a particular marketing communication channel, they were likely to come from the group of the five cues outlined above.

Overall use of principal cues in magazine advertisements and websites is summarized in Table 4.24 below.

Table 4.24: Overall Use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites.
Sorted by Combined use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites

Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads AND their websites (from Table 4.23 above)
Availability	29	40	53
Price	26	30	49
Special Offers	40	29	48
Performance	6	7	35
Taste	6	9	7
Quality	4	4	6
Nutrition	5	5	6
Components	2	3	5
Warranties	3	4	5
Company Research	3	2	3
New Ideas	2	5	3
Independent Research	1	1	1
Safety	0	1	0
Packaging	0	0	0
Total	127	140	221

Out of all of the content elements listed in Table 4.24 above performance was arguably the most interesting one. Neither web-linked nor unlinked magazine advertisements were likely to use it as a principal cue. On the other hand, when enhanced by a website, performance-related content was rising in importance dramatically. However, such variation in use of performance as a principal cue across the marketing communication channels appeared to be an exception rather than a norm. All the remaining cues were used rather consistently in all types of the communications.

One of the most critical aspects of the content analysis was identification of the value delivered by specific content elements and establishing whether the role of a particular content element was (as with principal informational cues) or was not (as with ordinary informational cues) primary. Furthermore, as not all of the communications incorporated a principal cue in the first place, such a comparison could establish how many of the advertisements were built around a principal cue as opposed to focusing on multiple content elements.

Table 4.25: Frequency of Content Elements Being Used as Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements, Sorted by Total Cues

Cue	Appearing in 235 web-linked ads	Appearing in 255 unlinked ads	Total times appearing in print	Total Cues
Availability	29	40	69	330
URL	27	0	27	235
Price	26	30	56	103
Special Offers	40	29	69	85
Performance	6	7	13	46
Nutrition	5	5	10	43
Taste	6	9	15	35
Components	2	3	5	30
Quality	4	4	8	19
Warranties	3	4	7	15
E-Mail	0	0	0	15
New Ideas	2	5	7	14
Company Research	3	2	5	9
Independent Research	1	1	2	4
Safety	0	1	1	3
Packaging	0	0	0	3
Total	154	140	294	989

Table 4.25 above shows that some of the content elements were not used very frequently but at the same time, whenever they were used, they were likely to play a principal role. For example, research-related content elements (company research and independent research) were not used in the advertisements very frequently. Combined score for the use of these research-related content elements was thirteen (nine for company research and four for independent research). However seven (50%) of the content elements were used as principal cues. Therefore, while research-related content was arguably harder to

incorporate into the advertisements than availability or price-related information, when included, it did tend to play an important role in the overall content formation.

Percentage-wise, informational content elements were utilized as principal cues to the following extent:

Table 4.26: Principal Cue Inclusion by %age of Cues Used, Sorted by % of Total Cues Used

Cue	As %age of all cues in Web-Linked ads	As %age of all cues in unlinked ads	As %age of all cues	Total Cues
Special Offers	47.06%	34.12%	81.18%	85
Company Research	33.33%	22.22%	55.56%	9
Price	25.24%	29.13%	54.37%	103
New Ideas	14.29%	35.71%	50.00%	14
Independent Research	25.00%	25.00%	50.00%	4
Warranties	20.00%	26.67%	46.67%	15
Taste	17.14%	25.71%	42.86%	35
Quality	21.05%	21.05%	42.11%	19
Safety	0.00%	33.33%	33.33%	3
Performance	13.04%	15.22%	28.26%	46
Nutrition	11.63%	11.63%	23.26%	43
Availability	8.79%	12.12%	20.91%	330
Components	6.67%	10.00%	16.67%	30
URL	11.49%	0.00%	11.49%	235
E-Mail	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	15
Packaging	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3
Total Cues	15.57%	14.16%	29.73%	989

Analysis of the principal cues showed that while some of the informational cues were not incorporated into the magazine advertisements as frequently as others, once incorporated, they were more likely to define the nature of the advertisements than some of the commonly used cues. For example, availability was by far the most popular cue of all. However, it was rarely used as a principal cue, as only in 20.91% of the 330 instances where it was used the cue was treated as the principal one. This was making availability of the products and services advertised the 12th most popular and consequently the 5th least popular informational cue of all on %age of use as the principle cue basis. At the same time, the analysis showed that special offers cue was by far the most usable principal cue of all, on the % of use as a principal cue basis. While it was used in 85 advertisements only, it featured as a principal cue in 69 of these advertisements (81.18%). Other informational cues used as principal ones 50 or more % of the times they featured in the magazine advertisements were company research (55.56%), price (54.37%), new ideas (50%) and independent research (50%). On the other hand, E-Mail and packaging cues did feature in a number of the advertisements (fifteen and three) respectively but none of the advertisers used them as principal ones. Therefore, these cues were not as critical for content development as some others (e.g. special offers).

4.3 Content Analysis of Australian Websites as Advertisements

The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure was initially developed for informational content analysis of traditional advertising communications, such as TV and radio commercials, print advertisements and billboards. However, in the early years of this century, the World Wide Web had emerged as an alternative to, or supplement for, this kind of advertising. As has been discussed previously in this thesis, it is therefore appropriate to view a website, to which an advertisement in print media refers, as a kind of additional advertisement which is itself amenable to analysis via the Resnik-Stern procedure.

While section 4.2 of the thesis focused on comparison of all of the communication categories (e.g. both web-linked and unlinked advertisements + websites) in this particular section, the focus was on the web-linked ads and websites for these advertisements only. As identified above, 235 advertisements referred to a website. However, in some of these cases, the same website was referred to in a number of different ads. Furthermore, eighteen of the URLs identified could not be found. As a result, there were 217 websites which could be analyzed, treating the websites to which advertisements refer as advertisements themselves. The findings of the research where the procedure was applied are shown in Table 4.27 below:

Table 4.27: The Resnik-Stern Cues Appearing on Websites Referred by Print Advertising

Information Cue	Times used in total	As %age of ad presence	As % age of all cues appearing
Availability	192	88.48%	23.73%
Price	130	59.91%	16.07%
Performance	129	59.45%	15.95%
Special Offers	90	41.47%	11.12%
Components	69	31.80%	8.53%
Quality	58	26.73%	7.17%
Safety	32	14.75%	3.96%
Warranty	31	14.29%	3.83%
Nutrition	25	11.52%	3.09%
Company Research	19	8.76%	2.35%
Taste	16	7.37%	1.98%
Independent Research	10	4.61%	1.24%
New Ideas	5	2.30%	0.62%
Packaging	3	1.38%	0.37%
Total Advertisements	809	100.00%	100.00%

As shown in table 4.27 above, availability informational cue was the most popular cue of all as it appeared in 192 websites out of the 217 websites considered. Thus, this cue alone accounted for 23.76% of the informational cues used. Price, performance and special offers cues also passed the 10% mark. At the same time, a significant number of cues (safety, warranty, nutrition, company research, taste, independent research, new ideas and packaging) scored below 4%.

Similarly to magazine advertisements, websites also had their comparative use of universal and limited informational cues analyzed.

Table 4.28 Comparative Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in Websites by %age of Ad Presence

Cue Type	Av. %age of Ad Presence
Universal	19.40%
Limited	4.00%

Comparison between universal and limited informational cues showed that overall, universal informational cues were used in websites to a greater extent than limited ones. The universal cue average accounted for 14.3% of the total number of cues used in websites while the limited cue average accounted for 5.5%.

Informational content analysis of the websites revealed some popular patterns for creation of web advertising content. The patterns involved combined use of informational content elements (cues) for message creation. Such patterns were indicative of both interdependence of the content elements (e.g. whether they could or could not deliver informative content to consumers on their own or not) and logical links that existed between them. In Table 4.29 below, C1 refers to the cue listed first in the cue combination (e.g. special offers as in the first row of Table 4.29) and C2 refers to the cue listed second (e.g. availability as in the S+A combination mentioned below).

Table 4 29: Common Informational Cue Combinations in Websites

Cue Combination	Times Used	C1 %age of Total	C2 %age of Total
S+A	88	98%	46%
P+ A	121	93%	63%
T+N	13	81%	52%

Special offers + availability proved to be the most common informational content combination of all. 88 out of the 90 (98%) of the websites containing special offers-related content also included some product/service availability information. Another very popular content combination was price + availability (93% of the price-inclusive websites

incorporated availability information). Thus, it was evident that availability-inclusive websites provided a strong basis for the use of complimentary informational cues. Taste + nutrition and warranties + quality also proved to be popular pairs.

On the other hand, there were some informational content combinations that turned out to be extremely unpopular despite seemingly complimentary nature of the cues involved.

Table 4.30: Rare Informational Cue Combinations in Websites

Cue Combination	Times Used	% of Total
NI+I	0	0%
W+CO	3	10% / 16%
CO+Q	3	16% / 5%
T+SA	3	19% / 9%

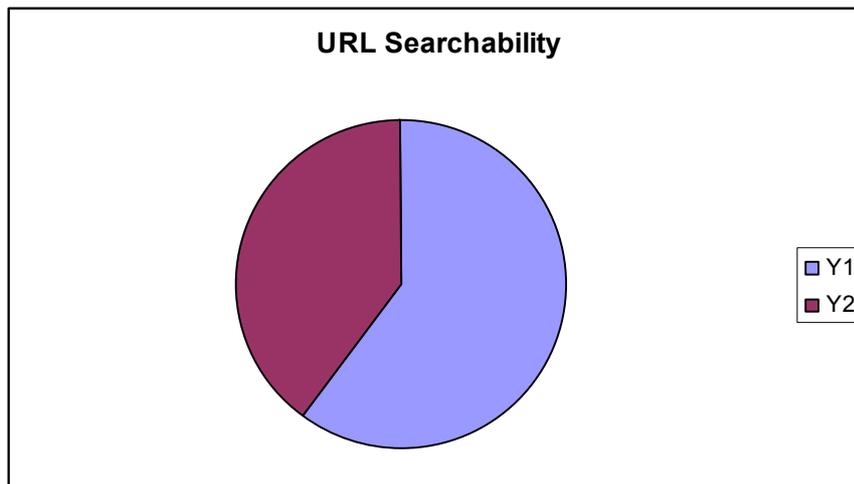
It could be seen from a comparison between Tables 4.29 and 4.30 above, that the contrast between common and rarely used cue combinations was quite obvious. For example, none of the advertisers used a combination of new ideas and independent research. Company research-related information was rarely used in the websites in combination with warranties and quality cues.

As explained in table 4.2, a survey of the Australian magazines analyzed identified the total of 490 magazine advertisements. 25 of the advertisements (as listed in Appendix A) contained no identifiable (as defined by the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977)) informational content at all. In order to establish whether there was a relationship between having content-rich advertisements and content-rich websites, websites for the 25 advertisements were located and analyzed.

Search for the websites was performed through the application of Fitzpatrick's (2000) website search methodology. Fitzpatrick pointed out that since ideally, website

domain name should match a company or a brand name – the initial stage (Y1) of the URL search involved searching for a matching domain name. In cases where search for a matching domain failed to identify the websites, search engine search (Y2) was to be used. Thus, website guessability (ease that a website could be located with) could be classified under either Y1 (where URLs were easiest to identify), Y2 (where domain name did not match brand or company name and therefore use of a search engine was required) or Y3 (where URL could be identified, but was taking a long time and required use of advanced search methods). In cases where a website could not be located/did not exist, the score of 0 was given.

Chart 4.1: Informational Content Exclusive Websites: URL Searchability



Abbreviation used: Y1 - .com.au; Y2 - search engine search.

Chart 4.1 above shows that while some of the magazine advertisements failed to incorporate informational content related to a product or service promoted, websites for the brands advertised could still be located easily. Fifteen out of the 25 content-exclusive advertisements could be found simply through entering company/brand name into the URL address field of a web browser. Websites for the remaining ten brands in this category could be located through a basic (with company/brand name used as a search term) web search. Thus, 60% of the magazine advertisements had easily locatable websites. The remaining ten (40%) advertisements did not have websites that were

unanimous with the company names. However, those websites were also relatively easy to find. Therefore, all of the websites could be located within a single search engine search for the respective brand/company name.

Once URLs for content-exclusive magazine advertisements were established, it was possible to carry out content analysis of the websites.

Table 4.31: Total Resnik-Stern Informational Cue Inclusion into Websites for Content Exclusive Magazine Advertisements

Number of cues	Websites with this many cues	As %age of all websites
Five	3	12.00%
Four	6	24.00%
Three	4	16.00%
Two	5	20.00%
One	5	20.00%
Nil	2	8.00%
Total	25	100.00%

As shown in Table 4.31 above, 52% of the websites for content-exclusive magazine advertisements contained three informational cues or more, while the remaining 48% contained two informational cues or less. Only two of the websites (8%) did not contain any identifiable informational cues, while the maximum number of cues incorporated into the websites was five.

Similarly to the magazine advertisements, some of the websites contained principal informational cues, while the others did not build key content of their messages around a single cue.

Table 4.32: Total Principal Cue Inclusion by Website by %age of Principal Cues Use

Information Cue	Used as Principal Cue	as %age of Total Principal Cues
Availability	32	26.23%
Performance	31	25.41%
Price	30	24.59%
Special Offers	17	13.93%
Components	4	3.28%
Quality	3	2.46%
Warranty	2	1.64%
Nutrition	1	0.82%
Taste	1	0.82%
New Ideas	1	0.82%
Safety	0	0.00%
Company Research	0	0.00%
Independent Research	0	0.00%
Packaging	0	0.00%
Total Cues	122	100%

Overall, 122 (56.2%) out of the 217 analyzed websites contained a principal cue while the remaining 95 websites did not focus on a specific element of informational content. Availability was principal cue in 26.23% of these websites, closely followed by performance and price that were used as principal cues by 25.41% and 24.59% of the principal cue-inclusive websites respectively. On the other hand, four of the cues (safety, company research, independent research and packaging) were not used as principal cues at all. Therefore, key content of the messages was usually built around a limited number of content elements (e.g. performance and price-related information).

The data discussed above also made it possible to establish relative shares of the informational cues from the total number of the principal cue-enabled websites.

Table 4.33: Principal Cue Inclusion by %age of Cues Used

Information Cue	Times used in total	Used as Principal Cue	%
Performance	129	31	24.03%
Price	130	30	23.08%
New Ideas	5	1	20.00%
Special Offers	90	17	18.89%
Availability	192	32	16.67%
Warranty	31	2	6.45%
Taste	16	1	6.25%
Components	69	4	5.80%
Quality	58	3	5.17%
Nutrition	25	1	4.00%
Safety	32	0	0.00%
Company Research	19	0	0.00%
Independent Research	10	0	0.00%
Packaging	2	0	0.00%
Total Cues	217	122	56.22%

While overall levels of use of principal cues in magazine advertisements and websites were similar to one another, (60% for the magazine advertisements and 56% for the websites) the two marketing communication channels did not follow similar patterns for communicating the principle messages. The magazine advertisements had a clear leader in the principal cue integration department (special offers), but it was hard to single out a particular informational cue that was influencing web content to a significantly greater extent than other cues. Performance served as a principal cue in 24.03% of the websites where it was used, while price and new ideas cues appeared in 23.08% and 20% of the websites respectively (though in case of new ideas the sample size was very small as the cue was used in five websites only).

4.4 Measuring Integration between Magazine Advertisements and Websites and Comparing Informational Content of the Two Marketing Communication Channels

The thesis is concerned with discovering the degree of marketing communication integration between a print (magazine) advertisement and a website for the same product or service. Integration assessment involved comparison of informational content of magazine advertisements and identification of matching informational cues. Furthermore, comparison of the informational content of the two marketing communication channels was carried out.

Another important aspect of the integration assessment was investigation of the methods used by the companies for integration of their communications and comparison of the traditionally advocated (as discussed in the Literature Review) integration patterns (integration by repetition) with the newly developed (integration by difference) ones. Integration by repetition involved consistent use of informational content elements (cues) across multiple communication channels (e.g. magazine advertisements and websites) while integration by difference involved complimentary use of the content elements across the communication channels. Complementary relationships between the magazine advertisements and the websites were not as close as repetitive ones but they were nevertheless evident from the communications' content. Furthermore, such relationships (integration) were reliant on consumers' willingness and ability to access both communication channels.

Table 4.34 below shows the degree of integration by repetition between magazine advertisements and online communications in Australia at the turn of the century. The data was compiled on the basis of the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure. The figure in the "Quantity" column shows the number of instances that the cue occurred both in the magazine advertisement and on the website for the product/service considered.

Table 4.34: Degree of Integration between Magazine Advertisements and Websites in Australia in 2001: Use of Individual Informational Cues as a Basis for Integration by Repetition

Cue	Quantity	as %age of Total
Availability	152	56.30%
Quality	37	13.70%
Performance	37	13.70%
Price	21	7.78%
Components	9	3.33%
Special Offers	7	2.59%
Taste	3	1.11%
Nutrition	2	0.74%
Packaging	2	0.74%
Warranties	0	0.00%
Safety	0	0.00%
Independent Research	0	0.00%
Company Research	0	0.00%
New Ideas	0	0.00%
Total	270	100%

As evident from Table 4.34 above, availability-related information was the most common integration by repetition driver as it featured in 152 magazine advertisements and websites for these advertisements and accounted for over half (56.3%) of the integrated by repetition cues. Quality and performance informational cues were integrated in thirteen instances each, accounting for 13.7% of the total number of integrated cues. On the other hand, some of the cues were not so common to integrate and none of the advertising communications integrated warranties, independent research, company research and new ideas cues.

Evidence of how integrated by repetition the two types of communications were with each other at the time can be seen in Table 4.35 below. The table shows the degree to which majority of the magazine advertisements and websites were integrated with each other.

Table 4.35: Integration of Magazine Advertisements and Websites by Degree of Integration by Repetition

Integration Score	Integrated Ads	%age of Total ads
4	8	3.69%
3	10	4.61%
2	37	17.05%
Total Ads	217	100%

The table shows that 55 sets of the magazine advertisements and websites achieved an integration score of two or above. Out of the 55 advertising communications, eight were integrated across four informational cues, ten more across three informational cues, while the remaining 37 advertising communications were integrated across two informational cues.

Further analysis of the integrated by repetition communications showed that some combinations of informational cues were particularly common to integrate. Out of the 37 advertising communications containing two integrated cues, 31 were integrated on the basis of either combination of performance + availability or price + availability combinations of cues. Performance + availability integration occurred in nineteen of the communications while price + availability integration occurred in another twelve advertising communications.

As both magazine advertisements and websites contained principal cues a comparison between uses of the principal cues in the two advertising communication channels was carried out.

Table 4.36: Comparative use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites (as %age of total number of ads)

Communication Channel	Magazine Advertisements	Websites
Ads with Principal Cues	60%	56%
Total Ads	490	217

The comparison showed that magazine advertisements used principal cues only to a slightly greater extent (60% vs. 56%) than websites. Therefore, the concept of having a principal cue did not differ significantly across the two marketing communication channels.

However, given greater advertising population of the websites, when a cue was included into a magazine advertisement, it was more likely to be used as a principal cue rather than a cue included into a website.

Table 4.37: Comparative use of Principal Cues in Magazine Advertisements and Websites (as %age of the total number of informational cues)

Communication Channel	Magazine Advertisements	Websites
Principal Cues	30%	15%
Total Cues	989	808

As shown by Table 4.37 above, in the magazine advertisements, 30% of all of the informational cues served as principal cues while in the websites, only 15% of the cues were principal ones. Thus, probability of a particular informational cue being used as a principal cue doubled if it was used in a magazine ad rather than in a website. In the magazine advertisements, 30% of all of the informational cues served as principal cues while in the websites, only 15% of the cues were principal ones.

Integrated marketing communications with a greater amount of integrated content that contained three common informational cues or more were also following some clearly identifiable trends.

Table 4.38: Integrated by Repetition Informational Content Combinations

Cue Combination	Score	Total Cues
P+PE+A+N	3	4
P+C+A+S	3	4
P+A+S	7	3
PE+A	19	2
P+A	12	2

Out of the ten advertising communications containing three integrated informational cues, seven were using the very same combination of integrated cues (price + availability + special offers). For the communications containing four integrated cues, the informational content tended to incorporate either price + performance + availability + new ideas combination or combination of price + components + availability + special offers. The two content combinations occurred in three advertising communications each. Therefore, integration by repetition was usually built around very specific informational content elements.

Integrated use of principal cues in the advertising communications is shown in table 4.39 below. Figures in the Integration Score column show number of times the cue was used as a principal cue in both a magazine advertisement and a website for the product or service advertised.

Table4.39: Integrated by Repetition Principal Cue Inclusion by number of Cues Used

Informational Cue	Integration Score	as %age of Total Cues
Special Offers	9	32.14%
Availability	8	28.57%
Price	7	25.00%
Performance	2	7.14%
Components	1	3.57%
Quality	1	3.57%
Company Research	0	0.00%
Independent Research	0	0.00%
New Ideas	0	0.00%
Nutrition	0	0.00%
Packaging	0	0.00%
Safety	0	0.00%
Taste	0	0.00%
Warranties	0	0.00%
Total Integrated Principal Cues	28	100%

Special offers were the most common of all principal integrated by repetition as they accounted for 32.14% of the integrated by repetition principal cues. Availability and price were also used relatively extensively. Availability-related content accounted for 28.57% of the cues while price-related content accounted for 25%. These three cues were the key integration drivers as they accounted for 24 out of the 28 (85.71%) integrated principal cues. On the other hand, eight of the cues (57% from the total number of cues considered), namely company research, independent research, new ideas, nutrition, packaging, safety, taste and warranties did not contain any integrated principal cues at all.

As the study investigated whether there was a relationship between achieving strong integration of magazine advertisements and websites and good website functionality, a comparison between the websites that had their content integrated with

magazine advertisements and those that did not match magazine advertising content was carried out. The comparison could establish whether greater informational content of traditional (print) and interactive (websites) communications could be associated with greater website functionality or whether there was no feasible link between the two elements of website performance.

Each of the two categories was represented by sixteen websites. Summary from the comparison can be found in Table 4.40 below. Scores for the integrated by repetition communications are shown in Group I column while scores for the disintegrated communications are shown in Group D column. Therefore, all of the advertisements listed on the left side of the table (e.g. GOO35, GOO39 etc.) are compared with the advertisements listed on the right-sided columns (e.g. NE7, WOM14 etc.).

Table 4.40 Website Functionality Assessment: Integrated (by Repetition) Marketing Communications Vs. Disintegrated Marketing Communications

Integrated Ads				Disintegrated Ads			
No	Code	Int. Cues	WebQual Scores		No	Code	Int. Cues
			Group #I	Group #D			
69	GOO35	4PEAN	24	19	3	NE7	NI
71	GOO39	4PEAN	20	18	20	WOM14	NI
75	FAM2	4PEAN	27	22	22	WOM18	NI
28	NW9	4PPEAS	28	15	35	BE36	NI
24	NW2	4 P C A W	23	25	36	BE28	NI
9	RO1	4 P C A S	17	17	42	BE21	NI
10	RO5	4 P C A S	29	21	60	GEO4	NI
29	NW10	4 P C A S	21	16	64	GOO7	NI
17	TV1	4 P A S W	24	24	66	GOO23	NI
27	NW7	3 P P E A	28	34	67	GOO27	NI
191	HOU25	3 P P E A	35	19	72	GOO43	NI
19	WOM11	3 P A S	25	16	73	G0045	NI
30	NW12	3 P A S	27	13	76	FAM7	NI
132	SHA11	3 P A S	31	26	79	FAM 14	NI
148	BRW8	3 P A S	35	15	82	FAM25	NI
129	SHA7	3 P A S	18	5	167	BRW16	NI
	Total		412	305			

The comparison between the samples showed that in 2001, the websites that had their content integrated with magazine advertisements achieved significantly higher WebQual scores than the websites that did not match informational content of the respective magazine advertisements. Integrated websites achieved a total score of 405 while their disintegrated counterparts had a score of 312. Thus, the comparison suggested that functionality of the integrated by repetition websites considered in the study exceeded functionality of the disintegrated ones by almost 25%.

Another important facet of the study was establishing whether integration by difference (complementation) did exist between the magazine advertisements and the

websites and the degree of the type of integration between these two marketing communication channels had been achieved. Furthermore, integration by repetition vs. integration by difference comparison was carried out as it was instrumental in benchmarking the two types of integration against each other.

Integration by difference assessment outcomes are shown in Table 4.41 below. The informational content elements (cues) are sorted on the basis of frequency of use as integrated by difference.

Table 4.41: Degree of Integration by Difference between Magazine Advertisements and Websites in Australia in 2001: Use of Individual Informational Cues as a Basis for Integration

Information Cue	Times used in total	Times used for Integration by Difference	%age of total cues
Warranties	31	31	100.00%
New Ideas	5	5	100.00%
Company Research	19	19	100.00%
Independent Research	10	10	100.00%
Safety	32	32	100.00%
Special Offers	90	83	92.22%
Nutrition	25	23	92.00%
Components	69	60	86.96%
Price	130	109	83.85%
Taste	16	13	81.25%
Performance	129	92	71.32%
Quality	58	21	36.21%
Packaging	3	1	33.33%
Availability	192	40	20.83%
Total Cues	809	539	66.63%

As it was evident from Table 4.41 above, a number of informational cues (warranty, new ideas, company research, independent research and safety) turned out to be integrated across the marketing communication channels by difference only. Interestingly, these were the informational cues that were not so common across both the magazine advertisements and the websites. On the other hand, some of the most common cues (e.g. availability and quality) were not so common to integrate by difference.

When integrated by difference, the informational cues were sometimes aiming at supporting particular (specific) content elements from the magazine advertisements by linking them to the websites. In such instances, the “bond” between content of the magazine advertisements and content delivered through the use of other informational content elements in the websites was particularly strong.

Table 4.42: Use of Integrated by Difference Informational Cue for Content Referral

Informational Cue	Times Used in Total	Times Used with Content Referral	%age of Total Cues
Availability	40	26	65.00%
Taste	13	8	61.54%
Quality	21	10	47.62%
Performance	92	41	44.57%
Components	60	24	40.00%
New Ideas	5	2	40.00%
Special Offers	83	33	39.76%
Nutrition	23	9	39.13%
Safety	32	11	34.38%
Warranties	31	10	32.26%
Price	109	28	25.69%
Independent Research	10	2	20.00%
Company Research	19	3	15.79%
Packaging	1	0	0.00%
Total Cues	539	207	38.40%

Content referral assessment showed that some of the cues were rarely integrated by difference but were nevertheless likely to be used for the content referral purposes. For example, availability cue was rarely integrated by difference but at the same time it had content referral frequency of 65%. However, “100% integrated” cues were not always highly instrumental in supporting specific messages. Both company research and independent research that were fully integrated (100%) by difference were rarely (in 16% and 20% of the instances respectively) used for content referral.

As integration by repetition and integration by difference content integration methods were exclusive rather than complimentary (a company could be using either one or the other), they could be compared against each other to establish which type of the informational content integration between the magazine advertisements and the websites was particularly common at the time. In Table 4.43 below integration by difference (IDF) and integration by repetition (IRP) scores and %ages for the informational cues are listed alongside each other.

Table 4.43: Comparative Use of Integration by Difference and Integration by Repetition
Content Integration Methods

Informational Cue	Total IDF Cues	%age of Total IDF	Total IRP Cues	%age of Total IRP
Availability	40	7.42%	152	56.30%
Company Research	19	3.53%	0	0.00%
Components	60	11.13%	9	3.33%
Independent Research	10	1.86%	0	0.00%
New Ideas	5	0.93%	0	0.00%
Nutrition	23	4.27%	2	0.74%
Packaging	1	0.19%	2	0.74%
Performance	92	17.07%	37	13.70%
Price	109	20.22%	21	7.78%
Quality	21	3.90%	37	13.70%
Safety	32	5.94%	0	0.00%
Special Offers	83	15.40%	7	2.59%
Taste	13	2.41%	3	1.11%
Warranties	31	5.75%	0	0.00%
Total Cues	539	100%	270	100%

Overall, integration by difference proved to be significantly (almost double) more popular among the advertisers than integration by repetition. Only three of the informational cues (availability, quality and packaging) were used for integration by repetition to a greater extent than for integration by difference. All of the remaining eleven cues were more likely to be integrated by difference rather than by repetition.

As integration by repetition was more common with three of the content elements only (availability, quality and packaging) popularity of this integration method with individual cues could be regarded as an exception rather than a norm. Therefore, it was important to establish how close integration by repetition between the two

communication channels (magazine advertisements and websites) in respect to the cues was. Given the very limited sample available for the packaging cue (it was used in three of the websites only), it had to be excluded from the analysis as such a small sample would be insufficient for establishing a clear trend. Consequently, the analysis was carried out for the availability and quality cues only

Table 4.44: Integrated by Repetition Content Elements: Relationship Assessment

Cue	Total Score	Complete Rep.	%age of Total
Quality	37	16	43.24%
Availability	152	46	30.26%

It is clear from Table 4.44 above that even in cases of integration by repetition, informational content elements were rarely simply “copied” across the communication channels. Rather than to be copied “word-for-word”, they were more likely to be considered as “related”. In cases of both cues (quality and availability) complete repetition was occurring in less than 50% of the instances. Therefore, integration by repetition was usually based on logical content connections across the marketing communication channels rather than on “word-for-word” repetition of marketing messages, slogans etc.

On the other hand, there were many content areas (eleven) where integration by difference was more common rather than integration by repetition. In the content areas, it was also interesting to see if any (even very minor) similarities were present in the websites and magazine advertisements where integration by difference was taking place. In Table 4.45 below the cues are sorted by frequency of occurrence.

Table4.45: Content Similarities with the Integrated by Difference Content Elements (Sorted by Frequency)

Cue	Total Score	Content Similarities	%age of Total
New Ideas	5	2	40.00%
Components	60	21	35.00%
Performance	92	29	31.52%
Company Research	19	5	26.32%
Special Offers	83	18	21.69%
Independent Research	10	2	20.00%
Nutrition	23	4	17.39%
Taste	13	2	15.38%
Warranties	31	3	9.68%
Safety	32	2	6.25%
Price	109	4	3.67%

With the integration by difference, content similarities were particularly common with new ideas-related content as it was occurring in 40% of the integrated cues. Out of the “mainstream” (commonly occurring) cues, only components and performance had content similarity level of above 30%.

Similarly to the integration by repetition, some content elements that were integrated by difference were also principal cues that were defining key messages from the communications. Unlike with integration by repetition, these content elements were not repeated throughout both marketing communication channels (magazine advertisements and websites). Instead there was a logical linkage between content elements from the respective marketing communication channels. Therefore, “principal integrated by difference cue” could be defined as a carrier of key complimentary content across the communication channels.

Table 4.46: Integrated (by Difference) Principal Cue Inclusion by the Number of Cues Used

Information Cue	Times used for Integration by Difference	Principal Cues	%age of Total
Availability	40	10	25.00%
Special Offers	83	20	24.10%
New Ideas	5	1	20.00%
Price	109	19	17.43%
Nutrition	23	4	17.39%
Taste	13	2	15.38%
Quality	21	3	14.29%
Safety	39	5	12.82%
Performance	92	11	11.96%
Company Research	20	2	10.00%
Independent Research	10	1	10.00%
Components	60	5	8.33%
Warranties	31	1	3.23%
Packaging	1	0	0.00%
Total Cues	547	84	15.36%

While none of the integrated by difference cues were particularly common to be used as principal cues (no cue was used as a principal cue beyond the 25% mark) availability was the most common integrated by difference principal cue. Special offers and price were also among the most commonly used principal cues.

It was interesting to see how the two types of the integrated (by repetition and by difference) principal cues performed in comparison with each other.

Table 4.47: Comparative Use of Integrated by Difference and Integrated by Repetition Principle Cues, Sorted by Alphabetical Order

Informational Cue	IRP Integration Score	As %age of Total	IDF Integration Score	As %age of Total
Availability	8	28.57%	10	11.90%
Company Research	0	0.00%	2	2.38%
Components	1	3.57%	5	5.95%
Independent Research	0	0.00%	1	1.19%
New Ideas	0	0.00%	1	1.19%
Nutrition	0	0.00%	4	4.76%
Packaging	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Performance	2	7.14%	11	13.10%
Price	7	25.00%	19	22.62%
Quality	1	3.57%	3	3.57%
Safety	0	0.00%	5	5.95%
Special Offers	9	32.14%	20	23.81%
Taste	0	0.00%	2	2.38%
Warranty	0	0.00%	1	1.19%
Total Integrated P. Cues	28	100%	84	100%

As shown by the table 4.47 above, integrated by difference informational cues were far more likely to be used as principal cues than integrated by repetition ones. Not a single one of the cues had a greater integration score by repetition than by difference!

4.5 WebQual Analysis of Websites

Website performance analysis was carried out through the use of WebQual website performance analysis tool. WebQual was developed by Adam and Deans (2000) specifically for the purpose of assessing both informational content and functionality of commercial websites. Unlike many of the other website performance assessment tools, WebQual was capable of assessing not just selected facets of websites (e.g. transaction processing) but all of the features websites were having at the time. Thus, WebQual scores were indicative of the overall website performance.

WebQual website performance analysis tool was applied to the very same 217 websites as the Resnik-Stem advertising procedure. A full list of WebQual scores can be found in Appendix A. Majority of the websites' features could score up to one point. However, the websites could score up to five points for Order Processing while "Helpdesk" and URL Guessability could score up to three points each and Multi-Office/Agents Contacts by Email/Form could score up to two points. The scores showed that in 2001, the Australian commercial websites analyzed achieved a total score of 5592, making the average WebQual score of 25.77.

WebQual website capabilities could be summarized into a number of categories. The categories were: New Media Communication Capabilities, Marketing Channel capabilities and Relationship Enhancement capabilities. New Media Communication capabilities incorporated evaluation of communication features of websites such as: URL, Coding, Brochureware /Non-linear, Design, Global Impact (design-wise), and Website Update functions. Marketing Channel capabilities assessment involved evaluation of order processing, service delivery, and global effectiveness (marketing-wise) of a website. Relationship Enhancement capabilities incorporated evaluation of ten factors related to effective management of customer relationships. This sub-division enabled WebQual to determine the areas where a website was performing strongly as well as the areas where the performance was not satisfactory as ability/failure to fulfill a specific

function was not necessarily indicative of the overall website performance. For example, if a website failed to produce media releases, this shortcoming alone was not sufficient to suggest that the marketing communications were not managed well.

Due to the large number of communication capabilities considered (46), Table 4.48 below had to be broken down into table 4.48A and table 4.48B. Overall, based on the 217 websites considered in the study, media communication capability (that also incorporated functionality assessment of the websites) could be identified as follows:

Table 4.48 A: WebQual Media Communication Capability1

	New Media Communication										
	URL	Coding			Brochure-ware / non-linear						
	URL Guessability (1-3)	Not browser restricted	ALT tags	Menu / Tabs	Navigation	Media releases	FAQs	Related product links	META tags (search)	In-site search	Product/service images and text
Total Score	399	197	105	180	162	106	86	96	143	109	175

Table 4.48 B: WebQual Media Communication Capability2

	New Media Communication												
	Design					Global				Update		NMC Total	
	Add-ons / Plug-ins linked	Graphics	Layout	Image	Aesthetics	Administrative details	Multilingual display / information	Multi-site office online directory	Multi-site office offline details	Multi-site vendor details	Webmaster details		Links updated date
Total Score	194	171	158	179	157	190	67	59	61	57	102	43	3196

As evident from the table above, URL Guessability achieved the highest WebQual mean score of all (1.8) but as a website could score up to three points for good Guessability, its score could not really be compared with the other communication capability features. Not Browser Restricted, Add-ons/Plug-ins Linked and Administrative Details functions turned out to be the most common communication capability features of the websites as they achieved a mean score of 0.9. Multi-Lingual Display/Information, Multi-Site Office Online Directory and FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) were the most unpopular communication capability features of the websites as they had a mean score below 0.5.

Analysis of the websites as marketing communication carriers resulted in a number of interesting observations related to some of the sites' performance aspects. The observations enabled the researcher to focus on specific aspects of the websites' performance and outline both strengths and weaknesses that were common for the Australian websites at the time. One of such aspects was use of the Resnik-Stern informational cues in menu tabs. Naming menu tabs after informational cues (or after synonyms to the cues) was indicative of the roles the cues were playing in the websites as the menu tabs were indicative of the content contained in the web pages they were linked to.

Table 4.48: Use of the Resnik-Stern Informational Cues in Menu Tabs

Cue	Times Used in Total	Times Used as Menu Tabs	%age of the cue used
Price	130	57	40.14%
Availability	192	27	19.01%
Performance	129	20	14.08%
Special Offers	90	19	13.38%
Quality	58	8	5.63%
Components	69	4	2.82%
Nutrition	25	2	1.41%
Company Research	19	2	1.41%
Safety	32	1	0.70%
Warranty	31	1	0.70%
Independent Research	10	1	0.70%
Taste	16	0	0.00%
New Ideas	5	0	0.00%
Packaging	2	0	0.00%
Total Cues as Menu Tabs	808	142	100.00%
Total Websites	217	97	45%

Use of the Resnik-Stern informational cues as menu tabs turned out to be fairly common as it occurred in 97 (45%) of the websites. Overall, these websites contained 142 cue-related menu tabs. Price turned out to be by far the most popular informational cue to be used as a menu tab as it accounted for 40% of the tabs. Availability, performance and special offers cues were also used to a reasonable extent. On the other pole of the scale, eight of the informational cues were either used very rarely as menu tabs or not used at all. As shown in Table 4.36 above, five of the cues accounted for over 92% of the total number of cue-related tabs!

Another interesting observation was to do with variations in the length of meta tags. Meta tags were used for submission of the websites to search engines. They were

the tags that described various aspects associated with primary content and to reinforce main topics of the web pages. From the 1990's onwards, meta tags that were hidden from the visible page, such as the keywords tag, have been subjected to a lot of abuse up until recent times. Longer meta tags enabled companies to increase their chances of being identified during random search engine searches while decreasing accuracy of the search engines. As super-long meta tags were clearly decreasing accuracy of the searches and impacted performance of the search engine tools negatively, by the turn of the century the major search engines such as Google and Yahoo were starting to take some actions against the offending companies by delisting them from their search databases. Thus, 2001 was a very interesting time when companies had to find the "golden middle" between providing sufficient information for being located by the web searches while sticking to smaller word limits.

Table 4.49: Length of Meta Tags for Search Engine Submissions (Sorted by Popularity)

Tag Length	Number of Websites	% age of total
6-10 words	44	30.77%
11-15 words	35	24.48%
16-20 words	24	16.78%
1-5 words	22	15.38%
21+ words	18	12.59%
Total Tags	143	100.00%

Analysis of the meta tags showed that majority of the tags were between six and fifteen words long. Only 12.6% of the meta tags exceeded 21 words in length. At the same time, almost equally small number of tags contained five words or less.

In the Design section of the Media Communication Capability, one of the most interesting observations was infrequency of software add-ons download times. Speed of the download had a very significant impact on user experience as slow downloads were detracting users from the websites. On the other hand, faster download speed made the

need to download additional software applications (e.g. Flash) less distracting (as the need for downloads was distracting in the first place since it required additional effort from the users).

Table 4.50: Software Add-Ons Download Times

Download Time	Quantity	% age of Total Sites
2-3 min	7	30.43%
1-2 min	5	21.74%
>5 min	5	21.74%
3-5 min	4	17.39%
<1 min	2	8.70%
Total Sites	23	100.00%

As evident from the table 4.51 above, in over 50% of the instances –additional downloads and plug-ins were taking between one and three minutes. On a positive side, only relatively few (slightly over 20%) of the required software downloads were taking five minutes or more.

With website design, consistency was one of the key performance indicators. Consistency of website layout was particularly critical as the website had to present unified and coordinated messages throughout all of its pages with the pages being interlinked to one another. Thus, website layout consistency was investigated.

Table4.51: Website Layout Consistency

Layout Type	Score	%age of the Total
Mostly Consistent	92	42.40%
Consistent Layout	66	30.41%
Mostly Inconsistent	40	18.43%
Inconsistent Layout	19	8.76%
Total	217	100.00%

As shown in Table 4.52 below, layout consistency was a significant issue for majority of the websites as only 30.4% of the sites had consistent layout throughout all of their pages. Further 42.4% of the websites were consistent most of the time but not always. However, over 27% of the websites (more than one in four) were either mostly inconsistent or even fully inconsistent in the ways the web pages were designed.

Some of the websites also used images that were similar to the images used in magazine advertisements for the products and services advertised. The images could be regarded as Old (magazine advertisements) Content-Linked.

Table 4.52: Use of Magazine Advertisement-Related Images in Websites

Image W+A Combinations	Quantity	%age of the Total
Old Content-Linked	27	40.90%
New Content-Linked	26	39.40%
Mixed	13	19.70%
Total Images	66	100%

A significant number of the websites (over 30%) contained the very same images that were included into the magazine advertisements. It was logical to anticipate the images to support similar informational content irrespective of the communication channel used. For example, if a particular image was used in a magazine advertisement to illustrate

product or service information (e.g. a magazine advertisement for Sony was half-page long only but nevertheless incorporated four images, one for each of the phone models advertised) and was incorporated into a website for the same company, logical link to similar kind of informational content could be anticipated. However, this expectation was not confirmed by the comparative analysis of the use of images, as only slightly over 40% of the websites were using the images to generate the very same messages that they were generating in the magazine advertisements. Nearly 60% of the websites did not use images in the same ways they were used in magazine ads consistently and majority of the websites (over 39% of the total number of the sites considered) had very little if any connection with the content they were supporting in the magazine advertisements.

Comparison of the levels of use of different elements of the new media communication capabilities established both relative strengths and weaknesses of the Australian websites at the time.

Table 4.53: New Media Communication Capability, by Average Score

Media Communication Capability	Mean Score Aver.
URL	1.84*
Design	0.81
Coding	0.74
Brochureware/non-linear	0.55
Update	0.33
Global	0.28
NMC Total	0.76

*out of 3

As it is evident from Table 4.54 above, comparative analysis of the new media communication elements showed that design-wise, majority of the websites were both attractive and functional. However, the scope of the websites was restricted to

communication of a limited amount of information that often excluded essentials such as updates on the companies' activities and in particular information on further development of the companies and products/services they had on offer.

Other than the high average score for the URL Guessability (1.84) that could be attributed to the WebQual scoring system (unlike other marketing channel website capabilities, the URL Guessability could have a maximum score of three rather than one), averages for both Design (0.81) and Coding (0.74) suggested that over three quarters of the websites considered in the study were fulfilling the design and functionality requirements to at very least a recognizable extent. On the other hand, poor scores for Updates (0.33) and Global Focus (0.28) indicated that there was either a significant number of shortcomings in these areas and/or these areas of the media communication capability were not addressed by majority of the advertisers.

As far as fulfillment of the marketing channel (incorporating transaction processing capabilities and functions) was concerned, WebQual analysis of the websites revealed a clear tendency among the companies to focus on provision of transaction processing facilities rather than on communication-related functions.

Table 4.54: WebQual Marketing Channel Capability

Marketing Channel 9										
	Order Processing	Service	Pay	Global	Multisite details non-electronic	Links only to third parties on other countries	Multisite offices / agents contacted by email / form	Payment & delivery online (multisites)	Multilingual online ordering (multisites)	MC Total
	Security / online / offline (0-5)	Tracking or customer service enquiry online								
Total Score	987	195	195	39	54	104	115	87	54	1829
Mean Score	4.6	0.9	0.9	0.2	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	8.43

There was a clear contrast between high scores for Order Processing, Provision of Online Pricing Details, and Tracking of the transactions completed (all of the functions were fulfilled in 90% of the websites) and significantly lower scores for availability of the currency conversion tools, provision of multi-site details and multi-lingual support (less than 1/3 of the websites incorporated these capabilities).

The comparison between the channel capability categories also confirmed Order Processing and Service Delivery focus of the websites. Interestingly, while service provision and order processing were maintained at the 90% level, payment processing barely passed the 50% mark.

Table 4.55: Marketing Channel Capability, by Average Score

Marketing Channel Capability	Mean Score Aver.
Order Processing	4.55*
Service	0.90
Pay	0.54
Global	0.38
MC Average	0.94

* out of 5

The Table 4.56 above shows Marketing Channel Capability (sorted by average score). Order Processing was assessed on the scale of zero to five (and that explained its high average scores when compared with scores for other categories), while the remaining four channel capability categories (Order Processing, Service, Pay and Global) were assessed on the scale of zero to one.

Transaction tracking functions were arguably among the most critical elements of the transaction processing. Therefore, it was important to identify the key shortcomings that transaction tracking functions were experiencing at the time.

Table 4.56: Transaction Tracking Shortcomings

Problem Description	Score	%age of Total
Account Management Flows	74	44.85%
Customer Service Flows	53	32.12%
Security Flows	38	23.03%
Total Websites	165	100%

Account management flows turned out to pose the greatest number of problems of all. It accounted for nearly 50% of the total number of errors/shortcomings occurring. On the other hand, not a single one of the three main types of shortcomings appeared to be

becoming “extinct”, as even Security Flows (the least common of the shortcomings) were occurring in 38 of the websites.

With the payment processing, it was important to incorporate price of the products and services sold into the shopping cart. Therefore, the companies had to consider a number of price-incorporation methods and choose the method that was most appropriate to their needs.

Table 4.57: Price Incorporation Methods

Price Incorporation Method	Score	%age of Total
Price of Selected Items Stated	67	34.36%
Basic Categorization	37	18.97%
Catalogue Format	36	18.46%
Complete Pricing Options	28	14.36%
Random Format	27	13.85%
Total	195	100%

The most common way of stating the price involved placing the price tag next to the products and services available (as it featured in nearly 35% of the price-inclusive websites). Unfortunately, more sophisticated and user-friendly options (e.g. catalogue format) were still less common than simpler but less convenient (from the user perspective) alternatives.

Unlike media communications and marketing channel capabilities that could be assessed through a number of sub-categories (as evident from Tables 4.56-4.4.58 above), WebQual did not divide relationship enhancement capabilities into sub-categories. Instead, the relationship enhancement capability was measured through assessment of the ten customer service related functions.

Table 4 58: Relationship Enhancement Capability, by Average Score

Relationship Enhancement Capability	Mean Score Aver.
Communication	0.98
About the company or site/products	0.90
Product & Service Complains	0.79
What is new	0.75
People phone/email detail	0.65
Opt-in/Opt-out Adapt. Messaging	0.63
Financial status of the firm	0.58
Helpdesk	0.55
Web community	0.28
Multilingual choice	0.25
REC Average	0.64

The relationship enhancement capability assessment showed that almost all of the websites (98%) fulfilled the basic communication function. Furthermore, 90% of the websites provided sufficient information about the companies as well as the key descriptions of the products and services they were offering. On the other hand, some other web-enhancement capabilities performed poorly. For example, only a quarter of the websites provided Web Communities and Multilingual access to the critical information.

Communication-related capabilities were not always fully functional. A significant number of the communication tools turned out to be erroneous.

Table 4.59: Communication Capability Shortcomings

Function	Number of Errors	% Age of Err. in Total Err.	% Age of Err. in Total W/sites
E-Mail Errors	40	40.40%	18.43%
Form Errors	37	37.37%	17.05%
Links Errors	22	22.22%	10.14%
Total Errors	99	100%	45.62%
Total Websites	217		

As evident from Table 4.60 above, communication-related errors were quite common. Over 45% of the websites contained some kind of errors or discrepancies. Surprisingly (given relative simplicity compared to other online communication patterns), E-mail errors turned out to be the most common of all. They appeared in 40 (over 18%) of the websites.

In order to measure marketing communication functions of the websites more accurately a number of additional content elements were added to the traditional WebQual website performance assessment tool (Resnik and Stern, 2001). The elements were: Warranties, Special Offers (traditional marketing communication elements), Portals and References to Traditional Marketing Communications (web-enabled marketing communication elements). Thus, it was possible to compare whether traditional marketing communication elements were or were not utilized by the web communications to a greater extent than the new ones. The elements were sorted by %age of web presence.

Table 4.60: Use of Marketing Communication Functions in Websites

Capability	Score	% Age of use
Warranties	116	53.46%
Special Offers	102	47.00%
Portals	73	33.64%
References to Traditional Marketing Communications	63	29.03%
Total Websites	217	

Traditional marketing communication elements (Warranties and Special Offers) turned out to be significantly more common than the Web-Specific (Portals and References to Traditional Marketing Communications) elements. It was particularly interesting to see that while a significant number of magazine advertisements (235) referred to the websites, despite virtually unlimited space, only 63 of the websites had some mention of traditional marketing communications (magazine advertisements, TV commercials etc.)

References to traditional marketing communications of the time (magazines, TV, radio), could be sorted by the marketing channel mentioned on the websites.

Table 4.61: References to Traditional Marketing Communications in the Websites

Communication Channel	Score	% Age of the Total
Magazine	48	76.19%
TV	13	20.63%
Radio	2	3.17%
Total	63	100%

As evident from Table 4.62 above, over three quarters of all of the references were aiming at redirecting websites' visitors towards magazine advertisements rather than to other traditional marketing communications. Therefore, at that point in time, magazine

advertisements had a significantly stronger connection to the websites than other traditional marketing communication channels.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter presents data from informational content analysis (the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure) of magazine advertisements and websites and WebQual analysis of website functionality and content. The data shows that by 2001, nearly half (48%) of the magazine advertisements incorporated a link to a website for the company or brand promoted. Overall, advertisements containing a link to a relevant website turned out to contain greater amount of informational content than advertisements without URLs. Furthermore, popularity of the respective informational cues in both magazine advertisements and websites was identified. Availability, URL, price and special offers were the most popular informational cues to be incorporated into magazine advertisements, while websites focused on communicating availability, price, performance and special offers. In addition, differences between the respective amounts of informational content in web-linked magazine advertisements and unlinked ones were transparent, with the web-linked advertisements usually containing a substantially greater variety of content elements than the unlinked ones.

Content analysis of magazine advertisements and websites also revealed key components (primary cues) of the informational content as well as the cue combinations used for integration of the communications. This information was instrumental in identifying advertising communication methods, patterns and objectives that the companies were having at the time as well as providing data for further analysis of these communications (with the detailed analysis being provided in chapter five).

Website performance analysis (section 4.5 of this chapter) of the website for the magazine advertisements considered in the study revealed both strengths and the weaknesses of commercial websites of the time (2001). The analysis showed that while technical functions were usually (as evident from the respective scores in Tables 4.48-

4.62) fulfilled at least to a minimally required level while communication functions of the websites were often not fulfilled sufficiently.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The informational content analysis of the magazine advertisements and websites, using the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure and the analysis of websites' content and functionality, using WebQual, identified the content and capabilities of the two marketing communication channels. The analysis also revealed a number of interesting and often unexpected trends and patterns in marketing communication development at the time, as well as key differences and similarities between magazine advertisements and the websites as marketing communication channels. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss and explain these trends and patterns.

As data related to respective informational content and functionality capabilities of the communications was already presented in chapter four, this chapter is focusing on evaluation and discussion of this data. More specifically, the discussion involves in-depth analysis of the communication channels' (magazine advertisements' and websites') features as well as identification of the ways the features were linked with one another and how the magazine advertisements were linked and integrated with the respective websites by repetition and by difference. Integration by repetition and by difference were two polar informational content integration methods, so the chapter compared the two types of integration and discussed key similarities and differences between them. Consequently, the comparison showed how the advertisers were treating specific informational content elements (e.g. product/service availability or price-related information) and whether the content elements were integrated by repetition or by difference or not integrated at all.

The analysis also involved a comparison of different communication categories (channel combinations), such as magazine-only communications, magazine + websites and websites with one another. The comparison was instrumental in establishing whether

there was a linkage of the websites to the web enhanced informational content of the magazine advertisements and vice-versa and whether the styles and patterns in which the different informational content elements were presented in the magazines and in the websites were similar or different.

5.2 Informational Content Analysis of the Advertising Communications

This section of the chapter is devoted to in-depth informational content analysis of the magazines and websites considered in this study. As both magazine advertisements and websites were assessed in terms of the same set of informational cues (as outlined by Resnik and Stern), it was possible to compare their use across the two communication channels and to identify the critical differences and similarities that occurred within different content combinations. It was also possible to identify channel-specific advertising communication patterns as well as the advertising patterns that were applicable to both magazine advertisements and websites to a similar extent.

5.2.1 Stating Availability of Products and Services

In 2001, availability cue was used extensively, being the most frequently used informational cue both overall and with each of the communication channels as it featured in majority of magazine advertisements and websites. According to Table 4.5, it accounted for 33.37% of the total number of cues appearing in all of the magazine advertisements (in case of unlinked advertisements, the %age was even higher (43.8%)) and as shown in table 4.7, it accounted for 26.3% of the total number of cues appearing in combined (magazine advertisements + websites) communications. Moreover, the way availability was stated in the advertising communications varied significantly. While advertisers differed in their approaches to communicating availability of their products and services to consumers, some of the fairly consistent trends were identifiable. Majority (as discussed in detail in the later sections of the chapter) of the advertisers who had their ads “connected” to the web, were taking the opportunity to provide their customers with complete information on how the products/services that featured in the advertisements could be obtained. For the 192 (as shown in Table 4.4) advertisements analyzed, reference to a website was the main pattern for communicating availability.

In some instances it was difficult for the advertisers to state availability directly as it was either impossible to list all of the point-of-sale locations in one advertising communication due to space limitations, or it was not feasible to provide consumers with exact addresses for all of them. Thus, if the products or services were sold online through the companies' websites, the advertisers felt that availability of products and services could be best communicated by publishing URL for the site in the magazine advertisement. According to Alreck and Settle (1999), focusing on critical product/service information rather than on the exact address delivered an important long-term benefit of strengthening positive perception of the products and services in the customers' minds, and such focus could be best achieved through providing logical (e.g. such as referring to websites as sources of availability information) links between the communications. It was argued at the time that marketers usually had a principal objective of building a strong, ongoing relationship with consumers, rather than merely making a single sale. Ideally, the essence of such a relationship was to be based on a strong bond between the buyer and the company. Thus, while the concept of customer loyalty was no longer as attractive in 2001 as it had used to be (Jenkinson, 1995, p.1) it was still critical to keep the brand recognizable, and as the Resnik-Stern analysis shows, web-linked magazine advertisers usually tended to do so by redirecting readers to a website. In such cases the product or service availability communication function of the magazine advertisements was limited to emphasizing that websites contained all the necessary information on how, where and when these products or services could be obtained.

As more than half of the magazine advertisements (as evident from Table 4.4) did not provide a URL, they were opting for alternative ways of communicating availability to consumers. Where the number of "shopping outlets" was limited, some of the advertisers (e.g. advertisers for Frankston music festivals) attempted to list them all within the body of their magazine ad. In the instances of lack of both link to a website and a selected range of shopping outlets, availability was usually stated in a more general way. For example, some of the advertisers (e.g. advertisers of breakfast serials or cheese) considered in the study, were not selling their products and services directly to the public

but through dedicated outlets of their own. Consequently, lack of direct contact with the consumers often made it more difficult or unnecessary for them to state availability. However, many of these magazine advertisers still managed to provide product or service availability information within the ads. For example, some of the availability-inclusive advertisements informed consumers that the product or service they were promoting was “available at all good stores” or through “selected brokers/agents” consequently making its availability transparent to consumers.

In some instances, the pattern outlined above could be developed even further. For example, Target superstores were not able to publish addresses for all of their store locations due to obvious ad size limitations so, (as evident from their magazine advertisements) they resorted to other means. Instead, Target’s advertising communications stated product availability by informing consumers that the product was available from “a local Target store”. In Australia, Target was recognized as a well-known brand represented by multiple outlets, so consumers could be expected to locate a store within reasonable distance.

Unlike magazine advertisements, websites did not appear (and they did not have to) to rely on assumptions (e.g. assumption that consumers are aware of whereabouts of a “local store” or “distributor in your area”). Whenever dedicated outlets were available, all of them were usually listed on the website along with full addresses, irrespective of the number of outlets. In the example given above (Target), one of the magazine advertisements did not publish a URL, while another one (published in a different magazine) did. The contrast between availability statements in the two advertisements was clear. Target’s website (www.target.com.au) included addresses of Target stores throughout Australia. Furthermore, the store listings were maintained in a user-friendly way, so it was possible to browse the online store directory through a number of search options such as searching by “state”, “suburb” etc.

Overall, when stating availability, magazine advertisements generally appeared to focus on confirming that a product or service was indeed available as well as on

provision of some guidance on how it could be accessed, while websites aimed to provide information that was as complete and precise as possible. Given that in 2001 many of the magazines' readers were still not on the web on a regular basis, it was logical that even 'web-linked' availability statements also provided some general information about product/service accessibility. Other than that, web and magazine advertisers' approaches towards stating availability were similar. As far as use of availability information in web-linked and unlinked advertisements was concerned (as evident from Tables 4.4 and 4.5) the unlinked ones were more likely to contain availability information than web-linked advertisements. Therefore, referring consumers to the companies' websites was a common way of informing them of product or service availability, but at the same time, a link to a website was not essential for communicating availability as other alternatives (as in cases of unlinked advertisements) were also available.

5.2.2 Linking Magazine Advertisements to the Websites

As shown in Table 4.4, The URLs appeared in 235 advertisements showing that a substantial portion (48%) of the magazine advertisements already had a linkage with websites at the time. This finding showed that, while having a link to website alone was no indicator of content integration between the two communication channels, it at very least confirmed the fact that by 2001, many advertisers were starting to acknowledge the importance of including a link to a website into the bodies of their magazine advertisements. Therefore, there was often a logical connection (as defined by Fitzpatrick, 2001) between the websites and the advertisements.

One of the interesting observations about URL usage in magazine advertisements was lack of consistency in size and placement of the URLs in the bodies of the ads across the sample considered in this study. The web addresses were published in magazine ads in various sizes, shapes and fonts. For example, a number of the magazine advertisements, such as advertisements for Thai Airways, Subaru, Ford, etc. simply published URLs in the body of the advertising messages without highlighting their significance in any special way. Neither font, nor text color or size of the URLs differed

from the ways the rest of the content was presented in the advertisements. In other words, the advertisements did present links to respective websites, but the links simply informed the consumers that the websites did exist and could be visited at the addresses specified.

Alternatively, some of the other advertisements e.g. for COMMSEC and Huntley's not only published URLs in the body of the advertisements but also encouraged consumers to visit the websites through either visual (e.g. publishing website address in a larger font or an outstanding color) or textual (e.g. informing consumers about additional information/special deals, etc. available from the websites) invitations or even both. As shown in Table 4.16, many of the magazine advertisements included a URL and consumers were invited to visit the websites and get the e-mail addresses from there. However, if they wanted to e-mail the company straight away they were not able to obtain the address without having to visit the website first and searching for the "Contact Us" button or an "E-mail" link at the bottom of the web page. If consumers had a trivial question to ask, such as location of their local store or availability and details of a warranty on a particular item, many of them could not be bothered to go to the company's website. There would be no need to do so, if they could simply e-mail their questions to the company's customer service helpdesk. This could save consumers time and effort of visiting the website unnecessarily.

Table 4.16 summarized main trends in focusing email addresses. Surprisingly (given variety of design and presentation styles used as well as overall content differences), nearly all (96.6%) of the web links could be classified under one of the following three categories: links to a particular content element (e.g. product/service availability), links to points of contact (such as, for example, phone contact details) and links to further information (expansion of the original content presented in the magazine advertisements) about products or services advertised. However, none of the three categories appeared to prevail over the others. Table 4.16 showed that two of the categories (links to particular content elements and links to further information) were occurring to an almost identical extent (37% and 35.3% respectively). Links to further information were "responsible" for a slightly lower (24.3%) proportion of the web links.

Unlike the URLs, the e-mail addresses were mostly conforming to the same pattern. The e-mail addresses were usually published along with the rest of the company information such as store addresses, phone numbers etc. Interestingly, while the e-mail addresses were combined with the offline contact information, the URLs often stood on their own. Thus, a URL address was often used in the magazine advertisements as an “invitation to learn more about the company and its products and services” rather than as a point of contact, while e-mail addresses were used for communication of contact details only.

5.2.3 Incorporating Pricing Details of the Products and Services

If a product or service was priced beyond one’s budget, it was unlikely to be considered for a purchase, no matter how great its principal qualities were. If consumers were aware of the cost of alternative purchases and found them more affordable, it would be difficult for the company to expand its market share. As Kinnear and Taylor (1996, p.815) pointed out, pricing decisions had a direct impact on how much revenue could be generated from the sales, consequently making them essential elements of any selling campaign. Likewise, websites could also benefit from incorporation of pricing details, as pre-2001 studies of web presence (e.g. Sheehan and. Doherty, 2001) revealed that at the time, majority of consumers already expected websites to provide information that was sufficient for an immediate product purchase. Even if a website did not have transaction processing capacity (e.g. shopping cart, online ordering system etc.), it was still expected to communicate all basic information about the products and services the company had on offer. Therefore, it was important to establish how pricing details were incorporated into both websites and magazine advertisements.

Overall, just over 20% of this sample (103 out of 490) magazine advertisements incorporated pricing information into the informational content, while slightly over 55% of the websites also included product/service pricing details. As shown in Table 4.5, in web-linked magazine advertisements, pricing details accounted for 12.31% of the total number of cues, while in unlinked advertisements it accounted for 6.35% only. Given that

web-linked advertisements were also frequently having their pricing information enhanced by websites (as evident from Tables 4.6 and 4.7), it could be concluded that unlinked advertisements were less likely to incorporate product or service pricing information.

In the magazine advertisements (both web-linked and unlinked), pricing information was almost always stated next to the product or service advertised, while the websites treated prices in a greater variety of ways. While some of the websites provided the price next to the product description/availability (similarly to magazine advertisements), the others singled out pricing details into a separate section. For example, website for Nature's Own did not list the price along with other product characteristics (e.g. availability, components etc.) but had a separate page dedicated to the pricing details of its products. The page simply listed the products and the prices next to them. That particular page did not inform consumers of any other features/qualities of the product and focused on the pricing alone. Websites had greater flexibility in showing prices of the products and services. Magazine advertisements simply listed the price or the price range that was payable for a product or service. In some instances, they also stated that "prices are subject to change without notice" or "the offer is valid till..." etc. There was only one instance (advertisement for Eriksson Mobile) where a magazine advertisement listed multiple (more than three) items and discussed how the price of the mobiles was going to depend on the customer requirements/deal chosen (e.g. whether the customer is going to buy a mobile phone only or sign-up for an ongoing contract with a reseller of Eriksson's phones). On the other hand, it was rather common for the websites to state a complete range of prices depending on a deal, product model, date of availability, etc. Advertisers for products and services belonging to particular industries (e.g. travel and mobile communications industries) appeared to be particularly appreciative of the flexible pricing options. Therefore, it could be concluded, that websites usually had greater flexibility than magazine advertisements in expressing pricing information.

Another important difference between the ways pricing information was presented in the magazine advertisements and the websites was in the font of the information presented. In the magazine advertisements, pricing details often appeared in a larger font than the rest of the content. In some instances (where the advertisement focused on portraying the prices as cheap), the fonts for the pricing details would be double the fonts for the remaining content. On the other hand, in the magazine advertisement, there were usually no evident size differences between the respective fonts. It could be concluded from the font comparison, that magazine advertisements were more likely to have pricing details stand out from the rest of the content (aiming to attract greater consumer attention) than websites.

5.2.4 Incorporating Special Offers into the Advertising Communications

The special offers informational cue referred to the availability of limited time non-price deals with a particular purchase of goods or services. The broad use of the special offers-related information across both the magazines and the websites showed that many companies were keen to demonstrate through their advertising communications that their products/services represented the best value for money. Special offers referred to availability of limited time non-price (so stating a cheap price alone could not be regarded as a special offer) deals with a particular purchase of goods or services. Consequently, they were focusing on the product/service attractions that were available for a limited time and/or from selected stores etc.

As shown in Table 4.5, the web-linked advertisements were much more likely to incorporate special offers than the un-linked ones. Such a significant difference was indicative of the growing role special offers, as communications were becoming web-linked. Both the magazine advertisements (web-linked and unlinked ones to a similar extent) and the websites considered in the study, usually emphasized availability of the special offers through similar ranges of patterns. A comparison between the ways special

offers were expressed in web-linked magazine advertisements and respective websites showed that while there were only seven instances where same special offers were used across the two advertising communication channels, six of the instances presented the offers in similar promotional styles and language (e.g. using the same key expressions to describe the offers in the advertisements and in the websites). Content of the special offers (special discounts, buy one- get one free, etc.) did not usually differ much either.

In the instances where special offers appeared in a magazine advertisement or in a website alone and consequently were not integrated with one another (Table 4.6 showed that there were many of such instances), some differences between the two communication channels could be observed. The magazine advertisements tended to focus on special offers that were specific to the products and services advertised, while the websites contained some special offers that were more general in their nature. For example, almost all of the magazine ads incorporating special offers described how a particular product or service could be obtained at a better price during a limited time period and/or how an additional service (e.g. free installation), could be available if a relevant special offer was taken, while many of the websites highlighted special opportunities (e.g. chance to enter a competition to win a significant prize, such as a car or a free holiday). Sometimes the competitions/incentives available online did not even require consumers to purchase a product/service advertised as they could be entered through “registering with a website” or “calling for a free demo session”.

Thus, it could be said that when magazine advertisements and websites were integrated with one another – special offers were usually delivered across both the communication channels through similar ranges of promotional patterns. On the other hand, when a magazine advertisement and a website did not have matching content related to special offers, differences between the ways the offers were communicated were often evident.

5.2.5 Use of Performance and Components-related Information

The way performance of the products and services was described both in the magazine advertisements and on the websites suggested that advertisers were mostly aiming to inform consumers what the product or service could do for them rather than what it was. When describing performance of their products/services, advertisers appeared to be choosing between stressing out product functionality and developing superiority perceptions. Product functionality was usually emphasized through descriptions of what the product did and demonstrations of how and why its performance was so great. The product or service superiority perceptions outlined above were often emphasized to the customers through the use of fancy product/service characteristics, such as for example, “only sky is the limit” or “simply the best”. While it was a perception-building exercise, it did not necessarily aim at providing consumers with any objective information about the product’s/service’s performance. Instead its focus was on appealing to consumers’ emotions rather than to their common sense.

The emotional focus displayed by performance-related information in majority of the advertisements illustrated the tendency to appeal to consumers’ emotions rather than encourage a rational assessment of the products and services on offer. Product or service performance could be expressed in a variety of different ways, so companies had a lot of creative choices to select from. For including components information into a magazine advertisement or a website, it was sufficient for companies to list different elements of one particular product or service promoted in general terms without describing them in detail, and for the magazine advertisements, this was the most common pattern for incorporation of components. It often appeared to be a logical limitation. For example, magazine advertisements for both Eriksson and Nokia mobiles discussed some of the components of the phones (e.g. accessories available) but did not explain how the components worked nor did they list all of them, focusing on the most “flashy” ones instead. Components-related information explained to consumers what the products or services advertised were comprised of, what ingredients they contained and which ancillary items were included with the product or service. For example, if an advertising

communication for a car outlined all the major and/or most recognizable parts (e.g., wheels, mirrors, belts, breaks, car stereo etc.) and informed consumers of the features and functions of each and every one of the parts, the advertisement could be classified by the procedure as components-inclusive.

Similarly to special offers, components-related information was far more common for the web-linked magazine advertisements rather than for the unlinked ones. Some of the websites expressed the components information similar to the way the performance information was expressed. However, majority of the 69 websites identified as components-inclusive, were providing detailed descriptions of nearly all of the products and services available from the company. Thus, while not so many of the websites incorporated components information, those that did include it usually made it quite comprehensive.

To sum up, both performance and components information was expressed to a far greater extent in the web-linked magazine advertisements (as evident from Tables 4.4 and 4.5) than in the unlinked ones. When compared with the websites (as evident from Table 4.7), components and performance-related information appeared to be used to a more or less similar extent with both the communication channels. According to Table 4.7, performance-related information accounted for 10.02% of all the informational cues in web-linked magazine advertisements and 12.63% in websites, while components-related information accounted for respectively 5.24% and 6.76% of the cues. However, there were some differences between the ways the information was presented in the advertising communications depending on the communication channel chosen. While in case of components, websites were expanding on the information provided by the magazine advertisements, in case of performance (when compared with web-linked advertisements in particular), advertisers' approaches did not appear to differ at all irrespective of the advertising communication channel used. The websites obviously contained a greater amount of product/service performance information than the magazine advertisements but focus and patterns for delivering performance information to consumers were very similar.

5.2.6 Incorporating Nutrition and Taste Information into the Advertising Communications for Food and Beverage Products

Taste could be considered a minimal standard for food consumption (Liesse (1990) Glanz et al, 1998). Furthermore, it was argued (Liesse, 1990) that other relevant factors, such as nutrition, also appeared to be important in determining food consumption, but only as long as the food was seen as tasting good. If a product (food/beverage) did not deliver the taste expected, it was unlikely to become popular with consumers. On the other hand, the nutrition informational cue referred to specific data concerning the nutritional content of a particular product. In some instances, identification of the cue could also be based on a direct specific comparison made with various other products available on the market. Consequently, both nutrition and taste were key informational cues for measuring effectiveness of food and beverage advertisements. According to Resnik and Stern (1977), the taste informational cue referred to the evidence presented in an advertisement, that taste of a particular product was perceived by consumers as superior. Resnik and Stern argued that, if an advertisement stated that a product was “delicious and unforgettable” but did not describe the taste more precisely (e.g. creamy, sweet, salty etc.) the taste informational cue was not utilized, as no factual information was provided. Thus, not every magazine advertisement or website for a food or beverage product could be considered as taste information-inclusive.

With the majority of the content elements discussed above (e.g. components, performance and special offers) the web-linked advertisements were usually far more informative than the unlinked ones. However, as shown in Table 4.5 both taste and nutrition-related information was far more common in the unlinked advertisements rather than in the web-linked ones. The differences in use of the content elements between the two communication categories were colossal. Taste-related content accounted for 9.52% of informational cues in the unlinked magazine advertisements but only for 1.93% of the cues in the web-linked ones. With the nutrition-related content, the contrast was even more transparent, as it accounted for 10.16% of the cues in the unlinked magazine

advertisements and only for 0.45% in the web-linked ones. Interestingly, combined use of the content elements by the web-linked magazine advertisements and websites (communications involving simultaneous use of the two communication channels) was less common than use of the content elements by the unlinked magazine advertisements. Given, that majority of other content elements were more likely to occur in the web-linked advertisements, it could be concluded that advertisers for print-only information communications were regarding taste and nutrition information to be more critical for their target audience.

As far as stating taste of food and beverages was concerned, there were no significant differences between the ways the websites and magazine advertisements (both web-linked and unlinked) addressed the issue. Both the communication channels generally expressed taste-related information in a condensed format and without focusing too much on accuracy of the statements. For example, the Kraft Cheese advertisement used words like “delicious” and “magic” rather than “spicy” or “sweet” to describe taste of the product. This advertisement was typical of the advertisers’ approach towards informing consumers of the taste, as very few of the websites and none of the magazine advertisements mentioned factual taste of the food and beverage products rather than emotional feelings (e.g. magic taste) that the products could arise. In addition, the websites did not generally discuss taste of the food and beverage products in a greater detail than the magazine advertisements. With the other cues/advertising communication features considered in this study, the websites generally allocated greater amount of space to describe a particular quality of a product or service than the magazine advertisements. In case of taste-related content, both the websites and the magazine advertisements usually provided complete information in a few words only. It could be concluded, that virtually unlimited space offered by the web communications did not alter the amount of taste-related content significantly. Nor did it result (as shown in Table 4.7) in the websites discussing taste of products more frequently than magazine advertisements.

While taste of the food and beverage products was treated by the magazine advertisements and websites in a similar manner, descriptions of the nutritional content of

the products differed to an evident extent. First of all, unlike the taste-related information nutrition-related information was expanded by the websites much further than by the magazine advertisements. A number of nutrition information-inclusive websites (including even websites for the products that were not traditionally associated with “healthy eating”, such as website for Cadbury chocolates) had web pages dedicated specifically to discussing nutritional content of the products. Secondly, the websites and magazine advertisements often appeared to present nutritional information in different ways. The magazine advertisements tended to present nutritional information through the use of slogans, such as “97% fat free” or “5g of sugar per serve only”, while the websites tended to list food and beverage ingredients without elaborating on how advantageous (e.g. low in fat or in sugar) specific features of the products were. In other words, the magazine advertisements (and majority of them was unlinked) tended to present nutritional information through the use of emotional persuasive statements, while the websites often tended to focus on presentation of plain nutrition-related data without emphasizing the outstanding qualities (e.g. high in energy but low in fat) the food or beverage product was able to deliver. This willingness to focus on plain, rather than emotionally-motivated data could be the reason why the web-linked magazine advertisements were leaving it up to the respective websites to inform consumers of taste and nutrition-related information.

Another interesting revelation of the Resnik-Stern analysis of the unlinked magazine advertisements and websites was that some of the food and beverage advertising communications embraced neither nutrition nor taste-related information. Given the obvious relevance of the two content areas to all of the edibles, this was a surprising outcome. This finding should not be attributed to difficulties in expressing taste and nutrition information in the advertising communications. If the unlinked magazine advertisements were capable of expressing these content elements there was no reason why the web-linked ones or the websites could not present the information in any style of their choice (e.g. emotional style as the unlinked advertisements were doing or a more plain kind of data that was available from some of the websites). Thus it could be

concluded, that nutritional details were usually omitted by choice, rather than because they were hard to incorporate into the advertising communications.

5.2.7 Provision of Quality and Warranty Assurances

According to Tables 4.5 and 4.7, the quality informational cue accounted for 1.92% of all the content elements in the magazine advertisements (0.74% of web-linked and 4.44% of unlinked) and 5.68% of the content elements in the websites. Same as with the components or warranties cues, its use could be linked to a magazine's or website's ability to communicate specific product or service information. Content-wise, the quality informational cue referred to the product's/service's key characteristics that distinguished it from competing products/services, based on an objective evaluation of factors, such as workmanship, engineering, durability, excellence of materials, structural superiority, superiority of personnel, attention to detail or availability of special services (Resnik and Stern, 1977).

The warranties informational cue informed consumers of post-purchase assurances that accompanied the products and services advertised. For example, statements of a money back guarantee or an assurance of post-purchase service were typical kinds of warranty an advertiser could offer in both the magazine advertisements and the websites. At the time, it was quite a popular pattern for making consumers feel more secure about a product or service. Thus, both components and warranties (along with quality) were quality-focused informational cues.

Components-related information was clearly much more common for the websites rather than for the magazine advertisements (web-linked magazine ads in particular). However, as far as general descriptions of the product and service components were concerned, the magazine advertisements usually described them similarly to the websites. The few magazine advertisements that did mention components, focused on the components that they felt were superior in quality to the alternatives available, but at the same time did not discuss those additional features in detail. The websites tended to

incorporate components in a similar manner. Only few of the components-inclusive websites were discussing a greater number of components than the magazine advertisements. Similarly to the magazine ads, they focused on very few critical components only (such as for example alloy wheels for cars) Thus, there were no significant differences between the ways components descriptions were handled in the magazine advertisements and websites.

In case of warranties, there were some differences between magazine and online expressions of this content element. The magazine advertisements simply stated availability of a warranty (e.g. one of the magazine advertisements for Hyundai cars considered in this study, included a three-year warranty, and an advertisement for an investment magazine subscription offered a “no questions asked” money-back guarantee) for the products and services advertised. No detailed “in-depth” information was provided. Furthermore, the warranties were offered in the form of formal assurances outlining companies’ obligation towards the consumers only. No informal warranties (e.g. “your satisfaction guaranteed”) were provided. Unlike the magazine advertisements, the websites contained a greater variety of warranty statements. Some of the sites not only provided plain warranty information but also incorporated supplementary information to support the warranty claims. For example, the Hyundai website combined a presentation of the warranties with the addresses and contact details of all of its service centers in Australia, consequently emphasizing value delivered through the warranties to a greater extent. On top of the formal warranties, some websites also incorporated informal warranties that discussed companies’ spotless records in production and/or delivery of the products and services advertised. The informal warranties were usually used in combination with the formal ones.

To conclude, all of the differences (and similarities) between the ways the warranties were presented in the magazine advertisements (both web-linked and unlinked) and websites discussed above, could be attributed to obvious space limitations (in the magazine advertisements) or lack of such (in the websites). The magazine

advertisements could only outline what the warranties were and the websites could provide comprehensive in-depth descriptions.

5.2.8 Use of New Ideas and Advertising Concepts

The aim of the new ideas informational cue was to introduce new original concepts featuring in advertising communications. The new ideas were different from the other content elements. All the other informational cues could be identified on an objective basis, since they were expressed textually. The new ideas were usually more difficult to spot, since original ideas and approaches towards advertising were expressed at the conceptual level and thus were more difficult to identify, from the author's perspective. If these communications featured themes other than traditionally used by advertisers, the ideas could be regarded as "revolutionary". Importantly, new ideas were not about having a new unorthodox product or service on offer but about having an original advertising concept. Thus, new ideas were measuring creativity and originality of the advertisements rather than specific information presented.

The overall number of new ideas in the advertising communications appeared to be fairly low. In the magazine advertisements, the new ideas accounted for 0.45% of the web-linked advertisements and 3.49% of the total amount of cues in the unlinked ones. With the websites, the new ideas accounted for 0.49% only. Thus, despite lacking the interactivity and creative design potential of the online communications, the magazine advertisements contained more original ideas and concepts than the websites. Given that new original ideas were not as easy to come up with as other content elements (as they required a high degree of creativity rather than simple willingness to include a particular kind of information), the share of the new ideas in the overall content mix in the unlinked magazine advertisements was not to be regarded as low. The websites were having a lot of comparative advantages over the magazine advertisements in terms of unlimited space, greater number of design tools available, etc. but, these factors rarely resulted in idea generation.

Interestingly, none of the magazine advertisements (including the unlinked ones) had a non-standard layout. Consequently, the majority of the magazine advertisements expressed new ideas through original slogans and concepts rather than through original designs. For example, an advertisement for the Continental Asian Easy Meals presented a concept of “a meal that you can have hot or cold and that you can take with you on a space trip”. In case of the websites, new ideas included original designs and content combinations. The Levi’s Cord website offered consumers an opportunity to enter their size, color and design preferences when browsing through the product listings as well as to “contribute to the product design” by adjusting some of the product dimensions to tailor it to their needs. Back in the year 2001, this concept was quite original and it made the Levi’s Cord website stand out from the majority of the sites considered in this study.

Another interesting revelation evident from Tables 4.5 and 4.7 was that combined use of new ideas in the web-linked magazine advertisements and websites for the products and services advertisements was significantly lower than the use of new ideas in the unlinked magazine advertisements alone. Therefore, if an advertisement was to be combined with a website it was rarely containing unusual advertising concepts, while with the unlinked advertisement, new advertising concepts were not uncommon.

5.2.9 Presenting Company Research and Independent Research Information

The company research informational cue referred to representation of data gathered by a company to compare its product or service with a competitor’s product or service and/or industry standards. The independent research-related content referred to presentation of the findings available on the basis of a study that was carried out by an independent organization (e.g. a market research company or consumer association). The research findings were commonly presented in a magazine advertisement or a website with the aim of illustrating the advantageous nature of the product/service to consumers.

Both of the content elements were relatively unpopular with advertisers and did not appear in the advertising communications on a large scale. The company research-related content accounted for 1.19% of the content elements in the web-linked magazine advertisements and for only 0.32% of the content elements in the unlinked magazine advertisements. The independent research-related content was even less common as it accounted for 0.45% of the content elements in the web-linked magazine advertisements and for 0.32% in the unlinked ones. With the websites, the research related content elements were also rare. The company research accounted for 1.82% of the total amount of informational content in the web-linked magazine advertisements and for 1.86% in the unlinked ones. The independent research-related content was even less common as it accounted for 0.68% of the content elements in the web-linked magazine advertisements and for 0.98% of the advertisements in the unlinked ones. While rare use of research findings in the magazine advertisements could be explained by its lesser significance, when compared with other content elements (e.g. product or service availability or special offers), as well as by greater difficulties when expressing research information within a limited space, lack of research-related information in the websites was surprising.

There were no significant differences between the ways the magazine advertisements and the websites portrayed company and independent research findings. The websites were using their extra space to emphasize the importance of the findings further. For example, if a magazine advertisement for Kraft Cheese stated that a product was “national heart foundation approved”, the website for SpecialK breakfast cereal not only displayed the National Heart Foundation (NHF) logo but also explained the significance of this approval and how it was assuring the healthy nature of the product. Thus, the websites presented findings from company and independent research studies in greater detail and with greater clarity, but in the very same way as the magazine advertisements.

5.2.10 Packaging and Safety Information in the Advertisements

The packaging informational cue referred to packaging and/or presentation of the product or service advertised. Attractive packaging could usually make the product more desirable than alternative purchases. In some instances, packaging information could also refer to special shapes the product was available in. The safety informational cue identified safety features of a particular product/service in comparison with the product's/service's alternatives (Resnik and Stern, 1977).

As very few of the magazine advertisements and the websites (as shown by Tables 4.5 and 4.7) contained product or service packaging and safety-related information, there was hardly sufficient data for an overview of how these informational cues were used in the advertising communications. Thus, the most significant finding related to the use of these two informational cues is that advertisers were no longer regarding packaging and safety information as critical and consequently omitted packaging and safety information from the advertising communications.

5.2.11 Resnik-Stern Analysis of the Magazine Advertisements and Websites: General Observations

Findings revealed in chapter four and consequent discussion of these finding in this chapter provided an overview of both magazine advertising content in Australia in the year 2001 and website for the respective advertisements. An average magazine advertisement contained only 2.02 informational cue. When compared to previous studies of the magazine advertisements (e.g. Resnik and Stern, 1981; Abernethy and Franke, 1999) such amount of informational content in advertising could be regarded as low. However, in web-linked advertisements alone, the average was 3.49! Thus, to could be concluded that web-linked magazine advertisements were generally richer in informational content than previous generations of traditional advertising communications!

Informational cue selections (as shown in Table 4.4) suggested that the magazine advertisements (unlinked ones in particular) did not appear to focus on presenting as much factual information about the products and services advertised as possible. In majority of the magazine advertisements, the emphasis was made on the content elements (e.g. availability, price etc.) that were “reminding” consumers about the very existence of products or services, rather than describing their qualities and performance. Thus, very few of the advertisements appeared to be based on the assumption that the products and services they were promoting were new to the consumers. Instead, the content of the advertisements suggested focus on strengthening the existing relationships between the companies and the consumers.

As far as the advertising content of the websites was concerned, it often appeared to be quite similar to that of the magazine advertisements. Many of the informational cues considered above were used in the websites in the very same ways they were used in the magazine advertisements. On the other hand, the websites not only contained greater overall numbers of the informational cues than the magazine advertisements (as could be expected due to obvious space limitations of the magazine advertisements), but also (usually, not always though) provided consumers with a greater variety of options and greater amounts of detail. For example, when presenting price or availability information some of the websites showed significantly wide ranges of options available to consumers rather than focused on a set price or a set point of order.

To sum up, the Resnik-Stern cue-based informational content analysis of the Australian magazine advertisements for the year 2001 revealed that:

- At the time, majority of the magazine advertisements focused on reminding consumers of the products and services on offer and underlining their key qualities rather than on presenting new product/service concepts and informing consumers how special and/or different their products and services were
- Majority of the magazine advertisements was built around the concept that consumers already had some knowledge of a product or service advertised

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- Very few of the Australian magazine advertisements contained rich informational content
 - The web-linked magazine advertisements usually contained greater amount of informational content than the unlinked magazine advertisements
 - There were some evident differences in the content focus (the informational cues used) between the web-linked magazine advertisements and the unlinked ones
 - Some of the informational cues outlined by Resnik and Stern (1977), such as safety and packaging-related content was no longer utilized sufficiently by majority of the Australian communication architects to a significant extent
 - URLs (Uniform Resource Locators) were gradually populating Australian magazine marketing communications and making the first step in linking magazine advertisements to company's websites as nearly half of all the magazine advertisements were web-linked
 - At the time, there were still some magazine advertisements that contained no informational content at all (despite the fact that all of the magazine advertisements considered in the study were at least half-page in size)

As for the websites, the analysis revealed that:

- The websites usually contained a greater overall amount of the informational content than the magazine advertisements
- As evident from the cue selections shown in Table 4.7, unlike the magazine advertisements, the websites were trying to convince consumers that their products and services were special and unique rather than simply good
- Despite having unlimited advertising space at their disposal, the websites tended to portray many of the informational content elements (e.g. independent research and company research) very similarly to the ways the magazine advertisements did

5.3 Use of Universal and Limited Informational Cues in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites

As pointed out in the Introduction section of this chapter, each of the Resnik-Stern informational cues had a role to play and a message to deliver in the advertising communications. Thus, each of the cues had an important and unique purpose and could enhance advertising content in a positive way. Out of the fourteen informational cues that were applicable to both magazine advertisements and websites eleven were universal while the remaining three cues were limited. In addition, the magazine advertisements could contain two more universal cues - URL and E-Mail.

It could be expected that universal informational cues were likely to be used more widely in comparison with their limited counterparts in both the magazine advertisements and websites. The study confirmed this expectation. Most of the advertisements investigated in the course of the research appeared to have at least one of the universal informational cues incorporated into their informational content. At the same time, significant numbers of the advertisements did not incorporate any of the limited informational cues. However, analysis of the communications showed that, given an opportunity (e.g. relevance of a limited cue to a product or service), advertisers were often more likely to prefer limited cues for both magazine advertisements and websites.

Statistically, (as shown in Tables 4.9-4.12) universal cues were predictably used to a greater extent than limited ones in both the magazine advertisements and websites. In the web-linked magazine advertisements, universal cues accounted for massive 97.17% of the total number of cues while in the unlinked ones, universal cues accounted for 80.32% of the total number of cues. In the websites, the overall dominance of universal cues was even greater than in the magazine advertisements (95.69%). A closer look at the advertising communications showed that some of the limited cues were used to a significantly greater extent than many of the universal ones.

Firstly, the overall number of the limited informational cues considered in the study was three. Consequently, if one of the limited cues was not utilized to a significant extent, it affected the overall level of use more dramatically than with the universal cues and it could reduce the average level of the limited cue population in the magazine advertisements significantly. In this study, packaging was such a cue. The packaging informational cue referred to packaging and/or presentation of the product or service advertised. Attractive packaging could usually make a product or service more desirable than alternative purchases. In some instances, packaging could also refer to the special shapes the product was available in. However (as discussed in 5.2.10), the study showed that neither the magazine advertisements nor the websites used packaging-related information to a substantial extent. Thus, overall scores for the limited cues were reduced due to lack of use of the one particular cue (packaging).

Unlike packaging, the remaining two limited cues (nutrition and taste) were popular with advertisers of relevant (food and beverages) products. With the relevant products, they were used to a greater extent than majority of the universal cues. In case of the websites, almost every site for a food or beverage product contained information on nutritional content. Another interesting observation evident from Table 4.11 was relative lack of integration by repetition (same content element appearing in both the web-linked magazine advertisements and websites) for limited cues. If a magazine advertisement contained a particular limited cue (e.g. nutrition) it would be logical for the website to expand the information provided by the advertisement. Expression of the limited cues usually required more space than expression of the universal ones (such as product or service pricing details that could be provided easily in one line of text). For example, complete nutritional information of yogurt or pizza was difficult to fit into a magazine advertisement but could easily be provided through a website. Therefore, the websites had the capacity to repeat and expand information provided by the magazine advertisements. However, this capacity was not utilized.

5.4 Role of Web-Related Informational Cues in the Magazine Advertisements

Web-related informational cues (URL & E-Mail) were instrumental in linking the magazine advertisements with the websites. The study (Table 4.15) showed that e-mail addresses were almost always (86.7% of the time) used in combination with a URL. Thus, e-mail addresses were usually added with the website addresses, and instances where magazine advertisements contained an e-mail address but no website address were very rare. On the other hand, website addresses usually (94.5% of the time) were unaccompanied by an email address.

Magazine advertisements often listed website addresses not only to provide a link from traditional media to the web but also as points of contact with the company. One standard line of text (website address) could lead to a diverse range of information. The study showed (Table 4.16) that it was particularly common to use URL for either linking a magazine advertisement to the company/store contact details or for expanding product/service information presented in the advertisement further.

Furthermore, Table 4.16 showed that there were many instances (37% of the total number of URLs) where a website address was referred to in relation to a specific informational cue. For example, magazine advertisement for Nutrimetics included a brief description of nutritional content of the product and pointed out that complete information was available from the website listed in the advertisement. Such a specific focus of the URLs informed consumers about kinds of specific information they could anticipate to find in the websites. Providing consumers with a point of contact was the second most common reason (35.3% of the total number of URLs) for incorporating a link to a website into a magazine advertisement, while links to further information accounted for 24.3% of the URLs. Interestingly (as shown in Table 4.16), only 3.4% of the web links could not be classified under one of the three linkage categories (link to a particular cue, point of contact provision and link to further information). It could be

concluded that magazine advertisements usually a) had a particular reason for incorporating a web link and b) these reasons could almost always be classified under one of the three categories.

Out of all the informational cues (as shown in Table 4.17), provision of availability-related information appeared to be by far the most common way of connecting the magazine advertisements to the websites. Nearly half of all the cue-specific links (45.98%) were emphasizing opportunities to find more about availability of the products and services advertised from a respective website. Product or service availability was usually stated through accompanying website addresses with expressions such as: “for more information visit...” or “details available at ...”. Another important feature of the availability-focused URL links was neutral (unemotional) nature of how the links were stated. None of the statements discussed and/or promoted the websites (e.g. by saying how good/comprehensive the websites were). Instead, availability-focused website addresses simply informed consumers that by going to a relevant website, they could find out more about availability of a product or service advertised.

Provision of product or service pricing information was the second most popular reason (16.09% of the total number of cues) for cue-linked inclusion of a URL. Invitation to visit a website for pricing details usually occurred when it was difficult to state the price of the products and services advertised in the magazine advertisements. Some products and services advertised (e.g. cars, travel packages and insurance) did not come at a set price, as the price varied depending on a number of factors (e.g. driving record in case of RACV car insurance). Unlike availability-linked cues, price-linked URLs usually occurred in the magazine advertisements when stating the price in the magazine advertisements was impossible (due to the reasons outlined in the paragraph above). On the other hand, there were several instances when a magazine advertisement discussed availability of the products and services advertised extensively but nevertheless directed consumers to a website to present availability information to a greater extent. Thus, in case of the availability-linked URLs, the websites had a role of complimenting magazine

advertising content, while in case of the price-linked cues, the magazine advertisements fully delegated the role of presenting the pricing information to the websites.

Similarly to availability-linked URLs, special offers-linked URLs (accounting for 13.79% of the total number of cues) usually focused mainly on further enhancing information contained in the magazine advertisements. However, there were two particular instances (both of the advertisements were for travel companies) where the primary purpose of including a URL into the magazine ads was to direct consumers to the special offers available from the websites, while the actual magazine advertisements contained no information on availability of such offers.

The remaining eleven cues accounted for less than 25% of the cue-linked URLs. Furthermore, four of these cues (company research, independent research, packaging and safety) were not referred to by cue-linked URLs at all. It was interesting that while both price and special offers cues were frequently used in cue-linked URLs, very few of the URLs featured links to information about performance and qualities of the products and services advertised. As it has already been pointed out above (Table 4.16), overall, only eight of the 235 (less than 3.5%) from the total number of URLs published in the magazine advertisements did not have a clearly identifiable purpose. Thus, instances where a website address could not be linked to the rest of the advertising content were few and far between. This was a very important finding as it confirmed logical linkage between the magazine advertisements and the websites. Web addresses were not simply “stamped” on to the magazine advertisements but they were incorporated in order to fulfill a particular advertising objective.

As pointed out above, only few (3.4% as shown in Table 4.16) of the URL links could not be linked to a specific informational content element, such as product/service availability or special offers or to a particular communication objective, such as referring customers to further information. While, the sample of non-informative URLs was very small (3.4% accounted for eight of the URL-inclusive advertisements), it was nevertheless indicative of the uselessness of URLs that were lacking a particular direction

and aim. Interestingly, all of the websites contained relatively low (as compared with the informational cue inclusion averages in Table 4.14) amounts of informational content.

A comparison between the websites for the URL+E-mail and the URL alone-inclusive magazine advertisements (Table 4.15) showed that while e-mail addresses were not very often included into the advertisements, they were usually indicative of the companies' greater ability and willingness to interact with the customers online (as defined in Table 4.59). Similar to the URLs, e-mail addresses were usually included for a specific purpose, such as for example, promotion of special offers or responding to customers' queries. Therefore, it could be concluded that there were some similarities between the ways the two web-related cues (URL and E-Mail) were used in the magazine advertisements. Another interesting comparison could be carried out between the websites for the magazine advertisements that included a URL only and the advertisements that included both URL and E-Mail. Websites for the E-Mail-inclusive magazine advertisements were more likely to achieve higher WebQual scores.

5.5 Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites

5.5.1 Popular Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites

Some of the informational cues were used not only as “stand alone” carriers of informational content but also in conjunction with the other cues. In such instances, two of the cues were complementing each other by providing supplementary information about products and services advertised. The link between the two content elements was not only complimentary (e.g. both cues appearing in the same advertisement or on the same website) but also logical (e.g. a clear logical relationship between pieces of information presented by the cues). Whenever such relationships existed, would information presented by one of the two cues go missing, information communicated by the other cue could not be regarded as complete.

Popular informational cue combinations in the magazine advertisements were shown in Table 4.18. %age-wise, packaging + warranties was the most popular cue combination of all as every time a magazine advertisement contained some packaging information, it was combined with information on the warranties available. However, given the overall low use of packaging-related information in the ads (it was used three times only) this was still a fairly rare combination. The URL+ availability combination was also very common and featured in almost all (91%) of the advertisements that included a URL. Interestingly, even if product or service availability information was available in plain text (e.g. the advertisement listed addresses of the stores where the purchase could be made), it was still common to use link availability with the URL through phrases such as “for more information visit www...” or “store details are also available from www....” etc. The very few advertisements that did include a URL but did not have it combined with product or service availability information were the ones where the availability information was not included at all. Thus, in almost 100% of the

instances where an advertisement included both URL and availability information, the two cues were integrated with each other.

Taste + nutrition was another popular informational content combination appearing in 80% of taste-inclusive and 65% of nutrition-inclusive magazine advertisements. In majority of the magazine advertisements where the two cues were used in combination with each other, the main focus was usually on expressing taste while nutritional information played a supplementary role. For example, even an advertisement for Weight Watchers weight loss program (a service with a clear nutritional focus) published nutritional information in the smallest font of all, while the main slogan of the ad was in capital letters and focused on taste of the meals available to those who joined the program. Similarly, many of the T+N inclusive advertisements turned taste information into a slogan or key message of the ad.

Majority of the new ideas (71%) were presented in combination with special offers. In most of the cases, the new ideas involved original advertising concepts supported by special deals and opportunities rather than the other way round. The new ideas were contributing to design of the specials and making the offers stand out when compared to other advertising promotions. For example, a Nokia advertisement presented an original (at the time) concept of receiving a mobile phone for free by trading-in old mobile phones in exchange for newer models with a 1-month trial period. Would the consumers return the new phone back to the seller during that 1-month trial period, they would not be charged for use of the phone (other than standard call and service charges) and would be able to get their old mobile phone back. When compared to special offers that did not incorporate new advertising ideas (e.g. traditional offers such as “buy one get one free” or “Christmas sale”, the new ideas-enhanced specials were generally less informative (as assessed by the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure).

In the websites, special offers + availability turned out to be the most popular content combination of all. As it was evident from Table 4.29, almost all (98%) websites that included information on special offers, supplemented the information with

instructions on how to access the offers. While the connection between special offers and availability is logical such a high %age of availability inclusion into the special offers showed that availability was not just regarded not just as a common but as an essential element of special offers presentation in the magazine ads. Interestingly, when common cue combinations in the websites (Table 4.29) and in magazine advertisements (Table 4.18) were compared with one another, it was becoming evident that the combinations that were extremely common with one of the marketing communication channels (e.g. websites) were often rare in the magazine advertisements and vice-versa. For example, the special offers + availability content combination discussed above appeared in almost every special offers-inclusive website, but it was uncommon in the magazine advertisements.

The most common way for expressing the special offers + availability combination in the websites was stating the special offer on the main home page while often publishing its availability information on some other pages, such as “Our Stores” or “Shop with Us”. Another interesting feature of the combination was that in majority of the instances, special offers + availability information was presented in isolation from the other informational cues. A special offer commonly outlined a particular deal and/or an opportunity and provided information on where and how the offer could be accessed but at the same time, rarely did the offers include information on quality, performance, warranties, etc. associated with the offers. This information was presented in the website but it appeared to be general rather than specifically linked to the special offers available.

Price + availability content combination appeared in 93% of the price-related content inclusive websites. Therefore, it was nearly as popular as the special offers + availability one. Unlike special offers, where nearly all products and services that almost never had their prices stated on the websites, had availability information alongside, pricing information was always presented very close to the availability information pricing information was more likely to be linked logically not only to availability information. On top of that, it was often linked not only to the availability information alone, but also to the other cues (e.g. performance) relevant to the products and services

advertised. Unlike with the magazine advertisements, pricing information rarely appeared in the websites in a larger font than the rest of the advertising content. However, it still stood out and consequently made price of the products and services look critical in the price + availability combination, making availability information appear less significant. In other words, the websites usually emphasized importance of price-related information, such as cheap prices of products or services available over availability-related matters.

Similarly to the magazine advertisements (as shown in Table 4.18), taste + nutrition combination was also popular with the websites. 81% of the taste-inclusive websites also incorporated nutrition-related information. It was arguably the most predictable of all of the cue combinations. Both taste and nutrition were limited cues but they were related to each other as both were applicable to food and beverage products. A comparative analysis of their use in the websites showed that while over 4/5th of the websites, where taste-related information was presented, combined it with nutritional information, only slightly over half (52%) nutrition-related statements were accompanied by information about taste of the food and beverage products promoted. Thus, majority of the websites highlighted taste information in combination with the nutritional facts, but nutritional information was not often accompanied by descriptions of how the products tasted.

Nutritional information was incorporated even into the web pages for food and beverage products that were traditionally considered from a perspective other than nutritional content. For example, websites for Cadbury Chocolates and Penfolds Wines provided nutritional information not only on the same page as descriptions of the product's taste but in the very same paragraph. It was unusual that milk chocolates and wines were promoted not only on the basis of the experience delivered (pleasant taste) but also on the basis of health benefits that the websites claimed they were able to deliver. Surprisingly, integration of the taste and nutritional information was often occurring despite differences in the ways the two informational cues were portraying food and beverage products. Taste of the food and beverage products was often described in emotional rather than rational terms such as: "magic taste" "the real taste of Asia",

“100% pure Ceylon” and even “if you yelled for 8 years 7 months and 6 days, you would produce enough sound energy to heat a cup of delicious Nescafe coffee”. On the other hand, nutritional information was expected to be accurate and free of exaggerations and imprecise descriptions. Nevertheless, many of the websites for food and beverage products considered in this study combined taste and nutrition information together consistently.

In the magazine advertisements, T+N combination usually focused on taste information with nutritional value of the products provided “in support” of the taste-related slogans. However, in the websites, there was a greater balance between taste and nutritional information. Another interesting trend was that amount of the taste-related information rarely varied, no matter how large or small the overall amount of informational content (e.g. number of web pages attached to the website) was. In case of nutrition, websites with greater overall informational content tended to provide larger amounts of nutrition-related information. Thus, while the amount of taste information in the websites was significantly smaller than the amount of nutritional information, it was equally significant importance-wise.

Warranties + quality was another relatively popular content combination in the websites. Overall, not so many of the websites included warranties information but 61% of the warranty-inclusive sites did combine warranties with quality. Warranties were often used to compliment quality information rather than the other way round. In the W + Q combinations, warranties usually played a critical part. Interestingly, when W+Q were stated together on the same web page, quality information would occupy most of the space and warranties information would only take one-two lines to express. However, warranties information was more likely to be highlighted through both larger fonts and brighter colors, and having a complete page of quality-related information to support two lines of warranties only underlined primary role the warranties were playing in the websites further.

5.5.2 Rare Informational Cue Combinations

While some of the informational cues (as discussed above) were often used in combinations with one another, there were also cue combinations that rarely occurred in the advertising communications despite complementary nature of these cues. None of the magazine advertisements (as shown in Table 4.19) included the content combination of packaging + safety. Packaging-inclusive advertisements discussed how convenient, attractive, useful, etc. the packaging was but then never integrated safety information into it. On the other hand, safety issues were never incorporated with relevant packaging information (e.g. product/service delivery). Interestingly, packaging information was always used in combination with warranties but never with safety. Given similarities between the warranties and safety informational cues, such drastic (always vs. never) differences between the levels of use for the two combinations were surprising.

Another very rare content combination was price + quality. Both cues were logically linked to each other, as price of products and services is clearly dependant (among other factors) on quality of the products offered. Nevertheless, fewer than 4% of the price-inclusive magazine advertisements included quality information. Thus, product and service pricing information was much more likely to be combined with availability, performance or special offers information rather than with quality. Similarly, product or service quality statements were rarely supported through provision of pricing details. Advertisement for Sony Stereo contained an extensive (half-page long) description of the quality features that were also endorsed through a “best value offered for your money” statement. However, while the advertisement stated that the product offered good value for money, the actual price of the product was not included.

Performance + warranties and company research + independent research combinations did not occur in many of the magazine advertisements (only 11% of the company research-inclusive advertisements also contained independent research information related to the products and services advertised) either. Lack of common content between company research and independent research cues was particularly

interesting. Despite apparent similarities, there were visible differences between the ways these cues were used. Company research information was usually presented through emotional statements while independent research findings were usually presented through raw facts revealing advantageous features of the products and services. Furthermore, independent research findings appeared to be serious and fully justifiable in their nature while company research findings were sometimes based on clearly anecdotal data that could hardly be taken seriously such as for example StockDoctor's claim that: "our clients retire rich". Thus, instances of combined use of the cues in the magazine advertisements were few and far between.

Unlike the magazine advertisements that usually relied on a fairly small range of the informational cue combinations, the websites tended to contain a greater amount of such combinations. Nevertheless, as shown in Table 4.30, not all of the cue combinations were common. None of the websites included a combination of new ideas + independent research, as opposed to a number of websites that had a combination of new ideas + company research. Thus, research findings related to the products and services advertised were usually presented with greater creativity when they belonged to the companies themselves. On the other hand, company research + quality and warranties + company research were very rare, while independent research findings were more common to be combined with both quality and warranties information.

Another rare content combination in the websites was taste + safety (appearing in 19% of taste-inclusive websites only). Majority of the websites for food and beverage products containing taste information did not include information on how safe the products were for consumption. One extreme example was website for Energy Diet weight loss program. The website discussed taste and nutritional content of the food substitutes but did not mention how safe the weight loss program was, despite the fact, that acquisition of dietary substitutions was traditionally associated with considerable health risks, and safety was consequently a relevant issue. Instead of safety, the websites usually addressed food and beverage product reliability issues through taste + nutrition, taste + quality and taste + performance informational content combinations.

5.5.3 Informational Cue Combinations in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites (Summary)

The discussion above outlined both popular and unpopular informational content combinations used in the magazine advertisements and websites in 2001. Overall, a comparison of the cue combinations used in the websites and the magazine advertisements showed that:

- Taste + nutrition was a popular content combination for both the magazine advertisements and the websites.
- Other than taste + nutrition, there were significant differences between the cue combinations used by the communication channels, as none of the other combinations were employed equally extensively, irrespective of the advertising communication channel used
- Unpopular (rarely used) informational cue combination lists in the magazine advertisements and websites also differed
- While the websites usually contained a greater number and variety of informational cues than magazine advertisements, they did not appear to favor a greater number of content combinations
- Majority of the content combinations in the websites were built around product or service availability information
- The magazine advertisements often referred to the websites as sources of further information on the content combinations provided

5.6 Use of Principal Cues in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites

If an advertising communication focused on one key message (e.g. cheap price or outstanding quality of a product or service) an informational cue behind this message could be regarded as a principal informational cue. In such instances, the role of the remaining cues was to support this main message with additional information. As it was evident from tables 4.20-4.23, both magazine advertisements and websites used principal cues to roughly the same extent (there was 4% difference only between the two).

5.6.1 Use of Principal Cues in the Magazine Advertisements

Some of the informational cues were particularly common to be used as principal cues in the magazine advertisements. Overall, five cues (as shown in Table 4.20) were used as principal ones in 50% or more of the instances they were included into the magazine advertisements. Interestingly, some of the most common cues (such as availability) were used as principal ones to a far lesser extent than fairly rare cues, such as independent research.

As shown in Tables 4.20 and 4.21, the special offers cue was by far the most popular principal content element of all. Over 4/5 of the advertisements incorporating special offers, used them as the key themes of the communications. In majority of the cases, the principal role of special offers was emphasized not only through their informational content but also through the amount of space dedicated to the offers. For example, an advertisement for Eriksson mobile phone included a one-sentence long special offer that occupied (due to a very large font) nearly half of the total advertising space. On top of it, nearly all (with the exception of three) of the principal special offers were accompanied by images of the products and services advertised. It made the offers stand out from the rest of the advertising content even more.

Company research-related content did not appear in the magazine advertisements very frequently but whenever included, it was also likely to play a principal role. According to Table 4.21, the company research cue accounted for only 1.70% of the total number of cues in the magazine advertisements. However, as shown in Table 4.20, it was the principal cue in the total of five (three web-linked and two unlinked advertisements), while the overall number of company research cues in the magazine advertisements was nine only. Therefore, company research related information was often carrying key content in the magazine advertisements it was incorporated in. When used as the principal cue, company research usually focused on unique features of the product/service advertised, that was (according to the advertisements) superior to analogous features available elsewhere. While special offers were almost always accompanied by image(s) of a product or service advertised, with company research findings, images were rarely included. Furthermore, unlike with other popular principal cues such as special offers, price and new ideas, company research information did not stand out from the rest of the advertising content. It was usually presented in the same font and color with the information provided through other cues. Thus, its principal role was not emphasized through visual effects (as was common with some other content elements such as for example, special offers and new ideas) but through the content of the messages the cue was carrying. Interestingly, independent research findings were presented differently. Whenever independent research was used as a principal cue, similarly to special offers and new ideas, its content was highlighted through visual aids such as images and art-work.

There were a lot of similarities in how price, warranties, quality, and performance cues were used. All of the cues were usually expressed through similar patterns (e.g. use of images, larger fonts, contrasting colors). However, while price, warranties and quality cues were used as principal cues to a similar extent (40%-55%), performance information (as evident from a comparison between the overall use of performance cues in the magazine advertisements (Table 4.4) and their share of principal cues (table 4.21)) was rarely emphasized as critical. The only visible difference between the ways the cues were used as principal ones in the magazine advertisements was length of messages.

Warranties and price information was usually expressed through very short messages, while quality and performance information usually occupied a greater amount of advertising space.

A comparison between how differently/similarly the web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements selected key content elements (principal cues) and the overall probability of a cue being incorporated into a magazine advertisement and when used as a principal cue, revealed both some differences and similarities. On the one hand, it was clear (Table 4.21) that both the web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements were likely to use three same content elements (availability, special offers and price) as principal cues. The only other cue that was significantly more common to be used as a principal informational content element in the magazine advertisements was URL. On the other hand, if the overall quantity of the cues was to be considered (comparison between Table 4.4 and Table 4.20), it would show that some seemingly common content elements were used as principal cues fairly infrequently, when compared with their overall level of use in the advertisements. Thus, it could be concluded that some elements (e.g. availability and performance) were rarely or never used in the magazine advertisements as principal cues.

A relatively low score (in web-linked magazine advertisements in particular) for the availability cue was especially interesting. Overall, availability was the most popular informational cue of all but was rarely used as a principal content element. As far as sheer amount of information was concerned, majority of the advertisements contained greater amount of availability information than information on the principal cues. For example, an advertisement for Target was using price as the principal cue. The prices were listed in small fonts while availability details (store addresses) occupied over half of the space consumed by the advertisement. Nevertheless, the critical role of the pricing information was evident. Thus, while almost all of the magazine advertisements included some kind of product or service availability information, it rarely appeared to be of most critical (principal) importance to the ad. Therefore, product or service availability

information was usually used to support key messages behind the advertisements rather than present key messages of its own.

In the magazine advertisements, URL was used as a principal cue to an even lesser extent. It was the 2nd most popular informational cue of all (as shown in Table 4.4), yet one of the least popular principal cues (all the cues other than e-mail and packaging were used as principal ones to a greater extent). However, despite a relatively low (when compared to the overall level of use) level of use as a principal cue, URL still accounted for 17.53% of all the principal cues in the web-linked magazine advertisements. Similar, to availability, it usually provided supporting information (such as invitations for consumers to visit website for further information or inform them of the bookings or purchases that could be made online). Components informational cue also very rarely played a principal role in the advertisements as it accounted for 1.70% of the total principal cues only (Table 4.21). Similar to product or service availability information, components' descriptions usually occupied a lot of advertising space but did not appear to be as critical as special offers or pricing details. Examples of components and availability-related content elements clearly showed that it was not the amount of advertising space occupied/by particular content information that was essential for turning the content element into a principal cue, but a message the content element was carrying.

Overall, identification of principal cues showed that some of them (e.g. availability and URL) were appearing in a lot of advertisements but rarely contained the main message of the magazine advertisements. On the other hand, special offers and company research-related content cues did not appear in many of the magazine advertisements (for instance, company research findings appeared in nine advertisements only), but once included, they were likely to play an important role. Furthermore, principal cues did not necessarily occupy greater advertising space than the other cues ,nor were they published in a larger font or a different (e.g. brighter) color.

5.6.2 Use of Principal Cues in the Websites

As evident from the comparison between Tables 4.4 and 4.20, in the magazine advertisements, one cue (special offers) was particularly common, the other four cues (company research, price, new ideas and independent research) were also used as principal elements or more in 50% of the instances or more. In the websites, there was a significantly greater variety. No informational cue was used as a principal element beyond 25% level, while overall %age of the websites containing a principal cue was almost the same as with the magazine advertisements.

Price and performance were the most popular principal cues of all. As shown in Table 4.23, along with availability (that was the most common cue of all, but not so frequent to be used as a principal informational content element as discussed in 5.6.1), they were the only cues that accounted for more than 20% each of the total amount of principal cues. In case of price-related content, there were usually no significant differences between the way it was used as a principal cue in the magazine advertisements (both web-linked and unlinked) and in the websites. However, performance-related information was usually expanded by the websites to a far greater extent. Content-wise, the websites were strengthening performance-related messages through incorporating not only direct but also indirect complimentary/added benefits. For example, both the Harvey World Travel and Thai Airways' websites were not only discussing travel opportunities to different parts of the world and including information that was related directly to the travel service purchases (e.g. hotels, local travel arrangements, weather, taxes, events etc.) but also general information about the countries/regions that consumers were invited to visit. Nearly half of the total space on the Thai Airways website was allocated towards presenting history and culture of Thailand. Similarly, the Harvey Word Travel website was strengthening perceived performance of its travel-related products and services through inclusion of "country profiles" for all of the locations it was promoting as travel destination. Such informational content extensions occurred on almost all the websites, where performance was used as a principal cue.

In the magazine advertisements, the special offers cue was the most common principal cue of all (by a large margin). However, in the websites, it was not used to a similar extent. One of the distinct features of having special offers-related content as principal cues was lack of dedicated web pages. Many of the websites incorporated pages devoted to information delivered primarily through a single informational content element. It was common to have a complete page dedicated to displaying product or service availability details or performance credentials. In cases where special offers were used, such pages were rarely found. Furthermore, special offers were rarely presented consistently throughout the websites (e.g. appearing on majority of the web pages). Instead, special offers usually appeared on 1-2 pages only and also incorporated other information, such as information related to availability or price of the products and services advertised.

Similarly to the magazine advertisements, the websites had some content elements that were rarely used as principal cues (as evident from Tables 4.22 & 4.23). For example, another interesting feature of the websites was that both taste and nutrition-related informational content elements were almost never used as principal cues. Instead, websites for food and beverage products usually focused on performance or availability related information, while both taste and nutrition played supporting roles. In the websites containing nutritional information but excluding the taste informational cue (altogether, there were twelve such sites), nutritional information appeared to play a more significant role. Similarly, when the taste informational cue was included and nutrition excluded, the websites appeared to be placing greater emphasis on taste. Availability was also used as a principal cue fairly rarely (given that availability-related information was incorporated into almost every website). However, almost every principal cue was accompanied by some availability information. Thus, it was not due to lack of availability details but to the focus of the websites.

Four of the informational content elements (as shown in Table 4.23) (safety, company research, independent research and packaging) were never used as principal cues. This was a very interesting contrast when compared with the magazine

advertisements. In magazine advertisements, both company research and independent research were used as principal cues in 50% of the instances they were included into the advertisements. In the websites, research findings were used to a significantly greater extent but played less critical roles. As opposed to magazine advertisements, where research findings were often presented in the form of slogans and headlines, such as for example, “best-performing investment fund”, the websites usually discussed both company and independent research findings in support of other pieces of information, such as performance or quality-related passages.

Overall, when comparing the ways principal cues were used in the magazine advertisements and in the respective websites, the following observations could be made:

- The magazine advertisements mainly relied on a limited number of informational content elements that often featured as principal cues, while the websites had a greater variety
- The magazine advertisements had one informational cue (special offers) that was used as a principal cue far more commonly than the other cues (over 80% of the times special offers were included into the advertisements, as evident from comparison between Tables 4.4 and 4.20), while in the websites, no cue was used as a principal cue with a frequency greater than 25%
- Both in the magazine advertisements and in the websites, principal cues were not necessarily the cues occupying a greater amount of advertising space or containing greater descriptions than the other cues
- Some of the informational cues were expressed differently depending on the communication channel (the magazine advertisements or the websites) used

5.6.3 Impact of the Principal Cues on the Advertising Communications

Only 60% of the magazine advertisements and 56% of the websites had a principal cue. The remaining advertising communications did not contain one, as none of the informational content elements present in the communications was represented to a greater extent than the others. Furthermore, only 30% of the cues identified in the magazine advertisements (with the web-linked magazine advertisements having a slighter higher proportion of principal cue-inclusiveness than the unlinked ones) and 15% of the cues identified in the websites were principal cues. Thus, it was possible to compare the advertising communications that did contain a principal cue with those that did not and identify how becoming a principal cue changed the nature of the informational content elements.

Interestingly, overall comparison between the advertising communications that did and did not contain principal cues showed that having a principal cue was not a sign of having larger informational content. With majority of the websites, there were no significant differences between principal cue-enabled and the other websites in the amount and variety of the informational content. Having a principal cue did not usually lead to having a greater number of cues in a website. With the magazine advertisements, having a principal cue usually resulted in using even fewer informational cues in the advertisements. In addition, in websites, a principal cue was rarely the only cue present. Majority of the websites incorporating a principal cue were also enhancing their content with other content elements. As for the magazine advertisements, nearly half of those that had a principal cue did not include any other content elements to supplement it with additional information about products or services advertised.

5.7 Websites for Informational Content-Exclusive Magazine Advertisements

By comparing the websites for informational content-exclusive (as defined by Resnik and Stern (1977) magazine advertisements with the websites for the advertisements that included some identifiable informational content it was possible to determine whether there were content-wise differences between the websites for content-inclusive and content-exclusive advertisements. Consequently, such a comparison could reveal whether advertisers with content-exclusive magazine advertisements (that were focusing on an emotional appeal rather than on informational content) approached website advertising in the same way as they did with the magazine advertisements or similarly to advertisers behind the content-inclusive advertisements. Mattila (1999) carried out a study of the emotional appeal delivered by advertising communications for services. The findings presented in his study suggested that in some cases advertisers could be successful in appealing to novice consumer's emotional responses rather than to rational (informational content-based) ones. However, if the consumers were familiar with the service advertised, it would be highly desirable to focus on creation of a favorable attitude towards a service brand instead. According to Mattila, advertisement-invoked emotions appeared to strongly influence post-exposure attitudes and service quality expectations among consumers who were not very familiar with the service and had limited personal experiences with that particular service category. Furthermore, the findings of the study also suggested that in some instances, employing tangible cues of service excellence could be an effective strategy in promoting an initial liking of a service brand among potential customers. Thus, it was important to investigate whether websites for the content-exclusive magazine advertisements differed from or were similar to the content-inclusive ones, and if the differences did exist, it was important to establish what these differences were.

The website search (as discussed in Chapter 4, with findings being shown by chart 4.1 and in Table 4.31) was successful in locating URLs for 25 out of the 36 content-

exclusive magazine advertisements identified during content analysis of the advertisements. A comparison of websites for the two types of magazine advertisements focused on both: a) differences between combinations of the informational content elements used and b) the ways these particular informational cues were used in the websites.

5.7.1 Comparing Websites for Content-Inclusive and Content-Exclusive Magazine Advertisements

Cue quantities used by the websites for content-exclusive advertisements did differ a little from the content inclusive ones in terms of the informational cues used (as evident from a comparison between Table 4.6 and Table 4.31). Majority of the content elements appeared in websites for content-exclusive magazine advertisements to a slightly lower extent. However, while the overall average amount of informational cues per website was a little lower, 60% of the websites contained between four to six cues (similarly to the websites for content-inclusive advertisements). Furthermore, only one of the websites contained no identifiable informational cues at all. Interestingly, the websites for content-exclusive magazine advertisements contained a greater number of performance cues. At the same time, relatively few of the websites incorporated product or service pricing information. Availability of the products or services information was also relatively often missing compared to for content-inclusive magazine advertisements.

Another interesting difference between the two website categories was lack of consistent cue combinations in the websites for content-exclusive advertisements. While with the websites for content-inclusive advertisements there were a number of identifiable cue combinations (e.g. special offers + availability content combination), the websites for content-exclusive advertisements had a greater variety of combinations, but none of the combinations occurred throughout the websites consistently. Availability + performance pair was the most popular informational content combination in these websites. However, even this combination occurred in six websites only.

5.7.2 Comparing Use of Informational Cues in Websites for Content-Inclusive and Content-Exclusive Magazine Advertisements

As discussed in section 5.7.1 above, despite a significantly smaller sample (25 websites compared to 217 for content-inclusive magazine advertisements) websites for content-exclusive magazine advertisements showed a number of cue combinations and interpretations that did not appear in the main sample. With the websites for content-inclusive magazine advertisements having fewer informational cues usually resulted in smaller amounts of informational content. In case of the websites for the content-exclusive advertisements, content amounts usually did not differ based on the number of informational cues used, as having a smaller number of cues was usually compensated by presenting information delivered by the cues in greater depth. Thus, these websites were more dedicated to delivering narrowed-down information focusing on specific features of the products or services advertised rather than on provision of an “overview” of what the products and services had to offer.

With the websites for content-inclusive magazine advertisements, incorporating one or two informational cues only, it was usually (in over 80% of the cases) either the availability cue alone that they were using or a combination of availability plus another cue. In the very rare cases where availability-related information was missing, the websites usually focused on product or service characteristics (e.g. price, performance or taste and nutrition for food and beverage products). As for the websites for the content-exclusive magazine advertisements, despite having a small sample, a greater variety of content elements was evident. For example, the website for Colgate toothpaste was built around a single informational cue (special offers). However, it did not mean that the website was underdeveloped (as was the case with some websites back in 2001) or small in size or content. Instead, the website simply focused on presenting a comprehensive range of special offers (there were six special offers altogether available from the website) and discussing the offers in great detail. Interestingly, the offers were outlining special opportunities available without even mentioning products’ availability, price, performance or quality. Consequently, the Colgate website looked like a very large

printed brochure rather than a typical online document (as websites usually contained a number of inter-linked pages rather than one very long page). None of the well-developed websites for content-inclusive magazine ads were built around delivering special offers information only.

Similar to Colgate, Westinghouse had its website developed around a single informational content element (performance) and did not discuss any other product/service related information. Furthermore, the Westinghouse website contained the total of fourteen web pages (more than any other website for content-inclusive advertisements). Each of the pages was dedicated to a particular product or model (e.g. refrigerators) and discussed performance in great depth, without relating the discussion not only to the product availability or pricing information but even to the information presented through such closely related content elements as quality or components.

To sum up, when compared to the websites for informational content-inclusive magazine advertisements, the websites for informational content-exclusive advertisements showed:

- Greater variety of informational content combinations
- Greater focus on specific features and/or issues related to the products or services advertised (e.g. such as in Colgate and Westinghouse examples discussed above)
- Narrower communication objectives (e.g. building website content around a smaller number of informational content elements) with attempt to present information related to the objectives in greater depth

5.8 Use of WebQual Informational and Functionality Elements in Websites

The WebQual website performance assessment model subdivided all of the website functionality and communication components into three logical categories: New Media Communication Capabilities, Marketing Channel Capabilities and Relationship Enhancement Capabilities. Performance in each of these categories (as discussed in chapters 3 & 4) was assessed through a set of evaluation criteria designed specifically to assess functions associated (in 2001) with fulfilling key objectives within the categories. Once a website's performance within each of the categories was assessed, it was possible to evaluate its overall performance and identify both of the areas where it was performing well as well as the areas where it was underperforming, so that improvements were required.

5.8.1 Media Communication Capability Assessment

URL Guessability assessment of the domain names for the websites showed (Table 4.48) that majority of the advertisers considered in the study had their website addresses (domain names) named after the very same company or brand that was promoted in the magazine advertisements, making it easier for consumers to locate websites for the products and services advertised. However, there were a number of common deviations from an "ideal" (as defined by Adam and Deans (2001)) scenario. In the ideal scenario, the websites were supposed to have a .com.au + brand name URL address. However, a number of the websites were not hosted by dedicated .com.au domains. This finding confirmed that in 2001, there was still some confusion about identifying and registering a URL that was most suitable to companies' needs and would make it easier for consumers to find the companies on the web. Today (in 2008), it is hard to imagine a well-known Australian or international company that does not have a URL address that reflects its company name. For example, those searching for Telstra's website can be sure to find it at telstra.com.au and consumers requiring more information about Dell's products and

services can be almost certain that if they type dell.com or dell.com.au, they will not end up at a wrong web address. In other words, no search engine is required to find websites for major companies as their domain names match their business and/or brand names + have a .com.au extension. However, back in 2001 (as evident from Table 4.48) even some of Australia's biggest and best-known brands could not be located on the web so easily. On the other hand, while .com.au extension was still not very common at the time, nearly all of the websites' domain names either matched the names of the products and services advertised or company names. Absence of .com.au domains was almost always compensated by the use of .com domains reflective of the products or services advertised. Therefore, based on the URL guessability assessment, it could be concluded that at the time, majority of the website domain names were reflective of company or brand names, but not all of the websites had an .au (a sign of having Australia-specific content) extension.

Furthermore, among these cases where neither relevant .com.au nor .com domains were used, there were also a couple of interesting instances where websites were created to support specific promotional campaigns/special offers. For example, Nokia created a website to promote its "family package" special deals available for families purchasing two or more mobile phones, as part of a "family deal". The deal had an expiry date on it and was valid for three months only. Nevertheless, www.familyphone.com.au website was created and referred to by magazine advertisements. A website of this kind was obviously created for a limited time only (as its purpose would diminish on the expiry date of the special offer). However, from a short-term perspective it could also be regarded (along with www.nokia.com.au website) as a relevant website. Thus, while .com.au domains were still not obtained and/or activated by many of the advertisers, combined figures for .com.au and .com domain names showed that majority of the advertisers did have a relevant domain name already. Besides, some of the websites referred to by the magazine advertisements were aimed at fulfilling specific short term objectives (as in the case of Nokia's family phone deal discussed above) and while the websites could not get high WebQual scores (as website names did not match the names of the products or services advertised, focusing on special deals and/or events instead),

the logic behind having such web addresses was also transparent. Thus, the fact that the URL addresses were not matching company or brand names of the companies behind products and services advertised could be regarded as evidence of a number of companies' treating their websites as short-term rather than ongoing (permanent) marketing communication channels.

Among other factors, marketing communication performance of the websites depended on quality of the sites' designs as a consumer-usable place for the marketing communications to occur. Inadequate technologies would not allow a website to be used as an effective marketing communication tool, irrespectively of how clever its informational content was. Thus, technical facets of the websites were as relevant to its performance as a marketing tool, as the non-technical ones. As shown in Table 4.48, over 90% of the websites considered in the study contained Not Browser Restricted capability. Thus, the study revealed that the websites for products and services promoted in Australia at the time did not have to deal with the issue of compatibility of their software/site development tools with all of the major browsers. The websites analyzed throughout the study could be accessed irrespectively of a type of browser site visitors were using. It made no significant difference whether visitors were using Microsoft Internet Explorer or Netscape Navigator (two most popular web browsers at the time), or any other mainstream browser. Quality of images and content displayed (as could be seen from Tables 4.48 and 4.53) were not affected by browser-specific features. Besides, software add-on/download times (as shown in Table 4.51) indicated that over half of the additionally required applications could be downloaded within three minutes only. These findings could be regarded as indicators of positive trends in adoption of web technologies in Australia.

Not Browser Restricted capability played an important role in the earlier studies of Australian websites, involving application of the WebQual. Initially, browser compatibility was a big issue for some Australian companies. Back, in the mid-1990s' WebQual was identifying browser compatibility as a real problem for some websites. For example, there were instances where a website was displayed perfectly by Internet

Explorer but was not viewable with Netscape Navigator. Website visitors' switch from one browser to another could result in inferior user experience. This study proved that by the year 2001, compatibility of websites with Web browsers was no longer a problem for Australian marketers. Ongoing development and convergence of Internet technologies resolved the browser compatibility issue once and for all. As for the twenty websites that did not have complete compatibility with all of the major browsers, seventeen of them had their complete features available through the Microsoft Internet Explorer web browser, so their limitations were usually becoming evident only if lesser common browsers (such as the Netscape Navigator, as by 2001 majority of the Internet users already abandoned the Netscape in favor of the Internet Explorer) were used. In the rare instances where the web browser compatibility problems did occur, the problems were mainly related to a poor display of images. From the marketing perspective, it was a particularly serious problem, as images were usually logically linked to the principal cues, so if the images were failing to initiate and display fully and/or were not displaying at all, such a shortcoming was reducing quality of the website as a marketing communication channel significantly. For example, Sony's website had performance as its principal informational cue. All of the performance descriptions were illustrated by images of the products advertised but more than half of the images were failing to appear whenever the Netscape Navigator was used. However, with the Microsoft Internet Explorer, no image initiation problems were occurring. Overall, scores for coding elements of the media communication capability (Table 4.54) indicated that by the year 2001, only few of the websites still had coding-related problems.

As shown in Table 4.48, ALT Tags appeared in 105 of the websites. The score suggested that, similarly to improvements in browser compatibility, use of tags in commercial websites was also becoming more common, when compared with the 1990s. This was a significant step forward towards making websites more search-engine friendly. Furthermore, presence of the tags gave a good indication of how companies were positioning their websites on the Net and how they wanted these websites to be perceived by consumers. Therefore on the basis of this data (Table 4.48), it could be concluded that from a technical perspective, by 2001, implementation of tags was no

longer a big task to accomplish. It did not require companies to adopt any complicated technologies or expensive/advanced website development patterns. At the same time, value of adding ALT Tags to the websites was evident as the websites that did incorporate the tags were usually the ones that also incorporated other beneficial coding elements.

As there was approximately a half-half (as shown in table 4.48, 48% of the websites were incorporating Alt tags) division between the websites that were and were not using tags at the time, it was easy to carry out a comparison between the two samples. The comparison revealed that the websites that had ALT tags provided usually appeared to be easier to navigate due to user-friendlier layouts and clearer focus of the content. It was yet another indication of continuous improvements and developments to the World Wide Web and its “commercial branch” in particular. Same as with the Not Browser Restricted category, use of ALT tags was becoming more common. At the same time, while the trend was positive, about half of the Australian companies considered in the study were yet to follow the path and embrace the concept of having ALT Tags incorporated into their websites. Interestingly, a comparison between the score for ALT tags (Table 4.48) and the overall average score for the coding-related website performance elements (as shown in Table 4.54) showed that when compared with the other related website elements, tags were used rather infrequently (48% as opposed to 74% average for all of the coding-related elements). Thus, it could be concluded that on the one hand, use of ALT tags in the websites was becoming more common but on the other hand, it was still not as high as use of other design-related content elements.

Menu Tabs capability was evident in over 68% of the websites (Table 4.48). It showed that at the time, use of menu tabs was already becoming relatively widespread. With majority of the websites, use of menu tabs enabled first-time visitors to navigate the websites easily, as having menu tabs on a homepage could serve as a basic site map. Consequently, by looking at menu tabs, website visitors were able to navigate their way around companies’ virtual homes and quickly get to the information they were after.

Thus, availability of menu tabs was instrumental in improving both access to information and user friendliness of the websites.

Analysis of the menu tabs showed that at the time, there were already clearly established concepts on how to structure and position menu tabs in the body of the websites, and there was a lot of consistency across different websites in how the tabs were utilized such as fairly consistent (as evident from overall use of websites' content elements in menu tabs (Table 4.49)). While colors, fonts and designs differed from website to website, structure of menu tabs usually remained similar, irrespectively of the size of the websites and the design style used. Menu tabs were usually placed at the top or on the left side of the websites' main Home Pages. WebQual analysis also showed consistency in the naming of the tabs. Majority of the websites were using Tabs like "About Us", "Products" (in 2001, terms like "Shopping Cart" were not very common yet) and "Contact Us". On average, websites had around four to five menu tabs each. It gave a clear indication about size and scope of the commercial websites at the time. Even some of the best known Australian companies considered in the WebQual study and presumably having a lot of information to share with consumers tended to have websites that incorporated four to five web pages only. Overall, analysis of the menu tabs showed that while architecture of commercial websites in 2001 did not differ much from the contemporary (2007) website architecture, majority of Australian websites were still quite small (four to five pages only).

Interestingly, use and naming of the menu tabs was often (with over 50% of the websites containing menu tabs, as shown in Table 4.48) logically linked to informational content of the websites rather than fulfillment of functional objectives (e.g. transaction processing). In such instances, some of the tabs could be linked to specific Resnik-Stern informational content elements. As shown in Table 4.49, price, availability, special offers and performance were the most common content elements to have menu tabs dedicated to them. For example, the Nescafe website had a special offers-related menu tab on its home page. The tab was linking Nescafe's main page (Home) with a page devoted specifically to competitions (e.g. product-related quizzes, lucky draws, etc.) that the company was

running for its consumers. In a number of instances, the websites contained more than one cue that was used as a menu tab. In case of Nescafé, the menu tabs were linked to information related to three different informational content elements (quality, special offers and independent research). Overall, based on the data provided in Table 4.49, it could be concluded that use of key content elements as menu tabs (and in case of price-related information, it was particularly common, as price alone accounted for over 40% of all the content elements-related menu tabs) was fairly frequent.

Almost 75% of the websites could be regarded as easy to navigate (Table 4.48). The purpose of the navigation assessment was to evaluate depth of the websites. Only websites that were at least three pages deep (for example – contained Main home page + brand description page + product description page) could achieve a score of one. The study showed that majority of the websites considered in this study consisted of a number of inter-linked pages. However, testing of links between the web pages also identified a number of shortcomings. HomePage was usually connected to all of its “subsidiaries” but at the same time, there were often no direct links between related/supplementary pages. For example, there were instances where both product page and “buy it now” page were linked to the HomePage but not to each other. Such shortcomings made it more difficult for consumers to make online purchases. On spotting an item they were after on the product list, they were not able to proceed directly to a shopping cart and place their orders. Such inconveniences made the websites less user-friendly and more complicated to use. From a marketing perspective, it was decreasing efficiency of online advertising and sales, as consumers were less likely to return to the HomePage and stay on the websites for longer periods of time. Interestingly, almost all of the websites, that could be regarded as easy to navigate, were incorporating menu tabs as part of their user-friendliness enhancement method (as evident from near corresponding scores for menu tabs and navigation in Table 4.48)

Overall, in the year 2001, coding level of the websites was showing clear progression (as back in the late 1990s it was regarded as one of the major shortcomings of commercial websites in Australia (Adam and Deans, 2000)) both in terms of quantity

(as evident from Table 4.48 and relatively high scores for coding, when compared to other website capabilities in Table 4.54) and quality of the coding elements utilized. Firstly, every single capability considered in the website coding assessment (Not Browser Restricted, ALT Tags, Menu/Tabs Navigation) was utilized by over half of the websites. Furthermore, based on corresponding scores of some of the website capabilities in Table 4.48 there was clear evidence (e.g. as in the case of Menu Tabs) that coding was often carried out with informational content of the websites in mind rather than as an unconnected technical activity, as there were logical links between the structure (Coding) and the content (WebQual) of the pages in over half of the websites. There was also a high degree of accuracy in how the website structure and content were connected to each other. For example, if a website menu tagged pages as related to a particular kind of content (e.g. special offers, or prices), the pages usually delivered the information promised. In addition, it could be concluded that use of specific content elements in website design (Table 4.49) usually resulted in higher scores for website functionality-related capabilities (Table 4.48).

As shown in Table 4.48, Brochure/Non-linear elements of the websites did not appear to be as well developed as coding elements of the websites. Only half of the websites contained media releases. According to Cohn (2002), having company's media releases available from its website was regarded as a good way of integrating traditional and electronic communications. It was pointed out that when it came to dealing with content management issues, companies were usually adding more features to incorporate information from all kinds of sources into their websites. Media releases could provide consumers with first-hand information on companies' activities. Thus, it was logical to expect a greater number of sites to include some kind of media releases, such as for example updates, as absence of up-to-date information was reducing quality (relevance-wise) of the websites' content significantly.

As shown in Table 4.48, half of the websites were not using media releases and other up-to-date company information at all. It was not only the overall number of media releases that could be regarded as relatively low. Another problem identified during

WebQual assessment of the websites was poor quality of some of the releases. Some of the websites did contain media releases but did not combine them well with the rest of the website's content. For example, there were instances where "enhancing" a website with a media release involved simple "cutting and pasting" of content from the company's brochures or product catalogues. There was no evidence of effort made to customize content of the releases to the needs of web audiences. Furthermore, some of the online media releases were seriously outdated. For example, there was an instance where a website for a retail chain was inviting consumers to a "grand-sale", while the sale start and end dates given suggested that the sale had ended long time ago. In another instance, a website was advertising "arrival of a new product line" and giving the product's release date that was one year old, making the 'latest news' look clearly outdated. Thus, in the instances outlined above, the media releases were not fit for their purpose.

Similarly to media releases, FAQ did not feature in the websites consistently as they were included into less than 40% of the websites only (Table 4.48). According to Bozeman (1999), by providing answers to the FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions) companies were able to demonstrate that they were aware of consumers' concerns and queries and were prepared to anticipate and answer the queries online. Incorporation of the FAQ section into a website enabled companies to make it easy for first-time visitors to familiarize themselves with the website and navigate their way around. As Bozeman was pointing out, even some of the long-term customers who had already visited a website previously, could find its FAQ section useful. In addition, application of specialized software packages, such as for example, PowerFAQ enabled webmasters to add standard FAQs relevant to particular needs of individual consumers and a searchable knowledgebase (database application) to their websites quickly and at a low cost. The software incorporated data translation functions, that allowed companies to import customer support information from their main databases, helpdesks or customer support systems (Bozeman, 1999), thus making FAQ section of the websites better tailored to consumers' needs.

While overall use of FAQ capability in the websites was not very high (less than 40% of the websites contained a dedicated FAQ section, such as a separate web page), the study showed that a significant number of the websites that were using FAQ were turning it into one of their key customer service tools, as nearly all of the websites that did have a FAQ section, were making it available directly through menu tabs. From a consumer perspective, it was an encouraging sign of companies' growing desire to invest into making their websites more user-friendly. Many of the FAQs dealt with questions that were of particular importance to web audiences of the time and addressed issues specifically related to many of the websites' informational content elements (as listed in Table 4.27). In 2001, the concept of online shopping was still not very common in Australia. Thus, if FAQ section of a website dealt with queries such as "Is It Safe to Shop Online?" or "How do I Place an Order?", it could be concluded that FAQ was instrumental in ensuring that consumers were not scared of getting involved in online shopping activities.

While there was rarely a direct logical connection between FAQs and media releases sections of the websites, the websites that contained FAQs appeared to be performing better (higher overall WebQual scores) in the majority of advertising-related areas. The websites containing at least reasonably well developed FAQs sections also tended to incorporate other information aimed at providing consumers with greater knowledge of the products and services advertised as well as about the company. Performance, quality, warranties and availability cue-related information often featured in the FAQ sections of the websites to a significant extent.

Similarly to FAQ, Related Product Links capability also featured in 40% of the websites. If a website provided links to products/services that were complimentary to the main products and services offered by the company, it was building a distinct competitive advantage over its rivals, as it was offering a complete solution for its consumers. For example, consumers shopping around for tickets to travel overseas were also likely to show interest in complimentary travel products, such as excursions, guided tours, etc. While related product links did not appear in the websites to a significantly greater extent

than FAQs, by the 2001, standards the score of 96 could be regarded as high. Unlike FAQs that were in use from the early days of the Internet (as there were obviously a lot of questions about the new communication channel), importance of having related product links was not identified until late 1990's (Alreck and Settle, 1999; Adam and Deans, 2000; Schubert and Selz, 2001). Consequently, at the time of this study (2001) portals and link exchanges were generally not as common as they are today. Besides, all of the websites considered for WebQual analysis in this study were for specific companies or brands rather than for general portals, as all of them were hosted by private companies behind products and services advertised, rather than by industry associations etc. Initially (in the 1990s), it was still common for such websites to focus on promotion of their own products and services only. The study showed that nearly half of all the companies considered did not take long to understand the concept of link exchange and were using it effectively to enhance their websites. Furthermore, another very positive outcome of having related product links was ability to promote products and services to wider audiences. Analysis of the links showed that when a website provided a link to a website for a complimentary product or service, the partnering merchant would usually return the favor by acknowledging the partnership through a return link. Thus, having related product links to ten to fifteen complimentary products usually ensured that there was a lot of exposure for the company all over the Net as well as provided greater amount of information relevant to consumers' needs.

Another growing trend was active use of search (Meta) tags for submission of the websites to search engines. Search tags appeared in majority of the websites and were usually submitted to all of the main search engines of the time. Search tags were essential for making websites identifiable by search engines. Ideally, search tags were supposed to contain key information about the websites. For example, a website for a supermarket like Coles could benefit from incorporating search tags such as "fresh food" "best buys" etc.

The study showed that majority of the websites (70%, as shown in Table 4.48) included at least minimal characteristics of their mission in the search tags. Sometimes

the website descriptions were not most accurate. They did not identify and describe the main features that the companies were traditionally associated with. For example, search tags for Telstra were quite long but nevertheless did not incorporate much information about telecommunications and/or Telstra's excellence in this particular industry. However, it was better to have "imperfect" search tags than no tags at all. Sooner or later, consumers would still be able to locate the websites, as long as some search tags were there. On the other hand, websites without search tags were sometimes hard to find on the web and could leave consumers frustrated by the companies' inability to make the websites easily accessible. Search tags also served as indicators of the informational content that website administrators regarded as particularly critical, as making a search engine submission involved selection of a few words that could characterize the websites best. Some of the most common (as shown in Table 4.27) of the web informational cues (availability and special offers,) never featured in the search tags. At the same time, performance, quality and price cues-related information featured in the search tags to a significant extent.

Application of the cues in the search tags was usually carried out through the use of general terms such as "cheap food" (for price), "best-performing car" (for quality and performance), etc. Interestingly, brand and/or company names for products or services advertised were rarely included into the search tags. Instead, the websites focused on promoting the features of the products or services that they believed were superior or best-known. In a couple of instances, the search tags incorporated complete slogans from the websites such as for example: "Tailoring Banking to Your Needs". Another interesting observation was related to length of the search tags. Given that the major search engines (such as Google, Yahoo and Ask Jeeves) had no word limit for search tags at the time (as some of the search engines introduced search tag word limits later, while others still do not have them), some very long search tags could be anticipated. However, majority of the search tags were fairly short as they were one-two lines long. Thus, when trying to attract wider web audiences, the companies were trying to keep their website promotional campaigns both focused and ethical (as use of long search tags was regarded as an unethical website promotion practice).

In-site search function appeared in half of the websites (as shown in table 4.48). It enabled visitors to a website to avoid random browsing and locate a particular section of the site they were after. As larger websites that incorporated many pages and a lot of informational content were finding it difficult to achieve complete inter-linkage, use of a site search engine was often the only way for consumers to find the information they were after. Even smaller websites could benefit from incorporation of the in-site search function and save consumers' time and frustration.

The WebQual score for the in-site search function could be regarded as disappointing. From a technical perspective, adding an in-site search function to a website was not a difficult task, and some of the tasks that were technically more challenging (e.g. tasks analyzed in Tables 4.50 and 4.51) appeared to be handled with greater efficiency. Lack of in-site search engines could not be explained by reasons other than companies' failure to implement them. Even earlier studies involving WebQual (e.g. Adam and Deans, 1999) showed that the in-site search function could be used easily, yet effectively. The study confirmed this ease, as none of the 109 websites that did incorporate in-site search had any problems executing this function. WebQual analysis did not identify a single instance of an in-site search failing to perform a basic website search and identify all of relevant pieces of information available from the website, irrespective of its size and structure.

Product/Service Images and Text content elements were well or at least reasonably well-integrated in the majority (around 80%) of the websites making it (as shown in Table 4.48) the best-performing brochure-ware function of all. It exceeded the average score for brochure-ware (0.55 as shown in Table 4.54) by 0.25. Such a high score was a very good sign, as integration of images and text in a web page was one of the basic requirements web designers needed to satisfy when developing a quality website. For example, if consumers visited a website for a vegetarian restaurant, they would be shocked to find a picture featuring a non-vegetarian dish. Such inadequate content could turn many consumers away from the business. Furthermore, images and text were to be mixed in reasonable proportions. As Tweney (1999) pointed out, excessive use of large

images made websites slow to download. Consequently, it was usually not the size of a website that was making it appealing to consumers. If a website contained a lot of information, it was not necessarily going to make it “better”. In fact, greater amount of informational content and a larger number of images required companies to make a greater effort to make the information provided integrated and easier to locate, so it was absolutely essential for companies to ensure that their web content could be accessed easily.

The role of images was equally evident in websites for products and services. Quantity-wise, the websites for products (such as mobile phones, cars and computer equipment) contained a greater amount of image-supported content than the websites for services. Surprisingly, the only product category that did not appear to contain a lot of image-supported content was food and beverages. The only shortcoming was quality of some of the images. However, as far as integration of images was concerned, it was rarely a problem. Additionally, many of the images (as evident from Table 4.53) were shared across both the magazine advertisements and the websites, providing yet another logical avenue for integration of the two marketing communication channels. Table 4.53 showed that 42.4% of the images used on the websites were related to the content of the magazine advertisements for products and services. It could be concluded that images were often integrated across the magazine advertisements and websites to an even greater extent than text.

An overall impression of the ways the brochure-ware functions were carried out by majority of the websites was positive. First of all, all of the functions assessed (other than in-site search function) were used to a greater extent than in the late 1990s. Secondly, quality of the functions was usually good as they performed up to the general expectations. The only facet of brochure-ware that was occasionally disappointing (not up-to-date or not formatted for the web) was lack or quality of media releases. Other than that, performance of the brochure-ware functions was of at least of a satisfactory standard, as majority of the websites were designed in a user-friendly manner. Informational content-wise, scores for Search Tags, and Product/Service Images and Text

functions confirmed that there was usually a relationship between some aspects of brochure-ware and informational content of the websites. Search tags were built around the key words and expressions that could be used to identify nature of the websites, while use of images was also reflective of what particular elements of the websites' informational content were supported.

Website Design elements were essential for effective communication of the advertising messages, as quality of the advertising communications depended not only on the content of the messages but also on the formats and styles the messages were presented in. Assessment of the web design elements of the websites (Table 4.48) showed that all of the elements were used to either a high or at least satisfactory extent (as assessed by WebQual), and at least some of the design capabilities were (as shown in Table 4.54) present in over 80% of the websites. Furthermore, the assessment identified a number of interesting features and relationships between the elements.

The websites' Add-ons and Plug-Ins turned out to be the most improved technical features, when compared to the ways the websites were in the 1990s (e.g. Ju-Pak, 1997; Adam and Deans, 1999). The new media communication capability analysis confirmed that unavailability of Add-ons was no longer an obstacle to accessing a website and utilizing all of its features. In some cases, a specific software application (e.g. Flash) was required to view a website. However, as evident from Table 4.48, by 2001, it no longer appeared to be a limitation, as almost all of the companies behind the websites with "special needs" offered visitors links to free online downloads of the software applications required. Thus, it could be concluded that nearly all of the consumers with a standard Internet access could visit the websites easily since both Not Browser Restricted and Add – ons/Plug-ins Linked confirmed achieved almost perfect scores.

While Add-ons were dealt with relatively smoothly, from a purely technical perspective (software easy to download and/or save etc.), it was evident that they usually slowed down the website browsing process significantly. Analysis of the download times (Table 4.51) showed that the applications sometimes (nearly 40% of the total instances,

where an additional download was required) took three minutes or more (given standard Internet connection speed) to download. Furthermore, there was a number of instances (particularly when a trial/incomplete version of a software application was offered) where there were some additional delays (e.g. software user license applications) before the applications could be saved on the user's systems. As the software user licenses were usually granted impermanently and for a short period of time (e.g. fourteen days), if consumers wanted to access the websites again after the license expiry date, they had to download the software once again and go through the complete registration process. Consequently, despite flawless download processes – Add-ons appeared to make the websites less user-friendly. If used correctly, Graphics could brighten-up the websites and increase their appeal. In the light of the above, graphic content was instrumental in transforming text-based information into a form of visual representation that was more user-friendly. It made the websites easier and more enjoyable to navigate (Nyberg, 2001). At the same time, inaccurate erroneous or excessive use of graphic components could easily spoil a website by making it messy and inadequate. “Too much” Graphics could become as much of a problem as “not enough”.

WebQual analysis (Table 4.48) revealed that over 80% of the websites considered in the study demonstrated good use of graphical content. Given how relatively young commercial web development was at the time and considering previously emphasized issues (Adam and Deans, 1999), the finding could be regarded as encouraging. All of the websites considered contained at least some graphical content. Nearly all of them contained a mix of different types and styles of Graphics. Graphics were usually used consistently throughout the websites rather than on selected pages. More than half of the websites incorporated some graphical content into each and every page. Furthermore, the graphical content varied from page to page and was usually original, rather than repetitive. The only relatively consistent downside of the graphical content was that in 2001, a significant share of the graphics-rich websites required additional software downloads (such as Flash) and as discussed above, the software downloads were not always smooth and fast. Other than that, majority of the websites appeared to have adequate graphical content. Similarly to the use of graphics, layout of the websites was

generally of an acceptable standard, as over 75% of the websites considered in the study were fulfilling WebQual layout criteria. The web pages were structured on a logical basis, so visitors were finding it easier and more enjoyable to navigate the websites and access the information they were after.

Layout of the websites was arguably one of the trickiest WebQual elements to assess, as it was hard to draw a clear line between a “good” and “not so good” layout. In some cases, layout quality was not consistent throughout a website. For example, some pages of a website were neat and presented both graphical and textual information clearly. Nevertheless, high quality of web design was not consistent, as other pages of the very same website had a significantly inferior layout. The finding outlined above was rather unexpected. However, this was not always the case. For example, website for Saab Motors did not use a consistent layout throughout its content-related pages. Some of the pages contained nearly identical informational content (the very same Resnik-Stern informational cues were used, and the only differences between the pages were due to different models of the cars advertised), yet the layout of the pages differed throughout. The Saab case could be regarded as an extreme one (even though Saab’s website was not the only one with such severe design-related problems, since eighteen other websites considered in the study were also completely inconsistent throughout). However, as far as “total” layout consistency was concerned, it did not occur very often. Similarly, layout was nearly always integrated with graphics to some extent, but majority of the websites had at least one or two occurrences where graphic images did not fit in with the rest of the content. According to Table 4.52, only 30% of the total number of the websites had a consistent layout, while 42.4% of the websites had a mostly consistent layout and only less than 10% (8.76%) had a totally inconsistent one. Therefore, it could be concluded that while the websites were rarely having a “near-perfect” layout, majority of the layouts were at least reasonable.

When applying the WebQual website performance assessment tool to the websites, it was usually possible to identify clear distinguishing features between Image and Product/Services Images and Text aspects of the websites’ performance. While

Product/Services Images and Text assessment involved investigation of relevance of images to the web pages, the image assessment dealt with quality of images rather than the role they played in the websites. However, despite the differences between the two, the WebQual analysis revealed clear consistency between having good image quality and the ways these images were utilized in the websites. Even respective scores for Image and Product/Services Images and Text turned out to be almost the same (as shown in Table 4.48). While the magazine advertisements tended to use the images that were more representative of the textual context they were linked to, the websites often contained the images that were not logically linked to the content of the messages directly. For example, website for ANZ contained an image of a nicely set dinner table, while Toyota's website included an image of a dog and a cat playing. While the images obviously did have a role to play in the websites (e.g. setting up the mood or improving emotional appeal of the websites), they were not associated with particular content or messages displayed.

Image-wise, there were a lot of similarities between the magazine advertisements and the websites. A significant share of the images used in the websites (40.9% as shown in Table 4.53) was identical to the ones used by the magazine advertisements for the same product or service and/or by the same company. In some of the websites and magazine advertisements, this consistency in the use of integrated images throughout the two marketing communication channels was even greater than the consistency in integrated use of informational content (Table 4.7). These websites (such as ANZ and Continental Soup websites) featured the very same images as the respective magazine advertisements. On the other hand, informational content of the advertisements and the websites (particularly in case of ANZ) differed. Thus, the images indicated that integration between the two advertising communication channels (a traditional one such as magazine advertisements and an emerging one like the web) was becoming possible not only through specific informational content (e.g. descriptions of product or service details or pricing information), but also through graphical content.

Aesthetics was arguably the most subjective of all the WebQual website performance capabilities considered for the study. As pointed out by Adam and Deans (2000), there were no clearly defined boundaries for assessing aesthetic appeal of the websites. It was sometimes difficult to explain logical reasons behind a positive or negative impression of a website. Consequently, the assessment of aesthetic value of the websites was based on the researchers' personal impressions of the websites analyzed. The high score for Aesthetics (as shown in Table 4.48) suggested that majority of the websites were regarded by the researcher as aesthetically pleasing. In this particular instance, when assessing the aesthetic value, the researcher aimed at evaluating the websites from the 2001 perspective rather than from a contemporary one. The websites were examined for a combination of layout, color coordination, use of images and text as well as for emotional appeal to consumers.

Leaving in-depth content and functionality analysis aside, the overall impression from absolute majority (over 72%) of the websites considered in this study was positive. A comparison of aesthetically pleasing and aesthetically poor websites led to an interesting observation. On commencement of the WebQual analysis, the author expected websites for the biggest and best known brands, such as Telstra, Dell and Target to be more aesthetically pleasing than websites for smaller and less known brands as it was the case in the 1990s. However, this expectation turned out to be wrong as by 2001, the times had clearly changed. Some of the websites that failed to achieve a positive score for Aesthetics were for Australia's major brands. At the same time, lesser known brands did not appear to be having a lower probability of accomplishing a good website. This observation was equally applicable to other facets of website design, such as graphics, images and layout. The websites for well known and bigger brands did not outperform the websites for smaller companies in quality of web design.

Administrative details information was provided by 87.5% of the websites. Such a high level of use could be anticipated. There was no need in running a website if it did not display basic company information (such as contact information). By 2001, the companies that were still not incorporating their administrative details into their websites

were few and far between. With the 27 websites that did not have administrative information included, specific reasons for the shortcoming were hard to identify. However, nearly all of these websites scored equally poorly with the other WebQual website performance assessment criteria. Thus, such a lack of administrative details appeared to be neither a “strategic decision”, nor a one-off flow in website planning and design, but an indicator of the websites’ overall lower standard and capabilities. The relationship between unavailability of company information and a poor layout of the websites was particularly transparent. On the other hand, while it was a case of poor website design, there was no evidence that the websites that failed to incorporate administrative details of the parent companies had less versatile informational content.

Overall impressions of the ways the websites considered in the study were designed was positive. At the turn of the century, there were still a lot of uncertainties what website development standards were (Weiner, 2000; Schubert and Selz, 2001; Baron, 2003), so quality web design could not be taken for granted. The websites also appeared to be consistent in their design quality. If a website satisfied some of the key quality requirements (e.g. a good layout), it was also likely to address the other design essentials, such as inclusion of an adequate amount of graphical content and provision of administrative details. At the same time, if a website was failing aesthetically, a lot of other shortcomings could also be identified.

Interestingly, there was also little, if any evidence that greater use of advanced website development technologies led to creation of better websites. For example, the websites that required additional software downloads to be viewed and/or contained novel visual effects (as use of web animation was fairly new and unusual in 2001) did not appear to make better overall impressions. Layout and aesthetics-wise, they were compatible with the other websites, given that they were usually both more expensive and difficult to design and provide additional obstacles/limitations for the consumers, such as for example consumers having to spend time to download the necessary software and save it on their computers prior to being able to view complete version of the websites. On the other hand, some of the websites with the highest WebQual scores for aesthetics,

layout and image/text integration were developed through the use of simple tools and applications, such as Microsoft FrontPage and/or trivial HTML code-editing software applications.

As far as the size of the websites was concerned, there was no evidence that the websites that were larger in size were better designed or had a larger number of features than the smaller websites. For example, size-wise, Telstra's website was the largest website of all considered in this study. However, in terms of website design (as assessed through WebQual), it was in no way superior to the websites for smaller companies/less known brands. Similarly, large websites for Nokia and Hewlett-Packard also had average scores for design, rather than outstanding ones. On the other hand, some of the smaller websites (e.g. one-three pages long) were designed efficiently enough to incorporate significant informational content, while making the web design both attractive and user friendly.

To conclude, one of the distinctive features of the websites (as evident from a comparison between different website capabilities shown in Tables 4.48-4.55) was high quality of the designs, as opposed to some other facets of media communication capability. Technology-related capabilities (such as in-site search functions and availability of links) were lacking in over half of the websites but design-wise, majority of the websites satisfied most if not all of the design requirements.

As shown by the WebQual analysis, while nearly all of the websites were designed to a satisfactory level (as discussed above and evident from majority of the scores in Table 4.48), absolute majority of the websites were not customized to deal with global audiences. Content of the websites was focused specifically on the Australian customer base and consequently did not incorporate information that was of interest to international customers. Interestingly, as shown in Table 4.48, there was not a single element of global website performance that was evident in majority of the websites. However, if a website was nevertheless designed with the aim of providing the company and/or its products and services with international exposure, it was very likely to

incorporate majority if not all of the website features required to address specific needs of the international audiences, such as multi-lingual company information, contact details for companies' offices/branches outside Australia and descriptions of the products and services in languages other than English.

Multilingual Display/Information was available from 30% of the websites only. This was indicative of the fact that majority of the websites concentrated on English speaking audiences as well as singled out the websites that aimed to have a broader focus. Furthermore, at the turn of the century, Australia was a multi-cultural and a multi-lingual society. In Australia, while English was obviously the only official language, many families (mainly first generation migrant families) regarded another language such, as Chinese, Greek, Vietnamese, Hindi, Italian, etc. as the first language spoken at home. Those people were feeling much more comfortable were given an opportunity to access information in their first languages rather than in English. Thus, the 45 of the websites, that provided users with a multilingual option were not only addressing the needs of the, global audiences but also looking after the non-English speaking Australian residents who either did not speak English or simply preferred some other language(s) for business communications.

As far as exposure and appeal towards international markets were concerned, according to Williams (2002) at the time, 57% of the global online population was using a language other than English as their first language. Furthermore, analysis of multilingual display/information-inclusive websites revealed a clear "global" focus. In other words, multilingual display/information was usually provided to target global audiences rather than tailor the websites to the needs of local ethnic consumer groups within Australia. Content of the multi-lingual websites was usually aimed at users outside Australia. While in majority of the cases, it was difficult to examine the exact content of the multi-lingual information, due to an obvious need to understand the language the information was provided in. As the author is fluent in Russian only but not in other foreign languages, he singled out three pages, where Russian-language information was provided. Two out of the three pages simply provided plain "word-for-word" translation

of the English language information. Furthermore, the very same images, layouts and colors were used. Thus, language constituted the only difference between the English and the Russian versions of the web pages. In case of the 3d website, the Russian language version was a summary of the English one, rather than an exact translation. Other than that, similarities were also few and far between. Informational content-wise, the Russian language version of the website contained a different mix of combinations of informational cues, as compared to the English language version. The Layout was similar (not exactly the same though), but nearly half of the images and slogans/headings used on the page also differed.

While multi-language pages in languages other than Russian were impossible to examine content-wise, layout as well as use of images and colors could nevertheless be investigated. The comparison showed (as evident from relatively low scores for Global capabilities) that the websites where layout and non-textual content were identical, irrespective of the language used, were few and far between. In a number of cases, there were next to no design-related similarities between the English and the Non-English language pages. Size-wise, the non-English language pages were almost always occupying less amounts of web space.

Similarly to having multi-language information, use of multi-sites was a good way of reaching a wider audience. It enabled companies to target greater audiences by having their websites tailored to address specific needs of various user groups. In order for the websites to perform effectively, they needed to be linked to one another. While it was easier to focus on development and management of a single website, multi-site networks could be developed with the use of a variety of different languages and marketing patterns. Overall use of multi-sites was relatively low. However, in 2001, developing and maintaining more than one website was not regarded internationally as a common practice (as evident from the website performance assessment literature, e.g. Weiner, 2000; Schubert and Selz, 2001). Even some of the world's largest corporations were represented in cyberspace by a single website, rather than by a network of inter-linked websites. Thus, the fact that more than a quarter of the brands promoted in

Australia had two or more websites to support their advertising campaign could be regarded as a positive sign. Furthermore, WebQual revealed that over twenty of the websites considered in this study were linked to three other websites by the same company/for the same brand that showed that once the companies would start getting involved in development of multi-site networks, both development of the multi-sites and inter-linkage between the websites was usually becoming a norm, and the practice of adding more and more websites to the networks was progressing quickly.

It was interesting that, similarly to the multi-language pages, multi-site networks were also having relatively few similarities between the different sites. Even when all of websites were in English (e.g. network of websites where each of the Australian states was represented by a separate website), some differences in terms of layout and content between the websites were usually evident. In a significant number of cases, the differences were more obvious than similarities, so would it not be for the inter-linkage and names of the companies/brands discussed, establishment of any kind of logical connection between the websites was impossible.

Multi-site office offline details information turned out to be relatively common, when compared with other global performance elements (Table 4.48). This finding came very unexpectedly. The WebQual score for Multi-site Office Offline Details was paradoxically higher than the score for Multi-site Office Online Directory. Such a contradictory outcome could only be explained by either lack of coordination among the people/companies in charge of development and implementation of the companies' online business strategies, or purposeful intent not to develop multi-site networks as such. Overall, Multi-site Office Online Directory's and Multi-site Office Offline Details' respective scores confirmed how difficult it was for companies to manage multi-site networks at the time. Multi-site networks usually appeared to be more difficult to update when the websites were not integrated properly. As a result, changes to one website were not always reflected on the other websites. A simple comparison of site update dates across the websites on the same network often showed large time gaps (three months or even more) between the updates. On the other hand, offline details were usually provided

with greater accuracy, because they either did not change as often as online details or received a better maintenance.

Multi-site Vendor Details achieved a score of 57. Thus, the score for Multi-site Vendor Details was fairly close to the scores for two other multi-site network-related features (Multi-site Office Online Directory and Multi-site Office Offline Details). Multi-site Vendor Details assessed commercial websites for consistency of vendor details throughout multi-site networks. As discussed above, in 2001, consistency was still not one of the definite strengths of the networks. While overall WebQual scores for Multi-site Vendor Details were nearly as high as those for the two other multi-site cues, vendor details often contained errors and/or inconsistencies. For example, a website could be providing a complete set of offline and online contact details, while another one could be incorporating only one or two links to relevant vendors. There were also some clear differences in clarity of the contact details provided. A website could be providing consumers with a clear pattern for identifying the right vendor to contact (e.g. based on consumers' geographic location, etc.) while other websites would simply request consumers to send an e-mail to a customer assistance account or to call their head-office.

Overall, multi-site networks appeared to perform quite evenly with all of the relevant WebQual categories. However, if the WebQual scores were to be left aside, lack of consistent patterns for running multi-site patterns was becoming transparent. Similarities between the networks (e.g. similar types of links, focus of the networks, shared information, etc.) were rare, and it was often hard to guess that all of the websites were associated with the very same company or brand. Such nominal relationships between the sites were making it unclear what the real benefits of such links were. To sum up, few of the websites considered in the study had a global focus. Efforts of majority of the websites were clearly concentrated on Australia-based target audiences.

As shown, in Table 4.48, Webmaster Details appeared in almost half (47%) of the websites. The main objective of publishing details of web developers/maintenance people was to inform consumers about the company in charge of the website development and

management. In some instances, companies were able to use their own resources to run the site and this was what majority of the larger companies was doing. On the other hand, smaller, less-known companies and organizations (e.g. Frankston City Council) were more likely to outsource webmaster services from 3rd party vendors (e.g. a web development company). The total score for webmaster details could be regarded as low. In some of the cases, it underlined the problems Australian companies were having at the time with copyrighting web content as well as with informing consumers clearly who was responsible for maintaining and managing company websites. WebQual analysis also revealed a lot of websites (nearly half of all the websites considered in the study) that appeared to be “homeless”. Content and management rights for the websites were claimed neither by companies themselves nor by web development companies.

Links Updated Date information was even less common, as it appeared in less than 20% of the websites only. By incorporating update dates into the websites, companies were making it possible for consumers to see how much they cared about keeping the websites up-to-date, as well as what the actual dates were. If an update date indicated that no changes to the website’s content had been made for a long time, it showed the company’s indifference to the electronic segment of their market. Unfortunately for the websites, WebQual revealed not only lack of Links Updated Dates but also a lot of obsolete links that were not functional (did not lead to any websites/pages) or outdated. While “forgetting” to put a date next to a link was not a good decision from a promotional perspective, as it did not make the websites look good to consumers, having outdated links was making even greater damage, since consumers were unlikely to be appreciative of outdated content and links that were no longer relevant to their needs. A relatively high percentage of dysfunctional links and a low overall number of links suggested that few of the websites (including sites for some very large organizations, such as Target, etc.) were updating their websites on a regular basis.

To sum up media communication features and capabilities and to identify the overall trends, it was interesting to see not only the extent to which the specific technical and communication features were used, but also how these features/capabilities were

linked to one another. First of all, very few of the websites performed consistently in all of the media communication capability areas. WebQual media communication capability analysis revealed a number of links within various categories (e.g. website design), but not so many websites had cross-category connections. For example, it was quite common for a website (e.g. website for Coles supermarkets) to have some well-developed features, such as all of the necessary coding components, but at the same time, perform very poorly in the Design department. As Coding and Design-related features of the websites were usually supposed to go hand-in-hand, such a discrepancy was typical not only of the Coles website but also of many other websites. Graphic design of the websites was usually handled quite well. Images and text were integrated with each other, good color combinations were used, and overall impressions were usually aesthetically pleasing. However, maintenance-wise, few of the websites were able to maintain the standard over the time. Many of the websites considered in the study were outdated, both in terms of informational content (e.g. websites discussing special offers that had long expired) and functionality (e.g. links to other sites that no longer existed or had moved).

Another distinct feature of majority of the websites was an “Australian focus” of the content. While the side affects of such an approach were also evident (e.g. lack of websites/pages targeting international audiences, lack of multi-language facilities etc. as shown in Table 4.48), from a local perspective, the websites were able to address the needs of the audiences. Furthermore, by 2001, technology and technology-related issues and problems no longer appeared to pose serious obstacles for the websites’ performances. As shown by the media communication capability analysis, some of the previously significant technical limitations (e.g. web browser compatibility or lack of image/text integration) became “shadows of the past” and occurred with a very few of the websites only. While the websites did contain a number of shortcomings, very few of them could be attributed to technical faults (even though back in the 1990s, it was one of the major problems for commercial web development (Adam and Deans, 1999)). Thus, by 2001, media communication capability features of the Australian websites were usually:

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- Evolving at a fast pace and subject to ongoing change and development
 - Dealing mainly with communication and business issues rather than with technical ones (as evident from comparison between scores for technical and business/communication capabilities in Table 4.48)
 - Having little (if any) international focus, as all the communication efforts were concentrated on serving local (Australian) audiences
 - Having greater difficulty keeping websites updated, rather than building them up
 - Having a recognizable URL address
 - Structured in a logical and consistent way

5.8.2 Marketing Channel Capability Assessment

Marketing channel capability assessment (Table 4.55) focused on functionality of the websites rather than on informational content. However, all of the technical facets considered were directly related to the fulfillment of marketing communications of the websites, as well as to transaction processing. Marketing channel capability was assessed through evaluation of order processing, service provision, payment processing and global transaction processing functions of the websites. Overall, channel capacity assessment highlighted both positive (as compared with the 1990s) and problematic features of the transaction processing. None of the websites considered in this study turned out to be “near perfect” and incorporated all of the channel capability features. Furthermore, there were instances where complimentary elements of transaction processing (e.g. order processing facilities and order tracking facilities) were both available from a website but were not linked to one another. On the positive side, almost all of the websites incorporated at very least some form of transaction processing and were making an effort to sell their products or services online and/or engage into two-way online communications with the consumers.

Online order processing was arguably one of the most critical elements of marketing channel capabilities. In 2001, online order processing was already (and still is)

one of the critical elements of doing business online. It could be argued that a website that was not providing visitors with an online purchasing option was not an e-commerce website, but rather an e-marketing one or most commonly, a non-commercial one. According to WebQual, the websites could score up to five points for successful utilization of Order Processing facilities. Thus, the total score of 344 could be regarded as relatively low. It confirmed that in 2001, online transaction processing facilities still had a lot of space for improvements, as achieving a full score of five was not very common. Furthermore, many of the websites were serving marketing and public relations purposes but provided visitors with no transparent opportunities for making the purchases online. Lack of transaction processing facilities was turning the websites into “online brochures” that informed consumers of the products or services available but did not enable them to obtain them directly.

One of the most significant shortcomings of order processing was lack of fully-functional integrated shopping cart facilities. Even some of the websites for well-known companies/brands, such as Telstra, Saab and Hyundai, did not have a shopping cart as such. Instead, the websites offered various other options for online purchasing such as postal credit card purchases or directions on how to find a local store that was dealing with the products or services promoted. Alternatively, automated purchasing facilities were made available, but they were one-dimensional and did not include facilities other than order placing. For example, in case of Telstra, it was possible to make a purchase online, but in the B2C section of the website, there were no facilities for fulfillment of important account management tasks, such as tracking past transactions, checking account balance, order dispatch days, product/service status, etc.

Another interesting aspect of the online order processing was transaction security. As evident from a fairly high mean score for security (Table 4.55), majority of the websites, that did process transactions online, had some form of transaction security included. The most common form of security was use of SSL (Secure Sockets Layer). The SSL technology was based on a cryptographic system that used two keys to encrypt data sent through the websites. Both The Microsoft Internet Explorer and the Netscape

Navigator browsers supported the SSL technology, so websites could use it to send confidential and sensitive user information, such as credit card numbers. Majority of the websites not only used SSL technology extensively, but also emphasized its role to the customers presenting it (through warranty and safety statements) as an assurance of transactions going smoothly and customers' personal data and funds being secure. However, very few of the websites included additional security features, such as extra-secure account logins (e.g. verifiable passwords) or identity verification tools and devices.

Interestingly, similarly to the web design features (as discussed in the Media Communication Capability section of the chapter), larger organizations (e.g. Hewlett-Packard, Telstra, Target, etc.) did not appear to be having (with some exceptions) better-developed shopping cart facilities, than smaller traders. Though larger organizations were supposed to have greater IT resources as well as greater awareness of the latest technological developments, overall, the websites for larger companies had more transaction security features, but as far as all of the other facets of selling online were concerned, there were no evident differences quality-wise.

As shown in Table 4.55, Tracking or Customer Service Enquiry Line facilities were not very common, as less than half of the websites considered for the study provided consumers with an online customer service option. Unfortunately, even out of those 99 companies that did offer online customer service, very few appeared to encourage direct online communications with the customers. Facilities for making online queries (e.g. contact forms, internal chat-rooms, etc.) were rarely well developed. Typically, the facilities were lacking real-time interaction. For example, a number of the chat-rooms required software downloads. In addition, many of the online query systems would simply open an Outlook Express e-mail window and invite consumers to get in touch with the company via the e-mail, taking interactivity out of the communication process.

Overall, low scores for Order Processing and Tracking or Customer Service Enquiry Line website capabilities provided clear indications of the state of e-commerce in Australia in 2001. As nearly all of the websites considered in the study were for products or services belonging to well or reasonably well-known brands, a high level of online commercial activities could be anticipated. However, website marketing channel capability analysis (Table 4.55) revealed that at the time, nearly half of the websites were incapable of both transaction processing and establishing even relatively basic forms of two-way online communications with consumers. This revelation made the WebQual analysis significantly less positive. Poor scores for e-commerce related activities could overwrite high scores for some other web capabilities, such as aesthetics or layout of the websites. Aesthetically pleasing features of a website could not compensate site visitors for the lack of transaction processing facilities.

Online Pricing Details appeared in about half of all of the websites. Same as with Online Order Processing, Online Pricing Details indicated that many of the websites considered for the study were still lacking capability to sell their products and services online. Such deficiencies of the online pricing details appeared to be undermining not only potential opportunities for selling online, but also overall promotional capacity of the websites. While online shopping was still not very common in 2001, the promotional value of the websites and their role in encouraging traditional purchasing activities (e.g. in-store purchases) was already beyond any doubt (as discussed in the Literature Review). If pricing details for products and services were not provided, it was hard for a website to lure consumers into purchasing the products and services advertised from offline venues (e.g. supermarkets, convenience stores, etc.).

Majority of the websites were quoting prices in AUD only. Prices in foreign currencies and/or currency conversion tools were provided by only 20% (Table 4.55) of the total number of price-inclusive websites. Given the nature of electronic communications and transaction processing capabilities, in cases where companies wanted to expand their market share, geographic boundaries were usually not to cause any problems for them. Consequently, sellers behind the websites needed to be prepared

to service visitors to the websites even if they lived outside Australia. Overseas-based consumers were not using Australian dollars on a daily basis, so a currency converter could be of great help to them. However, since very few of the websites considered in the study made the currency conversion facility available to consumers, such an international focus appeared to be an uncommon practice, rather than a norm. It was a disappointing finding, given that by 2001, real-time currency converting services were already available for free and could be easily integrated into the websites. Thus, back in 2001, provision of prices in a foreign currency and/or currency conversion facilities were rarely regarded by Australian companies/companies selling in Australia as one of the most critical website capabilities. As in recent years (2002-2007), importance of having an international focus became transparent this could be regarded as a clear shortcoming. On the other hand, having Price in Foreign Currency or Converter Provided capability incorporated into a website was a good indication of companies' readiness and ability to embrace international marketplaces.

Whenever a shopping cart (order processing) facility was available, pricing details were linked to the shopping cart. There was a number of interesting variations to how this linkage was handled. Integration with the shopping cart was usually making presentation of the prices more flexible. For example, Hewlett-Packard had a very long range of products and services offered, and as they were next to impossible to incorporate into a single web page through a standard page layout (size of such a page would go beyond any thinkable limit), a drop-down catalogue menu was used instead. Furthermore, there was an in-built search engine that enabled the website's visitors to search for pricing of the targeted items selectively, rather than randomly. On the other hand, some of the other websites considered in the study (e.g. Target, Coles, etc.) presented product or service pricing details in a plain format, where products were listed in an alphabetical order and had price stated next to the product names. This was making the web pages very large in size, and accessing complete product or service lists and prices required a lot of scrolling down. It was also making the pages look untidy and difficult to browse. Therefore, it could be concluded that it was not the amount of information/size of the shopping cart that was making it user-friendly and comprehensive but the way it was designed.

Similarly to the media communication global capability, marketing channel global capabilities (Table 4.56) also appeared to be underemployed significantly by majority of the websites considered. Overall level of usage of the capabilities was lower when compared to the use of similar ranges of functions aimed at local target audiences. Multilingual Online Ordering (Multi-sites) capability appeared in approximately 30% of the websites. As shown by many studies (e.g. Kaufman-Scarborough, 2000; Dubliss, 2001) at the turn of the century, majority of consumers appeared to feel much more comfortable making significant purchases when a website “spoke” their language. Multilingual content could make a website more user-friendly and easier to browse for the non English speaking visitors. Global focus analysis also revealed that at the time, it was easier to implement a multilingual online ordering system through a multi-site network, rather than through a single website. This was a very interesting finding. On the one hand, it appeared to be illogical. As analysis of multi-site networks (Table 4.56) showed, (as a result of evaluation of multi-site office online directories) majority of the Australian companies were having a lot of difficulties in managing multi-site networks and struggled to integrate them with one another. On the other hand, comparative analysis of use of Multilingual Online Ordering (Multi-sites) and Multi-site Office Online Directory elements revealed that those companies, that did manage to achieve integration of all of their websites and enable them with fit-for-purpose transaction processing facilities, were mostly successful in implementing a multi-lingual online ordering option. This finding was a clear indication of the companies’ ability to manage the technical side of the multi-site integration issues subject to adequate website management. There were clearly no “technical” difficulties in keeping multi-site networks fully functional.

Payment and Delivery Online (Multi-sites) capability was used to a roughly similar extent. Not all of the multi-site networks provided online payment facilities for their consumers. At the time, many of the websites appeared to be focusing on purely promotional functions, rather than on selling. Thus, the level of use established should not be perceived as evidence of good transaction processing capacity. WebQual’s website assessment framework of Payment and Delivery (“delivery” obviously applied to purchases of non-tangible items only) Online (Multi-sites) capability enabled the

websites to score multiple points for a single transaction processing facility, that was effective enough to fulfill basic processing functions. Thus, the scores showed that total percentage of multi-site network incorporating multiple options for online payments and delivery was not very high.

Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by E-mail/Form capability was evident in 32% of the websites. While only a limited number of the multi-site networks (as discussed above) offered online payment and delivery options, a significantly greater number of the sites belonging to such networks provided consumers with an option to contact their agents (shops, wholesalers, distributors, etc.). Greater use of the Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by E-mail/Form capability over the Payment and Delivery Online (Multi-sites) capability was usually indicative of the relationships that companies behind the websites maintained between their traditional and electronic business operations. In some cases (where both Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by E-mail/Form and Payment and Delivery Online (Multi-sites) capabilities were incorporated), the role of the websites was critical in supporting the relationships. Whenever both Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by E-mail/Form were provided but no online transaction processing facilities were made available, companies were trying to connect consumers with their traditional outlets through the use of e-mail order forms. While effectiveness of such “substitutes” was limited to directing websites’ visitors towards product or service acquisition and they did not fully make up for the direct online selling opportunities, consumers could at very least use the website as a point of purchase.

Relatively high (as compared to Payment and Delivery Online (Multi-sites) in Table 4.55) WebQual scores for Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by E-mail/Form capability also underlined a serious problem that the websites were experiencing in 2001. On the one hand, willingness to sell products and services online was evident (as online product/service catalogues and order forms were provided by majority of the websites), on the other hand, the websites were still lacking transaction processing facilities that could simplify the selling process by making it automated and more user-friendly. In

other words, the main problem was not lack of ambition to sell online in a “real-time” mode but lack of adequate website capacities/business processes for doing so.

Similarly, Links Only to Third Parties in Other Countries capability was more common in the Australian websites than transaction processing/communication-related facilities. While the study focused on the companies that were advertising products and services in Australia, many of the websites were serving as portals for multinational companies. In such instances, the Australian websites (.com.au) were linked to other companies’ websites aimed at other markets. The study also revealed that some of the advertisers provided .com URLs in their magazine advertisements, while the .com.au domains were also being maintained. It appeared illogical, given that the .com.au websites were anticipated (due to Australia-focused nature of the domain extension) to have Australian content, as opposed to international one. However, whenever both .com.au and .com websites were available, differences between the two versions (the Australian and the international ones) were likely to be few and far between. Such similarities between the Australian and international versions of the websites were transparent not only technology-wise but also content-wise. For example, some of the features offered (e.g. AFL quiz competition run by one of the websites) were self-explanatory to the Australian audiences but were rather confusing for overseas-based consumers.

Multi-site Details Non-Electronic capability also occurred rather uncommonly (in about 30% of the websites) and could initially be expected to occur even less. However, back in 2001, some of the websites considered for the study were maintaining linkage between websites through non-electronic means. Thus, the achieved score of fifty-seven could be regarded as relatively high as from the mid 1990s onwards (Hoffman et al, 1997) companies were already able to use electronic communications to a greater extent, due to superior communication capacities. This was (in cases of networks of websites that were integrated with one another electronically) making the concept of non-electronic integration obsolete. Similarly to other non-electronic capabilities, such provision of multi-site office or agent details and high scores for Multi-site Details Non-Electronic

capability could be attributed to lack of an adequate business and/or processes for managing multi-site networks. It was unlikely that companies were purposefully providing details of their other website(s) in a non-electronic format, as an electronic version of the details was usually missing. Thus, non-electronic details were usually available from the websites only in the instances, where no direct electronic (e.g. e-mail/web links) contact opportunities were provided.

To sum up, majority of the Australian websites was displaying little or no evidence of a global focus of their marketing channel capabilities. Inadequacy of e-commerce technologies did not appear to be a serious limitation. Whenever, the facilities (e.g. multi-level online ordering or payment systems) were provided, they were likely to function properly, so the problem lay in lack of such facilities, rather than in their inadequacy. Another common limitation was lack of diversification of both communication and transaction processing facilities when dealing with international target audiences. In the previously mentioned example (involving 3 English + Russian language websites) considered in this study, language of communication was the only transparent difference. Other than that, there was no evidence of the websites being tailored to specific needs of the targeted audience. It could be suspected (due to consistent similarities in layout and use of images) that with other non-English language versions of the websites, customization did not usually occur.

Out of all the marketing channel capabilities used, transaction processing-related capabilities were the most common ones to appear in the websites. From the 2001 perspective (given the state of technologies available at the time), more than half of the websites were complying with all of the basic order-processing requirements (transaction processing security, some form of shopping cart, etc.) but hardly any of the websites could serve as complete benchmarks for others to follow. The “ideal commercial website models” discussed in the website performance analysis literature of the time (Ho, 1998; Adam and Deans, 1999; Schubert and Selz, 2001) were rarely, if ever, emulated by the Australian websites. In some areas (such as lack of global focus discussed above) the shortcomings were particular transparent.

5.8.3 Relationship Enhancement Capability Assessment

As it was evident from Table 4.59, use of the standard relationship enhancement patterns and tools by the websites was not very consistent. Some of the patterns were consistently popular throughout the examined websites while the others (e.g. such as development of product/service or company-related web communities) were utilized rather rarely. Furthermore, lack of integration between various attributes of the websites, such as ability to consolidate feedback from web communities with feedback from online customer complaints forms, was not uncommon and was evident even from websites for well-known products and services/companies, such as Saab and Telstra.

Relatively few of the websites (39%) contained Product/Service Complaints or Difficulties form and/or interactive option. Thus, it was not very common for consumers to get opportunities for making specific enquiries related to products/services offered by the companies. This shortcoming was discouraging consumers from utilizing the Internet for communicating with the companies. From its early days, the Internet has always been regarded as a superior communication medium (when compared to traditional media, such as TV, radio or print). However, many companies did not appear to utilize its “real-time communication” capacity at the time. If a website for a “super-large” company, like Telstra, lacked feedback options, it was not able to provide proper customer service to consumers, nor was it able to keep the company aware of consumers’ needs and expectations. Consequently, other facets of Telstra’s web presence were also affected in a negative way.

There were no clear consistent patterns among the websites for handling customer complaints and queries. Some of the websites placed the complaint/query forms on their main home pages, while the others had them linked to shopping carts, product/service listings, policies pages, etc. In other words, there was little consistency in the ways online customer complaints were handled. Similar lack of consistency was transparent in other relationship-enhancement capabilities. For example, Communication (Form, E-Mail or Both) capability was present in almost all (94%) of the websites. Furthermore, all of the

companies provided consumers with an e-mail option. However, this alone could not be viewed as an indicator of good customer service policies availability (e.g. it did not mean that all e-mails and queries sent to the companies were answered within reasonable time), so this revelation could not be viewed as “insignificant”. In the mid-1990s, some websites were still mere “online brochures” with no contact options provided. Thus, the fact that all of the websites had contact details available could be regarded as an evolutionary milestone. It confirmed that by 2001, provision of a basic contact option became a common standard among the Australian companies.

Unfortunately, nearly a quarter of all the contact forms/e-mail links included into the websites was not functioning properly and contained some kind of functional errors. Many of the discrepancies were related to performance of the e-mail service. Interestingly, a surprisingly large number of the email links (over 18% as shown in Table 4.60) was not functional. In fact, despite greater technical simplicity, faulty e-mail links occurred more often than faulty URL ones. For example, in case of Subaru’s website, an Outlook Express (OE) new message window would open with the company’s contact e-mail address entered already, but all of the email messages delivered through Subaru’s OE windows were bouncing. With the contact forms, problems were usually of a similar nature. The Contact forms were easy to open and complete but (due to various programming errors) were often (as shown in Table 4.60) not delivered to the receiver. Furthermore, message bouncing was sometimes a more severe issue with the forms than it was with the e-mails. Whenever an e-mail bounced, the sender (consumer) always received a message that informed him or her of the delivery failure. In case of online forms, there were a number of instances, where a form would bounce, but no delivery failure message was generated. As a result, senders were not aware that the messages never reached the recipients.

Opt-In/Opt-Out Adaptive Messaging on Company or Product Services capability was evident in more than half (63%, as shown in Table 4.59) of the communications. Unlike unsolicited marketing communications, adaptive messaging was supposed to be both ethical and efficient, as it embraced only those consumers, who voluntarily

subscribed to receive companies' newsletters and press releases (Wilson, 1999). Website relationship enhancement analysis showed that by the turn of the century many companies were already keen to use adaptive messaging for promotion of their products and services. It was a very positive sign indicative of the companies' attitudes towards online communications. Adaptive messaging was not as easy to implement as use of mass mailing lists. A successful implementation of adaptive messaging involved careful analysis of consumers' needs as well as tailoring companies' communications to address those needs. From a contemporary (2007) perspective, benefits of provision of adaptive messaging options appear to be obvious. However, back in 2001, marketing communication practices were not as well developed as they are today, so having companies' messages customized to the needs of respective consumers was a definite achievement.

Adaptive messaging forms/templates were usually easy to locate on the websites. Links to the messaging tools were available from the main page and many of the tools were presented in an appealing way that involved use of animation and special effects. In some cases, the tools were designed with a high degree of creativity. For example, two of the websites were giving consumers an option of choosing from a range of adaptive messaging tools based on their color, layout and design preferences. Interestingly, while the adaptive messaging tools were usually more complicated from a technical perspective than the e-mail links, almost all of them were functioning flawlessly. Consequently, general impressions of the relationship enhancement capability assessment tools were mostly positive.

Web Community Creation or Maintenance capability was evident in significantly fewer websites (32%) than Adaptive Messaging tools. Hosting a web community on a commercial website was regarded as a great way of promoting products and services (Emerson, 1998). Consequently, community members were "exposed" to the company's communications without getting a feeling that they were being pushed into buying. Originally, web communities were formed with seemingly non-commercial objectives, but as time was going by, the commercial focus was becoming more and more evident.

However, despite the web communities being already used commercially to a significant extent, it was hard to identify particular consistent patterns in how the communities were built and managed. At the time online “community culture” was still young and growing. Thus, accepting it as a growing trend was a good judgment by the companies despite all the functional shortcomings of the communities.

More than half of the web communities identified in the study were large and populated enough to be self-managed. Companies could enjoy promotional value of the online communities without ever emphasizing the commercial focus of the discussions. “Links” to commercial pages (e.g. shopping cart, product catalogue, etc.) were usually well disguised among the non-commercial elements, such as chat-rooms or personal galleries. However, it was evident from the nature of the discussions taking place in the web communities, that many of the members were already active customers, who were purchasing products and services from the companies on a regular basis. Consequently, the role of the web communities at the time could be regarded as instrumental in sustaining existing customer base, rather than expanding it through acquisition of new customers.

Financial Status of the Firm information was also not too common to be included into the websites’ content (as shown in Table 4.59, it was incorporated into 58% of the websites). If consumers were well informed about financial status of the company they were going to buy from and knew that the company was doing well, they were usually more inclined to trust the products/services offered. At the turn of the century, e-business was getting a lot of negative publicity, as many online ventures were failing to establish themselves on a sustainable basis. Consequently, consumers had little trust in the new economy. Many were reluctant to take the risk of dealing with the companies that were yet to prove their “right to exist”. Thus, incorporation of information that could confirm financial stability of a company could be instrumental in building trust in the company and its products and services. Interestingly, the financial information was rarely provided by the companies that needed to display it most. Well-known brands that were already associated with successful companies represented quality due to their long-standing

presence in the marketplace. With less known brands, display of information related to the companies' performance could serve as an assurance that the website would not disappear once money for the goods was received. Consequently, for smaller companies, such reassurance was far more critical than for established ones, such as Telstra or IBM. Overall, by the 2001 standards, level of use of the financial information in the websites could be regarded as reasonable.

While inclusion of financial information was not too common, Company or Site/Products/People/Customers or Projects-related information appeared in almost every website, as this capability achieved a near-perfect score of 192. Such extensive use of this information was fully justifiable, as it was illogical for a website not to contain any information about a brand or company it represented. It would "kill" the very reason for establishing web presence. Thus, the high scores for Company or Site/Products/People/Customers or Projects capability (Table 4.59) were not surprising. The unexpected side of the finding was lack of company/brand information in the remaining websites as well as a striking difference between levels of provision of extensive product/service information (provided extensively by majority of the sites) and financial information (rarely provided).

Similarly to the Company or Site/Products/People/Customers or Projects capability, "What is New" capability was also used extensively (it was incorporated into 75% of the websites) by majority of the websites. This capability was usually essential for making it evident to consumers whether a website was or was not updated on a regular basis. These updates could be related to both the website design/content and the products/services available. WebQual analysis revealed a significant difference in scores between "What Is New" and Links Updated Date (as discussed in the media communication capabilities analysis section) capability. This inconsistency was underlining lack of "real" updates in many of the websites. On the one hand, "What Is New" suggested availability of up-to-date information, on the other hand, lower scores for Links Updated Date were making it dubious how "fresh" the so-called new information was. The websites were clearly keen (as evident from the desire to claim that

the information was up to date) to demonstrate that they were keeping consumers updated, but at the very same time, they did not appear to make sufficient efforts to update product, service and company information on a regular basis. Thus, in 2001, there was a clear gap between the companies' aspirations and the way they handled this matter.

“Multilingual Choice” capability was also rather rare. Multilingual Choice referred to making a website accessible in languages other than English and appeared in 25% of the websites only (Table 4.59). However, use of non-English language options by the websites could be regarded as relatively high, given that other language-related capability (Multi-site Multilingual Display Information) was utilized to an even lower extent. The paradox of the finding lay in the fact that there were more multi-language options available from individual websites rather than multi-site networks. The finding could be attributed to the difficulties some companies experienced in coordinating all of their websites simultaneously. In any case, the fact that a single website could incorporate a particular capability to a greater extent than a network of sites was interesting.

Overall, relationship enhancement capabilities contained a number of shortcomings. First of all, none of the websites incorporated all of the relationship enhancement capabilities. Secondly, (as discussed above) an alarming share of the capabilities (e.g. communication capabilities, such as e-mail and contact forms) was not fit for the purpose and contained errors and/or discrepancies that were making them dysfunctional. It was also evident what kinds of information were regarded as critical for building stronger relationships with consumers. For example, majority of the websites contained sufficient information about its products and services yet very few of the websites contained a large variety (other than basic company information, such as the year it was founded, numbers of employees and outlets, etc.) of information about companies' standing in the marketplace, such as financial information. However, when compared with other facets of website performance, relationship enhancement functions were carried out reasonably well. Each of the websites considered in the study contained at least one relationship enhancement capability. Thus, this objective of the web communication was usually fulfilled at least to a minimal extent.

On a negative side, some of the website capabilities were not well integrated with one another. For example, a number of online helpdesks were (including helpdesks in the websites for well-established companies, such as Dell) were not linked to the other communication or relationship enhancement functions. Similarly, some of the web communities were “disconnected” from information about the products and services they were built around. On the other hand, some of the other capability categories (such as Design-related capabilities) were usually integrated with one another to a greater extent.

5.8.4 Website Performance Capabilities Assessment (WebQual Extras)

While magazine advertising communications contained links to the websites, the websites could in turn refer to traditional communications (such as magazine advertisements) by means of incorporating content of the advertisements into their informational content. Thus, References to Traditional Marketing Communications capability (Table 4.62) was added to the traditional version of WebQual in order to investigate whether advertising communications considered in the study were fully integrated both ways. As, all of the websites were selected for the study on the basis of their relationships with magazine advertising communications, it was possible to check whether the websites referred back to the magazine advertisements, as well as whether some other advertising communication channels were mentioned. Unfortunately, “reversed” integration did not appear to be very common (as shown in Table 4.62), since only 29% of the websites referred to traditional communications. Furthermore, out of the 63 communications, some were focusing on TV and Radio commercials (as shown in Table 4.62) rather than on the magazine advertisements. The level of use of References to Traditional Marketing Communications capability showed that in 2001, integration between websites and magazine advertisements as well as other traditional advertising communications was still fairly one-sided. Promotional capacity of traditional advertising communications was utilized to bring consumers to websites, but only a limited number

of the websites was “returning the favor” and encouraging consumers to re-visit messages they had originally received through traditional communication channels.

Majority of the references to traditional marketing communications were of a specific nature, rather than of a general one. Very few of the references were aimed at directing consumers towards greater product, service or company information. Instead, the communications (magazine websites and TV commercials) usually promoted special offers or events. For example, Optus website contained references to both a TV commercial and a magazine advertisement. The TV commercial promoted an “unlimited calls” special offer, while the magazine advertisement offered an opportunity to purchase two mobiles for the price of one. None of the communications contained any information (not even basic product information) beyond the actual special offers. Thus, the very and the only purpose of such incorporation of the traditional marketing communications into the websites was to promote special offers rather than the products and services the offers were linked to.

On a positive side, references to traditional marketing communications were usually relatively well updated with links (in cases of magazine advertisements) and video downloads/pictures (in cases of TV commercials) containing very few errors. Unlike with the references to traditional marketing communications, portal-enablement capability was often functioning less smoothly. Overall, 33% of the websites (as shown in Table 4.61) could be regarded as Portals. The focus of the websites expanded beyond companies’ own products/services in order to provide consumers with complete information. By turning its website into a Portal, a company could gain a significant competitive advantage. Thus, relative unpopularity of portals was difficult to explain.

On the other hand, nearly half of all of websites considered in the study (47%, as shown in Table 4.61) contained clearly-defined special offers. Unlike with the Resnik-Stern procedure (Resnik and Stern, 1977), a simple mention of Special Offers in a website was not sufficient to obtain a score of one for this capability in the WebQual. The websites needed to contain specific information on what the offers were, as well as how

they were going to be beneficial to the consumers. Similarly, Warranties capability was present in 53.46% of the websites. Same as with the Special Offers capability, companies needed to elaborate on what their warranties were (e.g. whether the warranties were or were not comprehensive, how long the warranty would be valid for, etc.). The website performance analysis not only confirmed the emphasis majority of companies were placing on provision of Warranties but also identified the instances where no kind Warranties or similar post-purchase assurances were provided. Given consumers' concerns about reliability of the online vendors (as in 2001, online shopping was not very common yet) provision of Warranties was absolutely essential.

It could be anticipated that transaction processing-enabled websites were going to provide greater warranties and special offers than the websites that were yet to start selling online. However, comparative analysis showed no significant differences between the ways the two respective types of websites (transaction processing-enabled and transaction processing-disabled) were utilizing special offers, warranties and other post-purchase assurances.

5.8.5 Website Capabilities Overview

The analysis of the website capabilities (Tables 4.48-4.62) considered in this study revealed some very interesting trends. On the one hand, majority of the websites appeared to be performing marketing functions better than transaction processing ones. All of the websites contained at least some of the marketing communication-related capabilities, yet only slightly more than half of the sites incorporated at least minimal transaction-processing capabilities. On the other hand, despite consistent use of some of the latest technologies available at the time (e.g. web-design and transaction processing technologies) and fulfillment of basic communication objectives, many of the websites lacked consistency of content. Furthermore, while some of the relatively complex (by 2001 standards) technical functions were flawless, some of the trivial functions (e.g. e-mail or customer query forms) surprisingly often turned out to be faulty.

Lack of content consistency between the website pages was also a fairly common problem with many of the websites. If assessed separately, layout and content of the pages appeared to be of high standard (as indicated by some of the WebQual scores), but at the same time, the pages were often unrelated (logically) to one another. Similarly, if a company had a number of websites (e.g. country versions such as .com.au for Australia or .de for Germany, or brand versions where every major brand promoted by a company had a separate website (e.g. Mitsubishi), they were often either disintegrated from one another or (and that was another negative extreme) had their content translated “word for word” for each and every one of the pages. This was an indication of lack of coordination between the websites.

Another clear and common shortcoming evident from the WebQual website performance analysis was general lack of a broader (international and multi-community) focus of the websites. Very few of the websites contained information in languages other than English or prices in a currency other than AUD. On the other hand, from an ‘average’ Australian consumer’s perspective, the shortcomings were not so significant. Locating the products and services Australia-wide was usually made easy for consumers as many of the websites had store directories or at least clear instructions on how the products or services could be accessed both online and offline.

Finally, despite a common anticipation of bigger and better known companies having better developed websites (as was the case in the 1990s both internationally (Ho, 1998) and in Australia (Adam and Deans, 1999)) than smaller vendors did, the study showed that performance-wise, there were usually no clear differences between websites for large internationally acclaimed companies, such as Telstra, Dell, Saab and IBM and far less known (even in Australia) ones. While each and every one of the websites was obviously distinct from the others and had its pros and cons, and some of the websites were better developed than the others. Surprisingly, some of the “least informative and functional websites” (e.g. Subaru and Saab) were those for large multinational corporations, and some of the best ones were for local “low key” vendors (e.g. Frankston Arts Festival).

5.9 Measuring Informational Content Integration Between the Magazine Advertisements and the Websites

5.9.1 Identifying Degree and Nature of Content Integration between the Magazine Advertisements and the Websites

As discussed in Chapter Four, there were two types of integration between the magazine advertisements and the websites – integration by repetition and integration by difference. The study revealed that out of the 217 matching magazine advertisements and websites where both of the communication channels delivered some common classifiable (as defined by the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure) informational content – 182 (84%) of the magazine advertisement + website combinations were integrated through the use of one or more common informational cues, while the remaining 33 (16%) website + magazine advertisement combinations did not contain any common cues.

On average (as evident from the comparison of data for total amount of web-linked magazine advertisements integrated by repetition (presented in e Table 4.4 and Table 4.25), one unified message delivered by the companies to Australian consumers contained only 1.25 informational cues. As some marketing communications' researchers were pointing out at the time (Christensen and Askegaard, 2001; Baron, 2003), there was a direct relationship between effectiveness/informational content of the marketing communications and companies' image and identity. Thus, by 2001, importance of informational content integration was already recognized and consequently, a significantly higher degree of integration between magazine advertisements and websites could be anticipated. As far as having a basis for an informational content integration was concerned, information related to availability of the products and services advertised was by far the most common uniting feature between the magazine advertisements and the websites. Furthermore, availability informational cue was the only popular cue out of the fourteen cues considered to serve as a basis for integration, as it featured in 70% of the

integrated by repetition messages out of the 217 marketing communications (web-linked magazine advertisements + websites) chosen for the study. Thus, product or service availability-related information was more likely to be integrated by repetition (70%), rather than by difference (30%), making this cue the most common content integration driver of all.

Interestingly, despite shared meaning of the magazine and website messages in the integrated by repetition marketing communications, means for expression of availability of products/services usually did vary depending on the communication channel used. The magazine advertising communications mostly invited consumers to purchase/inspect products or services on offer through traditional distribution channels. They also encouraged visits to traditional outlets (e.g. supermarkets, specialized stores, factory outlets), inspection visits (e.g. hotels or golf courses) or contacts with established distributors/resellers. On the other hand, the websites were usually providing consumers with a wider range of choices. A comparative analysis of the ways the availability informational cue was used in the magazine advertisements and the websites revealed that by 2001, many of the websites could already offer consumers an option of purchasing and inspecting products or services promoted online, while at the same time direct them to traditional distribution channels. In other words, while the key product or service availability-related messages delivered by the websites and the magazine advertisements were similar, patterns for the delivery varied depending on a marketing communication channel used.

On another positive side, majority of the websites usually aimed at supplementing traditional business operations and expanding their scope, rather than substituting them. They did not have objectives of running over traditional business operations and taking their place on the market (as could be the case should the integration by repetition not be occurring at all or occurring to an insignificant extent). Kemp (2002) argued that at the turn of the century, if companies were tempted to sell their products directly to consumers through a website, rather than through a network of stores and distributors, they needed to consider difficulties of undertaking reseller-provided services as well as

possibilities of channel conflict. The analysis (Tables 4.34-4.47) confirmed Kemp's point of view. The services often went well beyond simple provision of purchase destinations and delivery details. They also incorporated other business activities, such as marketing and ongoing customer support. At the same time, majority of the transaction processing-inclusive websites still incorporated details of the physical locations where the products and services were also available from.

Other than product and service availability-related information, price and performance information was most common to integrate by repetition between the magazine advertisements and the websites. Nevertheless, it was a fairly low degree of integration given the importance of both cues for communication of promotional information. Some of the issues associated with the use of the cues in the marketing communications, such as setting, price or choosing the right target market did differ depending on the communication channel used. Thus, it appeared that different communication channels could be considered for targeting different audiences. For example by the year 2001, if consumers needed to purchase air-tickets, booking online would almost certainly help them to receive better deals from suppliers (Sherman, 2000; Limone, 2001). However, despite the obvious appeal of the online vendors, some consumers were nevertheless choosing to book their tickets through a local travel agent. The cost of purchase in such instances could be slightly higher, but many consumers believed they were getting a better customer service for the money they had spent. Nevertheless, despite the two problematic issues outlined in the papers discussed above (Sherman, 2000; Limone, 2001), similarities between the ways the informational content elements were expressed through the communication channels were rather uncommon.

It was argued previously (Campanelli, 2001) that performance of products and services sold online had to be expressed to a greater extent than in a traditional business environment due to the customers' expectations. However, no clear-cut evidence was available at the time that expectations of informational content (cues) could vary depending on a communication channel used, so Campanelli's suggestion was yet to be tested. Camponelli also claimed that variations in consumers' preferences for marketing

communications were the best confirmations for a need for integration and coordination of all the communication channels. Despite this perception, the informational cues considered throughout this study did not appear to provide the companies with sufficient basis for integration of their marketing communications. Few of them were being used to a sufficient extent.

The Resnik-Stern advertising procedure revealed lack of consistency in the ways companies were using the informational content elements across the magazine advertisements and websites. For example, Special Offers, that was the 6th most popular informational cue on the integration by repetition popularity list achieved an integration score of 7 (2.59% from the total number of cues as shown in Table 4.34) only. It was not a high score, given the total number of advertising communications considered for the study. However, the score was relatively high in comparison to some of the other informational cues since eight of the informational cues failed to reach the integration by repetition score of three or above. The magazine advertisements often contained special offers that were to expire within a strictly limited time period (e.g. end of the year sale, while stocks last etc.), while the websites tended to have a greater focus on continuous offers, such as “10% off when ordered online”. As for the cases where special offers were integrated successfully, the integration was almost always “predictable”, as the magazine advertisements pointed out that websites contained greater information about the respective offers discussed. Thus, whenever a reference to a website was made, the offers were likely to be integrated but provision of a link alone, somewhere in the body of the magazine advertisement, usually resulted in absence of these special offers from the website.

The poor integration by complementation scores outlined above, illustrated the degree of redundancy, majority of the informational cues were facing at the time. As shown in Table 4.34, four out of the fourteen informational cues considered for the study: (availability, price, performance and special offers) accounted for 9.15% out of the 270 integrated by complementation applications of informational cues identified by the study. The figure represented 91% of the total number of integrated applications. Five out of the

ten remaining informational cues were failing to serve as a basis for integration even once between the marketing communications. Thus, there was a clear division between the four informational cues that were being used by the Australian advertisers consistently to a sufficient or at least a relatively sufficient extent throughout their integrated by repetition marketing communications and the remaining ten informational cues, as the other cues were not being utilized by absolute majority of the advertisers as a basis for integration of their marketing communications at all.

5.9.2 Magazine Advertisements and Websites Content Integration Patterns

There were some identifiable differences between the patterns used for integration by repetition (Table 4.34) and integration by difference (Table 4.41). Informational content integration by repetition between the magazine advertisements and the websites did not occur very often. However, in the instances where integration did occur, it frequently resulted in almost “word-for-word” duplication of the informational content from one of the marketing communication channels to the other. While some of the duplications were obvious (e.g. price statements or product/service descriptions), there were also instances where almost complete content of the magazine advertisements was taken from the websites. For example, the study identified four advertising communications where almost all price, availability and special offers-related information was copied from the websites into the magazine advertisements or vice-versa. Even the images used in the magazine advertisements and respective sections of the websites were mostly identical.

Another interesting integration by repetition pattern was reinforcement of the messages delivered through one of the two communication channels (e.g. magazine advertisements and websites) by the remaining channel. Not only did the websites have a role of reinforcing the magazine advertisements, but even the magazine advertisements occasionally reinforced the websites. Such reinforcements were usually related to specific messages/elements of the messages rather than to complete communications. It often

made integration of the communications difficult to identify. For example, a magazine advertisement for an Optus pre-paid mobile phone deal pointed out that the respective website contained a detailed explanation of the deal's conditions as well as an opportunity to place an order for the phones online. However, the URL given in the advertisement (www.optus.com.au) was linking consumers to the main Optus homepage, rather than to the specific pages that contained details of the deal and/or an online form that consumers had to complete to take advantage of the offer. Thus, while integration between the two communication channels was there, not very transparent and it was not easy for consumers to appreciate its benefits, as relevant web pages of the Optus website were not easy to locate.

On the other hand, integration of informational content elements by difference was much more common to occur than integration by repetition. Overall (as evident from Table 4.43) integration by difference was almost twice more common than integration by repetition. Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.41, five of the informational content elements, including some relatively popular ones such as warranties, safety and company research, were integrated by difference in 100% of the instances. Interestingly, integrated by difference informational cues were often used for content referral to link them logically (Table 4.42). Two of the informational cues (availability and taste) were used for content referral in over 60% of the times. These cues were integrated between the magazine advertisements and the websites by difference, while four other integrated by difference cues (quality, performance, components and new ideas) were used for content referral in over 40% of the instances. Therefore, it could be concluded that integration by difference was often as effective as integration by repetition, since integrated by difference content elements were also effective (as evident from Table 4.42) in supporting the advertising communications delivered through the other communication channel.

Interestingly, analysis of the two most commonly integrated by repetition content elements (Table 4.44) showed that with both of the cues, repetition was complete (meaning close resemblance of the content element-related information in the magazine

advertisements and the websites) in less than 50% of the instances the informational content was used. In case of quality-related information, a complete repetition occurred in 43.24% of the instances where it was integrated, and in case of availability-related information, the complete integration rate was 30.26% only. Such a relatively low proportion of closely integrated by repetition content elements showed that even when focusing on the same informational cues, the magazine advertisements and the websites were more likely to express the content elements differently, depending on the communication channel used rather than to “cut and paste” product or service information from one marketing communication channel to the other.

Similarly, with integrated by difference content elements (Table 4.45), not a single informational content element was integrated close to a 50% level. In fact, on average, the integrated by difference content elements were even less likely to resemble one another across the marketing communication channels than the integrated by repetition ones. Some of the seemingly “communication channel-neutral” content elements turned out to be particularly unlikely to be expressed similarly in both the magazine advertisements and the websites. For example, as shown in Table 4.45, product or service pricing information was closely integrated by difference in 3.67% of the price-inclusive magazine advertisements + websites and special offers were closely integrated in 21.69% of the communications only. Therefore, it could be concluded that even when the magazine advertisements and the websites were containing integrated informational content (irrespective of whether the content was integrated by repetition or by difference), the ways of expressing product or service-related information were likely to differ depending on the marketing communication channel used.

A comparison of the use of integrated by difference and integrated by repetition principal cues (Table 4.47) showed that there were some clear trends in how the informational content elements were integrated. Firstly, all of the cues (as evident from Table 4.47) were more likely to be used as principal cues, when integrated by difference rather than by repetition. Secondly, the same informational cue (special offers-related content) was most likely to play a principal role when integrated both by difference and

by repetition. Majority of the content elements were also used as integrated principal cues to a similar extent when assessed for integration by repetition and by difference.

5.9.3 Integration Summary

Informational content integration assessment revealed a number of both positive and negative trends. To sum up, in 2001 (as shown in Table 4.34) the overall level of the informational content integration by repetition between the Australian magazine advertisements and the websites was not very high. The main obstacles to the integration by repetition of the magazine advertisements and the websites were:

- Differences in the content of the messages delivered
- Differences in the ways key points of the messages were expressed
- Limited time span of the magazine advertisements, while some of the websites were in need of update
- Differences in the communication objectives resulting in polar selections of the principle cues

On the positive side, while overall content integration between the magazine advertisements and the websites was relatively low, there were particular areas where the integration was more common such as:

- Product and/or service availability, price and performance information was not so uncommon to integrate by repetition
- Some of the descriptions related to products and services were consistent across both of the communication channels
- Consistent use of the informational cues across both of the communication channels was usually accompanied with consistency in the ways the cues were expressed

Finally, the website, where informational content was integrated by repetition with the magazine advertisements (Table 4.34) usually achieved significantly higher WebQual scores (Table 4.48) than the websites that did not match the content of the respective magazine advertisements. Consequently, a greater amount and diversity of the informational content as well as integrated use of the content across all of the marketing communication channels was usually accompanied with better website functionality.

Chapter 6: Research Implications

6.1 Introduction

Analysis of the respective (magazine advertisements and websites) marketing communications resulted in a lot of interesting and useful revelations. Presentation (Chapter four) and discussion (Chapter five) of the research findings identified a number of interesting qualities, features and patterns that both the magazine advertisements and the websites were possessing at the time, as well as critical differences between the two marketing communication channels.

The purpose of this chapter is to elaborate on the findings outlined above and provide a comprehensive summary of the study's key discoveries and implications for both academia and industry practitioners in the field of marketing communications. Furthermore, this chapter identifies trends in the magazine and website marketing communications in Australia at the turn of the century. Thus, Chapter Six summarizes findings from chapters Four and Five and concludes the thesis by singling out the most critical of the findings.

6.2 Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns

As advertising communication was a dynamic and rapidly changing field, the magazine advertisements and the websites had to be considered in the light of both a) previous use of the communication channels for advertising purposes and evolution of the channels over the time b) anticipated future progression of the magazine advertising content. As pointed out in the previous chapters of the thesis (Chapter Four and Chapter Five), rather than develop in a parallel mode, both magazine advertisements and websites had at least some degree of integration by repetition with each other. While this (fairly modest) degree of integration was hardly sufficient to suggest an interdependence of the two marketing communication channels, it was clear that (at least with some of the companies) a logical connection between them was clear and identifiable.

Overall, it was hard to judge whether the advertising communications were or were not addressing the changing needs of the target audiences, as majority of the communications were not ‘clear-cut’ and contained both pros and cons. However, it was becoming transparent that informational content of the communications was clearly evolving over the time and integration by both repetition and difference of traditional (magazine advertisements) and new (websites) was already occurring.

6.2.1 Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns in the Magazine Advertisements

Literature review (Chapter Two) provided a clear identification of the state of traditional (pre-WWW) marketing communications in the last century. As pointed out by Pearson (1996) and Duncan and Moriarty (1997), by the end of the last century, marketing communications were reaching the point where trivial listing of products and services as well as provision of basic product or service information, such as price, availability and key feature descriptions, was no longer sufficient for impressing consumers and pushing

them towards falling in love with the items advertised. Additionally, consumers wanted to have a greater exposure to specific (ideally unique) features of the respective products or services that could make them stand out of the ranks of alternatives available. On top of it, consumers were anticipating the advertisements to address their specific needs (Hanson, 2000, pp.189-191). In other words, communications could no longer afford to focus on satisfying wider audiences (as it was becoming impossible), but instead had to re-focus to identify and address specific needs of significantly narrower target audiences they were aimed at. In the light of this ongoing transition of the marketing communications from mass marketing and generalization towards personalized marketing and specialization, by 2001, both the magazine advertisements and the websites could be anticipated to a) display greater varieties of informational content, as compared to previous years b) have a clearly identifiable target audience.

Informational content analysis of magazine advertisements identified a number of positive trends. One of the positive trends in the informational content development of magazine advertisements was a growing focus on content combinations and having a principal cue (as confirmed by Table 4.21). Previous studies of informational content of magazine advertisements and other traditional marketing communication channels (Martenson, 1987; James and Van Den Bergh, 1989; James and Van Den Bergh, 1990; Noor Al-Deen, 1991; Stern and Resnik, 1991; Biswas et al, 1992; Dholakia, Rego; Fay and Currier, 1994; Chan, 1995; Abernethy et al, 1996; Elliott and Lockard, 1996; Abernethy and Franke, 1998) had no difficulty in identifying elements of the informational content of the communications (e.g. informational cues used, total amount of content, etc.), but they were usually either uninterested or unable to establish a primary focus (principal cues and cue combinations). Consequently, many of the pre-2001 publications mentioned were reporting lack of patterns/clear focus in the majority of the advertisements considered. However, the study showed that by the turn of the century the trend was getting reversed. It showed that by the year 2001, majority of magazine advertisements contained both principal cues and consistent cue combinations. This finding was arguably one of the most important and valuable revelations of the thesis, as

it was a clear indicator of a paradigm shift towards the previously uncommon approach in advertising content development.

Given that both principal cues and cue combinations (Tables 4.18 and 4.19) were fairly new patterns of informational content development at the time, the actual content combinations and preferences were important indicators regarded by advertisers as most critical for a successful promotion of the products and services advertised. Firstly, some of the so-called “common” cues (such as the cues responsible for describing product or service availability and price information) were more likely to play supporting roles rather than primary ones. Many of the advertisements included price information, while nearly all of the advertisements included availability information, yet the ways these elements of informational content were usually presented suggested that it was neither the price of the products or services nor the ease of their acquisition that the magazine advertisers regarded as particularly important for attracting consumers. With many of the advertisers, “compulsory” information was becoming of less significance than occasion or unique feature-related one. Majority of the advertisements tended to focus on original ideas, special offers, and “latest” product or service research findings.

Another interesting (and positive) trend with the magazine advertisements was that very few of them were trivial combinations of unrelated pieces of information. Even when an advertisement incorporated very few informational cues, they were usually logically combined with one another. Few of the cues were “stand-alone” and completely disintegrated with the rest of the content. Furthermore, the informational content carried by the “emerging” cues, such as URL and e-mail was very closely integrated with the “traditional” advertising content. For example, majority of the URLs (as shown in Table 4.16) were provided as logical extensions of pricing and availability information as well as special offers and product/service descriptions, rather than in the form of flavorless links that advised consumers of the fact that the websites were available but failed to state specific reasons why visiting the websites was going to be beneficial. Thus, incorporation of web-related information into the magazine advertisements was going rather smoothly and links to the websites were usually aimed at fulfilling a particular

communication objective (e.g. informing consumers about specific features of products or services advertised).

Unfortunately, trends in informational content development of the magazine advertisements were not all positive. Many of the previous (pre-2001) studies of traditional advertising communications (magazine advertisements in particular) were pointing out that ideally, advertisers were to aim at increasing the amount of useful informational content. The studies (Resnik-Stern, 1977; Resnik and Stern, 1981; Dholakia, Rego; Fay and Currier, 1994; Chan, 1995; Abernethy et al, 1996; Elliott and Lockard, 1996; Abernethy and Franke, 1998) tended to emphasize the important role of informational content in making advertising communications more effective, and usually pointed to an increase of the amount of informational content as a possible pattern for improving effectiveness of the communications. Thus, in the light of the previous studies, by 2001, advertisers could be anticipated to have learned the lessons from the past and to start increasing the amount of informational content in the advertisements. However, the study (as shown by the data presented in Chapter Four (more specifically, Tables 4.3 and 4.4)) demonstrated that at the time, there was no significant increase in the amounts of informational content in the advertisements, as compared with previous studies (e.g. Resnik and Stern, 1981). Therefore, on average, informational content of the magazine advertisements was staying at roughly the same level as in the 1980s and 1990s.

On the other hand, if the magazine advertisements were to be sub-divided into two separate categories (web-linked and unlinked magazine advertisements), it was transparent (Table 4.4), that the web-linked magazine advertisements contained a significantly larger amount of informational content than the unlinked ones. Therefore, if the web-linked (progressive) magazine advertisements were to be treated as a separate category (as opposed to being part of the overall magazine advertising sample), it could be concluded that by the year 2001, the amount of informational content in magazine advertising (quantity of informational content elements/per magazine advertisement) was slightly higher than in the previous decades.

6.2.2 Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns in the Websites

By 2001, studies of advertising content carried through traditional marketing communication channels were already very common (Abernethy et al, 1996; Elliott and Lockard, 1996; Abernethy and Franke, 1998), so it was possible to compare content creation trends of the Australian magazine advertisements at that point in time with the previous trends. However, in case of the websites, there were no previous informational content analysis studies of this kind, so content-related trends and patterns had to be considered in the light of websites' performance, as compared with other marketing communication channels and comparative use of the patterns.

Informational content analysis of the websites (Tables 5.6 and 5.7) identified a number of well-developed features and qualities. The most obvious positive trend in how the websites were performing as advertising communications was a relatively high overall amount of informational content. Majority of the websites were significantly more diverse than the magazine advertisements in terms of information they were presenting. From today's (2008) perspective, such diversity appears obvious. However, it was pointed out that during early stages of the Internet adoption there were many countries, other than Australia, such as for example, Singapore (Soh et al, 1997) and Greece (Kardaras and Papathanassiou, 2000), where companies were initially inefficient in using the Internet for promotional purposes. At the time, content and overall performance of websites in these countries was leaving much to be desired. Thus, in 2001, a seemingly "obvious" assumption that Australian websites contained a larger amount of informational content than respective magazine advertisements could not be taken for granted yet (as it had not always been the case in the past). Therefore, it could be concluded that in 2001, unlike in some countries (e.g. Singapore and Greece, as discussed above), in Australia, commercial websites were already capable (not only from a technical perspective but also from a practical one) of delivering greater informational content than traditional marketing communications.

None of the websites appeared to contain majority of the identifiable (as defined by Resnik and Stern, 1977) informational content elements. Furthermore, there were some instances where missing information was clearly critical for effectiveness of the advertising message communicated (e.g. the websites that did emphasize how affordable the advertised products or services were, when compared with alternative purchases available from other vendors but where nevertheless failing to include actual prices of the products and services. However, such shortcomings were not typical and majority of the websites (as shown by the overall scores for various informational content elements in Tables 4.6 and 4.7) could be regarded as complete advertising communications rather than collections of facts and points about the companies and their products and services. Warranties were likely to be accompanied by information about quality or safety of the products and pricing details were usually accompanied by availability information. While harmony between all of the informational content elements used was not yet a norm, there were hardly any websites with no logical links between the informational cues used at all and presented all of the content elements as stand-alone.

Another positive sign in the web content development was proactive use of special offers and other short-term promotional activities. While execution of the offers was not always carried out in an optimal manner (as discussed in the paragraph below), the very fact that the companies were trying to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the online communications to reach consumers faster was worthy of being commended. Furthermore, many of the websites emphasized that special offers and competitions promoted were aimed specifically at the online target audiences, and the offers could be taken advantage of online only. Thus, by 2001, many Australian companies were already trying to embrace some (not all though, as evident from relatively low scores for some of the content elements considered) of the promotional features that were unique to the WWW. Websites were usually not simple additions to the existing mix of marketing communications but were usually assigned a unique role to make the most out of their superior communication capabilities, as compared with traditional marketing communication channels.

Unfortunately, informational content analysis of the websites also revealed several problems that were yet to be resolved. Lack of updates was arguably the biggest content-related problem of all. Some of the websites (as discussed in detail in chapter five) appeared to be designed “once and for all”. There were even instances where “last updated” date on the websites was showing 1998/1999 dates (meaning that the websites had not been updated for years). There were also instances where no “update date” was available at all, but it was nevertheless obvious that the websites were terribly outdated. For example, there were a number of special offers that had already expired long before the websites were examined, yet the offers were still featuring on the websites and were still described as “current”.

Similarly, to currency, accuracy of the information provided on the websites was sometimes an issue. Some of the discrepancies were rather obvious. For example, there were instances where on one of its pages a website would state a price for a product or service available, but on a different page of the same website a different price was quoted. Likewise, there were instances where main homepage would promise three year warranties for all of the products sold, or (in cases of food and beverage items) state that all of the products were national heart foundation approved and/or 97% fat free. However, other pages were providing information that was contradictory to the statements.

The shortcomings outlined above could be regarded as very serious as such inaccuracies were clearly deducting significant value out of the websites. It has long been established (Schultz et al, 1997; Percy and Rossiter, 1998; Schultz and Kitchen, 1998) that, if a promotional message was contradictory and/or unclear, impact of such a message was more likely to be negative rather than positive. Thus, since from a marketing perspective websites could be defined as long integrated promotional messages, such mistakes had to be regarded as major blunders rather than insignificant discrepancies. It could be concluded that some of the companies did not have their web content developed by dedicated teams. Controversies between the inter-linked pages showed lack of coordination between the content developers. It could be suspected that

the developers were simply collecting product/service/company related information from a variety of internal sources and pulling it together using a trivial “cut-and-paste” approach. This problem was also evident from the different language styles and levels of depth used throughout. For example, two of the websites for car manufacturers (Hyundai and Toyota) had near-identical problems. Main pages of the websites were describing the latest models of the cars using simple and unsophisticated terms easily understood by general public. On the other hand, after clicking-through to the dedicated product pages developed for each of the respective models, the websites’ visitors had to encounter a lot of technical terms and expressions (e.g. in-depth descriptions of the engines) that could hardly be understood by ordinary consumers who did not possess advanced knowledge of the cars.

Another interesting (but rather unfortunate) revelation of the informational content analysis was lack of original ideas (as evident from the low scores for new ideas informational cue in Table 4.7) in the websites. Given technically advanced content creation opportunities (as compared to traditional marketing communications such as magazine advertisements) and virtually unlimited space available, the websites could be anticipated to contain a significantly greater amount of new ideas and concepts as compared with traditional communications such as magazine advertisements. By 2001, there was already a lot of evidence of web communications’ superior potential for identification and fulfillment of new advertising concepts (Rowan, 1999; Nemmers, 2000; Rowley, 2001). However, this study suggested that in Australia, such a creative approach to the website-enabled advertising communications was still rather uncommon at the time. Websites incorporating unconventional advertising concepts were few and far between.

Finally, it was disappointing to see general lack of product or service research-related information in the websites. As Resnik and Stern (1977) were pointing out, both company and independent research findings could be instrumental in adding validity to the claims presented in the advertising communications. Unlike the rest of the advertising content elements, research findings could enable companies to present actual rather than

emotional data in support of the claim that the products or services advertised were of superior nature. Given the perception of websites as companies' virtual home was already common at the time (Deans and Adam, 2000; Dholakia and Rego, 2000), active use of research and/or service/product testing related informational content elements could be anticipated. However, relatively few companies were incorporating the output from both internal and external research and testing activities into their websites.

6.2.3 Comparative Analysis of the Informational Content Development Trends and Patterns in the Magazine Advertisements and Websites

Comparison of the informational content development trends and patterns in the magazine advertisements and the websites in Australia at the time delivered some very interesting findings. As far as similarities between the two marketing communication channels were concerned, mixes of the informational content elements used were often similar. Both the magazine advertisements and the websites tried to emphasize availability, price and performance of the products and services advertised fairly consistently. The ways the content elements were presented in the advertising communications were also pretty similar. The websites were obviously communicating the information to a greater extent (as evident from a comparison between the Resnik-Stern scores for the two types of marketing communications) and in a greater detail than the magazine advertisements (e.g. listing all of the shopping outlets in case of availability, or providing detailed pricing for each of the items available for purchase in case of price), but the ways the content elements were integrated with one another and the logical connections between them rarely differed.

Language-wise, terms and expressions used to describe various features of the products and services did not differ that much either. At the time, there were already many academic and industry publications that were trying to emphasize the importance of having a more “sophisticated” approach towards developing web content, as opposed to advertising the content developed for traditional communication channels. While

traditional advertising communications were supposed to be aimed at getting consumers excited about products or services (Percy and Rossiter, 1998), very few of the Internet marketing specialists (e.g. Wilson, 1999) considered websites' promotional capacity to be equally limited. It has usually been argued (e.g. Poon and Swatman, 1997; Rohner, 1998; Rowley, 2001) that websites were both capable and expected to move beyond creation of trivial promotional messages and focus on the "objective" features the products and services were able to deliver. In other words, the websites were expected to present information in a less emotional but more factual style than the magazine advertisements. However, this was rarely a case with the Australian websites considered in the study. Majority of these websites tended to focus on emotional appeal just like the magazine advertisements did.

Comparative use of special offers and competitions/contests in the websites and the magazine advertisements was a particularly interesting finding. In the light of the perceived features and capabilities of the two marketing communication channels outlined in the paragraph above, it could be anticipated that given the emotional rather than factual nature of the informational content elements, magazine advertisements were to use catchy offers to a greater extent than websites. However this expectation proved to be wrong. Thus, contrary to both the popular believes as well as to the previous studies of web informational content in the US and European countries, the Australian websites turned out to be using special offers both to a greater extent than the magazine advertisements and similar websites aimed at overseas' target audiences.

6.3 Informational Content Integration between the Websites and the Magazine Advertisements

Establishment of the level of integration between magazine advertisements and websites in Australia was arguably one of the most critical findings of this thesis. Comparative analysis of informational content of the two marketing communication channels showed that while some degree of integration by repetition usually did exist, for majority of the communications were integrated via a limited number of informational content elements. Thus, the integration was rarely complete. Even when integrated, the communication channels always appeared to maintain some differences from each other.

6.3.1 Points of Integration

For general (basic) integration of the magazine advertisements and the websites, availability of the products and services advertised appeared to be the key. Both of the marketing communications were usually adopting a unified approach towards informing consumers about product or service acquisition options. In fact, availability-related information was integrated consistently across the magazine ads and the websites to a greater extent than all of the remaining content elements together. However, for a deeper integration (involving a unified approach not towards specific informational content elements only, but also towards integration of the key messages) there was a significantly greater variety.

As far as integrated content combinations were concerned, the integration was nearly always taking place across a few consistent combinations (as shown in Table 4.38). For example, as shown in Table 4.35, the highest degree of content integration between a magazine advertisement and a website achieved in the study (four) occurred in eight (3.69%) of the magazine advertisements + websites communications, and the integrated content elements were either the price +performance + availability + nutrition

combination or price + component+ availability + special offers only. On the other hand, with the principal cue integration, some of the cues were never featuring as principle cues in both the magazine advertisements and the websites. For example, nutrition-related information was used quite frequently by both of the marketing communication channels considered in the study, but it was never used as an integrated common theme for both.

To sum up, the most common integration by repetition points for the magazine advertisements and the websites in Australia in 2001 were:

- Special offers that were shared across both of the marketing communication channels
- Product or service availability/acquisition information
- Price +performance + availability + nutrition and price + component+ availability + special offers informational content combinations
- Special offers, availability and price-related information

6.3.2 Magazine Advertisements and Websites Integration Overview

As no identifiable studies of informational content integration (by repetition or by difference) between magazine advertisements and websites were carried out prior to 2001, it was hard to establish whether the process of integration between the two marketing communication channels was or was not developing smoothly, since there was no previous track record/expectations that the companies considered in this study had to “comply” with. However, the nature of the integration was quite transparent. First of all, it was transparent from the data presented in section 4.4 of the thesis that the informational content integration was never complete (100%). While 217 magazine advertisement + website combinations were examined, not a single (!) one of the combinations contained identical or near identical (based on the use of the very same informational cues) content combinations. There were several instances (as shown in Table 4.39) where principal cues were integrated by repetition, but even if the principal

cue used in a magazine advertisement and a websites was the same (e.g. very same special offer present in both a magazine advertisement and a respective website) some content-related differences between the promotional messages presented by the two communication channels were still evident.

On the other hand, at least some degree of integration by repetition could be seen in majority of the communications. The similarities could be observed not only through the informational cues used (as shown in Table 4.34) but also through the content development patterns. For example, (as shown in Table 4.36) there was both the magazine advertisements and the websites were using principal cues to a similar extent (60 and 56% respectively). Furthermore, if a magazine advertisement did contain a principal cue, a website for the related product or service advertised was also likely to have one (not necessarily the same cue though), and if a magazine advertisement did not emphasize the importance of a particular content element, the related website was usually doing likewise.

Another interesting factor was that a number of the magazine advertisements (as shown in Table 4.42) referred to the respective websites as logical extensions of the informational content presented. Expressions such as “for more information visit www...” or “further details are available from www...” were rather common. Thus, the magazine advertisements were often proactively encouraging consumers to visit the websites. In cases of special offers and availability-related information, there were even instances where magazine advertisements simply assumed the role of “connectors” between consumers and the websites. In other words, the only role of such magazine advertisements was to guide consumers to the websites where more complete information about products or services and the companies behind them was available.

On the basis of the integration analysis discussed above, it could be concluded that by the year 2001 in Australia:

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- Integration by repetition (content-wise) between magazine advertisements and websites did exist
 - Websites often acted as “logical extensions” for magazine advertisements
 - Integration of magazine advertisements and websites (as shown in Table 4.34) was usually occurring through six of the informational content elements (namely availability, quality performance, price, components and special offers), while the remaining eight informational content elements were rarely if ever integrated across these two marketing communication channels

6.4 Website Functionality and Marketing Communication Trends and Patterns

While the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure examined informational content of the websites (along with the magazine advertisements), the WebQual website performance assessment model was used in order to determine functionality of these websites. The website functionality analysis showed that at the time, quality of commercial Web development in Australia was improving very rapidly. By 2001, some of the shortcomings outlined in the previous studies of the Australian websites (e.g. Adam and Deans, 2000) were no longer occurring (e.g. browser compatibility), while a number of other previously common technical problems (e.g. coding or software downloading problems) were still happening occasionally but on a significantly smaller scale, as compared with 1998-1999. In other words by 2001, web development technologies had already evolved to the point where few if any technical errors were occurring. Thus, it could be said that web technologies were no longer posing a serious challenge to successful commercial web development.

On the other hand, the WebQual analysis (Table 4.48) revealed a number of website management-related problems, namely lack of consistent updates, broken links and insufficient use of online customer service and support tools. Another significant shortcoming was lack of international focus in the websites. Few of the websites appeared to consider needs of the overseas target audiences.

6.4.1 Strengths and Weaknesses of the Commercial Websites in Australia

As pointed out above, by 2001, website accessibility problems appeared to be almost eliminated. The WebQual Analysis showed that as opposed to the previously studies of the Australian web, where lack of compatibility between the websites and the users'

systems was still very much an issue (e.g. Adam and Deans, 2000), by 2001, over 90% of the websites could be accessed through any major web browser, downloaded within a reasonable amount of time (irrespective of the number of images/graphics/animation used by the websites, etc.) and with plug-ins (e.g. Flash downloads) being available where necessary. Another important positive facet of this finding was the fact that majority of the companies behind the websites considered in this study were not only improving overall standards of website delivery (as compared with earlier studies) but were also demonstrating awareness of the users' requirements and consideration for their time and needs. For example, when an additional download was required to view a website, consistent step-by-step "how to do it" instructions were usually provided. In a number of the websites, visitors were also given an option of choosing between viewing a complete version of the site (that did required additional downloads) and a simpler one (with some of the images and animations removed) that could be viewed instantly. In the author's opinion, this was very good evidence of user-centered design.

Design-wise, nearly all of the websites were aesthetically pleasing. A very important and positive revelation was consistency of the design performance. All of the WebQual design assessment elements (six) of them appeared in 70% or more of the websites. Furthermore, over half of the websites were designed in compliance with all of the website assessment requirements. Thus, by 2001, standard of web design was clearly one of the strengths of the Australian commercial web.

From today's perspective, level of use of some of the key "customer experience enhancement" features and tools in the websites can be regarded as low. However, from the 2001 perspective, it was hard to label it as unsatisfactory or disappointing. For example, approximately half of the websites contained an "In-Site Search" function that enabled visitors to locate specific content elements they were after quickly, rather than to search for the information randomly all over the website. Back in 2001, website search tools were still fairly new (as they were hardly in commercial use before the year 2000). Furthermore, a significant share of the websites (particularly websites for smaller

companies) considered in this study consisted of two-three pages only, making their content transparent anyway.

As already pointed out above, the websites scored poorly on the WebQual scales for all of the capabilities related to gaining international exposure. Global capabilities were usually evident in 30% of the websites only. The rest of the websites contained neither technical (e.g. currency conversion tools) nor business capabilities for servicing international target audiences. However, this revelation should not be necessarily regarded as negative in all of the cases. Some of the websites did point out throughout their informational content that their target audience was international, yet no facilities to address needs of the audience were provided. In such instances, the shortcoming was transparent, as there was a clear dissonance between informational content and functionality of the websites. Nevertheless, there were also other instances where content of the websites focused on the local target audiences only and therefore, lack of the global capabilities was not to be regarded as a serious limitation.

As far as communication capabilities of the websites were concerned, while virtually all (98%) of the websites had some communication capability, very few of the websites were capable of and/or interested in creating web communities. Given that majority of the communities appeared to function well, it was very probable that companies tended to discard the idea of having web communities attached to their websites due to lack of conviction that such communities could enhance the websites' performance rather than due to inability to build and maintain one.

Overall, based on the WebQual analysis (Table 4.48) it could be concluded that by 2001, majority of the Australian commercial websites were already capable of fulfilling most of the marketing communication functions. The shortcomings discussed above were indeed transparent from a historical perspective, given how young the online marketing communications were at the time the Australian websites were at very least "fit for purpose".

6.4.2 Website Development Trends

In the authors' opinion, the most important trend identified throughout this study of the websites' content and functionality was similarity between the main focus of the websites considered in this study and the focus of the traditional marketing communications (e.g. magazine advertisements). At the turn of the century, web marketing literature (as discussed in Chapter Two) was suggesting that websites were turning over a new leaf in marketing communications by taking the communications to a brand new level, namely by making them significantly more informative, customized and updated. Interestingly, none of the superior (as compared to traditional marketing communications) qualities of the internet-enabled communications (websites) that were so anticipated to happen by the Internet marketing literature regarded as "contemporary" at the time (Breitenbach and Van Dooren, 1998; Adam and Deans, 1999; Adam and Deans, 2000; Hotz and Kohler, 2000, etc.), appeared to be common!

Despite the anticipations discussed above, based on the data collected through WebQual (and presented in section 4.4 of the thesis), the Australian websites did not conform to the perceived website marketing communication standards outlined above. First of all, they were clearly developing hand-in-hand with the traditional marketing communications rather than along parallel lines. The communication patterns used were similar to the ones used in the magazine advertisements of the time (as discussed in 6.2.1). At the same time, only very few of the websites (as shown in Table 4.48) were getting regular updates. Thus, communication-wise, the websites appeared to be run in a style similar to that of traditional marketing communications (e.g. magazine advertisements).

Secondly, (and that was definitely a very positive sign) The WebQual analysis made it transparent that by the year 2001 (as opposed to the previous years), there were already sufficient web technologies to ensure a smooth performance of the websites. Even more importantly, the technologies were available and easy to use for all kinds of

the Australian companies, big and small irrespective of the industries the companies belonged to.

Finally, majority of the Australian websites was clearly focused on the local (Australian) content and target audiences only, rather on international ones. Furthermore, few of the websites had any facilities (e.g. currency conversion tools, product/service information in languages other than English, etc.) aimed at assisting overseas-based customers in making the most of the websites. Even some of the otherwise flawless websites that appeared to excel in all of the other areas of web design and management, were scoring poorly for the WebQual global capabilities. This finding was very important as it was contradictory to the popular perception of websites as keys to open doors to the new marketplaces. Majority of the academic and industry publications of the time (e.g. Breitenbach and Van Dooren, 1998; Rowan, 1999; Rowley, 2001) were stressing out the role of the Internet in creation of new marketplaces worldwide as well as in allowing companies to adopt a “global” approach in its marketing communications and business activities. Therefore, the study revealed a clear dissonance between the globally accepted perception of the role of websites as marketing communications at the time and the ways the websites were functioning in Australia. As it was evident from the low scores from the global capability section of the WebQual, in 2001, only very few of the Australian companies (about 30%) were viewing their websites as global (as opposed to local) marketing communication tools.

6.5 Research Implications and Overview

This research has led to a number of important conclusions regarding informational content of magazine advertisements and informational content and functionality of websites in Australia in the year 2001 as well as revelations as to how marketing messages transmitted through communication channels that were integrated with each other at the time. Therefore, the findings provide a clear picture of both the state of marketing communications in Australia (content-wise) at the time and a direction in which the communications were developing. The findings should be considered not only from a historical (the way things were in 2001) but also from a developmental perspective, as use of websites as marketing communication carriers was still going through its initial developmental stages and integration of websites with traditional marketing media (e.g. magazine advertisements) was still a relatively new problem and/or issue that the Australian companies were facing.

6.5.1 Research Overview

In the light of the findings presented above, Australian companies had to consider a number of issues related to both integration of informational content of magazines and websites and improving the websites' functionality. As shown by the data presented in Section 4.4 of the thesis, informational content integration of the magazine advertisements and the websites was usually carried out on the basis of general information (e.g. product/service availability or components). At the same time, integration of product or service-specific information (e.g. company research or warranties-related information) across the two marketing communication channels was seldom to be found. Furthermore, none of the specific informational cues were used as integrated principal cues. Thus, the study identified a clear need that existed at the time for companies behind the communications to consider this discrepancy. While the problem could have very well been resolved by now (as both magazine and website

marketing communications have obviously been evolving significantly since 2001), it is still relevant and certainly needs to be addressed.

Today, the findings outlined above are still relevant to contemporary Australian companies. By comparing informational content, functionality and degree of integration of their marketing communications with the historical data discussed in this research, they will be able to establish not only how far have the informativeness and integration of communications progressed since 2001, but also to see whether some of the problems outlined in this thesis are still reoccurring. Many of the shortcomings and discrepancies outlined (particularly in cases of magazine advertisements) were conceptual rather than technical. Therefore, unless the companies considered in this study (as well as other large and medium-size Australian advertisers) have been reviewing and consequently restructuring their marketing communications in recent years, there is still a lot that can be done to improve communication effectiveness and provide consumers with consistent and accurate information. Thus, today's advertisers can use findings from this research as benchmarks for assessing informativeness and integration levels of their marketing communications.

Even in cases of websites, many of the problems outlined by this research had little to do with the state of technology at the time. The problems could be best explained by the advertisers' preferences for specific informational content elements and functions. Therefore, the shortcomings were hardly linked to imperfectness of the tools and applications used for web development. In recent years, many of the web development applications and methods have become more comprehensive and user friendly. However, informational content requirements are mostly (with the exception of some interactivity related features such as animation) very much the same. By applying the methodologies and tools used in this research to their websites, advertisers can see how much of the product or service information they are providing and what informational cocktails are being used to present this information.

With the Resnik-Stern advertising procedure, application to contemporary magazine advertisements and websites can be carried out in exactly the same way as with the historic marketing communications (advertisements and websites considered in this research). Neither structural nor content-related updates to the procedure would be required. With the WebQual, some of the website performance assessment criteria would have to be updated (due to the obvious technological developments that have taken place in recent years). Additional performance assessment criteria could also be introduced. However, all of the key website performance areas highlighted by WebQual (e.g. marketing functions, transaction processing functions, transaction security etc.) are still essential elements of every single commercial website.

Another serious concern highlighted by this research was lack of international focus in the websites as both content and functionality of the websites (as discussed above in 6.4.2) were aiming at Australian target audiences only. Given ongoing internationalization of online marketplaces (as evident from a number of recent website performance analysis studies discussed in the literature review), from a contemporary (2008) perspective, it would be more than logical for companies to consider their websites as global marketing communication channels rather than localized ones. Such a transition would require companies not only to “upgrade” informational content of the websites but also to develop them to a new functional level, where specific needs of overseas customers (such as currency conversion service, product/service descriptions in languages other than English, links/contact details of local distributors) could be taken into account and included. Obviously, such a website would be harder to develop and maintain but in the long run, it would be likely to deliver better results and help the businesses to grow faster.

From a current business practice prospective, lack of international focus in websites appears to be an even greater shortcoming. Given that none of the companies behind the advertisements considered in this research are small locally-focused businesses, the need to address the requirements of international target audiences is transparent. The lack of adequate content for addressing needs of non-Australian

customers outlined by the study is arguably an even greater issue now than it was back in 2001. Ongoing internationalization of the marketplaces decreases differentiations caused by geographic boundaries, languages spoken and cultural barriers, so potential for international expansion is greater than ever. Application of WebQual can enable companies to pinpoint specific facets of the websites where needs and requirements of international consumers are being ignored and consequently assist them in eliminating these shortcomings.

Another important benefit that contemporary companies can gain from the thesis is the performance assessment method (combination of Resnik-Stern and WebQual) used for analyzing informativeness and integration levels in magazine advertisements and websites. Prior to this research, these two communication performance analysis tools have never been used in combination with one another. Now that scope for complimentary use of the tools has become evident, companies can assess both informational content and functionality of websites in a unified manner. This makes the performance assessment procedure superior to the alternatives available. No matter, how informative and comprehensive its informational content is, a website is unlikely to fulfill its marketing function unless all of its facets are fully functional. Similarly, there is no point in using state-of-art technologies that are not supported by adequate promotional materials highlighting benefits of products and services offered by the company.

6.5.2 Implications for Further Research

A number of the findings uncovered by the research cleared the ground for further investigations of the informational content and functionality of magazine advertisements and websites in Australia. First of all, as the degree of integration between the magazine advertisements and the websites in 2001 was established, it would be interesting to carry out similar kind of studies measuring integration between the two communication channels in later years (e.g. 2005 and 2009) to see how logical relationships between them were evolving over the time and whether informational content integration across

different marketing communication channels was becoming more or less common over the time. It would also establish whether the basis for the integration (e.g. the informational content elements that were shared across the two communication channels) was remaining the same or whether the paradigm was shifting towards previously uncommon integration drivers (e.g. product or service research findings, safety information, etc.).

Another interesting extension of the research could involve a longitudinal study of commercial websites (WebQual) and comparative analysis of the website performance in 2001 and in modern times. Such a comparison would reveal evolution patterns in website development over the time. Furthermore, it could show whether the specific problems uncovered by this research (e.g. lack of updates, etc.) were eventually dealt with and have been eliminated.

Finally, as the study concentrated on the magazine advertisements and websites in Australia only, it would be interesting to carry out similar studies for other countries and compare the two sets of findings with each other. As the study, revealed a number of interesting trends that were not considered as a norm internationally (as discussed in the literature review), such as for example, the local focus of the websites as opposed to the global one. If Australia was the only major economy where this phenomenon was occurring at the time, it would highlight uniqueness of its marketplace. Would the same approach be occurring in other countries, it could be an indicator that either international marketing communication theories of the time were not evaluating the roles of commercial websites in improving quality of the communications accurately or alternatively, private companies behind the websites were not paying attention to the researchers' suggestions and/or had another rationale for designing and handling their websites the way they did.

6.6 Thesis Conclusion

Integration of marketing communications has always (even long before development of the web as a marketing communication channel) been regarded as a challenging and complicated task. As for integration of online (websites) and traditional (magazine advertisements) communications, it was arguably even more challenging due to greater functional differences between the communication channels. However, as benefits of such integration were transparent, achieving it was essential for making promotional messages effective and consistent. By 2001, integration of magazine advertising and website communications already did exist in Australia. However, such integration was limited to specific content elements, such as product/service availability, special offers and price-related information. Thus, it could not be regarded as complete.

As far as the websites were concerned, overall performance of the Australian commercial websites (both from technical and communication perspectives) was clearly, at the very least satisfactory. It showed that by 2001, the Australian and international companies doing business in Australia were facing few if any difficulties in establishing web presence and using websites as marketing communication tools. On the other hand, ongoing maintenance of the websites, and the task of keeping them up-to-date and meeting the needs of international customers appeared to be unaddressed.

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Appendix

Table A.1: Magazine Circulation Figures, Sorted by Descending Circulation *

Publication Number	Title	Circulation
1487	Open Road	1560876
1492	Royal Auto	1100602
1417	Family Living	1000000
1845	Australian Women's Weekly	751878
1490	The Road Ahead	712917
1859	Woman's Day	608779
1811	Point-out - The Gold Coast Tourist Guide	570000
948	Readers Digest	470902
1853	New Idea	440554
1858	That's Life!	431160
1816	The Sydney Informer	390000
1491	Road Patrol	368079
1493	SA Motor	355278
1372	Better Homes and Gardens	313214
1325	Health Life News	300500
1395	Traveling Life	300000
1781	TV Week	281197
1583	Australian Catholics	280000
1788	The Canberra Informer	260000
1402	World Vision News	230000
1849	Cosmopolitan	228218
1392	The Qantas Club	227100
1279	Dining Around Sydney	220000
1521	Undercover	220000
1848	Cleo	208690
951	Who Weekly	202969
1373	Homemakers Digest	200000
1791	The Coffs Harbour and District Complete	200000
1799	The Harbour Connection	200000
1806	Mornington Peninsula Holiday Magazine	200000
1946	The Infant Times Guide	200000
2365	BPR	200000
1536	50 Something	190000
1312	Australian Geographic	185000
1276	Australian Good Taste	171568
1851	For Me	163360
1160	Australian Family Circle	155052
1854	NW	152972
1775	Girlfriend	152913
1846	B	152703
1069	Jetsetter	150000
1787	Cairns Gateway	150000
949	Time Australia	140867
1163	First Steps	140000
1393	Qantas, The Australian Way	140000
1779	TV Hits	136737
1453	The Picture	127397

* Compiled on the basis of information available from: O'Halloran, S. (2000) Margaret Gee's Australian Media Guide, 65th ed., November2000-March2001. Information Australia, Melbourne.

Table A.2: Websites for Informational Content-exclusive Magazine Advertisements

No	CODE	BRAND	SITE SEARCH	URL
2	NE15	KMART	Y1	www.kmart.com.au
3	R04	RACV VICROADS	Y1	www.racv.com.au
5	WOM4	JOHNSON AND JOHNSON	Y2	www.johnson-and-johnson.com
6	WOM9	NOKIA.	Y1	www.nokia.com.au
7	WOM17	CONTINENTAL	Y1	www.continental.com.au
8	BE42	HILLS	Y1	www.hills.com.au
9	BE29	FREEDOM	Y1	www.freedom.com.au
11	GE02	BRIDGESTONE	Y1	www.bridgestone.com.au
12	GOO2	LINDT	Y2.	www.lindt.com
14	GOO15	CADBURY WHITE CHOCOLATE	Y1	www.cadbury.com.au
15	GOO 22	CONTINENTAL SOUP	Y1	www.continental.com.au
16	GOO24	SPECIAL K	Y2	www.specialk.com
17	GOO47	CADBURY	Y1	www.cadbury.com.au
18	GOO49	DUCD'O	Y2	www.ducdo.com
19	GOO50	WESTINGHOUSE	Y2	www.westinghouse.com
20	FAM 20	CONTINENTAL ASIAN EASY MEALS	Y1	www.continental.com.au
21	SHA20	HENDERSON GLOBAL INVESTORS	Y2	www.henderson.com
22	SHA28	PERSONAL INVESTOR	Y1	www.personalinvestor.com.au
23	BRW4	VISA GOLD	Y1	www.visa.com.au
24	HOU17	WESTINGHOUSE	Y2	www.westinghouse.com
25	HOU 37	MAXWELL & WILLIAMS	Y1	www.maxwell.com.au
28	CL6	ANNA SUI	Y2	www.annasui.com
29	CL8	GUCCI	Y2	www.gucci.com
32	CL20	LEVIT'S CORD	Y2	www.levi.com
36	CL30	COLGATE	Y1	www.colgate.com

Table A.3: Unavailable/Non-Existing Websites for Informational Content-exclusive Magazine Advertisements

No	CODE	BRAND	SITE SEARCH	URL
1	NE6	ERVIN BOCKOVICH VIDEO	N	NOT FOUND
4	WOM2	FEBRESE	N	NOT FOUND
10	BE3	CMX	N.	NOT FOUND
13	GOO10	RICCADONNA	N	NOT FOUND
26	CL4	NOA	N	NOT FOUND
27	CL5	AMARIGE	N	NOT FOUND
30	CL9	PURE WISH	N	NOT FOUND
31	CL10	DESHUDA	N	NOT FOUND
33	CL24	LIBRA	N	NOT FOUND
34	CL26	BLUE RIBBON	N	NOT FOUND
35	CL28	CLAY	N	NOT FOUND

Table A.4: Websites with an Integration Score of Two and Above, Sorted by Descending Integration Score

No	CODE*	BRAND	INTEGRATED CUES
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69	GOO35	HI-MAZE	4PPEAN
71	GOO39	NATURES' REMEDY	4PPEAN
75	FAM2	NUTRIMETICS	4PPEAN
28	NW9	WEIGHT WATCHERS	4PPEAS
24	NW2	HYUNDAI	4PCAW
9	RO1	ERICSSON	4PCAS
10	RO5	RACV TRAVELAND	4PCAS
29	NW10	NOKIA	4PCAS
140	SHA24	HUNTLEY'S	3PEAS
27	NW7	WEIGHT WATCHERS	3PPEA
191	HOU25	MEDIBANK PRIVATE	3PPEA
15	TV4	NOKIA5110 + PLAN	3PAS
19	WOM11	VIRGIN MOBILE	3PAS
30	NW12	NOKIA/OPTUS	3PAS
132	SHA11	MAUS	3PAS
148	BRW8	COMMSEC	3PAS
129	SHA7	INVESTOR'S STARTER PACK	3PAS
185	HOU14	HOUSE AND GARDEN	3PAS
199	HOU41	MITSUBISHI	2QA
48	BE2	JAMES HARDIE	2PEC
32	BE39	RINNAI ENERGY SAVER	2PEA
38	BE25	TELSTRA BROADBAND NET	2PEA
62	GEO1	RANGE ROVER	2PEA
87	FAM30	PHARMACIA	2PEA
118	TIM8	SONY	2PEA
126	SHA4	HUNTLEY'S	2PEA
127	SHA5	EZYSTRATION	2PEA
138	SHA22	LEVERAGED EQUITIES	2PEA
141	SHA27	STOCKDOCTOR	2PEA
142	SHA29	SHARES/E-TRADE	2PEA

Table A.5: Website Performance Analysis (WebQual) Scores

No	CUE	SCORE	No	CUE	SCORE
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1	URL	399		24	SPE	102
2	ORP	344		25	TCS	99
3	CFE	203		26	RPL	96
4	NBR	197		27	FSF	94
5	APL	194		28	HEL	91
6	ACS	192		29	FAQ	86
7	ADM	190		30	PCD	84
8	MT	180		31	PPH	84
9	IMA	179		32	POR	73
10	WHN	177		33	LTP	71
11	PIT	175		34	WEC	70
12	GRA	171		35	MOC	69
13	NAV	162		36	MCH	67
14	LAY	158		37	REF	63
15	AES	157		38	MOF	61
16	ST	143		39	MON	59
17	OAM	120		40	MVD	57
18	WAR	116		41	MDN	57
19	OPD	114		42	MUD	45
20	STS	109		43	PFC	44
21	MDR	106		44	PDO	44
22	ALT	105		45	LUD	43
23	WED	102		46	MOR	40
WBT	217				<u>TOTAL</u>	<u>5592</u>

**Abbreviation used: URL – URL Guessability; ORP – Order Processing; CFE – Communication (Form/Email or Both); NBR – Not Browser Restricted; APL – Add-ons/ Plug-ins Linked; ACS - About the Company or Site/Products/People/Customers or Projects; ADM – Administrative Details; MT – Menu Tabs; IMA – Image; WHN - “What is New”; PIT – Product/service Images and Text; GRA – Graphics; Nav – Navigation ;*

LAY – Layout; AES – Aesthetics; ST – Search Tags; OAM – Opt-In/Opt-Out Adaptive Messaging on Corporate or Product Services; WAR – Warranties; OPD – Online Pricing Details; STS – In-site Search; MDR – Media Releases; ALT – “ALT” Tags; WED – Webmaster Details; SPE – Special Offers; TCS – Tracking Customer Service Enquiry Line; RPL – Related Product Links; FSF – Financial Status of the Firm; HEL – ‘Helpdesk’; FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions; PCD – Product/Service Complaints or Difficulties; PPH - “People” Phone/E-mail Details; POR – Portal; LTP – Links Only to Third Parties in Other Countries; WEC – Web Community Creation or Maintenance; MOC – Multi-site Office/Agents Contacts by Email/Form; MCH – “Multi-lingual Choice”; REF – References to Traditional Marketing Communications; MOF – Multi-site Office Offline Details; MON – Multi-site Office Online Directory; MVD – Multi-site Vendor Details; MDN – Multi-site Details Non-Electronic; MUD – Multilingual Display Information; PFC - Price in Foreign Currency or Converter Provided; PDO – Payment and Deliver Online (Multi-sites); LUD – Links Updated Date; MOR – Multilingual Online Ordering (Multi-sites).