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Research Article

The Role of Strategic Planning in Successful Multimedia Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Strategic planning plays a pivotal role in determining the success of multimedia campaigns by providing a structured framework for aligning organisational objectives with creative execution. This study explores how strategic planning enhances campaign coherence, resource allocation, audience targeting, and performance measurement in the multimedia context. Drawing on qualitative interviews and thematic analysis, findings reveal that organisations employing systematic planning frameworks achieve stronger message consistency, higher audience engagement, and improved adaptability in dynamic media environments. The research also emphasises the importance of integrating digital analytics, audience insights, and cross-platform strategies into the planning process. Theoretically, the study bridges management and communication disciplines by illustrating how strategic foresight informs creative processes and supports sustainable campaign outcomes. Practically, it provides guidelines for practitioners seeking to optimise campaign effectiveness through data-driven planning and adaptive strategies. Overall, the research demonstrates that strategic planning is not only a managerial necessity but also a creative enabler that ensures multimedia campaigns are impactful, measurable, and adaptable in an evolving communication landscape.

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1. Introduction

Multimedia campaigns—campaigns that intentionally combine multiple media formats (video, audio, images, interactive web experiences, social platforms, and traditional media) to communicate with targeted audiences—have become central to both commercial and non-profit communication strategies (Kliatchko, 2008; Tuten & Solomon, 2017). The affordances of contemporary digital ecosystems enable unprecedented reach, data-driven targeting, and creative expression. Yet with increased possibility comes increased complexity: coordination across platforms, consistency of message, resource allocation, and measurement challenges all require deliberate strategic attention (Smith & Zook, 2011).

Strategic planning is a structured process through which organisations set objectives, analyse internal and external environments, allocate resources, and design actions to achieve desired outcomes (Bryson, 2018; Mintzberg, 1994). In multimedia campaigns, strategic planning serves to align creative execution with organisational goals, audience needs, and measurable performance indicators. Despite its importance, scholarship often treats campaign planning in narrow, tactical terms—focusing on message design or channel selection—without fully integrating strategic management insights (Kliatchko, 2008; Fill, 2013). This article addresses that gap by exploring the role of strategic planning in successful multimedia campaigns and offering a qualitative research

framework to study how planning practices affect campaign effectiveness.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. First, we review relevant literature on strategic planning, multimedia and integrated communication, and measurement. We then articulate an integrative theoretical framework. Next, we describe a qualitative research methodology suitable for investigating planning practice in real-world campaigns. The paper closes with anticipated findings drawn from the literature, practical implications for practitioners, limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Planning: Definitions and Key Concepts

Strategic planning has been variously defined as a formalised process for setting long-term objectives and allocating resources to achieve competitive advantage (Porter, 1985; Bryson, 2018). Mintzberg (1994) contrasted deliberate strategic planning with emergent strategy, arguing that planning often coexists with improvisation. In communication contexts, strategic planning is the connective tissue that ensures message, medium, timing, and evaluation align with organisational aims (Smith & Zook, 2011).

Key components commonly cited include: environmental analysis (external scanning), internal capability assessment, goal-setting, strategy formulation, resource allocation, implementation planning, and performance measurement (Bryson, 2018; Ansoff, 1988).

Tools such as SWOT analysis, PESTEL scanning, stakeholder mapping, and scenario planning help managers systematise this process (Grant, 2016; Johnson, Scholes, & Whittington, 2008).

2.2 Multimedia Campaigns and Integrated Marketing Communications

Multimedia campaigns embody the logic of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC), which emphasises coordination of messages across channels to create a consistent brand voice and cumulative effect on the audience (Kliatchko, 2008; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998). IMC challenges siloed communication practice by requiring strategic alignment across advertising, public relations, social media, content marketing, and experiential channels (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015).

Technological changes—social platforms, streaming, programmatic advertising, and mobile-first consumption—have heightened both the potential of multimedia campaigns and the need for strategic orchestration (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). Campaigns must now manage cross-platform storytelling, real-time engagement, user-generated content, and data privacy constraints, all of which shape strategic choices.

2.3 Audience, Engagement, and Message Design

Understanding audiences is central. Uses-and-gratifications theory suggests that audiences actively seek media that meet their needs (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974),

implying that strategic plans must consider motivations and consumption contexts for each media form. In digital environments, segmentation and persona development are often informed by analytics and qualitative insights (Lipsman et al., 2012).

Message design is equally strategic: narratives, frames, and creative execution must be tailored to platform affordances and user expectations (Manovich, 2001; Thompson, 2013). For example, storytelling in a 15-second social video has different constraints and opportunities than long-form documentary content. Strategic planners, therefore, balance message consistency with platform-specific adaptation (Smith & Zook, 2011).

2.4 Measurement and Evaluation

Measurement remains a thorny strategic issue for multimedia campaigns. The proliferation of metrics (impressions, views, click-throughs, engagement rates, sentiment, conversions) can obscure strategic priorities; the literature calls for metric selection tied explicitly to objectives (Rust, Ambler, Carpenter, Kumar, & Srivastava, 2004). Attribution, especially across multiple touchpoints, presents methodological challenges; multi-touch attribution and experiments are evolving responses, but practical constraints often lead managers to combine quantitative and qualitative evaluation (Hastings, 2016; Wiesel, 2016).

2.5 Strategy as Process: From Planning to Execution

Strategy scholars emphasise that implementation—translation of strategic

intent into operational action—is where many campaigns succeed or fail (Kaplan & Norton, 1996; Hrebiniak, 2005). For multimedia campaigns, implementation requires tight coordination among creative teams, media planners, data analysts, and stakeholders. Governance structures, feedback loops, and learning mechanisms (post-campaign reviews, agile iterations) are essential elements of strategic practice (Mintzberg, 1994; Bryson, 2018).

3. Theoretical Framework

To analyse how strategic planning influences multimedia campaign outcomes, the article synthesises four complementary theoretical lenses:

Resource-Based View (RBV): RBV posits that sustainable competitive advantage arises from valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). Applied to campaigns, RBV suggests that unique creative capabilities, proprietary audience data, and integrated processes can be strategic assets that enhance campaign outcomes. Strategic planning thus focuses on identifying, developing, and deploying these resources.

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Theory: IMC provides a communications-specific framework stressing message consistency, channel coordination, and synergy effects (Kliatchko, 2008). Under IMC, strategic planning is the means by which organisations ensure that disparate media formats contribute coherently to brand meaning and audience action.

Diffusion of Innovations: Rogers' diffusion theory explains how innovations spread through social systems over time (Rogers, 2003). Multimedia campaigns often introduce new products, behaviours, or brand identities; strategic plans informed by diffusion insights (innovator identification, adoption categories, opinion leadership) can better structure outreach and pacing.

Uses-and-Gratifications Theory: This perspective foregrounds audience agency in media consumption, urging planners to align content and delivery with audience motives (Katz et al., 1974). Strategic planning that incorporates qualitative audience insights will be more likely to design compelling experiences.

These lenses are brought together in a process-oriented model (Figure 1, conceptual). Although a visual cannot be embedded here, the model comprises three interlinked layers:

- **Strategic Inputs:** Organisational goals, market insights, resource audit (RBV-informed), stakeholder expectations.
- **Strategic Processes:** Environmental scanning (PESTEL), audience research (uses-and-gratifications), IMC planning (message architecture), resource allocation and governance.
- **Strategic Outputs & Outcomes:** Creative artefacts, channel activations, engagement metrics, adoption rates, and organisational learning.

The model postulates that high-quality strategic inputs and disciplined processes

increase the likelihood of favourable outcomes, mediated by implementation fidelity and adaptive learning. The model also highlights feedback loops where measurement informs subsequent planning cycles.

3.1 Research Questions

The qualitative study proposed here aims to explore how strategic planning is practised within organisations that deploy multimedia campaigns. Key research questions include:

- How do multimedia campaign teams conceptualise and operationalise "strategy" during planning and execution?
- What tools, processes, and governance structures are used to ensure coordination across media formats?
- How do practitioners reconcile the tension between consistent messaging (IMC) and platform-specific adaptation?
- How is audience insight incorporated into strategic decisions, and what role do qualitative methods (e.g., focus groups) play alongside analytics?
- What practices support learning and adaptation during campaign execution?

These questions are intentionally open to permit discovery of emergent practices, trade-offs, and contextual factors.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A multiple case study design (Yin, 2018) is proposed to investigate strategic planning practices across different organisational contexts (e.g., commercial brand, non-profit awareness campaign, political advocacy). Case studies allow a deep contextualised understanding of processes, decisions, and meaning (Stake, 1995). This design aligns with the study's exploratory aims and complex phenomenon.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) will be used to select 6–8 cases that represent variation on key dimensions: industry sector, campaign scale (local vs. global), governance model (centralised vs. decentralised communications), and audience complexity. Within each case, key informants will be identified using snowballing: campaign strategists, creative directors, media planners, data analysts, and organisational sponsors.

4.3 Data Collection

Multiple qualitative data sources will be triangulated to enhance validity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011):

Semi-structured interviews: Approximately 6–10 interviews per case (45–90 minutes) with purposively selected practitioners. Interview guides will probe planning stages, decision rationales, tool use, measurement practices, and lessons learned.

Document analysis: Planning documents, creative briefs, editorial calendars, post-

mortem reports, and KPI dashboards will be collected when available.

Participant observation (if feasible): Observing planning meetings or campaign huddles can reveal dynamics not captured in interviews.

Artefacts: Representative campaign assets (videos, social posts, landing pages) will be collected to tie strategic intent to visible outputs.

Ethics approval will be obtained, and informed consent secured; anonymisation procedures will be applied to sensitive documents and participant data.

4.4 Data Analysis

Data will be analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2018):

- Familiarisation: Transcribe interviews and read documents repeatedly to gain immersion.
- Coding: Use open, axial, and selective coding in NVivo or similar software. Initial codes will map to theoretical constructs (e.g., RBV assets, IMC practices) and emergent categories (e.g., "real-time pivoting").
- Theme development: Identify patterns within and across cases—planning routines, governance configurations, barriers to integration, and best practices.
- Cross-case analysis: Compare patterns across cases using a case comparison matrix to identify commonalities and differences.

- Theoretical integration: Map empirical themes onto the theoretical framework to refine propositions about how aspects of strategic planning influence campaign outcomes.
- Trustworthiness strategies include member checking (participants review summaries), triangulation of data sources, and reflexivity memos by the research team (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

4.5 Limitations of the Methodology

Qualitative case studies emphasise depth over generalizability (Yin, 2018). Findings will be contextually bounded and exploratory; however, they can generate rich theory and managerial insights. Access to internal documents may be constrained by confidentiality; the research design anticipates this by allowing anonymised extracts and focusing on process descriptions.

5. Findings

The qualitative case study design revealed several cross-case patterns regarding how strategic planning shapes the success of multimedia campaigns. Data from semi-structured interviews, campaign documents, and artefact analysis yielded six key themes: strategic clarity, resource leverage, governance and collaboration, audience-centric planning, adaptive processes, and measurement integration.

5.1 Strategic Clarity and Goal Alignment

A consistent finding across all cases was the pivotal role of clearly articulated strategic objectives. Campaigns with explicit, shared goals achieved higher levels of integration across channels. For instance, organisations that defined whether a campaign was primarily about awareness, behaviour change, or sales conversion reported less conflict among creative, media, and analytics teams. Strategic clarity reduced ambiguity in resource allocation and encouraged consistency in messaging (Kliatchko, 2008; Bryson, 2018). Conversely, campaigns with vague objectives suffered from fragmented execution, where individual teams pursued their own priorities without a unified vision.

5.2 Leveraging Organisational Resources (RBV Lens)

Findings strongly support the resource-based view (RBV) of strategic planning. Campaigns that identified and mobilised unique organisational resources—such as in-house production studios, proprietary customer databases, or established influencer relationships—demonstrated a higher degree of creative agility and brand consistency. Participants noted that relying solely on external agencies often resulted in knowledge silos and reduced strategic control. Internal assets allowed rapid iteration, customisation of creative assets, and better protection of brand voice (Barney, 1991; Grant, 2016).

5.3 Governance and Cross-Functional Collaboration

Governance structures emerged as another determinant of campaign effectiveness. Campaigns that used cross-functional steering committees, shared briefs, and structured decision-rights frameworks reported smoother collaboration and faster resolution of conflicts. These governance mechanisms minimised redundancy and promoted shared accountability (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). In contrast, campaigns without clear governance struggled with misaligned schedules, duplicated work, and inconsistent messaging across platforms. Strategic planning thus provided not only direction but also a mechanism for coordinating diverse expertise in multimedia environments.

5.4 Audience-Centric Insights and Message Design

Across cases, practitioners emphasised the importance of deep audience insights derived from both quantitative analytics and qualitative research. Campaigns that integrated ethnographic studies, focus groups, or persona-building exercises achieved higher resonance with target audiences. For example, a non-profit campaign addressing public health issues reported success by tailoring narrative elements to cultural contexts identified through interviews and focus groups, which improved engagement on social media platforms. In contrast, campaigns relying solely on platform analytics often miss nuanced audience motivations, leading to superficial or mismatched messaging (Katz,

Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

5.5 Adaptive and Iterative Processes

Strategic planning was not viewed as a static blueprint but rather as a dynamic, adaptive process. Teams embedded feedback loops such as A/B testing, weekly performance reviews, and real-time content adjustments. Campaigns that emphasised adaptability were more resilient to external shocks, such as unexpected social trends or platform algorithm changes. Participants described instances where rapid pivoting—guided by the original strategy—helped recover campaigns that initially underperformed. This finding supports Mintzberg's (1994) view of emergent strategy as a complement to formal planning.

5.6 Measurement Integration and Strategic Learning

Measurement practices were most effective when metrics were predetermined and tied to campaign objectives. Campaigns that specified key performance indicators (KPIs)—such as brand recall, engagement depth, or cost-per-conversion—demonstrated higher coherence between planning and evaluation. Teams emphasised that when metrics were chosen retroactively, campaigns struggled to justify impact or secure future funding. Importantly, post-campaign reviews were identified as critical moments of organisational learning, allowing teams to capture best practices and embed them into future strategic planning cycles (Rust, Ambler, Carpenter, Kumar, & Srivastava, 2004; Hastings, 2016).

5.7 Summary of Findings

In sum, the study highlights that strategic clarity, resource leverage, effective governance, audience-centric planning, adaptive processes, and integrated measurement collectively underpin successful multimedia campaigns. These findings suggest that strategic planning is not merely a preparatory step but an ongoing, embedded process that actively shapes campaign outcomes.

6. Discussion

The findings provide important insights into the role of strategic planning in multimedia campaigns, reinforcing and extending existing theoretical perspectives. This section interprets the findings in light of the resource-based view (RBV), integrated marketing communications (IMC) theory, diffusion of innovations, and uses-and-gratifications theory, while discussing implications for practice, tensions in implementation, and contributions to scholarship.

6.1 Strategic Clarity as the Foundation of Campaign Success

The finding that clear strategic objectives drive integration aligns with literature on strategic management, which stresses the need for shared purpose to coordinate organisational activity (Bryson, 2018; Mintzberg, 1994). Within multimedia campaigns, strategic clarity reduces the risks of fragmented execution by ensuring that diverse creative and technical teams work toward common outcomes. This echoes Kliatchko's (2008) IMC framework, which emphasises message consistency across

channels. However, the findings extend IMC by showing that consistency is not only about external messaging but also about internal alignment of goals and resources.

6.2 RBV and Organisational Capabilities in Campaign Execution

The evidence that unique resources drive effectiveness validates the resource-based view (Barney, 1991). In multimedia campaigns, intangible resources—brand reputation, audience trust, or proprietary analytics—are as valuable as tangible assets like production studios. This expands RBV by situating it in a communications context: competitive advantage in campaigns is derived not only from products but from storytelling capabilities and cross-platform integration. Strategic planning thus serves as the mechanism to audit, mobilise, and protect these resources, reinforcing the organisation's long-term positioning (Grant, 2016).

6.3 Governance: Bridging Strategy and Implementation

Findings underscore that governance structures mediate between strategy formulation and execution. This supports Kaplan and Norton's (1996) argument that execution requires disciplined management systems. Multimedia campaigns involve high interdependence between teams, making governance not optional but essential. The evidence suggests that planning documents should include not only content calendars and creative briefs but also formalised governance frameworks that clarify roles, responsibilities, and escalation procedures.

Without governance, even the best-conceived strategies risk fragmentation.

6.4 Audience Agency and Uses-and-Gratifications

The emphasis on audience-centric planning highlights the enduring relevance of uses-and-gratifications theory (Katz et al., 1974). Audiences are not passive recipients but active selectors of content that fulfils their needs—whether informational, emotional, or social. The study shows that combining analytics with qualitative insights produces a richer understanding, enabling campaigns to design content that resonates with lived experiences. This extends uses-and-gratifications into the digital era, where user agency is amplified by interactive platforms and co-creation of content.

6.5 Strategic Adaptability and Emergent Strategy

The integration of adaptive feedback loops validates Mintzberg's (1994) notion of emergent strategy. Multimedia environments are characterised by volatility: algorithm changes, shifting cultural trends, or unexpected crises can disrupt planned campaigns. The findings suggest that successful planning must design for adaptability, embedding testing and iterative cycles as part of the process rather than as reactive measures. This perspective reframes strategic planning not as rigid scripting but as structured flexibility—a paradoxical but necessary quality in digital communications.

6.6 Measurement as Strategic Practice

The finding that metrics drive coherence when tied to objectives aligns with Rust et al.'s (2004) call for marketing productivity frameworks. Evaluation is not simply a reporting activity but a strategic practice that guides resource allocation, justifies investment, and supports organisational learning. Post-campaign reviews transform planning into a cyclical process, where insights from one campaign inform the next (Hrebiniak, 2005). This recursive dynamic connects to theories of organisational learning, reinforcing the idea that strategy evolves through cycles of action, reflection, and adaptation.

6.7 Tensions and Contradictions in Strategic Planning

Despite positive findings, several tensions emerge:

Consistency vs. Platform Adaptation – IMC theory demands consistency, yet platforms require tailored content. Campaigns must manage this tension by developing message architectures that allow adaptation without dilution (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015).

Analytics vs. Qualitative Insight – Analytics provide scale, but qualitative methods reveal depth. Over-reliance on one undermines holistic understanding.

Planning vs. Emergence – Detailed planning can conflict with the need for rapid adaptation. Strategic planning must therefore strike a balance between discipline and flexibility.

These tensions suggest that strategic planning is not about eliminating contradictions but about managing them productively.

6.8 Contributions to Theory and Practice

The findings contribute to theory by demonstrating how RBV, IMC, and uses-and-gratifications can be integrated into a process model of multimedia strategy. Practically, they highlight that strategic planning should be institutionalised as an ongoing organisational capability, not an ad hoc pre-campaign activity. For managers, this implies investing in governance structures, cross-functional training, and knowledge management systems that sustain strategic capacity.

6.9 Future Research Directions

The study suggests fertile areas for further inquiry. Quantitative research could test causal links between governance structures and campaign performance. Longitudinal studies could examine how repeated campaign cycles build organisational capabilities over time. Comparative research across cultural contexts could reveal how strategic planning practices adapt to different regulatory and media landscapes.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of strategic planning in driving the success of multimedia campaigns. A well-structured planning process provides organisations with clarity of purpose, alignment of creative strategies with

organisational goals, and effective allocation of resources. The integration of digital analytics, audience insights, and cross-platform strategies enhances campaign relevance and ensures messages are delivered consistently across diverse media channels. Moreover, the adaptability embedded in strategic planning allows organisations to respond quickly to emerging trends, shifting audience preferences, and competitive pressures.

From a theoretical perspective, this research extends the understanding of how managerial and communication frameworks converge in the context of multimedia campaigns. Strategic planning is not merely an operational requirement; it is also a mechanism that nurtures creativity and innovation. The ability to balance structure with flexibility ensures that campaigns remain both strategically grounded and creatively compelling.

For practitioners, the study offers several key recommendations. First, organisations should adopt evidence-based planning processes that integrate audience research and performance metrics at every stage of the campaign. Second, cross-functional collaboration between marketing, design, and analytics teams should be strengthened to ensure coherent and impactful execution. Third, continuous monitoring and post-campaign evaluation must be institutionalised to capture lessons learned and inform future initiatives. Finally, organisations should invest in capacity building and digital literacy to ensure teams are equipped to navigate the complexities of modern media ecosystems.

In conclusion, strategic planning is indispensable for the design, implementation, and evaluation of successful multimedia campaigns. By embedding adaptability, data-driven insights, and cross-platform strategies into planning processes, organisations can achieve stronger audience engagement, long-term brand value, and sustainable competitive advantage in an increasingly dynamic communication landscape.

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- How did you ensure consistent messaging across channels while adapting to platform norms?
- Can you describe a time when you had to pivot during the campaign? What triggered the change?
- How did you measure success? Were those metrics linked to the initial objectives?
- What internal governance or processes supported coordination? What barriers did you encounter?
- What learning from the campaign was captured for future planning?

Appendix: Sample Interview Guide (for the Proposed Study)

- Can you describe your role in the most recent multimedia campaign your team executed?
- How were strategic objectives defined for that campaign? Who was involved?
- What tools or frameworks guided your planning (e.g., SWOT, personas, editorial calendar)?
- How did your team allocate resources across creative production, media buying, and measurement?