Communication Ethics Perspective

To decide if an IMC approach is ethical, use the approaches offered in Communication Ethics Literacy:

- Democratic
- Universalist/Humanitarian
- Codes, Procedures, and Standards
- Contextual
- Dialogic
- Narrative


An example of evaluating advertising through the narrative approach to communication ethics is in this article that uses Walter Fisher’s narrative paradigm.


Rhetorical Perspective

The rhetorical perspective looks at what symbols are being used to persuade and how people make meaning of those symbols. By “symbols” we also mean words, since words are symbolic of ideas. The Cheney article will help to see how this might look in a corporation and its identity, but you could also look at the COM 301 textbook (James Herrick) for the functions of rhetoric (rhetoric assists advocacy, distributes power, tests ideas, discovers facts, shapes knowledge, builds community). So you might consider questions such as: “How does this IMC campaign build community? How does it help to advocate for a position?”


Semiotic Perspective

The semiotic perspective can be considered part of the rhetorical perspective, but for the purposes of this project it’s easier to separate them out. To explain this, I’ve cited Christensen and Askegaard because their description of the Peircean semiotic triangle is very helpful (and Peirce is pronounced “purse”).

“The sign can, in principle, be anything ± a gesture, a logo, an advertisement, a slogan, a product, a package, a narrative, a written text, a set of behaviours, or even an entire persuasive campaign. The object, which the sign stands for, is sometimes also called the referent ± an equivalent to the notion of the world as it “is" in itself ± in the present context, for example, the so-called personality of a product or the “real" character of an organisation. Finally, the interpretant can be thought of as a
mental image of the interpreter created or stimulated by the sign ± an image that links the sign to its object or referent, just as the word `IBM' creates a mental image that links the three letters I, B and M with a large corporation that produces computers (303).”


**IMC Message Typology Model**

The message typology model looks at consistency in planned and unplanned messages. However, a flaw in the message typology model is its focus on ‘control.’ Control is an illusion; while you can control things like the color of your logo, you cannot control how people will make meaning of your logo and its color. To help you with a more textured approach to the Message Typology Model, read Torp’s article on integrated communications as consistency, not control.


**Synergy Perspective (combined with Engagement approach)**

The synergy model includes consistency, mission, and interactivity – what we sometimes call “coherence.” You can have a consistent message that’s ineffective and does not engage with your audiences. Coherence and its related idea of engagement are helpful when evaluating whether a brand is “walking the talk” or doing what it says it will do. For a more expansive understanding of engagement, refer to this article by Groom.