A Review On The Integrated Marketing Communication

G. Santosh Kumar, Asst. Professor (Contract Basis), Department of Business Management, Kollapur PG Centre, Palamuru University, Mahabubnagar, India

Abstract
In the present world of business companies are majorly following the Integrated marketing communication when compared to the traditional marketing communications/marketing mix as a consumer oriented approach that has significantly influenced thinking and acting among all types of companies and organizations facing the realities of competition in the present open economy where the consumer decision is playing a vital role in the purchasing pattern of goods and services that lead to go for IMC by all the Companies. IMC has proved as an efficient promotional tool to communicate more universally, clearly, efficiently and effectively. This article presents about the understanding of how Integrated Marketing Communication is having it's impact on customers and business.

Integrated Marketing Communication is performed in a method of synergy rather than in isolation. Integrated Marketing Communication is associated with various concepts of marketing like brand awareness, unique brand association, positive brand image, brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, greater profitability, increased sales and market share and cost savings. Companies have to face major challenges for the successful implementation of IMC program in the present market situations.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Marketing Strategies, Communication Channels and mix, Promotional Programs, Customers.

Introduction
Communication is the process of conveying thoughts and sharing the meanings among individuals or organizations. Communication in marketing channel can function as the process by which influential information is transmitted (Frazier and Summers, 1984). All companies use marketing communications in some form or another – it is a critical component of effective marketing. It is necessary to examine the two basic parts of the marketing communications: marketing and communications.

Marketing consists of the marketing mix strategies that organisations develop to transfer value, through exchange, to their customers.

Communication is a process that conveys shared meaning between individuals, or between organisations and individuals.

In order to understand the nature and importance of integrated marketing communications the different elements of marketing communications mix must be known and on to be followed by IMC importance in Business Perspective, features, challenges, growth, benefits etc. of IMC.

Importance of Integrated Marketing Communications
The purpose of IMC in all its simplicity is for a company to communicate with its target and interest groups by all and any means available to it in a controlled and unified fashion

"Integrated marketing communications is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communication programs with customers and prospects over time. The goal of IMC is to influence or directly affect the behaviour of the selected communications audience. IMC considers all sources of brand or company contacts that a customer or prospect has with the product or service as potential delivery channels for future messages. Further, IMC makes use of all forms of communication which are relevant to the customers and prospects, and to which they might be receptive. In sum the IMC process starts with the customer or prospect and then works back to determine and define the forms and methods through which persuasive communications programs should be developed." (Schultz in Percy 1997, 2; Schultz in Shimp 1997, 12)

The underlying principle of IMC is that marketing communications has to build the profitable relationships in between the company and its customers. Different components of integrated marketing communications can be said as pillars of an action strategy which has its own importance for the successful implementation. These components are concept, synergy, process, Consumers and Communication channels. Concept relies on delivering the marketing message to all the stakeholders who has some form of contact to the organization. The responsibility of delivering the company’s marketing communication to its stakeholders generally rests with the different functional departments inside the company.

Integration has become important concept in marketing due to technological advances. IMC has been developed
to raise the standard of advertising and gain the customer concentration on the company and increase the market share. It is relevant to understand the concept of communication process that takes place when an entity sends a message to a selected target audience by encoding it into a desired symbolic form by using appropriate media to carry the message to the destination. The aimed target audiences of the message act as receivers who decode the message in finest conditions back into its original form thus forming a thought in the receiver's mind. The encoding, decoding and understanding the message in the desired way is always threatened by channel noise that can be in a form of any distracting element that makes the mental processes of coding and decoding more difficult. IMC recommends that all the marketers must focal point at the customer first for their preferences, purchase patterns & decisions, exposure to media, modes of communication, and various other factors that attract customers through which the customer is exposed to the products that fits their need and get satisfied by the use of communication mix methods which the customer finds it more attractive and credible for purchase by eliminating the noise.

Marketing communications represents various elements of the marketing mix that make possible exchanges by targeting the brand to a group of customers, positioning the brand distinct from competitive brands and sharing the brand’s meaning and unique differences about the product to the target audience. Having the consistent message over time and across various forms of communication media, a brand can achieve a competitive market share. It is important that to achieve an organization’s marketing communication objectives and enhance equity of its brands can be attained by effective utilization of the elements of the marketing communication mix – online advertising, outdoor advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing, personal selling, product packaging, point-of-purchase materials, outdoor displays, marketing public relations, traditional mass media advertising, direct-mail, opt-in emails, event and cause sponsorships, and presentations by salespeople etc. use of all the above elements help accompany to attain its target in communicating.

Overall, IMC is concerning about delivering consistent brand messages that are relevant to the targeted customers and prospects, with the aim of directly influence their buying behavior and building profitable relationships by planning, creating, integrating and implementing the various forms of marketing communications.

**Importance of IMC in Business perspective**

Market Segmentation provides the companies most favorite market places on the globe to do their business. The increasing purchasing power of customers has led companies more attractive towards geographic expansion. 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 to the companies.

There is a strong need 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 that is inevitable for companies to survive in this multi-national & multicultural world emerging globally. The flow of communication is simple and open and our ability to adapt to these changes has made it a very enthralling and promising place for the global market. Companies are now getting Internet-based operations, portraying a charming picture of sophisticated and cluttered market and an attempt is made to speak with clear voices about the nature of their operations and the benefits associated with the brands and products. Various types of media are 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 organizations to desirable integration of their communications efforts under the umbrella of this strategic marketing communications function. Effective marketing departments and advertising agencies are developing pipelines of new, talented innovations, media buyers, promotions managers, database webmasters, and others in order to succeed in the long term. Employee performance attitudes reflect morale within the marketing department and also relations with other departments and groups. The effect of IMC plans are building bridges with other internal departments and making everyone aware of the thrust and theme of the program. Companies are identifying the target niches on social and attitudinal behavior, and offering common product across different demographics and also formulating the message accordingly to the customer origins. Internet marketing is picking up pace with fast technological advancement. Consumption and shopping patterns are changing. Online shopping, credit card usages are being accepted.

**Features of IMC**

The following features that provide the establishment of integrated marketing communications are listed in as

a) **Profile the identified target market**: to determine the most appropriate messages and media for either informing, persuading or reminding these customers and prospects to respond positively towards the organization’s brand. Profiling a target market involves collecting demographic data, determining their values and lifestyles and analyzing their buying behavior.

b) **Use the relevant media channels**: IMC uses all forms of marketing communications and the appro-
priate media as potential message delivery channels. The relevant media channel is any message medium that is capable of reaching the target customers and presenting the brand in a favorable light.

c) **Achieve communication synergy**: Marketing communications for a brand must, therefore, ‘speak with a single voice’. Coordination of messages and media is critical to achieve a strong and unified brand image, and to move consumers to action.

d) **Influence the target market’s behavior**: The goal of IMC is to positively influence the behaviour of the target audience rather than just create brand awareness or enhance consumer attitudes towards the brand. IMC requires that the organisation’s communication efforts encourage some form of behavioural response; that is, brand awareness and a favourable brand attitude must move the target audience to action.

e) **Build customer relationships**: Customer relationships are an enduring link between a brand and its customers that leads to repeat purchases and generates stronger customer loyalty towards the brand. Relationships between brands and customers are created by positive brand experiences that make strong, favourable and lasting impressions, and ensure the long-term viability of the company.

IMC has emerged into an environment where marketing communication practices were radically changing. These changes included e.g.

a. Reduced faith in mass media advertising (media clutter, rising costs, and negative consumer reaction)
b. Fragmentation and demassification of target audiences
c. Increased sophistication, perceptiveness, and interest of consumers
d. Increased reliance on highly targeted communication methods
e. Greater demands imposed on marketing communications suppliers
f. Shift in a balance of power from manufacturers to retailers
g. Technological advancements
h. Globalization of markets
i. Increased efforts to assess communications’ return on investment.

**Growing Importance of IMC**

Many reasons have caused IMC to develop into a primary strategy for marketers to gain the market share, few of them are like manpower is getting performance based compensation from traditional compensation methods, sales and profit margins are increasing rapidly, consumers are being smarter and actively involving in purchasing decision process, presence of rural-urban mix shape in the Market, changes in occupational diversity, increase in the awareness, heterogeneous demographic traits, diversity in economic conditions, market is shaping from a manufacturer-dominated market to a retailer-dominated, consumer controlled market, rapidly change in Technology, huge opportunities are available to develop with market, media advertising is shifting to multiple forms of communication focusing at target centered niche media. The following above are some of the reasons for growing importance of IMC in the present world of business.

**Challenges for IMC**

IMC has the challenges to be achieved for the optimal IMC performance that are still in existence and acting as key barriers for the implementation of IMC Program. Some of them are- a) Lack of strategic consistency b) Lack of needed skill sets among marketing staff c) Scarcity of creativity and innovation d) Insufficient marketing budget e) Lack of a standard measurement process f) Lack of technology advancement support g) Ambiguity on the issue h) Complex cultural and social values

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Emergence of IMC has become raised for the development 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 and struggle for profits and market share. It is the thoughtful 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 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. Customer 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.
order to reach a better result, the marketers need 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