

Driving.IMC@home.org/effectiveness *(Driving integrated marketing communication home for organisational effectiveness)*

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Abstract

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a dynamic concept. Over the last couple of years it has changed tremendously and is expected to continue to do so. It is therefore important to determine what constitutes IMC in order to agree on the conceptual foundation thereof. This will give an indication of the scenario at present and might indicate the position of IMC in future.

In this paper I explore the conceptual underpinnings of IMC. Duncan and Moriarty (1997) offer a set of criteria that successful companies are using to integrate their marketing communication activities. The criteria identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) offer a valuable conceptual framework consisting of ten drivers. In the first part of this paper these drivers are discussed in brief. Thereafter different definitions of IMC are explored by means of qualitative content analysis within the context of grounded theory, to identify the core components constituting IMC.

Although Duncan and Moriarty's ten drivers are mainly criteria of evaluation, it is assumed that the implementation of the ten drivers will lead to integration. In merging the ten drivers and the new fundamental principles identified in this study, an explanation of the theoretical fundamentals of IMC is presented. The elaborated IMC driver model acknowledge the ten drivers identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997), but adds nine principles that underwrite the strategic approach that should be followed, operational processes that must be employed and infrastructure that should be available to facilitate effective IMC practices in organisations.

It is argued that knowledge of the fundamental principles of IMC will contribute a great deal towards the successful implementation thereof. The model presented in the paper provides insight into three levels of integration and identifies several aspects that can be used to measure IMC implementation, or that can be applied to get the integration process started. The paper concludes with an operational definition of IMC derived from the model.

Introduction

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has changed dramatically since the first efforts to formalize the concept. Kitchen, Brignell and Tao (2004) suggest that IMC is the major communications development of the last decade, and that it is a potential driver of competitive advantage. Indeed, IMC is a much different activity than it was ten years ago (Schultz 1998). According to Reich (1998) the fundamental tenets of marketing have shifted to a large degree. Comprehension of the core concepts of IMC will help determine the conceptual foundation thereof. This knowledge will give an indication of the IMC scenario at present and might indicate the position of IMC in the future. Therefore the aim of this paper is to contribute towards the understanding of the conceptual underpinning of IMC.

At first the theoretical framework developed by Duncan and Moriarty (1997), that consists of ten drivers, will be discussed. Thereafter different definitions of IMC will be analysed to identify the components that constitute IMC. Each component will be discussed briefly. These components will then be compared to the principles and practices of IMC discussed in the “*White Paper on the Status, Scope and Future of IMC*” (Duncan & Mulhern 2004). The paper concludes with a comparison between, and integration of Duncan and Moriarty’s initial ten drivers and the identified components of IMC.

Duncan and Moriarty’s Ten Drivers of Integration

Duncan and Moriarty (1997) offer a set of criteria that successful companies are using to integrate their marketing communication activities. The criteria identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) offer a valuable theoretical framework consisting of ten drivers. Although this model was formulated a decade ago, it is still frequently used by academics and professionals alike (Walt 2006, Niemann 2005; Kitchen 2005, Duncan & Mulhern 2004). Each of the ten drivers falls into one of three integration categories. The first category, corporate focus, includes two drivers: (1) *relationship management* and (2) *stakeholder focus*. The second category, institutional processes, includes four drivers: (1) *the maintenance of strategic consistency*; (2) *generation of purposeful dialogue*; (3) *marketing the corporate mission*; and (4) *the implementation of zero-based planning*. The third category, infrastructure, also includes four drivers: (1) *cross-functional planning*; (2) *the development of core competencies*; (3) *database management*; and (4) *use of an integrated agency*. According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) the integration that results from the implementation of these drivers includes customer retention, interactional, ongoing communication, the expansion of marketing beyond the marketing department to the whole organisation, and improved brand equity. Figure 1 illustrates the drivers of brand relationships according to these authors.

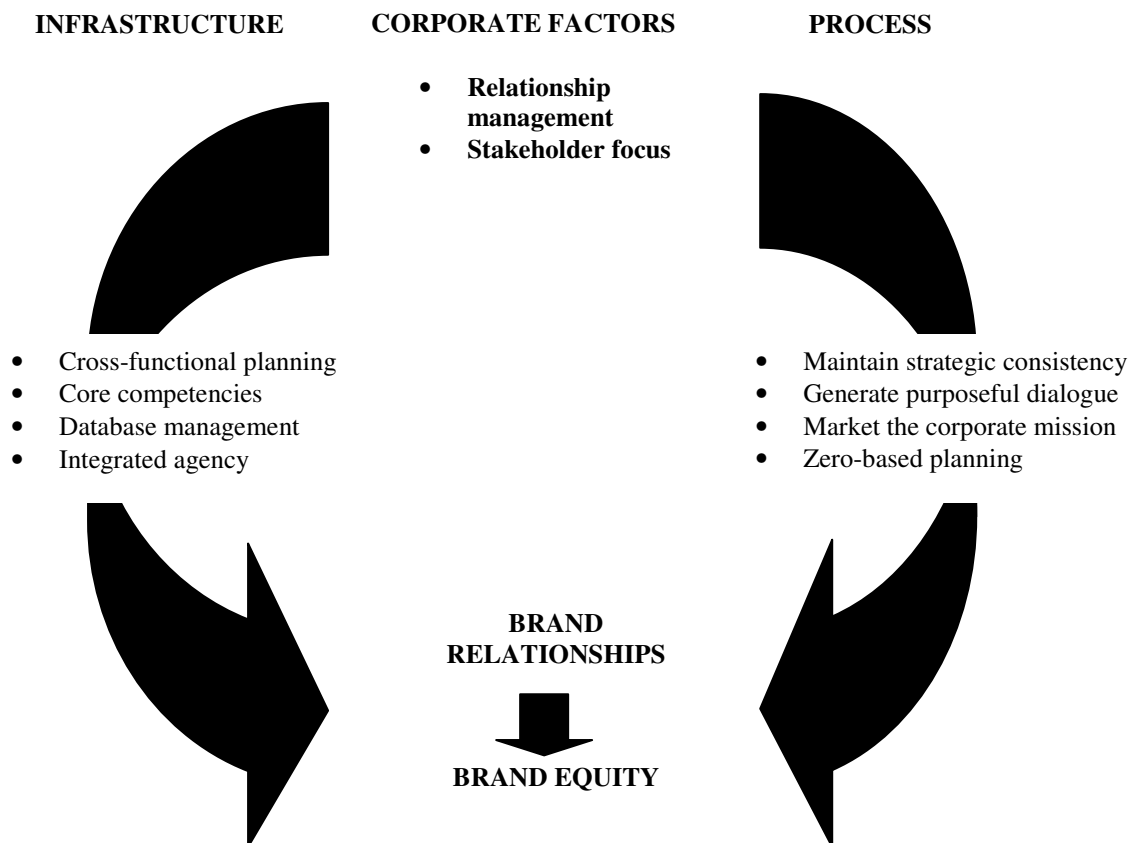


Figure 1: Drivers of Brand Relationships (Duncan & Moriarty 1997, p.16)

The Core Components of Integrated Marketing Communication

Following the investigation of Duncan and Moriarty's brand drivers, a qualitative content analysis strategy in the context of grounded theory was used to evaluate definitions of IMC found in a theoretical sample of literature from 1989 to 2006. The definitions were obtained through title searches that were performed on the databases NEXUS, SACat, Sabinet and the Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDLTD). Internet searches were also performed by means of EBSCOHOST.

A review of the literature shows that the first formal definition of IMC, developed in 1989 by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (4As) (Schultz & Schultz 1998) has been most widely used and is the most often cited by academics and practitioners (Belch & Belch 1995; Duncan & Caywood 1996; Petrisson & Wang 1996; Russell & Lane 1996; Shimp 1997; Burnett & Moriarty 1998; Koekemoer 1998; Sirgy 1998; Kitchen & Schultz 1999; Anantachart 2001; Kallmeyer & Abratt 2001; Peltier, Schibrowsky & Schultz 2003). The AAAA defines IMC as:

A concept of marketing communications planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact.

This definition was used as point of departure for the analysis in this study. Theoretical sampling (Babbie 2007; Charmaz 2006; Strauss & Corbin 1990), the grounded theory strategy of obtaining further selective data (IMC definitions in this instance) was then used to refine and fill out the major categories, until theoretical saturation (indicating that no new properties of the category or concept emerged from the definitions during data collection) was reached. The purpose of theoretical sampling is to obtain data to help explicate the categories (Charmaz 2006, p. 100). With IMC definitions as units of analysis (Fraenkel & Wallen 2003), I systematically coded data in order to create categories that “emerged” from the data and then assessed the fitness of these categories with each other as described by Babbie (2007, p.297). The constant comparative method suggested by Charmaz (2006, p.5) was employed to make comparisons during each stage of the analysis. The general theme in each category became the concept that describes the meaning of the constructs of the cluster or category. The concepts resulting from this analysis were then compared to principles and practices created by a group of IMC academics and professionals that appeared in a *White Paper on the Status, Scope and Future of IMC* (Duncan & Mulhern 2004) and the criteria identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) in their model.

The scrutinizing of the theoretical sample of IMC definitions found between 1989 and 2006, led to the emerging of the most prominent constructs that form the foundation of IMC. I categorised the constructs to present the subsequent concepts. These initial concepts, which seem to outline the primary values and philosophy of the IMC phenomenon, are:

- ❑ Holistic business approach
- ❑ Brand integration
- ❑ Customer-centric
- ❑ Customer-conscious employees
- ❑ Contact synergy
- ❑ Message consistency
- ❑ Use of technology
- ❑ Financial accountability
- ❑ Stakeholder segmentation
- ❑ Sustainable success

In the following discussion each one of these fundamental principles of IMC is explored to reflect on the true nature and scope thereof, and the task it has to perform in IMC.

Holistic business approach

An important milestone in the conceptual development of IMC was introduced by Schultz and Schultz (1998), where they proposed a shift in focus from marketing communication tactics and operations to viewing IMC as a “business process”. Marketing communication is no longer a peripheral function. Schultz and Barnes (1999, p.63) call it “the move from functions to processes”. There is an increased focus on integrated business strategies that promote organisational growth (Wiscombe 2005). IMC has to be part of the core decision-making processes of a company; otherwise the true value of IMC, including all the basic principles thereof, will not be a viable option for a company. If IMC is to make a real contribution, then Kitchen (2005) suggests that it has to move from tactical promotional component to strategic business partner. Hutton and Mulhern (2002) say the best marketing communications are integrated at every level to create a unified, cohesive, effective program.

As Duncan and Moriarty (1997, p.xii) put it, “making marketing less a function and more a philosophy of doing business”. Although these authors did not include a holistic business approach as one of their drivers, it is implied by several of the criteria identified by them – especially by stating that cross-functional rather than departmental planning and monitoring should be employed. However, this specific aspect is categorised as an infrastructural concern. Nevertheless, this principle is of such great importance to the whole planning process of IMC that it is suggested that a holistic business approach should be distinguished as a separate criterion within the corporate focus domain (Niemann 2005).

Brand integration

Within an IMC context, brand communication is more than a name, term, sign, symbol, or any other feature. A product or company becomes a brand through communication (Overton-de Klerk 1993). Communication is the means through which value is added to the product or company, and the product or company is entrenched as a “symbol” within the mind of the consumer. According to Schultz and Barnes (1999, p. 44) “the brand has become a part of the relationship between the marketing organisation and the consumer”. The brand represents the bond between the buyer and the seller and is a relationship that only the consumer can create. Ratnatunga and Ewing (2005) outlined the potential role of IMC in enhancing brand equity. These authors provided a new construct called “*brand capability*” to indicate what one can actually achieve with the brand as asset (Ratnatunga & Ewing 2005, p.37).

A brand, according to the global branding consultant Interbrand Schechter, is the promise of an experience (Moriarty et al. 1995). A powerful brand enhances awareness, differentiates the organisation and commands a premium in today’s highly competitive marketplace. Overton-de Klerk (1993, p. 187) is of the opinion that a strong brand image can establish a “fund of goodwill” or “brand equity” from which future benefits can be reaped. This author suggests that goodwill or brand equity is often equated in the industry with the term “communication stock”.

The opinions viewed strongly support the notion that the brand should be entrenched in all organisational activities. Although Duncan and Moriarty (1997) address this issue when claiming that strategic consistency should be maintained, they consider it as a process only and not as a business philosophy. By adding brand integration to the corporate focus category in the above-mentioned authors’ model, this void is addressed on a managerial level but is still kept operational because of its presence in the process category within the strategic consistency criteria.

This deliberation instinctively leads to the discussion of a customer-centric approach to marketing communication.

Customer-centric

Common knowledge in marketing is that the customer is the ultimate determinant of product or company success. As many authors suggest, the concept of integrated marketing communication begins with the consumer (Schultz 1998; Burnett & Moriarty 1998; Shimp 2000; Hansted & Hemanth 1999/2000). It’s the process and strategic approach of marketing from the consumer standpoint rather than from a product or service standpoint. The thrust starts at understanding what consumers are interested in – what they want – then building or adjusting the products or services to meet those needs. After understanding what the

consumer wants, the marketer should insure that the communications being developed are relevant to them [the consumer] (Schultz 1998). Customers are increasingly being viewed as assets, with tangible equity (Blattberg & Deighton 1996) and lifetime value (Pitt, Ewing & Berthon 2000).

According to Lauterborn and Curran (2000) it is important to recognise the fact that “all customers are not created equal”. In recent years, customers have become significantly more empowered. Yastrow (2000) identified three major factors that caused this increase in customer power, namely a significant increase in purchase options; improved access to objective, plentiful product information; and consumers have become savvy, more self-reliant and sceptical, trusting themselves more than sellers.

Every IMC strategy should therefore begin with an intense consideration of the customer. This approach goes far beyond basic demographics to uncover the customer segments and consumer motivation that drive purchasing decisions. Companies often restrict themselves to statistical measures such as population size, net disposable income and purchasing power. While this might have been an adequate method to use ten years ago, it is not the best approach in today’s competitive business environment. Advocates contend that IMC is the crucial first step in transitioning from “primarily out-bound, product-driven communication to the more interactive, consumer-oriented, and behaviour-oriented approaches of the 21st century” (Kitchen & Schultz 1999, p.24).

A customer-centric approach in IMC necessitates the discussion of two closely related and undeniably important aspects, namely dialogue or two-way communication and the consequent building of long-term relationships. Marketers should move towards communication efforts that are packed with information that can form the basis of a dialogue with the customer. In IMC all customer contacts, planned and unplanned, take on the role of communicating the brand’s marketing message to the customer. One of the latest trends in marketing is customer experience management. This concept is defined as “the process of strategically managing a customer’s entire experience with a product or a company” (Schmitt 2003, p. 17). The challenge now becomes to manage the ongoing stream of contacts, or “moments of truth”, a company has with each customer as an integrated marketing dialogue. According to Harbison (1997) customer intimacy is one of the key components of IMC and involves the tracking and managing of all customer moments. Marketers need to regard each point of contact with a customer as an opportunity to create a relationship and live up to the promises made while in that relationship.

The aspects highlighted in the preceding discussion have implications for the running of a company. An aspect that Duncan and Moriarty included in their model and that bears relation to being customer-centric is the generation of purposeful dialogue however, being customer-centric is an aptness needed to create the context for this purposeful dialogue mentioned. Customer-centric is therefore considered a supplementary criterion that is essential and as a result added to the Duncan and Moriarty model (1997) within the corporate focus category.

According to Duncan and Moriarty (1997) companies will have to set up cross-functional processes and make other structural changes to better manage brand relationships. As will be seen in the next section, an aspect that goes hand in hand with the changes in the internal environment is the predisposition of employees. The internal marketing process in IMC is of the utmost importance to establish an effective base from which a company can operate.

Customer-conscious employees

The experience each customer has when buying and using a company's product or service and interfacing with its employees is an integral part of his or her perceived value. Brand experience starts with attracting employees who have an affinity for the product and are themselves satisfied and loyal (Robinette & Brand 2000). Studies show that employee satisfaction is correlated with customer satisfaction (Feig 1997; Freemantle 1998; Maddock & Fulton 1996). A customer responds positively to an employee who is passionate about his or her job and the products the company provides. This indicates the importance of an integrated internal marketing communication programme in any organisation that wants to employ effective marketing actions (McGoon 1998/99).

Today's consumer simply cannot be sold through mass media alone. As a result, leading marketing strategists are focusing on creating one-on-one, customised customer relationships that utilise every possible advertising, promotional and relationship medium to enhance the brand experience. However, this customer-orientated approach has serious implications for the management of communication and the human resources of a company. Murray and White (2005, p.356) rightfully refer to internal communication as the "sleeping giant" of strategic communication.

The previous discussion reflects back on the holistic business approach that should be followed, but even more important is the fact that employees should be made customer conscious in order to comply with a customer orientated approach. The key assumption underlying internal communication in an integrated marketing communication context is based upon the notion that to satisfy customers, the firm must have satisfied employees.

The Duncan and Moriarty model does not explicitly address the issue of customer-conscious employees; neither on a strategic, nor a tactical level. However, these authors do admit that IMC recognises and responds to the fact that increasingly everyone in the organisation has the potential to "touch" the customer (Duncan & Moriarty 1997, p. xii). Although the inclusion of customer-centricity in the corporate category addresses the void on a strategic level, customer-conscious employees are also added to the process category to supplement the existing operational criteria.

The importance of internal marketing is also reflected in the next discussion on contact synergy. As stated repeatedly in the previous discourse, an organisation should strive to direct each contact point between the organisation and its customers.

Contact synergy

The significance of this concept is the notion that a marketing communicator should manage contact between a company and the customers in such a manner that synergy is created. A whole array of tools can be used to communicate and persuade intended stakeholder groups. These tools are called the marketing communication mix and traditionally included advertising, sales promotion (directed at both consumers and the resellers), personal selling, direct marketing and public relations. But increasingly marketers are coming to understand that integrated marketing communication is not just based on what the organisation sends out or delivers to customers and prospects, in other words planned messages. Communication also occurs through the brand contacts or experiences customers and prospects have with the brand and the organisation in the general marketplace (Schultz & Kitchen 2000). In truth, it is

the total sum of the brand contacts a customer or prospect has over time that determines the consumer's response to planned and controlled communication programmes. Therefore, to plan effective programmes the communication manager must have some idea of the totality of contact points that currently exist in the marketplace. The goal of the IMC programme is not just to manage the contacts but also to manage the process (Schultz & Kitchen 2000). Understanding the venues in which customers and prospects come into contact with the brand is one of the key steps in IMC.

The bottom line of contact synergy is the fact that many marketing communication techniques should be combined to present a unified message with a feedback mechanism built into the process to make the communication a two-way flow of information. Two of the criteria identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) have relevance to the above discussed concept. Firstly, these authors refer to strategic consistency and state that the communication dimensions for all brand contacts and the sources of these messages are critical because they impact on stakeholders' behaviour. The more the brand's position is strategically integrated into all the brand messages, the more consistent and distinct the company's identity and reputation will be (Duncan & Moriarty 1997).

Furthermore these authors highlight core competencies as another important IMC driver. This criteria support the notion in the above discussion that marketing managers must have a basic understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the major marketing communication functions or techniques. They must objectively evaluate and respect these strengths and weaknesses and apply them in a mix that maximises the cost-effectiveness of each function (Duncan & Moriarty 1997). However, the concept contact refers very strongly to the expected outcome of the process. Although the core competency criterion obviates the infrastructure need, the author suggests that this concept should be added to the operational process category to underline the operational importance thereof.

Message consistency / strategic consistency

A key guideline for building strong brands is to have an identity, position, and execution that are consistent over time (Aaker 1996; D'Alessandro 2001; Ries & Ries 1998). Strategic consistency is the coordination of all messages that create reputations, as well as images and positions, in the minds of customers and other stakeholders. Without consistency these critical identity cues will be unfocused and diffused. Having executional consistency in marketing communication is important, but what is even more important is to create strategic consistency in the fundamental areas of core brand values, business philosophy, and corporate mission (Dewhirst & Davis 2005). These are the areas that demonstrate corporate integrity and provide a platform for integrated communication.

Strategic consistency then means making these fundamental business philosophies actionable by integrating them into all aspects of the organisation's performance and communication (Moriarty 1997). In other words, to ensure that the various elements of the communication program have a common, strategic objective (Low 2000). Maintaining strategic message consistency is a very complex management process. If a cross-functional management system is not in place in an organisation, it is almost impossible to coordinate the effort (Duncan 2002). Consequently, the importance of the links between the different concepts discussed in this article is once again highlighted.

The preceding discussion highlighted the fact that consistency should be incorporated at all levels in an organisation. Therefore strategic consistency is moved to the corporate focus category and message consistency is added to the process category.

Use of technology

Technology touches every part of our lives, making our world faster, smarter and more mobile than ever before. These technological trends have a profound impact on today's fragmented marketplace. It means marketing communicators have to adopt new and better ways to understand, reach and connect with ever-more-elusive consumers.

Many leading marketing communication theorists and practitioners feel that an integrated marketing communication approach offers the ways and technology the means to achieve these ends (McGoon 1998/99; Duncan & Moriarty 1999; Kitchen 2005; Dewhirst & Davis 2005). As Reich (1998, p.28) suggests, "a multifaceted relational database-driven approach packs a far more potent wallop than any single advertising component in terms of positioning, brand building/product awareness, and cementing that all important bond – customer loyalty." However, this same author maintains that a mix of traditional marketing communication techniques and interactive programs should blend to yield a more powerful IMC program.

Database management is accommodated in Duncan and Moriarty's model (1997) in the infrastructure category. The essence of the arguments presented on the use of technology is captured in this concept and therefore it shall be maintained.

Financial accountability

One of the biggest problems facing marketing communication managers is the fact that they are more and more pressurised to be accountable for the money they spend on marketing activities (Duncan, Caywood & Newsom 1993; Thornson & Moore 1996; Shimp 2000). A simple argument for IMC is that "there are financial, competitive and effectiveness benefits to be achieved through the synergy afforded by the process of integration" (Pickton & Hartley 1998, p. 458). IMC should be results driven, as suggested by Kliatchko (2005). This author considers financial measurement as a pillar of IMC.

Analysing the Duncan and Moriarty model (1997) it became apparent that zero-based planning addresses the financial approach and management aspect in IMC. However, to allow for a broader application of financial planning it is suggested that zero-based planning is replaced with financial accountability in the process domain.

Stakeholder segmentation

The increased sophistication of audience segmentation has provided marketers with a whole new way to reach target audiences more efficiently (Reich 1998). Stakeholder segmentation is a very important concept in IMC. In essence, stakeholder segmentation in IMC entails the identification and formulation of meaningful and profitable niches and includes all stakeholders of the organisations. Kliatchko (2005) describes IMC as audience-focused. The use of the term audience rather than consumer is deliberate as it gives prominence to the fact that IMC programmes are not directed solely to consumers, but to all relevant publics of an organisation (Kliatchko 2005, p.26). To be audience or stakeholder focused means IMC

programmes are directed at the multiple markets that have a direct or indirect impact on the business of an organisation (Moore & Thorson 1996), internal as well as external (Kliatchko 2005; Burnett & Moriarty 1998). Another issue raised by Thomas and Sullivan (2005) with regards to stakeholder segmentation is the fact that segment-specific communication strategies should be developed in IMC.

Duncan and Moriarty (1997) included stakeholder focus in their model at the corporate focus level. The main idea behind this criterion is that gaining the support of key stakeholders in the short term generates greater long-term profits for investors. These authors also underline that brand equity is determined by the number and quality of relationships that a company has, not only with customers, but with all its stakeholders. This notion upholds the argumentation line that was followed in the discussion on stakeholder segmentation.

Sustainable success

All marketing communication is goal directed in the IMC paradigm; even more so than in the traditional marketing communication context, because of the stressed importance of efficiency (Burnett & Moriarty 1998) and financial accountability (Rensburg & Cant 2003). Whether aimed at existing or prospective stakeholders, the communication strategy must have an objective that can generally be interpreted as the achievement of a substantive goal. The ultimate goal of the marketing communication strategy is to help sell the product or service to keep the company in business (Burnett & Moriarty 1998).

Duncan and Moriarty's (1997) proposed mission marketing links up with sustainable success. A mission creates an integrity platform and helps define and humanise a company. One of the benefits thereof is that it keeps employees focused on the company's fundamental objective of growing profitable relationships. Mission marketing is a long-term corporate activity with companywide buy-in.

Sustainable success is not mentioned among Duncan and Moriarty's ten drivers. It offers a broader and deeper understanding of, and contextualises the other principles identified; therefore it is included in the elaborated IMC driver model.

The White Paper on the Status, Scope and Future of IMC

In an effort to better understand industry thinking and adoption of IMC, a group of IMC academics and professionals created a list of IMC principles and practices that appeared in the *White Paper on the Status, Scope and Future of IMC* (co edited by Duncan & Mulhern 2004). The principles listed in this document are:

- All customer touch points impact the brand and brand equity, not just advertising and promotional messages.
- Interactive, two-way communication is just as important as one-way media messages.
- Transactions are "relationship" building blocks – each transaction strengthens or weakens a customer-brand relationship.
- Retaining and growing customers is just as important, if not more so, than acquiring customers.
- IMC is an ongoing, interactive process.

The practices listed are:

- Communication and strategies is customer focused (based on “outside-in” thinking).
- There is cross-functional planning and monitoring of all brand messages.
- Customer expectations, not customers, are managed.
- All marketing communication messages have strategic consistency.
- Brand positioning is integrated into all brand messages.
- Marketing communication planning is based on prioritized SWOTs – strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats.
- Segmenting and targeting are database driven.
- Relationship metrics and other financial measurements are used to evaluate marketing communication programs.

After scrutinizing this white paper, it became eminent that no new principles emerged during the discussion that was not already identified in the examination of the definitions.

Comparing the Ten Drivers with the Fundamental Principles of IMC

Although Duncan and Moriarty’s ten drivers are mainly criteria of evaluation, it is assumed that the implementation of the ten drivers will lead to integration. In this last phase of this study, the ten drivers and the fundamental principles identified are merged and an elaborated explanation of the theoretical fundamentals of IMC is presented in figure 2.

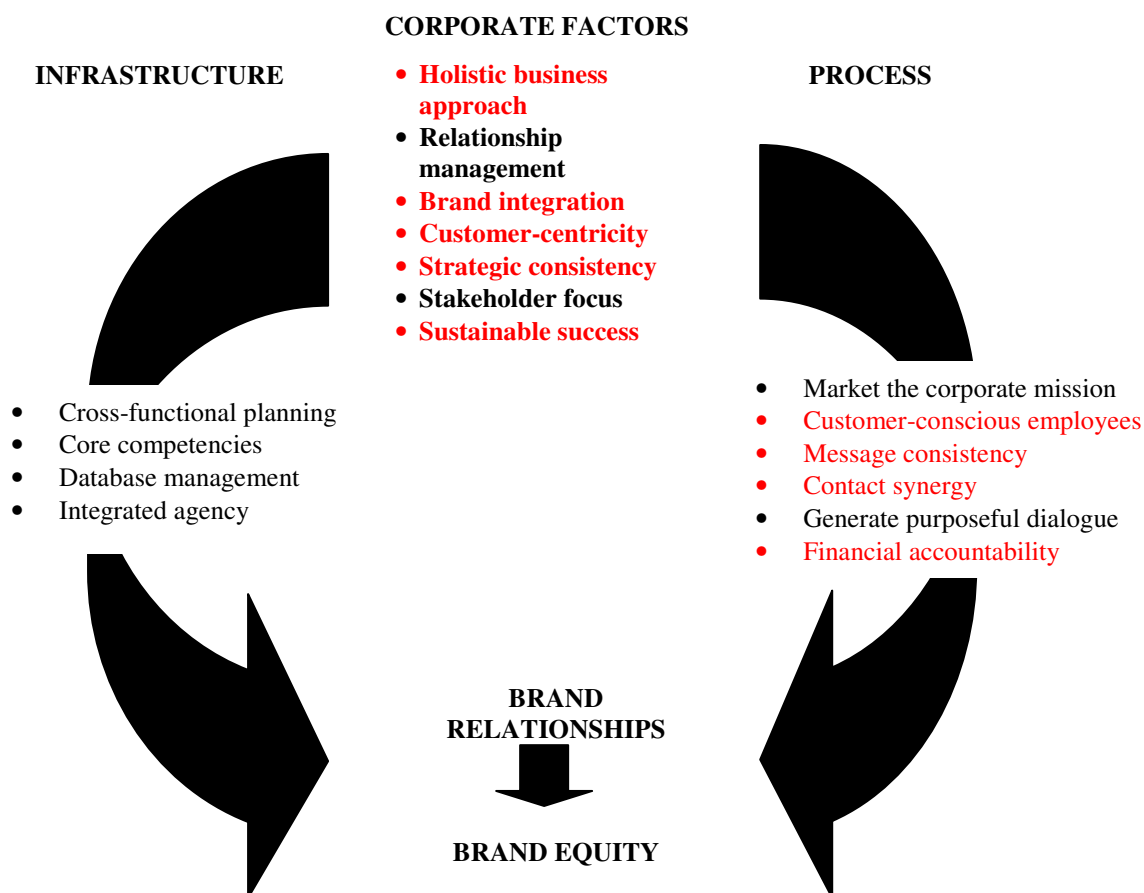


Figure 2: Elaborated IMC driver model

The elaborated IMC driver model acknowledges the ten drivers identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997), but adds nine basic principles that underwrite the strategic approach that should be followed, the operational processes that must be employed and the infrastructure that should be available to facilitate effective IMC practices in an organisation.

In the corporate focus category the original two drivers are supplemented with an additional five, namely holistic business approach, customer-centricity, brand integration, strategic consistency, and sustainable success. Although stakeholder segmentation was identified as a basic principle of IMC in the analysis of IMC definitions, it is not included in the elaborated IMC driver model because the criterion stakeholder focus incorporates the same ideas.

The institutional processes, which consisted out of the maintenance of strategic consistency, generation of purposeful dialogue, marketing the corporate mission, and the implementation of zero-based planning, are also adapted. Marketing the corporate mission and generating purposeful dialogue are sustained, but strategic consistency is moved to the corporate focus level and the concept message consistency is added to the institutional processes level. Zero-based planning is considered too constricting and is replaced with financial accountability. Furthermore contact synergy and customer-conscious employees are also added to this category.

The infrastructure category is not changed. Although one of the ten principles identified is the use of technology, a parallel can be drawn with the central meaning attached to database management and therefore this criterion is kept intact.

A New Operational Definition of IMC

Although it was stated previously that one definition of IMC is hard to come by, the basic theoretical principles of IMC can be incorporated with the ten drivers identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) to give a more comprehensive definition of the phenomenon than those that already exist. After thorough reflection on the phenomenon and deliberation about the topic, the following definition of IMC is proposed:

IMC is a dynamic, holistic approach, integrated into all strategic levels of an organisation. It manages and fuses every point of contact between the organisation and its stakeholders. Through this coordinated efforts it supports a targeted, integrated, consistent brand communication strategy for the purpose of building positive lifetime relationships through data-driven techniques, by customer-conscious employees ultimately giving an organisation a competitive advantage and brand equity.

Concluding Remarks

To understand IMC, it is necessary to realise that IMC is not a separate business function in an organisation like traditional marketing was. It is an approach that directs all organisational activities. Consequently, it is no longer a side-function, but rather part of the core of strategic business decisions as the suggested new definition indicates.

Knowledge and insight of the fundamental principles of IMC contribute a great deal towards the successful implementation thereof. In this paper a model is presented that depicts the basic principles or building blocks of IMC. With Duncan and Moriarty's drivers of brand relationships model used as point of departure, a new model is presented that incorporates the concepts that were identified when different definitions of IMC were analysed.

The new model highlights that the aim of implementing IMC is ultimately to create brand equity, and as brand equity is nothing else than satisfied, loyal customers the ultimate aim of implementing IMC in businesses is therefore to create satisfied, loyal customers. The elaborated model gives insight into three levels of integration and identifies several aspects that can be used to measure IMC implementation, or that can be applied to get the integration process started. A next challenge emanating from this paper is to integrate this model with the other two areas of organisational communication, namely managerial and corporate communication.

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