

Implementing imc at lower levels of theoretical models



This report is about the use of Integrated Marketing Communications in the marketing industry, in particular focusing on the various definitions that exist for IMC. My report also investigates why organisations choose not to approach IMC or if they do why they appear to only implement it at the lower levels of the theoretical models and not take it further. I will do this by discussing IMC in a variety of ways and looking at organisations as examples, whilst considering many academics views on IMC and its future from the many journals I have read.

Integrated Marketing Communications is the integration of all marketing communication tools and sources from within a company put in conjunction in order to create a campaign that maximizes the impact on consumers with minimal cost. The marketing communications mix is the starting point of IMC and the end aim to achieve is to maintain strong communication throughout the company and customers. The marketing mix consists of the following tools - advertising, direct marketing, public relations, personal selling and sales promotion. The goal is to combine all these tools along with the organisations message and other aspects of the marketing mix, in order to overtake any competitors.

The definitional concern of IMC has been an ongoing problem amongst the academics. There are a range of various definitions some of which are contrasting, although even those with similar points vary hugely in terms of technique and simplicity.

Schulz and Schulz (1998) introduced a new definition which in the opinions of others includes both the current and future features of IMC. This definition

emphasises the strategic aspects and refers to IMC as a business process instead of simply the combining of marketing tools. Although this definition is successful Kliatchko believed that for it to be complete it must not ' limit the scope of IMC to the strategic management of multiple audiences or markets, multiple channels and financial results,' as it is therefore leaving out crucial content which is obtained and delivered through the IMC process. Although it could be argued that this is implied in the term ' marketing communication,' Kliatchko felt it was important to be stated also. This new definition also implements the term ' business process' which was previously introduced by Schultz and Schultz (1998). Kliatchko (2005) agrees tremendously with this term and explains that it perfectly describes the core of integration. In addition it also supports the findings of Jones et al. (2004) and Fill (2002) that IMC has advanced from purely being a communication process to a management process.

' IMC is an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels and results of brand communication programs' Kliatchko (2008). One key difference between Kliatchko and the Schultz and Schultz (1998) definition is the use of the term ' business processes', Kliatchko highlights how it is audience driven in order to reinforce the view that IMC gives to significant publics.

Fill concentrates on the relationship with audiences, " IMC is a strategic approach to the planned management of an organisation's communications. IMC requires that organisations coordinate their various strategies, resources and messages in order that it engages coherently and meaningfully with target audiences. The main purpose is to develop relationships with
<https://assignbuster.com/implementing-imc-at-lower-levels-of-theoretical-models/>

audiences that are of mutual value” (Fill 2005). Whereas Kotler (2003) focuses on how the market is perceived by the public “ a way of looking at the whole marketing process from the view point from the viewpoint of the customer.” There are then extremely opposing viewpoints such as that made by Cornelissen and Lock (2000) that IMC is just a short term management fashion.

The concept of integrated marketing communications has become an essential part of the market in terms of communication strategies for companies however due to the definition constantly changing it prevents IMC being developed and understood to a full extent.

The changes that have taken place over recent years have highlighted the capability of the current marketing practices. It is viewed that there is a need for change if any future challenges are going to be met. The momentum for this adaptation in the industry has almost certainly been strongest in the larger fast moving consumer orientated organisations. There is no doubt that integrated marketing communication is not easily achieved, and can therefore lead to failure, however when practiced correctly it can have extremely successful results. IMC is a significant and essential theme (Cornelissen and Lock 2001) for a variety of reasons, it is just crucial to consider both the advantages and the barriers.

Integrated Marketing Communications involves a great deal of work, although when this effort is put in it brings achievement. It gives the company an edge over their competition which leads to an increase in profit, whilst in the long run it saves money and time due to the planning. IMC has

been defined by Kotler (1996) as a technique to produce more consistent and successful communications throughout a whole company.

The main benefit of IMC will be to achieve the desired goal of marketing communications by an individual organisation, however well known academics have developed their own lists of specific advantages to using IMC. Linton and Morley's (1995) ten potential benefits of integrated marketing communications are shown below.

Creative Integrity

Operational efficiency

Consistent messages

Cost Savings

Unbiased marketing recommendations

High- Calibre consistent service

Better use of Media

Easier working relations

Greater Marketing Position

Greater agency accountability

Fig 1. 1 (Linton and Morley)

Linton and Morley demonstrate ten advantages of the use of IMC here, which gives a guideline to why IMC is to be encouraged and how it will benefit organisations, however some of the points are fairly vague and may be misinterpreted for example unbiased marketing recommendations. Fill (2006) on the other hand only lists eight, but both sets of lists include similar points which demonstrate how confident some academics are in the advantages of IMC.

According to Kuczynski (1992), success of integration occurs with consistency in particular in the company's message. Tynan (1994) also believes this and goes on to explain that for IMC to be achieved not only is it through media being combined but he reiterates the importance of the consumer receiving one clear message. A comprehensible message has much more of an impact and will stand out in the mind of a customer over the hundreds of other adverts that surround an individual every day. Un-integrated communications will develop inconsistent messages which will make them less credible. Duncan and Everett (1993) also consider that consistency in the marketing communication elements will prevent any impending conflicts.

IMC also incorporates all the various communications in order for the customer to progress through the steps of the buying process and cultivates the relationship with the customers. This relationship ensures a sense of brand loyalty and consumers will therefore feel safer with this particular brand and therefore remain with them. This ability of accomplishing a customer for life is a very strong advantage over competitors. Duncan and Everett (1993) believe that IMC leads to a decrease in media waste and <https://assignbuster.com/implementing-imc-at-lower-levels-of-theoretical-models/>

therefore the company gains this competitive edge. This was also reinforced by Linton and Morley's (1995) ten potential benefits. Organisations have identified that it is becoming increasingly harder to maintain consumer's loyalty, which is why integrated marketing communications is important in a technique to gain advantage over any competitors. Regardless of huge investments these complicated relationships between a business' multiple marketing comms. are not completely understood. Research shows that the positive effects of combining media for example print advertising and television looks promising and that a change is taking place. Another set of research illustrates that 20 years ago 75% of marketing budgets in America was inserted into mass advertising, whereas today 50% goes towards trade promotions, 25% into consumer promotions and only 25% into advertising, which is a huge decline of 50% (Kitchen, 2003).

Money is another issue related to IMC. It saves money in the long run however many organisations do not appreciate the long term values of integrated marketing communications and therefore fail to see it as an investment. This appears to be slowly changing though due to the fact the importance of brand value is becoming more common knowledge. Tortorici suggests that one of the easiest ways to maximise its return on an investment is through the use of IMC. (Tortorici 1991) He would have suggested this for a number of reasons such as agency fees being reduced, as it becomes possible for one agency to handle all the communications, and also because it eliminates replication in various areas in the company such as logos, graphics and photography that the company intends to use. In the industrial product market, IMC frequently takes the form of personal selling

with advertising. This combination was seen as beneficial due to the decrease in selling costs (Morrill 1970) and a report completed by the McGraw-Hill Corporation in 1987 came to the same conclusion plus the evidence that it also reduced the amount of sales calls to the industrial decision makers. One example of this is IBM, there customer contact costs decreased enormously. (Moretti 1994). Belch and Belch (2001) believe that the benefits of adopting IMC do not just stop at limiting the operating costs but an optimistic attitude and concern for the company are just as significant. Overall all of this would in actual fact reduce the workload and save money long term, however most budgets set in a company are set with only short term in consideration.

Despite its many benefits, Integrated Marketing Communications has barriers to overcome just like the money issue just discussed. There are a number of other barriers that authors have identified. For example Ewing et al quoted " It has been suggested that departments can develop territorialism because they do not want to change their functional standing." (Ewing et al., 1997.) Schultz also goes on to say that they may be reluctant for this change because of a lack of understanding of IMC (Schultz 1996). This could start to explain why companies do not use IMC when perhaps it would in fact be appropriate for them to.

What's more, problems with implementation and measurement have been exemplified by several authors (Eagle et al., 1998). Implementation of IMC is difficult to achieve but it also hard to distinguish where to start planning wise. It has been discussed whether promotional activities should begin by examining external factors of the customers first. Although this is clearly a <https://assignbuster.com/implementing-imc-at-lower-levels-of-theoretical-models/>

barrier, it does not necessarily mean that it should discourage everyone, as 'practice makes perfect' to reach a great outcome.

Another issue that has arisen is the structure of companies which makes it difficult for integration. Organisations are generally subdivided in areas, and although joint assignments may help to break down these organisational barriers the hierarchical structures will still be an issue (Gonring 2000).

Pickton and Hartley (1998) also agree with the idea that the implementation has proven exceedingly complicated due to these organisational barriers.

Integrated communications has not caught on to many companies (Pettigrew 2001), for a number of reasons firstly the barriers of IMC contribute to this, however after the previous discussion there are ways to overcome the barriers and there are in fact more advantages to it so the question is why is it not being adopted. The debate of what marketing communications can accomplish has been a big question for many years (Ambler 2000). I will look at what various practitioners believe and also the main reasons why IMC has not taken off as much as it perhaps should have (Pettigrew 2001).

Marketers don't generally seem to like change in regards to new investments and approach to their marketing communications due to a fear of change (Gonring 2000), which is therefore an issue in relation to adopting IMC.

Although they may realise that as technology is growing the importance for companies to be organised and consistent is also increasing (Cornelissen 2003).

A lack of understanding of Integrated Marketing Communications is also another factor to why IMC is highly recognised but is not necessarily chosen
<https://assignbuster.com/implementing-imc-at-lower-levels-of-theoretical-models/>

to be used. This shortage of knowledge must be addressed before managers are expected to use integrated marketing. This all stems from the fact that there are many different views on whether IMC is here to stay or whether it is just a fad. Cornelissen and Lock state that IMC is nothing new but only a management fad (Cornelissen and Lock 2000), this is severely disagreed with by most other practitioners who see IMC as the future for example IMC is a new brand concept for the emerging digitalised environment (Shultz and Kitchen 2000).

There are also so many different definitions which can make it confusing from the beginning, nevertheless with all of these reasons considered the main weakness of IMC still lies in the apparent inability of agencies to measure behavioural outcomes.

This major issue of not being able to measure the effects of an integrated campaign is majorly delaying the implementation process and there is a lack of empirical studies into how it could be measured. Indicating how IMC could move into full implementation is a huge concern, measurement and evaluation corresponds to an extra cost to organisations. These organisations will have built up thorough behavioural databases of their consumers; however it would be unfair to access these unless an extremely strong relationship had been developed.

Overall, it would seem that integrated marketing communications have developed greatly, but there are still many issues to overcome in order for IMC to be completed successfully achieved in companies. It is important for this to occur as it has been defined by Chang et al.(1991) that consumers

attend more to integrated marketing communication than a normal advertising campaign.

One model used is the ' four pillars of IMC' by Kliatchko; these four pillars are the elements on which IMC levels are based, they are content, channels, stakeholders and results.

For full implementation of IMC, firms must use all four levels (Schultz and Schultz 1998). Although each pillar is separate there is a present of each of the four levels, just each have their own most prominent section.

The end goal of Content is primarily to deliver a consistent message for utmost communication impact (Duncan Caywood 1996). The objective is therefore for the target audience (stakeholders) to receive a clear integrated message. If this desired goal is achieved then integration at the first level has been achieved. A good example of this is Haagen Dazs ice cream. They use experimental appeals to their audience which communicates a sense of fun and pleasure, which is consistent through all of other campaigns.

Pillar two is all related to the channels of communication, not just in its general sense but also in the view of the customer, in order to obtain what customers prefer. This allows appropriate content to connect effectively with the audience. The ability to connect with a target audience in a way in which they prefer and deliver the message according to their terms would be successful IMC at this level. BT attempted to do this in their 1998 World Cup Football tournament. They took advantage of the football in order to make their advert more relevant and appealing to the public, this would have

made it more interesting for the public who were interested in football but not for the rest of their target audience.

The third pillar is applying information technology for the benefit of both the company and consumers. If the company uses IT to gain a better understanding of their customers and then they can manage databases of information. This better knowledge will allow them to obtain better relationships with consumers by combining the other pillars, more targeted messages by their preferred channels. This provides a more profitable future for the company (Schultz and Schultz 1998). Gillette Mach 3 achieved this as they produced an advert that utilised a functional appeal and communicate the brand's specific attributes capable of solving consumer's consumption-related problems. They therefore took into consideration what they target audience wanted to be delivered to them and how whilst making them a profit, this was successful IMC at this level.

The final pillar is strategic integration and results. If a company gets to this stage of integration then they have a good understanding of the demands of integration and what is necessary. Schultz and Schultz (1998) categorise this pillar as the one that allows a company to analyse more precisely the relation between returns and investments made in the marketing communications campaign. This is why this is the fourth pillar, as it is prominently the measurement of results which as discussed earlier is extremely hard to achieve, hence why my organisations only implement IMC at the lower levels of models such as this.

Another IMC model is demonstrated below and was designed by Pickton and Broderick (2000).

This is a much simpler model; however it does look at how integration starts off tactical and ends up strategic.

Bupa's recent marketing strategy was to reposition the company and integrate its offering. The core brand proposal ' Bupa the personal health service' was announced through a number of Medias such as TV, press, radio sponsorship and PR. The website was a huge success and played a key role in its integrated communications by offering online quotes and support. This promotion created awareness of the brand and increased their sales. The Group Marketing Director quoted ' we have succeeded in positioning Bupa as the only dedicated independent health care specialist in the UK.' (Marketing Business 2002)

Schultz also developed seven levels of integration model. The seven levels of integration are

Awareness of need for IMC - the starting point of the model, realisation.

Image- consistency between media.

Functional - Forming marketing communication programmes in order to achieve certain aims.

Co-ordinated - Personal selling is integrated with other elements in order to continue consistency.

Personal selling is directly integrated with other elements of marketing communications to ensure consistency between impersonal and interpersonal forms of communication.

Consumer-based - Understanding the consumers needs and wants, this is like the second pillar of Kliatchko's model.

Stakeholder- recognition of stakeholders after the final customers.

Relationship management.

A good example of complete IMC that could have applied the seven levels of integration is Coco Cola. It is one of the world's most famous brand names and was given the title of 'leading brand recognition' in 2003 by the Business week. Coca Cola represents major emotional advantages over all its competitors, whilst given the customers what they want. They are a loyal brand who creates consistent messages across their adverts and their message is always clear. They also produce spectacular adverts and have a strong brand image and logo, therefore they are incorporating lot of the seven levels of integration and it is obvious that they are doing successfully.

It is clear that IMC plays a vital role in the industry and everyday more is being learnt and understood. A clearer picture of Integrated Marketing is emerging and therefore future companies will begin to adopt it and take it to further levels of the theoretical models rather than just using it at the lower levels. It was established that due to a lack of understanding, and the rest of the barriers, this is the reason why companies only implement at the lower levels. The difficulty of IMC makes organisations reluctant however in the

<https://assignbuster.com/implementing-imc-at-lower-levels-of-theoretical-models/>

future if it is the path they must take to develop their company then IMC will evolve.

Ambler, T. (2000), “ Persuasion, pride and prejudice: how ads work”,
International Journal of

Advertising, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp. 299-315.

Belch, G. E. and Belch, M. A. (2001), “ Advertising and Promotion”, 5th ed.,
McGraw-Hill/Irwin,

New York, NY, pp. 10, 78-79.

Chang, D.-R., Hahn, M. and Ik-Tae K., (1991) ‘ Consumer Response to
Coupons with Advertising in a Pretesting Context’, Working Paper, Yonsei
University, Seoul, Korea.

Cornelissen, J. P. and Lock, A. R. (2000), “ Theoretical concept or
management fashion? Examining

the significance of IMC”, Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 40 No. 5, pp. 7-
15.

Cornelissen, J. P. and Lock, A. R. (2001), “ The appeal of integration:
managing communications in

modern organisations”, Marketing Intelligence & Planning, Vol. 19 No. 6, pp.
425-31.

Cornelissen, J. P. (2003), “ Change, continuity and progress: the concept of integrated marketing

communications and marketing communications practice”, Journal of Strategic Marketing,

Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 217-34.

Duncan, T. and Everett, S. E. (1993), “ Client perceptions of integrated marketing

communications”, Journal of Advertising Research, Vol. 33 No. 3, p. 30.

Duncan, T. and Caywood, C. (1996), The Concept, Process, and Evolution of Integrated Marketing

Communication, Laurence Erlbaum Associates, Hillsdale, NJ.

Duncan, T. R. & Caywood, C. L. (1996) The concept, process, and evolution of integrated marketing communications, in Thorson, E. & Moore, J. (eds) Integrated Communication: Synergy of Persuasive Voices. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 13-34.

Eagle, L., Hyde, K., Fourie, W., Padiseti, M. and Kitchen, P. (1998) ‘ Revisiting the Concept of Integrated Marketing Communications: Contrasting Perceptions Between Marketers and Advertising Agency Executives’, paper prepared for 3rd International Conference on Marketing and Corporate Communication, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

Ewing, M. T., de Bussey, N. and Ramaseshan, B. (1997) ' The Power and Politics of Integrated Marketing Communications', Curtin Business School Working Paper, November, 1-18.

Ewing, M. T., Du Pleiss, E. & Foster, C. (2001) Cinema advertising re-considered. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 41(1), pp. 78-85.

Fill, C. (2002) *Marketing Communications: Contexts, Strategies and Applications* (3rd edn). London: Prentice Hall.

Fill, C. (2002), *Marketing Communications, Contexts, Strategies and Applications*, 3rd ed.,

Prentice Hall Europe, Hemel Hempstead, p. 32.

Fill (2006) Lecture Slides, MKT2011.

Gonring, M. P. (2000), " Global megatrends push IMC concepts to forefront of strategic business

thinking", *Journal of Integrated Communications*, Vol. 2000-2001, pp. 15-18.

Holm, O. (2006), " Integrated marketing communication: from tactics to strategy", *Corporate*

Communications: An International Journal, Vol. 11 No. 1, pp. 23-33.

Jerry Kliatchko. (2008). Revisiting the IMC construct: a revised definition and four pillars. *International Journal of Advertising*. 27 (1), 1-13

Jones, G. S., Li, T., Kitchen, P. J. & Brignell, J. (2004) The emergence of IMC: a theoretical perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 44

(1), pp. 19-30.

Kitchen, P. J. & Schultz, D. E. (1999) A multi-country comparison of the drive for IMC. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 39(1), pp. 21-38

Kitchen, P. J. & Schultz, D. E. (2001) *Raising the Corporate Umbrella: Corporate Communication in the 21st Century*. New York: Palgrave

Publishers Ltd.

Kliatchko, J. G. (2005) Towards a new definition of integrated marketing communications (IMC). *International Journal of Advertising*, 24(1), pp. 7-34.

Kotler, P. (1996) *Principles of Marketing*, 7th edn, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Kotler, P. (2000), “ *Marketing Management*”, 10th ed., Prentice-Hall International, London, p. 7, 19.

Kuczynski, A. (1992) ‘ *Beyond Advertising, Towards Integration*’, *Marketing*, 13, 50-53.

Linton, I. And Morley, K. (1995), *Integrated marketing Communications*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Marketing Business (2002), *Strong Vital Signs*, September 14.

Moretti, P. (1994) ' Telemarketers Serve Clients', Business Marketing, April, 27-29.

Morrill, J. E. (1970) ' Industrial Advertising Pays Off', Harvard Business Review, March/April, 4.

Pettigrew, L. S. (2001a), " If IMC is so good: why isn't it being implemented?", Journal of Integrated Communications, No. 35.

Pettigrew, L. S. (2001b), " If IMC is so good: why isn't it being implemented?", Journal of Integrated Communications, No. 36.

Pickton, D. & Hartley, B. (1998) Measuring integration: an assessment of the quality of integrated marketing communication. International Journal of Advertising, 17(4), pp. 447-465.

Schultz, D. E. & Schultz, H. F. (1998) Transitioning marketing communication into the twenty-first century. Journal of Marketing Communications, 4(1), pp. 9-26.

Schultz, D. E. & Schultz, H. F. (2005) Measuring brand value, in Tybout, A. & Calkins, T. (eds) Kellogg on Branding. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Tortorici, A. J. (1991) ' Maximising Marketing Communications through Horizontal and Vertical Orchestration', Public Relations Quarterly, 36, 20-22.

<https://assignbuster.com/implementing-imc-at-lower-levels-of-theoretical-models/>

Tynan, K. (1994) Multi-channel Marketing: Maximising Market Share with an Integrated Marketing Strategy, Probus, Danvers, MA.