

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Marketing is an integral part of every organization and the term marketing communications was initially seen to be a managerial task. Most marketing communication methodologies are focused on advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing and public relations. The new technological innovations provide an opportunity to enhance the visibility products and promotions. Further, they actively engage consumers through various media. Due to the continuous development and innovations in the digital media the original proposal of IMC framework has become partially or fully obsolete. The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the theoretical review of IMC during the last decade.

Key words: Marketing,IMC,Customer,Communciation ,Dimensions

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the competitive markets that now exist, marketing is an essential part of a company's business. The term marketing equals advertising, but that is a classical myth of recent history. Marketing is not a one-way communication for companies to sell as much as possible; instead it centers on the exchanges of value between producers and consumers to satisfy both their needs and wants. By adopting a market-driven strategy, companies can truly understand the needs of the market and the basis for the market of their customers which results in an increased customer value and profitability.

The field of marketing is not static but has changed and evolved over the years. So marketers and companies need to think in new ways about the tactics and strategies to be deployed to create or sustain the competitive advantage. The birth of the marketing discipline can be sourced back to the beginning of the twentieth century and had become a keystone-philosophy in the mid-fifties. In the sixties, it was declared the savior of companies; in the seventies marketing got accused for being unresponsive to greater societal issues, while the eighties saw the marketing concept causing discontent due to over-segmenting markets and focusing too-much on customer needs. When firms moved towards the twenty first century marketing communications appeared to be the main bulwark of sustainable competitive advantage. And, with the recent revolution 1. With the Internet 2. As a new marketing channel, the way marketing is taught and practised has once again changed to meet the new needs from the online customers.

Marketing communication or traditionally termed promotion is part of the 4P marketing mix with the others being product, price and place. All 4Ps have a part in the communication process but only marketing communications or promotions have the power to inform, remind, persuade and induce action in consumers. However, marketing communication in today's society plays other roles than the traditional one-way communication from the sender to the receiver such as informing, listening and answering. The marketing communication must therefore be interactive and be a two-way communication process. Thus, marketing communication that is a two-way communication simultaneously is preferred as it is the only real form of communication.

Everyone from the academic field to marketing organizations agrees that the area of marketing communications has dramatically changed over the last few decades and this

change in the market environment is the most basic driving force behind Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC). It was in the beginning of the 1990s when the new popular term IMC appeared in the field of marketing and it has influenced the way companies and organizations act in the fierce competition in today's open economy. The essence of IMC is a call to optimize the effectiveness of marketing communications through greater tactical coordination and a strong brand strategy driven by customer feedback.

2. LITERATURE SURVEY

a) In Information Technology b) Emerging

The first definition of IMC came from the American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1989, which means the collaborative pattern of different promotional methods for a marketing campaign.

Grein, A. F. and Gould, S. J. (1996)¹ are among the early investigators of IMC for international communication. They have developed a modified concept of globally integrated marketing communications. To define globally integrated marketing communications, three definitions of integrated marketing communications are considered and modifications offered. The major extension provided by the new definition is a focus on the horizontal (across countries) dimension of marketing communications. This merges the integrated marketing communications approach with the international marketing strategy and communication perspectives. Based on the derived definition and analysis of the standardized adaptation issue in global communications, a contingency approach to globally integrated marketing communications is provided which incorporates both horizontal (across countries) and vertical (across promotion disciplines) factors that impact global communications strategy decisions.

Grove, S. J., Carlson, L., and Dorsch, M. J. (2002)² examined the degree to which IMC might be manifested in services advertising. Using one of Lovelock's typologies of services as a framework for classifying different services with respect to their tangibility, the authors examined ads in each of four service product categories to assess advertisers' efforts to address the tangibility of service offerings via IMC. They found few differences with regard to incorporation of IMC across four service types, with the exception that services advertisements that reflected tangible acts (lawn care, hairstyling) were more highly

integrated than services ads for intangible acts (education, retailing, banking). Results were discussed in terms of the implications for developing better services advertising.

Reid, M. (2002)³ conducted a study to evaluate the importance of IMC in the dynamic market condition. He used integrated marketing audit (Duncan and Moriarty, 1997) as a mechanism to analyse the degree of IMC management and brand performance. The result reveals that a higher degree of integration in marketing communications management results in better brand performance.

Flint, D. J. (2004)⁴ examined the effect of supply chain management with respect to cost reduction opportunities. The supply chain management can facilitate marketing strategy and lead to the creation of superior customer value, satisfaction, and loyalty which, in turn, lead to improved product profit margins, overall firm profitability, and overall corporate growth. However, marketing strategy is problematic in global supply chains. Specifically, four significant strategic marketing challenges exist that relate to the development and execution of marketing strategy in global supply chains. This article draws attention to these challenges to stimulating managerial and research efforts that will move marketing strategy through the 21st century.

Christensen, L. T., Torp, S., and Firat, A. F. (2005)⁵ explored the fact that under conditions of post modernity, the market is too complex to respond within the IMC-framework. While the desire of IMC scholars and practitioners to reinstate order and predictability in an increasingly disordered and fragmented world is understandable, such a mission may be misguided. This paper seeks to discuss the possibility that such attempts instead precipitate the production of complexity of an even more unpredictable nature.

Tsai, S. P. (2005)⁶ proposes a Holistic Consumer Experience Management framework. This framework is the key mission of IMC which is to effectively manage the mediated impression of and the direct encounter with the brand, so that synergism among all the interrelated elements of IMC, including research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, consumer service management, marketing message construction, and communication program execution is achieved.

Dresler-Hawke, E., and Veer, E. (2006)⁷ studied the IMC with the behaviour ecological model. Social marketing strategy is targeted in order to maximize societal change. This paper uses Multi-levelled/Multimedia Model of Social Change. This amalgamates integrated marketing communication principles and the Behavioural Ecological Model. It provides a basis for understanding how consistent messages and methods of communication affect long-term behavioural or attitudinal change at the individual and societal levels.

Holm, O. (2006)⁸ analyzed the emergence of IMC as a significant example of development in the marketing discipline. It has influenced thinking and acting among all types of companies and organizations facing the realities of competition in an open economy.

Pitta, D. A., Weisgal, M., and Lynagh, P. (2006)⁹ explore the developments in the field of integrated marketing communication and the changing relevance of its component processes that have implications for marketing managers.

Grove, S. J., Carlson, L., and Dorsch, M. J. (2007)¹⁰ investigated the incidence and nature of IMC evident in the advertising of products over time and across product classifications for services versus physical goods. Their goal was to shed light on the use of IMC in practice vis-à-vis its theoretical relevance in the advertising and business literature.

Elliott, R., and Boshoff, C. (2008)¹¹ described the impact of certain business orientations present in small tourism businesses, on the successful implementation of IMC. If these business orientations can be identified and their relative influence on IMC is determined, it will allow small tourist businesses to access markets more readily. The results indicate that having a marketing orientation, an entrepreneurial orientation and a pro-active competitor orientation are important for the successful implementation of IMC in small tourism businesses in South Africa.

Edmiston-Strasser, D. M. (2009)¹² conceptualized the findings of his survey: Qualitative interviews were conducted with nine of the survey respondents. A four stage IMC framework, based on studies of the American Productivity and Quality Center, served as the foundation for the research. The findings revealed the importance of leadership and formal communication mechanisms and demonstrated that IMC strengthens branding.

Finne, Å., and Grönroos, C. (2009)¹³ conducted a study on IMC towards the company integrates the marketing message conveyed to the consumer. This paper switches the focus by highlighting the consumer's message integration. A review of the marketing communication literature on meaning creation uncovered four central factors influencing the process of meaning creation. However, this literature seems to be lacking a broad model that includes all these factors as well as a specific study of the nature and impact of future factors. Combining insights from marketing communication with findings from research in relationship marketing, this paper presents a holistic model that is based on the consumer perspective and takes into account the impact of all four factors on message integration. By shedding light on the influence of the future time factor on message reception, this paper presents an emerging Relationship Communication Model (RCM). It offers researchers and marketers a useful tool for understanding and managing marketing communications more effectively.

Mangold, W. G., and Faulds, D. J. (2009)¹⁴ state that social media is a hybrid element of the promotion mix, because in a traditional sense it enables companies to talk to their customers, while in a non-traditional sense it enables customers to talk directly to one another. The content, timing, and frequency of the social media-based conversations occurring between consumers are outside managers' direct control. This stands in contrast to the traditional integrated marketing communications paradigm whereby a high degree of control is present. Therefore, managers must learn to shape consumer discussions in a manner that is consistent with the organization's mission and performance goals. Methods by which this can be accomplished are delineated herein. They include providing consumers with networking platforms, and using blogs, social media tools, and promotional tools to engage customers.

Castronovo and Cristina et al. (2012)¹⁵ reviewed the different elements of IMC. This research illustrates the profile of current literatures with respect to Word-of-Mouth (WOM) marketing, alternative marketing communications, and social media as viable components of integrated marketing communications. Additionally, this paper aims to develop an integrated alternative marketing communication conceptual model that can be applied by industrial practitioners to help them achieve their marketing objectives.

Mihart & Camelia (2012)¹⁶ stated that IMC is one of the most controversial areas of research in terms of combining the role of simple and complex promotional strategies in practice. But

many researches have insisted that IMC is the perfect way of achieving the company's objective and it increases the impact on consumer behaviour.

3. COLLECTIVE FINDINGS

The IMC primarily helps to enhance the effectiveness of marketing campaign through different media. Two promotional strategies have formulated for global IMC, i.e., Horizontal (across countries) and vertical (across promotional disciplines). The difference is observed on the impact of IMC with reference to various product/services. Hence, the IMC approach is to be carefully evaluated for new dimensions. IMC helps to enhance the brand image and preferences. The implementation team should possess the technical skill to manage the process involved in IMC. Further, IMC is useful to enhance the customer engagement, thereby improving the visibility and sales.

4. CONCLUSION

The marketing field is an always evolving and developing area in the business field. IMC is one of the biggest developments during the last decades. The IMC is highly integrated with the latest technologies like the internet and mobile. Hence, it assists a company to promote their products to their target customers more easily as compared to the earlier scenario and also provides a platform for two-way communications. This enables a new dimension to the company to forefront its existing customer's feedback to convince the new customers better than before.

5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE WORK

Many reviews confirm that the IMC is perfectly exhibiting the objective of the company. Still some controversy exists in terms of applying the promotional strategies in practice. The point of interest towards implementation of IMC may be different from country to country for various reasons. It is suggested that the future study should concentrate on alleviate the IMC for practical implications.

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