

Role of Integrated Marketing Communication in Modern Business

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Abstract. Integrated marketing communication is an emerging trend in today's marketing scenario, it is an approach to achieve the marketing campaign through a well-coordinated use of various tools. 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, clear, and effectively. The paper is an attempt to enlighten the role of IMC in modern business and challenges and hurdles that comes in its way. It is an attempt to make you understand it key basic and problems it faces.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing, Social Networking, Technology

1 Introduction

The process of integrated marketing communication is a most talked about topic in terms of its usage, applicability and emerging trends that are being noticed in marketing world today. As the word itself describes integrated means we got to put together all sort of marketing, advertising and sales tools in one complete package for a success of marketing venture. These are almost kind of large promotional tools available whereby you can customize it as per your own requirements. Traditionally earlier where we use to use newspapers, billboards, hoardings, magazines as a marketing tool for convincing customers today we are using a mix of both traditional as well as modern techniques as what we are dealing with today is all world of smart people with smart technology, so fusion of two is of prime importance for the success of an marketing event and to build a brand-customer relationship. Regardless of the brand's promotional mix, it is important that marketers ensure their messaging is consistent and credible across all communication channels.

2. Concept Of IMC

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 (Dyer, 1982; Coulson-Thomas, 1983; Schultz, 1996). Integrated marketing communication began to be practiced and became a hot topic throughout (Caywood et.al. 1991; Mile and Rose, 1994; Kitchen and Schultz, 1999).

Caywood (1997) 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 (Reich, 1998).

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 (Lauterborn, 2003). 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.(Kitchen.J.P., et.al.,2004).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 coordinated integration to consumer based integration to stakeholder based integration to relationship management integration (panda. T. k., 2009). 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 (Surrender. S., and Telrandhe.N.,2010). 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.

3. Why Integrated Marketing Communications?

Five major shifts in the worlds of advertising, marketing and media have caused an increased interest in (and need for) IMC. These include:

1. A shift From...	2. To...
3. Traditional Advertising	4. Digital/Interactive Media
5. Mass Media	6. Specialized Media
7. Low Agency Accountability	8. High Agency Accountability
9. Traditional Compensation	10. Performance-Based Compensation
11. Limited Internet Access	12. Widespread Internet Availability

These shifts are forcing organizations to look at the whole marketing picture, re-aligning their communications and seeing things the way the consumer sees them – as a constant flow of information from indistinguishable sources. Those who practice IMC are avoiding duplicate

messages, capitalizing on the synergy among promotional tools, creating more effective marketing programs and maximizing ROI.

4. **What is Integrated Management Communications?**

Integrated marketing communication refers to integrating all the methods of brand promotion to promote a particular product or service among target customers. In integrated marketing communication, all aspects of marketing communication work together for increased sales and maximum cost effectiveness.

Components of Integrated Marketing Communication:

- i. **The Foundation** – it is basic stage where by you make an attempt to analyze not just a product as well as the target market. It is of utmost importance to understand all about brand, its use and further its implication. It is important at this stage to focus just not on your brand and yourself but also on competitor's activities.
- ii. **The Corporate Culture** – it is of utmost important before making an IMC plan to understand the vision and mission of an organization. Whatever strategy are planned it must be co-extensive with the culture of the organization. It is almost a stage of selling your ideology, your name in the market so it matter what you promote.
- iii. **Brand Focus** – focusing upon a brand determines the identity of brand and of corporate house aswell.
- iv. **Consumer Experience** - Marketers need to focus on consumer experience which refers to what the customers feel about the product. A consumer is likely to pick up a product which has good packaging and looks attractive. Products need to meet and exceed customer expectations.
- v. **Communication Tools** – selection of right communication tool depending upon the masses with which we have to deal with is to be selected, various modes of promoting a particular brand such as advertising, direct selling, promoting through social media such as Facebook, twitter, orkut and so on.

- vi. **Promotional Tools** - Brands are promoted through various promotional tools such as trade promotions, personal selling and so on. Organizations need to strengthen their relationship with customers and external clients.
- vii. **Integration Tools** - Organizations need to keep a regular track on customer feedbacks and reviews. You need to have specific software like customer relationship management (CRM) which helps in measuring the effectiveness of various integrated marketing communications tools.

Integrated marketing communication helps an organization in all aspects of marketing mix in order to work with liaison with all departments in order to promote its product and services and create brand – customer relationship.

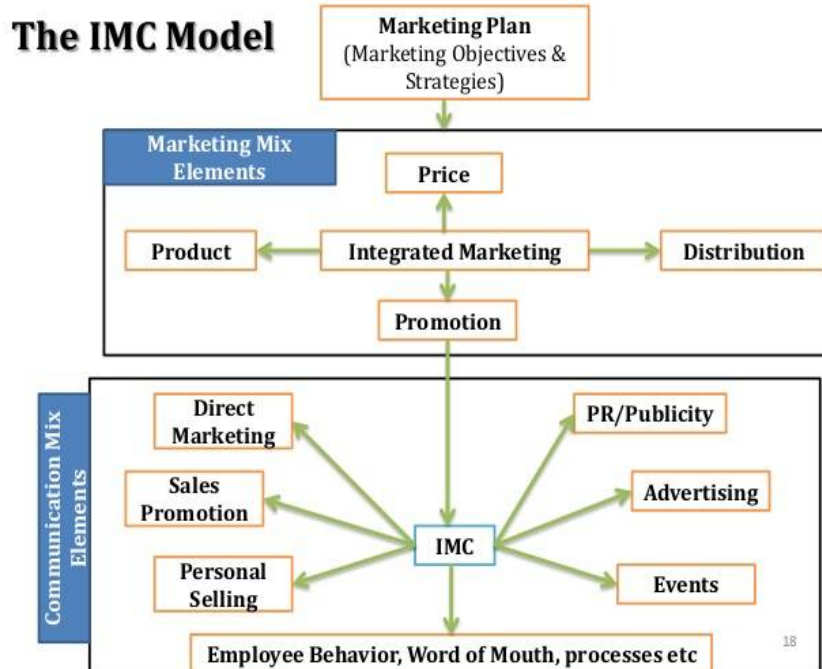
What kinds of companies follow IMC?

With the ever changing environment and growing competition, every company who want to survive for long duration have it all on its agenda, every such company who has its focus on :

- ✓ Advertise across multiple media
- ✓ Target specific audience
- ✓ Care about data and accountability across advertising campaign.
- ✓ Advertise to consumer or to other businesses.

Companies with big budget and far reach among masses are more inclined towards integrated marketing because of heavy budgets and money they hold. But for expansion and in order to be the choice of every customer it must be adopted by smaller companies as well if not at large scale but for survival it must be among their plan of action.

IMC MODEL



IMC is combination of both marketing and communication tools. In fact it an advance of 4p's of marketing. Where the marketing mix comprises of product, price place and promotion. IMC emphasizes upon the last P i.e. promotion which is of utmost importance for an organization. Above shown figure clearly depicts the working of IMC as a marketing tool in any organization.

Integrated Marketing Communication in Indian Business

Indian market is among one of the favorite world's market with a variant customer base, different cast, creed and culture and changing customer preferences. It is just not the game of launching a product in the market but it is also about doing it all in a convenient and reliable way without affecting customer preferences and incurring huge losses to business houses. The customer base of India is purely fragmented. The concept of IMC purely new to companies in India which have traditional experience in an mixed economy. With a developing nation where we already know the status of resources and budget and investment prospects still some business houses do not prefer to invest in IMC.

IMC is an evolutionary changing concept and with so much modernization it is a need of an hour. The focus of IMC is to work towards the common goal of achieving and creating customer focused markets. Business are now shifting from traditional to more of internet based operations and companies are trying hard for it .effective advertising and marketing agencies are coming up and they search for new talents round the clock with the primary motive of giving best to customers. The effect of IMC is shown positive in organizations where the liaison between all internal departments are very well maintained. The Indian companies re trying to identify the niches on social and attitudinal behavior and offering common products across different demographic regions.Internet marketing is picking up pace in India with fast technological advancement. Consumption and shopping patterns are changing. Online shopping, credit card usages are being accepted. Professionalism is increasing. 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, and people are keen to adopt such changes which make working of corporates quiet easy with little challenging and inspiring.

Current Scenario: isolated markets, the customers are bombarded with multiple options with multiple advertising medium as each company just wants to be its best in targeting its target audience. Hence it is a cumbersome task for customers to decide the best out of available resources and hence it left the customers confused about their choices.

Ideal Scenario: integrated marketing communication. With so many choices and lots of confusion in marketing in India, what is essential is to have an integrated marketing communication where by as per budgets time and money and as per your preference customers will be targeted with in a limited budget.slowely and steadily it is turning of the greatest measure in terms of brand management, by far the brands have realized how can they become popular and soon many more companies are following IMC in India.

5. 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-

- Market is now having a rural-urban mix shape
- Occupational diversity (Agriculture to other skills)

- Awareness is spreading fast
- Indian consumer is being more smart
- Heterogeneous Demographic Traits
- Diversity in economic conditions
- Media advertising is shifting to multiple forms of communication focusing at target centered niche media.
- Technology is getting updated rapidly.
- Huge opportunities are available to develop with market.
- Manpower is getting performance-based compensation from traditional compensation, sales and profit margins are increasing.

6. Key Challenges for IMC in India:

However, significant challenges to achieve optimal IMC performance are still in existence and acting as key barriers in way of effective IMC function in the country. Following are the few of them-

- Lack of strategic consistency
- Lack of needed skill sets among marketing staff
- Scarcity of creativity and innovation
- Insufficient marketing budget
- Lack of a standard measurement process
- Lack of technology advancement support.
- Ambiguity on the issue
- Complex cultural and social values

7 Future Outlook of Integrated Marketing Communication In India

Although liberalization has increased the pace of IMC in India, yet besides everything there still exist some hurdles as we talked about above. IMC is a demand of an hour and every corporate wants to avail it. Today's market is now turning into consumer related product, consumer related

brands, and consumer related advertising. So in all the base of today's marketing industry revolves around customer centric model. For following and adopting IMC following Be's must be followed:-

- i. **Be analytical** - use framework of consumer behavior and managerial decision making for making a well-developed plan.
- ii. **Be curious** - fully understand consumer in all respect.
- iii. **Be single minded** – focus on target customers only.
- iv. **Be creative** – make your message designed in an order that suits best to your target customers and increase your profitability.
- v. **Be observant** – observe competition, customer preferences, channel strategies and employees.
- vi. **Be realistic** – understand the complexities evolved in communication process.
- vii. **Be patient** – plan for long term benefits not momentary and short term gains.

These future strategies can help India to grow. India has been very cautious in adopting new technologies and others like heavy dependence upon agriculture, old methods of production, overpopulation, lower income are some reasons of its poor market economy but from the time it has adopted the practices of integrated marketing there has been noted a rapid improvement in the market and the growth in its economy. The future of integrated marketing communications in India is bright in terms of profitability and growth and India will also be benefited in the upcoming years

8. Conclusion:

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.

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