

A REVIEW OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

Vishal Lakade¹, Dr. Mrs. Surya Ramdas²

¹Research Scholar, Savitribai Phule Pune University, Email: lakadevishal@gmail.com

²Director, Smt. Hiraben Nanavati Institute of Management and Research for Women, Pune.
Email: ramdas.surya@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: To deliver a relevant and consistent message about the products to the target market, integrated marketing communication (IMC) plays an important role. Hence, this study aims to understand the concept of integrated marketing communication along with the challenges.

Methodology: In order to understand and explain the nature of integrated marketing communications as well as the tools that marketers employ; this research employs a qualitative analysis.

Findings: The integrated marketing communications play important role in reaching the consumers and help to convey a clear and consistent message to create a brand image. However, there are some challenges to deploy the integrated marketing communications.

Practical implications: The concept of the integrated marketing communication along with the challenges are analysed from the extant literature.

Originality/value: This article represents an overview of the integrated marketing communication for academics and practitioners to get the glimpse of the happenings in this incessantly evolving field.

Conclusion: The integrated marketing communication is integral to reach to the customers and keep engaging the existing customers. Studies show that IMC helps in delivering a coherent message and increase brand equity.

Keywords: Integrated marketing communications, marketing communications, brand equity

1. Introduction

Any company uses a set of controllable variables to reach out to the customers and influence their responses so that the company can achieve the goals set in terms of sales volume, market share etc. thereby generating the profit. The marketers have to use the optimum combination of the elements and these are grouped as product, price, place and promotion which are 4P's of the marketing (Singh, 2012). The marketing manager has to arrange all the marketing activities to meet the interests of the company in the long and short run (Borden, 1984).

Out of which, 'promotion' element encompasses the activities and functions such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing etc. to communicate and persuade the

customers. This element can influence thinking, emotions and the behavior of the customers (Al Muala & Al Qurneh, 2012; Munusamy et al., 2008). The marketing communication plays a critical role and it should be placed in the media that the target market is likely come across and the communication should deliver consistent message about the product (Munusamy et al., 2008).

To deliver a relevant and consistent message about the products to the target market, integrated marketing communication (IMC) plays an important role.

The concept of IMC is widely used but considering the available literature and practices across industries, it lacks the universally accepted definition. However, following characteristics help to summarize the understanding of IMC (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010).

- Customer to be considered first while developing a communication strategy
- All communication efforts should be directed at customers along with well-established relationship between the company and the customers is required
- To deliver the correct message, all contact points and communication activities should be integrated into the strategy
- Synergy amongst all communication disciplines

Although there are various tools such as sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations etc., it can be said that the most effective marketing tool is to use internet as a communication channel. It has changed the way consumers behave and thereby creating new buying patterns (Grubor & Jaksa, 2018).

2. Objectives of the Study

The objective of this study is to

- To understand the marketing communication
- To explain the importance of integrated marketing communication
- To learn the role of integrated marketing communication in increasing brand equity

3. Literature Analysis and Synthesis

The marketing communication is evolved over the years and it is integral part corporate communication strategies. The concept of IMC emerged in mid-1990's and since then marketers and academicians contributed to literature on various aspects of IMC with varied opinion.

3.1 The concept of Communication

The communication is defined as the process of using messages to understand the meaning. The word communication is derived from the Latin word *communicare* which means "to make common" or "to share". The communication involves the components such as people, the message, the channel, feedback, code, encoding & decoding, and noise. People component involve the message sender who sends the message and the receiver who receives the message. The message could be verbal or non-verbal. The channel is a medium through which the message is transmitted. The receiver's response is called feedback. The code components have verbal or non-verbal codes in terms of systematic arrangement of the message. Encoding involves the

formatting the message into a code and decoding means to understand the coded message. Noise is anything that hinders the understanding of the message during the encoding or the decoding (Judy C. Pearson et al., 2011).

Hence, the communication is a common understanding of the shared message. The understanding can also be affected by the receiver's own perception or the context or the situation. In the context of this study, the communication is between the marketer and the rural customer.

3.2 Marketing

The marketer has to communicate about the market offerings to rural customers. This is a part of the process called 'marketing'.

The American Marketing Association defines the marketing as the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large (*Definitions of Marketing*, 2017). It is implicit that the marketing involves the understanding of the customers' needs and fulfilling the same by benefitting all the stakeholders involved in the process.

3.3 Marketing communications

Hence, marketing communications is the process of sharing the message with the customer and having the common understanding with respect to the market offering to create a value for all the stakeholders involved.

John Egan defines the marketing communications (marcom)¹ as "the means by which a supplier of goods, services, values and/or ideas represents itself to its target audience with the goal of stimulating dialogue, leading to better commercial or other relationships." The essence of marketing communication lies in establishing the exchange of the information between the marketer and the customer. There are many tools used by the marketer to share the message with the customers. However, marketing communication has evolved over the years and is affected by other factors such as advent of the internet. The following are the noticeable movements (John Egan, 2015).

- Earlier mass communication was used but later on targeted communication is used.
- Mechanical or analogue tools were used in specific but digital tools are more popular now a days.
- Selective communication tools such as advertising were specifically used but with the changing circumstances IMC (Integrated marketing communications) is preferred.

The marketing communications perform various tasks such as informing the customers, persuading them to buy the market offerings, reinforcing the messages and hence differentiate the product or service (Chris Fill & Sarah Turnbull, 2019).

¹ Marcom is popular short form of 'Marketing communication)

Task	Sub-task	Explanation
Differentiate	Position	To make a product or service stand out in the category
Reinforce	Remind, reassure, refresh	To consolidate and strengthen previous messages and experiences
Inform	Make aware, educate	To make known and advise of availability and features
Persuade	Purchase or make further enquiry	To encourage further positive purchase-related behaviour

Source: (Chris Fill & Sarah Turnbull, 2019)

Table: DRIP elements of marketing communications

3.4 Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

Traditional marketing differentiates advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, social media, and public relation efforts separately as per contemporary times but the integration of all these techniques is integral owing to the technological advancements to deliver the consistent and unified message to the customer in present times (Saeed et al., 2013). With recent advancements in technology, IMC can give personalized communication through digital media with low cost (Desai, 2019). But the consumers have become savvy and sophisticated now, and the number of marketing channels have increased, and the market is divided into smaller segments making marketers' job hard to influence and pursue consumer because many irrelevant messages reach the consumer (Kitchen, 2017).

Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn introduced the concept of IMC in 1993, mentioning that the new focus is on the consumer, customer, or prospect and not on the organization's sales or profit goals, IMC is consumer-oriented concept. It is also explained that the 4 P's turned into Lauterborn's 4 C's - consumer, cost, convenience, communication – study consumer wants and needs to know consumer, understand cost involved to satisfy the want or need along with thinking convenience to buy and communication with the consumer rather than promotion (Don E. Schultz et al., 1993).

Since the emergence of the concept of IMC, it has been defined as different views by different authors. The popular definitions are listed in the following table.

Writer	Date	Definition
American Association of Advertising Agencies	1989	A concept of marketing communications planning that recognises the added value in a programme that integrates a variety of strategic disciplines – e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact.

Schultz	1991	The process of managing all sources of information about a product/service to which a customer or prospect is exposed, which behaviourally moves the customer towards a sale and maintains customer loyalty.
Keegan et al.	1992	The strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organisation to collectively influence its perceived brand value.
Kotler et al.	1999	IMC is the concept under which a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organisation and its products.
Duncan	2002	A cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven purposeful dialogue with them.
Schultz & Schultz	2004	IMC is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communication programmes over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences.
Kliatchko	2005	IMC is the concept and process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centred and results-driven brand communication programmes over time.
Kliatchko	2008	IMC is audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs (Kliatchko, 2016).

Source: (Kerr et al., 2008) article, adapted further by author

Table: Definitions of IMC

Though the concept of IMC is evolved over the years and there have been various opinions, by this time, all agree that IMC is a strategic communication tool and is part and parcel of the strategy of the firm. Moreover, with the advent in the technology, IMC becomes a promising way if the marketers want to communicate with the customers or potential customers.

3.5 IMC Process

The success of the IMC depends on the correct combination of the tools used for a specific market type. Generally, the IMC process encompasses the steps including the identification of the target market, understanding and deciding the communication objectives, designing the

communication, selection of media and budget allocation, deciding the marketing mix and measuring the results of the IMC practices (Shakeel ul Rehman & M. Syed Ibrahim, 2011).

3.6 IMC tools

Various tools are used for Integrated marketing communication efforts to be successful. The summary is mentioned in the following table no.

Tool	Main specifications	Main application
Advertising	1. Non-personal 2. One way 3. Paid	1. Brand awareness 2. Brand image 3. Encourage a response
Sales promotion	1. Short term 2. Encourage an immediate response	1. Facilitate the buying decision
Direct marketing	1. Direct and two-way 2. Data-based 3. Using wide range of media	1. Enabling dialogue with the customer 2. Product and services customization
Public relations	1. Create and control brand news 2. No media spending 3. The most credible MC	1. Formal channel of communication with society especially in crisis management 2. Reinforcement and modify brand image
Personal selling	1. Face to face communication 2. The most effective and expensive MC	1. Dominant tool for B2B and special products in B2C 2. Brand message personalization
Events and sponsorship	1. Create, sponsor or participate in celebration, contests and trade fairs	1. Active involvement of customers 2. Brand public announcement and reinforcement

Source: (Ekhlassi et al., 2012)

Integrated marketing communication plan is continuous approach. Also, specifically in rural India, Public relation and advertising are mostly used and preferred by retailers. Sales promotion is also favored by the retailers to promote their business. As compared to the other marketing communication elements direct marketing is chosen and executed by very few retailers (Sarathy & Sasikumar, 2017). Whereas Syed (Syed Irfan Shafi & C Madhavaiah, 2013) mentioned that modern marketers use direct marketing and interactive media as major promotional mix to

communicate with the customers. For B2B and consumer product companies, direct marketing plays a major role.

3.7 IMC challenges

In the modern digital era, the taste and preferences of the consumers are changing constantly. So, the marketers face the internal and external challenges while exercising IMC (Shakeel ul Rehman & M. Syed Ibrahim, 2011). Although, it is accepted widely that IMC plays an important role in delivering the communication, there are some significant challenges faced to get optimal performance out of it. Diverse culture and social value are also on the list of challenges including inadequate marketing budget, lack of required skills along with less creativity and innovation, lack of strategic consistency, and the most critical being the lack of standard measurement process (Sisodia Surendra & Telrandhe Narendra, 2010). However, no attempt has been made to overcome the challenges faced.

In the backdrop of the measurement of the effectiveness of IMC, Završnik & Jerman (2011), studied the conceptualization of IMC and empirically measured the concept of IMC. Researchers found that IMC is effective when the messages are coherent and consistent. When there are different communication campaigns for different target groups, in such cases, knowing the customers, product brands and their communication must be considered.

One of the challenges is to use the same design in all media including online and offline is the design of marketing content. (Udipti Jaiswal, 2017), focused on finding the consistency and cohesiveness of the design elements used in campaign design and the impact of Integrated marketing communication design on consumers. The design elements were studied through case study of two major players in the fast-food sector – Mc Donald's and KFC. Researcher found that integrated marketing communication design is not a time-consuming process though many researchers earlier concluded that it is a time-consuming process. Researcher also concluded that there is a lack of consistency in the execution of design elements and integrated marketing communication has greater impact on consumers. However, the process of developing the design for the campaign was not considered in the study.

The technology advancement has really benefitted IMC to deliver the consistent and central message to the consumer about the product or brand, but the infrastructure is the barrier in some cases. (Desai, 2019), discussed on whether IMC is challenge or opportunity and concluded that with growing users of internet and smartphone penetration, marketers can take advantage by integrating the message on digital media. Also concluded that some countries lack mature IT infrastructure and marketers may have to use both online and off-line media. The author also argued on the challenges of IMC but did not focus with respect to Indian rural market.

3.8 Role of IMC in branding

The research shows that there is a relationship between IMC and the branding. IMC is no longer just a communication process, but one associated with management and with brands (KITCHEN et al., 2004). If the components of IMC are used correctly then they help in increasing the brand equity. Obviously, IMC plays a very important role in branding (Syed Irfan Shafi & C Madhavaiah, 2013).

Effective IMC is indispensable part of an effective brand equity strategy of a firm (Madhavaram et al., 2005) [24]. However, modern IMC tools are more effective than the traditional IMC tools. With the integration of social media and digital marketing within IMC, brand equity creation is possible (Kushwaha et al., 2020).

(Eberechukwu & Chukwuma, 2016), points out that IMC has influence on customer-based brand equity (CBBE). IMC has positive impact on communications, creativity, and cause consistency in communications. The firms using IMC as strategic tool have competitive advantage over other firms.

(Reid et al., 2005) made attempt to develop a model linking the relationship amongst Integrated marketing communication, Market orientation and Brand orientation. According to them, an attempt to introduce and develop IMC may not be successful in the organization which has low brand orientation and low market orientation.

Hence, IMC helps to reach the marketer's message to the customer, make them aware of the brand and hence create brand awareness (Shakeel ul Rehman & M. Syed Ibrahim, 2011). The brand communication through IMC as a tool can lead to brand awareness and brand equity amongst the customers (Selvakumar, 2014).

3.9 IMC requirement

Many companies which use IMC, invest in developing the customer database every year which contains information of customer details such as phone numbers, email ids etc. (Syed Irfan Shafi & C Madhavaiah, 2013) In fact, this is one of the requirements to implement IMC so that this database information is used by telemarketers to contact the customers.

4. Contribution/ Practical implications

This article is a detailed analysis of the extant literature to understand the concept of the integrated marketing communication along with the challenges, various tools used to unify the message and IMC process. This study contributes to the discussion of IMC which is a continuously evolving approach used by marketers. This study can be helpful to understand the nature of IMC and is input to marketers to start off the implementation of IMC.

5. Limitations and Scope related to Further Studies

An effort has been made to synthesize the extant literature to include the concepts of IMC, various tools, the importance along with the process. However, the measurement of IMC could not be discussed. Further research can be conducted to measure IMC and its success. Also, the effect of IMC on consumer behavior can be studied further.

6. Conclusions

The marketers use various strategies to reach the customers to deliver a message to persuade them. Integrated marketing communication is an important and integral tool to integrate the customer insight from their point of view. Modern integrated marketing communication is more than just sharing the same communication across the all channels. IMC is a continuous approach. The concept of IMC has evolved over the years. Although, the literature shows there is no common definition of IMC, the 'customer first' approach is more used. There are many challenges faced to implement IMC. However, to realize the true potential of IMC and to

improve the customer reception of unified message across the board, the customer focus is utmost important. IMC also helps to increase brand equity, brand awareness and brand image.

7. References

- Al Muala, A., & Al Qurneh, M. (2012). Assessing the Relationship between Marketing Mix and Loyalty through Tourists Satisfaction in Jordan Curative Tourism. *Academic & Scholarly Research Journal*, 4(2). www.aasrc.org/aasrj
- Borden, N. H. (1984). *The Concept of the Marketing Mix*.
- Chris Fill, & Sarah Turnbull. (2019). *Marketing Communications Touchpoints, Sharing and Disruption* (Eighth). Pearson UK.
https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Marketing_Communications/6oyfDwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0&kptab=overview
- Definitions of Marketing*. (2017). American Marketing Association. <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing-what-is-marketing/>
- Desai, A. (2019). *Integrated Marketing Communication Then and Today-A Challenge or An Opportunity?* <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344348937>
- Don E. Schultz, Stanley I. Tannenbaum, & Robert F. Lauterborn. (1993). *The New Marketing Paradigm Integrated Marketing Communications*. NTC Publications.
- Eberechukwu, A. J., & Chukwuma, A. (2016). International journal of management and economics invention Integrated Marketing Communication in Building Customer-Based Brand equity: A Review Paper. *International Journal of Management and Economics Invention*, 2(3). www.rajournals.in
- Ekhlassi, A., Maghsoodi, V., & Mehrmanesh, S. (2012). Determining the Integrated Marketing Communication Tools for Different Stages of Customer Relationship in Digital Era. *International Journal of Information and Electronics Engineering*.
<https://doi.org/10.7763/ijiee.2012.v2.202>
- Grubor, A., & Jaksa, O. (2018). Internet Marketing as a Business Necessity. *Interdisciplinary Description of Complex Systems*, 16(2), 265–274. <https://doi.org/10.7906/indecs.16.2.6>
- John Egan. (2015). *Marketing Communications* (Second). SAGE Publications.
https://www.google.co.in/books/edition/Marketing_Communications/UB6JCwAAQBAJ?hl=en&gbpv=0
- Judy C. Pearson, Paul E. Nelson, Scott Titsworth, & Lynn Harter. (2011). Human Communication. In *Human Communication* (4th ed.). McGraw-Hill.
- Kerr, G., Schultz, D., Patti, C., & Kim, I. (2008). An inside-out approach to integrated marketing communication. *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(4), 511–548.
<https://doi.org/10.2501/S0265048708080098>
- Kitchen, P. J. (2017). Guest editorial. *European Journal of Marketing*, 51(3), 394–405.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-06-2016-0362>

- KITCHEN, P. J., BRIGNELL, J., LI, T., & JONES, G. S. (2004). The Emergence of IMC: A Theoretical Perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44(1), 19–30.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021849904040048>
- Kitchen, P. J., & Burgmann, I. (2010). Integrated Marketing Communication. In *Wiley International Encyclopedia of Marketing*. John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444316568.wiem04001>
- Kliatchko, J. (2016). *IMC 20 years after: A second look at IMC definitions*.
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/288596229>
- Kushwaha, B. P., Singh, R. K., Varghese, N., & Singh, V. N. (2020). Integrating social media and digital media as new elements of integrated marketing communication for creating. *Journal of Content, Community and Communication*, 10(6), 52–64.
<https://doi.org/10.31620/JCCC.06.20/05>
- Madhavaram, S., Badrinarayanan, V., & McDonald, R. E. (2005). Integrated marketing communication (imc) and brand identity as critical components of brand equity strategy: A Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(4), 69–80.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2005.10639213>
- Munusamy, J., Chee, W., Assistant, H., Manager, M., Marketing, S. H., & Bhd, S. (2008). RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MARKETING MIX STRATEGY AND CONSUMER MOTIVE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY IN MAJOR TESCO STORES. In *UNITAR E-JOURNAL* (Vol. 4, Issue 2).
- Reid, M., Luxton, S., & Mavondo, F. (2005). The Relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication, Market Orientation, and Brand Orientation Author(s). In *Source: Journal of Advertising* (Vol. 34, Issue 4). Winter.
- Saeed, R., Sub, B., Layyah, C., Bilal, M., & Naz, U. (2013). *INTERDISCIPLINARY JOURNAL OF CONTEMPORARY RESEARCH IN BUSINESS Integrated Marketing Communication: A Review Paper* (Vol. 5, Issue 5).
- Sarathy, M. R., & Sasikumar, S. (2017). A STUDY ON EFFECTIVENES OF INTERGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN RURAL MARKETING WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE IN FMCG INDUSTRY. *International Journal of Business and Administration Research Review*, 2(20), 57.
- Selvakumar, J. J. (2014). Dimensions of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and Their Impact in Creating Brand Equity in the Quick Service Restaurant (QSR) Industry in Coimbatore City. *Ushus - Journal of Business Management*, 13(4), 27–40.
<https://doi.org/10.12725/ujbm.29.3>
- Shakeel ul Rehman, & M. Syed Ibrahim. (2011). Integrated Marketing Communication and Promotion SSRN-id2383065. *Journal of Arts, Science & Commerce*, 2(4).
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=2383065>
- Singh, M. (2012). Marketing Mix of 4P'S for Competitive Advantage. In *IOSR Journal of Business and Management (IOSRJBM)* (Vol. 3, Issue 6). www.iosrjournals.org

- Sisodia Surendra, & Telrandhe Narendra. (2010). L25 ROLE OF IMC in Indian business 2010_10.1.1.476.3971. *Journal of Arts Science & Commerce, I(1)*.
- Syed Irfan Shafi, & C Madhavaiah. (2013). L24 Role of IMC 2013. *Amity Business Review, 14(2)*.
- Udipi Jaiswal. (2017). *CHALLENGES IN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION DESIGN*. BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY.
- Završnik, B., & Jerman, D. (2011). *MEASURING INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION*. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ajibm.2015.58053>