Efficient Marketing Communication: A Key of Success in Modern Indian Business

Capt. Dr. Ashok V. Giri
Assistant Professor,
MES Garware College of Commerce,
Ph.D & M.Phil Research Guide, Savitribai Phule Pune University
Pune-411004. (Maharashtra, India)

Abstract:
Marketing communication activities must be integrated to deliver a consistent message and strategic positioning. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is one of the most controversial areas of research, the concept marking a constant progress from the simple coordinating of promotional tools to a complex strategic process. Further to the evolution of modern marketing, where IMC has become a major way of achievement the objectives of a company, there is a need to identify opportunities to increase its impact on consumer of different segments w.r.t. age. Therefore, it is of interest, the relatively recent approach found in the literature. In this context, this paper intends to clarify some aspects regarding the effects of IMC on the consumer behavior of different age groups, materialized in the consumer decision-making process. The present paper torches upon the emergence of integrated marketing communications (IMC) that has significantly influenced thinking and acting among all types of companies and organizations facing the realities of competition in the present open economy. It has been proved as an efficient promotional tool to communicate more universally, clearly, and effectively. The paper puts lights on various facets of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) especially in Indian Business Scenario. The challenges and scopes of IMC with the context of strategies, implementation, and audit have also been discussed. The greater utilization of marketing communication tools within an IMC approach can lead to a better overall outcome and may also deliver a more holistic picture. Integrated Marketing Communication approaches have become the accepted norm for agencies offering services to clients. The psychological continuity is a consistent attitude towards a brand or firm. It is reference for company’s voice and personality for the consumers. This can be achieved but Integrated Marketing Communication with them.

Keywords: Efficient communication, Identify opportunities, Integrated Marketing, Social networking, Consumer Behaviour.

Introduction: The emergence of this concept has become one of the most significant examples of development in the marketing discipline. It has influenced thinking and acting among companies but also authorities, state owned companies and political parties, all facing the realities of competition in an open economy. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) emerged during the late twentieth century and its importance has been growing ever since Owing to the impact of information technology, changes came about in the domains of marketing and marketing communications which led to the emergence of IMC. The multiplication of media, degasification of consumer markets, and the value of the Internet in today's society are just three of the areas in which technological innovation has. This in turn left marketers in a challenging and competitive environment, trying to fulfill customer’s wants and needs while also developing long-term relationships with them. IMC can help in creating coordinated and consistent
messages across various channels of communication. Furthermore, the concept is especially valuable in that it places great emphasis on the importance of all stakeholder groups and, in particular, on customer loyalty, which can only be created through strategic relationship building. In today’s ever changing “Nanosecond Culture” of social networks, empowered customers and hyper competition, we need to be prepared to immediately implement holistic thinking for our marketing and communications strategy. With an increase in global competition, technological advances, and fast informed customers, it is important for businesses to make a powerful impact on target audiences and markets. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is one of the most important communications trends adopted all over. It is one such step toward an integrated approach to achieving efficiency by synergy.

Review of Literature:
The marketers of twenty-first century should utilize an IMC program, which goes beyond usual marketing concepts of 4p’s, trying in addition to generate new ways of creating customers by database. If companies disregard IMC and different messages are not delivered in unison, it may lead to an incoherent brand image, which can negatively influence consumer behavior. To draw the benefits from IMC approach, it is imperative that whole organization, cross functional and subsidiaries understands how IMC works and how IMC plans can be put into action if this is not the case integration will be lost which will intern weaken both corporate brand and relationship. The primary goal of IMC is to affect the perception of value and behavior through communication. The greater utilization of marketing communication tools within an IMC approach can lead to a better overall outcome and may also deliver a more holistic picture. Integrated Marketing Communication approaches have become the accepted norm for agencies offering services to clients. The psychological continuity is a consistent attitude towards a brand or firm. It is reference for company’s voice and personality for the consumers. This can be achieved but Integrated Marketing Communication with them. Marketing communication activities must be integrated to deliver a consistent message and strategic positioning. We are sure to see innovations in communications research during the next several years, the like of which have never been before seen in the field Integrated Marketing Communication has recognized all the trends by which firms touch customers must be related, aligned and coordinated making it more than advertising, sales promotion and direct marketing programs. Let us assume that the ultimate process of marketing is to deliver higher standard of living through communications.

Managerial Implications: Integrated Marketing Communication is the boost for promotional mix elements, whether it is advertising; direct marketing, interactive/internet marketing, sales promotion, publicity/public relations or personal selling, combining these disciplines to provide consistently and clearly a maximum communication impact. Promotion has been defined as the coordination of all seller-initiated efforts to set up channels of information and persuasion to sell goods and services or promote an idea. Promotion is the systematic attempt
to move forward step by step prospects from a state of unawareness to awareness then to knowledge and liking, then to preference and conviction and finally to action (purchase) or a positive behavioral response. The communication accomplishes its objectives in a series of mental stages as the receiver or audience moves from unawareness to actual deal. The purpose of integrated marketing communication should be to maximize customer delivered value. Integrated marketing communication plays a very important role in the ability and capacity of firm to innovate and success fully delivers competitive response through value added offerings to their customers.

The various steps commonly followed in an integrated marketing communication process are:

- **Identify** the audience to be targeted.
- **Determine** objectives of your communication.
- **Design** the message of communication.
- **Select** your media channel.
- **Decide** the budget.
- **Decide** the marketing communication mix.
- **Measuring** your results.
- **Managing** and coordinating IMC.

So a centralized strategic planning is the very heart of integrated marketing communication. The use of various options should be centrally planned and coordinated utilizing a systematic strategic planning. Strategy lays down the broad principles by which a company hopes to secure an advantage over the competitors, exhibit attractiveness to buyers and lead to efficient utilization of resources and promote company image. Moreover a successful Integrated Marketing Communication program must have the right combination of promotional tools and techniques that must help companies to identify appropriate and efficient methods for communicating and building relationship with customers as well as other stakeholders, such as employees, suppliers, investors, interest groups and the general public.

**Background and Concept of IMC:**

**The Evolution of IMC:** Integration, the attempt to present a consistent message across the available promotional mix elements has always been important to successful organizations even during the mid twentieth century.

However, some researchers believe that the concept of IMC can be traced back to the 1970s. The first study on IMC was conducted by Caywood, Schultz, and Wang (1991b) at the end of the 1980s, while the first “conceptual ideas” were published in the book “Integrated Marketing Communications” by Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn (1993). IMC advocates believe that its emergence was down to the context of media upheaval of that time, for example, digital TV and mobile phones, market environments, that is, increasing global competition and rapid technological developments, such as the personal computer. Technology can affect IMC from two sides, that is,
from the marketing and consumer perspectives. Today, integration is needed owing to globalization and the resulting interdependence between countries and marketplaces. Thus, corporate and brand managers need to coordinate the actions of their global and even national brand(s) with the aim of integrating elements of promotional mix.

**The Concept of IMC:** As a concept IMC has become well known on an international scale during the 1990s. Thus IMC is a term whose widespread use is comparatively recent, a fact, which might explain why there not yet is a common understanding of its real meaning and the lack of a generally accepted definition. Some 20 years ago academics and professionals discussed theory and practice of business communication but without considering the idea of integration as a realistic approach to reach a competitive strategic position for the company. Some early attempts in the beginning of the 1980s initiated academic interest and articles appeared in the academic literature. From the beginning of the 1990s IMC became a real hot topic in the field of marketing. Few years back, major portion of marketing budgets went to advertising, but now the scene has changed, it is allocated into various activities such as trade promotions, consumer promotions, branding, PR and advertising. The allocation of communication budgets away from mass media and traditional advertising has obviously promoted IMC in recognition and importance for effective marketing. The emergence of IT has fundamentally affected the media practices, contributed to an extensive deregulation of markets and individualized patterns of consumption and increased the segmentation of consumer tastes/prefences. The key has been ‘value’ and several combinations of methods are used, all aiming to raise benefits and reduce costs.

Smith *et al.* (1999) have defined IMC as “the strategic analysis, choice, implementation and control of all elements of marketing communications which efficiently (best use of resources), economically (minimum costs) and effectively (maximum results) influence transactions between an organization and its existing and potential customers and clients”. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as “a concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines, and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact”.

As a customer centered process integrated marketing communication is the first step in developing a common understanding of its purpose and value. Integrated marketing communication integrates everything that helps a company to promote its business and position its product in the market. An integrated marketing communication program must be continuous and strategic oriented. Some early attempts appeared in academic literature. Integrated marketing communication began to be practiced and became a hot topic throughout. suggest that background for the emergence of integrated marketing communication is from three areas first from corporate or client side, an increasing competition and higher risk in markets brought by merging and acquisitions have been required to meet the consumer changing needs more successfully through new marketing
strategies. Second from media and market side weakening the traditional trends of advertising and marketing, due to exposure of information technology has increased the search for more effective and cost efficient methods in communications among marketers. Third from, the consumer, as ongoing changes in his life style have made advertisers to develop more elaborate and quicker response communication formats. Today’s business environment demands a well managed and equally planned relational customer data-base, a focused and customer-oriented approach to customers and clients, and a psychological-driven prospecting approach to Sales. Reich then insists that marketers should combine proven marketing techniques with new integrated marketing communication methods to ensure success. It begins with the product development and includes packaging, pricing, selection of distribution channels, channel management, customer relationship management, total quality management etc. it involves the multidimensional, interactive, continuously measured communication that connects the brand or product and the customer. The allocation of communication budget, away from mass media and traditional advertising has obviously promoted integrated marketing communication in recognition and effective marketing. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines integrated marketing communication as “a concept that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact”.

Apparently in just a short period, the concept of integrated marketing communication became a watch-cry not only of marketing communications, but also an integral part of corporate communication strategies of many companies. It has increased communication impact, made creative ties more effective and provide consistency in communication. Integrated Marketing Communication has evolved over a period of time from awareness level of integration to image level integration to functional integration to coordinate integration to consumer based integration to stakeholder based integration to relationship management integration. It is a promotional tool along with other marketing mix components to gain advantage over competitors using to reach highest level of consumer satisfaction by knowing the right touch-points. It is a data driven approach using outside-in thinking focused on identifying consumer insights using both on and off –line channel strategy to develop a stronger brand-consumer relationship. Integrated marketing communication is thus the voice of marketing creating brand awareness, deliver information, educate the market and make a positive image of the company.

Integrated marketing communication is integration of all marketing tools, approaches, and resources within a company which maximizes impact on consumer mind and which results into maximum profit at minimum cost. Generally marketing starts from “Marketing Mix” and also includes internet marketing, sponsorship marketing, direct marketing, database marketing and public relations. And integration of all these promotional tools along with other components of marketing mix to gain edge over competitor by knowing the right touch-points using to reach
The highest level of consumer satisfaction is referred as Integrated Marketing Communication. Using outside-in thinking, it is a data-driven approach that focuses on identifying consumer insights and developing a strategy with the right (online and offline combination) channels to forge a stronger brand-consumer relationship. The objectives of any marketing communication process are to create brand awareness, deliver information, educate the market, and advance a positive image of the product brand. In simpler terms, “IMC refers to speaking with one voice, eliciting a response”. Therefore, “IMC is a return to building brand loyalty by building brands that deserve loyalty”.

**Integrated Marketing Communication in Indian Business Context:** India is one of the most favorite markets on the globe. The growing purchasing power of India’s huge middle class makes it attractive. However, the customer base in India is extremely fragmented. The huge geographic expanse of the country has resulted in an inconsistent distribution system that is radically different from other countries. Also the cultural diversity of consumer, differences in their tastes, habits, and requirements that make it more complex task to market their goods in a streamlined and consistent manner. The concept of IMC with focused and massive marketing is fairly new to the Indian companies who have traditionally experienced a mixed economy and trade restrictions back home. In a protected economy, the companies had faced restricted competition and consequently did not realize the importance of targeted and more focused marketing. In the absence of well-developed departments for individual elements of marketing communications, a quasi-integrated approach was in practice among various departments in Indian companies.

The idea of IMC still manifests itself in a variety of local and situational ways for marketers. It is necessary to examine the cultural and social factors with demographic influences, keeping in perspective a pertinent analogy of ‘GO GLOCAL” with the concept of IMC.

IMC is a major strategic concept that is as evolutionary and discursive in Indian context. A strong need is compulsory here to explore the concept and phenomena of IMC directly in the real world of communication. With the change in communication practices and technologies, integration in marketing techniques is inevitable for Indian companies to survive in this multi-national and multi-cultural world emerging globally. Flow of communication is easy and open and our ability to adapt to these changes has made it a very enthralling and promising place for the global market.

The purpose of integrated marketing communications strategy is to work toward the common goal of customer focused marketing. The Indian marketplace consists of an increasingly complex arena of competitors within a rapidly changing environment. Businesses are now getting Internet-based operations, portraying a charming picture of sophisticated and cluttered market. It is attempting to speak with clear voices about the natures of their operations and the benefits associated with the brands and products. Numbers and variety of media is bombarding potential customers with messages, it is vital to have clear and consistent
communication in the clutter. Response to this apparently amorphous marketing environment has led many recent liberalization policies have increased competition and enforced new marketing practices in India, the local environment and local markets dictate the need for specialized and integrated approaches.

As demonstrated in Table 1, during the early 1990s IMC was referred to as the one sight, one sound or one voice or the seamless marketing communication approach (Beard, 1997; Nowak and Phelps, 1994; Duncan and Everett, 1993). However, the increasing interest in the subject of IMC led researchers to reevaluate the concept and the “buzz words” were soon set aside (Grove, Carlson, and Dorsch, 2002; Lee, 2002; Fill, 2001; Hartley and Pickton, 1999; Phelps and Johnson, 1996). These words only hinted at the many applications of IMC and, therefore, new concepts were added to the earlier definitions of IMC.

Many researchers have noted that it may not be possible to agree upon a universal IMC definition, given the various interpretations of IMC and its different values in the academic and commercial spheres (Kliatchko, 2005; Phelps and Johnson, 1996; Stewart, 1996). A critical review of previous definitions of IMC and an assessment of current IMC literature
reveals that researchers were able to reduce any IMC definition to five crucial attributes (Kitchen et al., 2004a; Low, 2000):

1. The communication effort should be directed at consumers in order to affect behavior.
2. An outside-in approach should be utilized i.e. start with the customer first when developing a communication strategy.
3. A well-established relationship between the company and the customer is necessary.
4. To deliver a message correctly all communication activities should be included with contact points integrated into the strategy.
5. To create a competitive brand, coordination between the communication disciplines is needed.

**Major reasons for the Growing Importance of IMC in India**

Several reasons have caused IMC to develop into a primary strategy for marketers in India; few of them are given below-

1. Market is now having a rural-urban mix shape
2. Occupational diversity (Agriculture to other skills)
3. Awareness is spreading fast
4. Indian consumer is being more smart
5. Heterogeneous Demographic Traits
6. Diversity in economic conditions
7. Media advertising is shifting to multiple forms of communication focusing at target centered niche media.
8. Market is shaping from a manufacturer-dominated market to a retailer-dominated, consumer-controlled market.
9. Technology is getting updated rapidly
10. Huge opportunities are available to develop with market
11. Manpower is getting performance-based compensation from traditional compensation, sales and profit margins are increasing.

**Key Challenges of IMC:** Across the globe, there is continuity in market deregulation and emergence of individualized segmentation of consumer tastes and preferences. So IMC being not an easy process has to face internal as well as external challenges. As some markets flee traditional media they still come across some communication clutter. The challenges of IMC are.

- A shift in market place power from manufacturer to wholesaler to retailer/shift in channel power.
- A movement away from relying on advertising focused approach.
- **Rapid** growth of data base marketing.
- A shift in traditional promotions.
• Change in the way the advertising agencies compensated.
• Rapid growth of internet marketing.
• Growing competition in relationship marketing.
• Change from mere information delivery to value delivery.
• Consumer empowerment.
• Fragmentation of media.
• Increasing advertising clutter.
• Desire for greater accountability.

Conclusion: The emergence of integrated marketing communications (IMC) has become a significant example of development in Indian marketing discipline. It has influenced thinking and acting among all types of companies and organizations facing the realities of competition in the present open economy. It is the judicious and efficient use of the product promotional tools so that a universal, clear, and effective promotional message is communicated amongst the target audience. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is more than the coordination of a company's outgoing message between different media and the consistency of the message throughout. This also facilitates in ascertaining the effectiveness of the overall marketing effort to evaluation of brand messages. It is an aggressive marketing plan that captures and uses an extensive amount of customer information in setting and tracking marketing strategy. As the IMC strategies should be based on situation analysis and SWOT analysis, a periodical implementation would be significant. The need of the audit of the IMC process should be well understood and measurement and evaluation of the effectiveness should be taken care of. The primary goal of affecting the perception of value and behavior through IMC has to be checked up carefully. Indian consumption pattern are changing rapidly, technical advancements are fast, development and diffusion of IMC program should closely be associated with these changes. Objectives and strategies must be elastic enough to mould accordingly. In order to reach a better result, the marketers needs to develop marketing integration as occurring different levels and degree of various functions. The most important and fundamental level should be of vertical integration of objectives and activities. Within their own organizations, marketers should recognize the importance of creating important position with clear responsibility at different level on performance and productivity basis.

At last but not the least the key is ‘Value’ and all efforts must be in level-headed way to deliver in order to reduce the cost and increase the benefits. Integrated Marketing Communication can perform and lead to way to reap the benefits if exercise as a unit in order to attain the common objective of delivering the value to customer.

References:


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