Integrated Messages: 30 Years Lasting Evolution

“Communication is Power” (Merrihue 1960: 150)

All previous forms of communication such as printed media and others still exist and finding the right mix of them together with new media as social networking, etc., is the aim of communication managers armed with new technologies. Sometimes we all look for Renaissance communicators and especially during times of crises, which we have exactly at the moment of fighting against COVID-19 or other kinds of viruses. There are so many having something to say, express opinion or simply set new values and lifestyle, it is really the great need to make impact in all areas of our lives, but at the same time it is clear that those who agree and listen carefully not easy to persuade to do exactly what is the mostly important at the time. Besides, who may say, what actions are the priority and for whom, and why? Thus, is it possible to find a possibility to integrate a message in the mind of the selected addressee, to win in the environment of information overload and prepare messages that would be trusted? Propaganda or rhetoric, one to many communication or dialogue? Is it possible to plan and coordinate a “win-win” game?

Keywords: integrated communication (IC), integrated marketing communication (IMC), practical usage, crises times, original model of communication management

Introduction

It is a new direction of management and the very first springs of paradigm may be discovered in the circles of journalists about 30 years ago. Journalists can be named as originators of paradigm’s shift. This study is created using simple structure of research results presentation with review of literature sources, methodology, results of the scrutiny and conclusions. Besides, this study has three figures and the cartoon for better understanding of the phenomenon of communication.

Literature Review

The Aim to Integrate Message in the Mind of the Selected Addressee

A way to win in increasingly chaotic world, new approach and possibility to integrate message in the mind of the selected addressee, the chance to unite internal and external communication of organization, besides, not to separate political and business communication – integrated communication (IC) was originated as a management philosophy (Rebel 1999) at the cross of 20 and 21 century and also strategic concept that is open for renovation and rethinking. IC is the result of integrated marketing communication (IMC) (Caywood, Schultz and
Clarke Caywood’s (1997) approach is more useful for organisations with strategically strengthened public relations, on the other side, Don E. Schultz (1997) is rather universal and his understanding about levels of integrated marketing communication can be used for targeted activities. The most problematic is the level of reaching higher stages of integration, so it is useful to have the plan of functional development and Hunter’s innovative approach as an example for possible creative adoption. Internal organisational dynamics and external interactions are influencing the need to prepare evaluations and study the situation with the aim to design more improved and new levels of IC.

According to Tom Duncan and Sandra E. Moriarty (1998), an appreciation of the complexities of brand communication makes it possible to understand the structural changes needed to facilitate cross-functional planning and monitoring of all brand messages. Such kind of understanding is crucial for being able to apply a communication-based model of marketing more easily and to deliver a more effective relationship-building program. Duncan and Moriarty speak of three common elements in marketing and communication: 1) relationship/exchange; 2) channels/feedback; and 3) information signs/signals. These common elements have related factors in integrated marketing: 1) customers and other stakeholders; 2) interactivity; and 3) everything sends a message.

With the end in view, Chris Fill was very far looking for: he wrote that integrated marketing communication is the reduction in costs that this approach makes possible (Fill 2001:411). It was proved: T.R. Duncan (2005) introduced a detailed process of communication planning. This planning model has been popular because of understanding that approach is related to effectiveness, – the most respectful scholar who made a background for this – George S. Low (2000).

There are some requirements for management of communication in our so turbulent news spreading industry: “…for continuously changing media environment could be a strategic element for IMC implementation, since it enhances the interactivity, on the other hand its high complexity could make it difficult for practitioners to manage integration” (Porcu, Barrio-García, & Kitchen 2012: 344).

According to Kenneth Clow and Donald Baack, it is a “seamless program”, which maximizes the impact on consumers and others at a minimal cost (2004:322). Due to the changes under way, complexity, electronic communication, cyber marketing, the emergence of a global network in the market, it was simply necessary to create a new direction of management, thus in the 1990s in the USA,

1Diane Gayeski (1998) explains: IMC establishes a model for coordinating marketing, advertising, and PR efforts, all of which are promotional and external in nature. What we are calling IC is a model that encompasses both internal and external communication and its application for information dissemination, communication and collaboration, learning, and performance support. IC is the application of analysis, communication, and evaluation techniques to create and manage integrated, multifaceted interventions combining information, instruction, collaboration, business process design, feedback, and incentive systems to improve human performance in the workplace in order to achieve organisation’s desired missions and visions.
the concept and theory of the IMC and after IC appeared. Thomas Duncan and S.E. Everett (1993) presented the concept introduced by Paul S. Hume in 1991: IMC also means that communication is integrated with the thoughts of the consumer, and this have the feedback and affects sales. In their view, according to W.D. Novelli (1989-1990), the interaction is at the heart of the IMC, which means that individual efforts are mutually reinforced by the effect of the result achieved. This is quite different from the individual objectives chosen by the representatives of each functional sphere, different reporting strategies, and self-ordinated and uncoordinated public awareness plans.

In order to ensure new thinking, the conclusions presented at the initial stage of the development of the IMC concept are not sufficient. New communication understanding should be taken up by representatives of all management chains, integration processes should start at the top management level, along with a more horizontal direction of processes, hierarchy reduction, centralised communication planning, management, control and evaluation. The whole of the approaches developed by the proponents of the IMC is the beginning of the theoretical development of the IC and, at the same time, one of the elements of the structure.

IC is moving further than IMC according to the needs to have effective communication and here must be mentioned: IMC means different things to different people and, according to Chris Fill, IMC term should embrace the marketing mix, the promotional mix, internal communications and all those outsourced providers who contribute to the overall marketing communication process. Fill argues that IMC is the reduction in costs that this approach makes possible (2001:411).

Paul Smith’s is still in use, he bases his marketing communication theory on a rational argument: there is more room for a coordinated and crystal-clear message in a world where the consumer bombards over 1000 commercial communications every day (2004: 16). Hence, Smith with 7Ps – product, price, place, promotion, people, physical evidence, process – is not very original in the crossing of centuries, because a more precise formula of 12 elements was originated by Neil H. Borden in 1964. On the other hand, Smith details promotion as an element of the marketing mix and introduces the structure of the communication mix: selling; advertisement; sales promotion; direct marketing; publicity and public relations; sponsorship; exhibitions; packaging; point of sale and merchandising; internet; word of mouth; corporate identity (2004: 6-8).

Ben Wightman (1999) discussed James E. Grunig’s and Thomas Hunter’s suggestions mostly in the sphere of structural arrangements. It is some kind of signal about problems of deciding, what IMC originally means and what higher level of importance it has. The real strength of the concept is a variety of communication actions, equal voices for different communication forms and orchestration of them. Wightman’s conclusion is related to the need for the great changes in organisational thinking and also the deficit of skilled IMC professionals. His explanations about Caywood’s contribution to IC concept’s renovation give support to Gayeski’s works and also may form the united theoretical platform with Netherlands’ scholars working in the same field. Hunter’s conception about unification of organisation’s functions can be
implemented in the institutions of the public sector not only in the business sector. Thus, the ability and aiming to launch IC was tested in Lithuanian public sector (Armonienė 2001).

**It is Possible to Implement**

IC practical usage gives evidence about universality of implementation, when this new paradigm was discussed and studied using qualitative and quantitative statistical methods in the field of bibliometrics and also from the point of view of Lithuanian realities in the public sector – sample of 13 ministries – in 2001. Besides, integrated communication as an outside-in planning model was suggested for Lithuanian food products promotion in case of having excellent promotional programmes and EU financial support infiltration in 2005. IC was evaluated as a model for on-line journalism development in 2009 and 2014 with introduction of IC as an universal model for those who are aiming to win with their “one voice” messages in a very turbulent market (Armonienė 2000, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2009, 2014).

Here must be made some remark. It is clear, that development should be permanent and individual for every organisation. According to this, recommendations and variation of the theoretical and methodological whole (Figure 1) was originated as the result of the first research of such kind in Lithuania.

**Figure 1. Dynamic Model of Integrated Communication: Elements of Development Consistency**

Another step of previous investigations was the “Bibexcel” program as an analytical tool developed by Professor Olle Persson, Umeå University, Sweden. It was a helpful instrument for sorting and counting the citation data and producing a Don E. Schultz centred first author co-citation map having the first decade of theory development till 2001 (Figure 2).
A map can be used as an interpretative tool in understanding the structural properties of the intellectual base. The intellectual base has not been of a diffusive character since 2001 and it is crucial to continue investigations with the aim to study its dynamics in terms of its development over time. It is possible to know about this all more using the source – treasures of Umeå University with its human resources and extremely creative researchers (Armonienė 2002).

And with any doubt, starting input in the new paradigm and practical usage of the theory was made by Jan H.C. Rebel, who introduced IC concept for Vilnius University scholars from Faculty of Communication in 1999 (Armonienė 2000) and who implemented an approach of integrated communication for the banks sector and financial communication management in Poland during the last years of 20 century.

The application of integrated communication outside the business sector is possible, the scientific literature mentions it (Schultz, Tannenbaum, & Lauterborn 1994; Caywood 1997). One of the first major projects: a three-year integrated support and training strategy for the Polish public administration sector since 2004 to prepare effectively for the absorption of the EU Structural Funds.\(^2\)

The project is an excellent example of the application of integrated communication in the public administration sector and the integrated approach

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was chosen precisely in order to successfully work in the management of Community financial assistance. In general, an integrated approach is envisaged on the basis of an action plan, all measures are planned on the basis of strategically justified objectives and specific objectives. The implementation of the integrated strategy is primarily linked to the planning of actions, thus, establishing the planning model is one of the most acceptable. The development of an integrated approach is broadened by the development of integrated communication, which is possible primarily by strategically underpinning coherent activities.

Hence, implication, that “it may be that integrated marketing can work in a business context, but in terms of other organizations, municipalities, hospitals and government agencies, the concept is not at all useful” (Falkheimer & Heide 2014: 133) has the opposite evidences, for example, IC is useful for implementation in governmental sector. Lithuanian Government earned services of integrated communication agencies in case to originate effective communication, prevent crisis situation in various societies groups and coordinate messages during the quarantine in the state because of COVID-19 infection since April, 2020. Important to mention that it worked during the first quarantine in Lithuania in Spring 2020.

Returning to theory building steps, for example, Nete N. Kristensen (2010), who investigated Danish context, only 10 years later after the cross of 20 and 21 centuries claims again about integrated communication as a normative theory and during writing about problems of its implementation summarises, that communication managers are able to ask for more power, respect in times of crisis and tightening budgets and that it is not normal when communication professionals don’t have the chance to integrate communication and manage at the same moment when managers of organization or CEO “don’t get it” (Berger, 2007:230). But it was proved in Lithuania that IMC/IC as normative theory has practical implementation and signs of universal usage (Armonienė 2001, 2002, 2005, 2009).

**New Media – New Possibilities and New Requirements**

Thus, it is possible to get it – to implement IC in various organisations, especially during the time of crisis. Changes of communication and its management are in-line with social changes, spreading of new technologies (Armonienė 1999) and information platforms, besides, active role has so named social networks.

An important change is that there are often no decision-making factors in virtual space about what to publish or what not, and there is no control function. Knowledge is spreaded in discussion, and personal subjective opinion is freely expressed. However, in virtual space, evolutionary processes do not take place, as traditional journalism changes, interactive tools become part of the media – or vice versa? Journalists can immediately exchange views with readers, ensuring feedback. The process is being developed, its directions can be difficult to predict, but one thing is clear – the tension that exists between institutionalised control in traditional editor’s offices and subjective free self-expression can be the solved
problem, that is related to implementation of integrated communication (IC), which interacts with new media forms.

“Outside-in” approach of information dissemination planning and preparing messages of “one voice” was created by journalists aiming to survive in a turbulent market with news preparing and information preparing for various public groups’ business. IC is a way to jump out from the stream of chaotic communication flows for a very different kind of future looking for organisations and it is especially important during crises times. “One voice” messages are in great need when we have a huge amount of false information reaching us mostly from social networks during this COVID-19 crisis. People want information that is truth worth; they need media and communication which they can trust.

Attempts to use propaganda during this worldwide COVID-19 health and economy crisis is not in use, because people are able to use many channels of communication and make conclusions and decide what to do and how to behave by themselves, even so named experts not all gain real attention during crisis when they are from the same country and people want to listen what foreign experts say and what messages they are spreading, audience want to participate in dialogical communication, to express opinion and not pay attention to one-sided monologue communication.

Methodology

Descriptive research and problematic overview has been used in this study devoted for 30 years anniversary of IMC/IC theory and practical usage evolutionary development. Normative theory or so named new paradigm moved towards implementation. During the situation of worldwide movements because of the spread of biological viruses in 2019/2020/2021 the new one communication model with presentation of new media tools incorporation to the older media environment has been presented in this study (see Figure 3).

According to Michael Q. Patton’s (1987, p.101–104) presented description of the method, unifying framework was implemented with the aim to concentrate investigations around three main themes: 1) mutual relationships, dialogue; 2) integration of communication elements; 3) planning process from outside in. The process of evaluation and comparison of existing situation with desirable fruitfully supported movement toward more deeply understanding of problems that are the mostly important for professionals working in the field: lack of knowledge needed for managerial preparations to originate strategic plans of communication and information dissemination. Additionally discussion group was gathered and data about present and possible changes toward more effective communication was collected. Data was analysed and the worth finding was about existence of initial stages of IC or rather different kinds of attempts to improve communication management in all Lithuanian ministries starting 2001 (Armonienė 2001). The same method was used for the situation analysis in 2020/2021 – research object was the sector of Lithuanian museums and their ability to make impact for virtual clients. Other research methods which were used in combination of quantitative

**Figure 3. Model to Strengthen the Application of Electronic Marketing Communication Tools and Consumer Loyalty**

![Diagram](image)

*Source: Armonienė 2020/2021.*

**Results in 2020/2021: Research Agenda**

Lithuanian museums are reorienting and introducing active e-marketing tools, so, it is important to assess their impact on the loyalty of visitors, prepare for strategic works. The significance of this investigation is that there has been created original theoretical model to strengthen the application of the museum's electronic marketing communication tools and consumer loyalty.

Marketing of museums in the 21st century is quite actively explored the area (Kotler et al. 2005; Kotler et al. 2008; McLean 1994; Goulding 2000; Lagrosen 2003; Conway, Leighton 2012), there are famous researchers of the field (Rentschler 2002; Komarac 2014; Gilmore, Rentschler 2002; Conway, Leighton 2012; Styliani et al. 2009; Minoska-Pavlovska 2019). Lithuanian scientists have also published significant results of research about marketing in museums (Talijūnas 2004; Juščius, Baranskaitė 2015; Karpavičiūtė, Paqvalén, Petkutė 2019; Davidavičienė, Sabaitė 2014; Dzemyda, Jurgaitytė 2014; Dulskis, Umbrasas 2012). To be noted are scientific works, in which various e-marketing models have been presented, containing elements that can also be adapted in the museum sector: Dzemyda and Jurgaitytė (2014).
Loyalty can be described as a long-term user's attachment to a particular brand, brand or service (Backman, Crompton 1991). In this work, the following indicators of the loyalty of museum visitors were selected: benefit, perceived value; repeated visits to the museum, its website; recommending to visit the museum or its website for others; membership of the museum sponsors' club, discussion group or facebook friends. The following classification of electronic marketing communication tools used in museums was chosen in the empirical study of this work: website; banners; e-mail; search engine; news/discussion group (blog); newsletters; social networking; webinars, videos, forums, online competitions, games; virtual exhibitions.

This work was carried out in a quantitative and qualitative study, the Likert scale and the Reichheld (2003) method were incorporated.

The summary is that the tools of electronic communication need to be aligned with the elements of traditional marketing, but there is also a need to actively analyze the situation and new tools, such as the rise of mobile marketing and younger visitors will really prefer mobile apps, games, etc. The created model (see Figure 3) is theoretical, it is open to improvement (Armonienė A. 2020-2021).

In addition to created model, should be mentioned so-named internet communication models developed by D. Dunnington (2005) are of particular importance. Two-sided, interactive communication is the essence of its models. Dunnington (2005) developed, in a sense, a model of possible callback, the concept of which is creators J.E. Grunig and T. Hunt (1984). The application of the Dunnington (2005) models is important in the field of public relations, which would actually contribute to the real use of the practice and the developed model to help strengthen the application of the electronic marketing communication tools and consumer loyalty (Armonienė A. 2020-2021).

In sum, IC is not easy to implement, but it means profit and winning position according to the needs of those who are users of information which is well structured and manageable. It means permanent development.

**Conclusions**

Electronic forms of information and communication are more and more deeply penetrating into everyday life and troubles related to management, misunderstanding, not-successful communication may be possible to overcome with ideas and approaches which are characteristic features of IC. A lot of research questions are surrounding the implementation of the concept of IC and possible solution may be the process of evolutionary developed integration as well as the new understanding of strategic planning directed by an outside-in view. The movement toward outside-in development seems to be one of the greatest transformations and the mostly difficult to overcome obstacle. This process has started together with the boom of information and communication technology and has still been in a permanent development state, which is related to tremendous energy condensation. However, difficulties of measurement are not helpful for
building an original wholeness of theoretical and methodological premises of IMC/IC.

**Figure 4. Cartoon, its Title "Non Verbal Communication"**

*Source: Author Paulius Armonas, created being 8 years old, in 2000. Drawing had been made on the other side of printed paper page from his mothers dissertation about IMC/IC.*

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