

Chapter 8

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC): The Interdisciplinary Concept

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ABSTRACT

Since introducing the concept integrated marketing communications (IMC) in the communication field, researchers and practitioners admitted to the interdisciplinary nature of the nascent concept. The current chapter tries to further explore the interdisciplinary concept of IMC, through subjecting IMC into in-depth analysis of its origin disciplines (Communication, Marketing and Branding). Furthermore, the paper resides to synthesize IMC empirical research in a meta-analytic framework to assert on the interdisciplinary field research trends emerging from utilizing the concept as a dependent or independent variable in different research disciplines. Finally, a case study tackling the status of Egyptian tourism after the recent political turmoil post the uprisings was assessed had the designated authorities turned to executing Integrated Marketing Communications instead of relying on temporary unfeasible solutions. A conceptual framework was proposed as a permanent solution of this matter. Employing a theoretical method and a Meta analytical method of 135 research papers, findings proved IMC to be an interdisciplinary concept. IMC research trends could be traced to three development phases with the third phase being crucially related to interdisciplinary frameworks. Thus, IMC is proved to be a viable framework to study topics related to branding, education, services and tourism.

INTRODUCTION

In an earlier point in time, Acheson (1993, p. 4) elaborated on the fact that Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) “extends far beyond the merger of sub-disciplines into a single organization or the introduction of new jargon. In the path towards understanding how marketing and communications must come together in implementing IMC, it must be recognized that IMC is interdisciplinary”. The practice of IMC can be traced to the early 1980s when textbooks began to emphasize the concept of marketing

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communication (Edmiston-Strasser, 2007, p. 11), while the first “conceptual ideas” of the term were published in the book “Integrated Marketing Communications” in the last decade of the past century (Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn, 1993).

One of the earliest definitions of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) was that of The American Association of Advertising Agencies that described IMC as: “A concept of marketing communication planning which recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan which evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines (e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations), and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact” (Henderson, 1996, p. 10). The objective of all marketing communications efforts is to present a coordinated, cohesive and unified branded message to a specific target audience (Sayre, 2008, p. 243).

Several factors have aided the creation of this practical interdisciplinary concept. Marketing and communications are two distinct fields with parallel histories and considerable overlap. Advertising and other forms of communication disciplines have varying degrees of affinity with each of these two disciplines (i.e. Marketing and Communications). Inevitably, there is considerable synergy when the two disciplines work together (Acheson, 1993).

The current research paper tries to further explore the interdisciplinary concept of IMC, through subjecting IMC into in-depth analysis of its origin disciplines (Communication, Marketing and Branding). Furthermore, the paper resides to synthesize IMC empirical research in a meta-analytic framework to assert on the interdisciplinary field research trends emerging from utilizing the concept as a dependent or independent variable in different research disciplines. 135 empirical published papers and dissertations - selected based on their availability - from the year 1990 till 2017 were subjected to further scrutiny to uncover the truth behind the validity of the interdisciplinary concept and its status among researched topics worldwide. Finally, a case study tackling the status of Egyptian tourism after the recent political turmoil post the uprisings was assessed had the designated authorities turned to executing Integrated Marketing Communications instead of relying on temporary unfeasible solutions. A conceptual framework shall be presented hereafter.

METHODOLOGY

Research Problem

From an interdisciplinary perspective, this paper aims at fulfilling a tri-facet objective, primarily, exploring the disciplines comprising the concept Integrated marketing communications namely marketing, communications and branding via theoretical research. A meta-analysis of an available sample of empirical research will follow to prove the validity of the concept, which can be adapted to be utilized in multiple study disciplines. Finally, the paper sets out on the same track to present a conceptual model based on executing the full capabilities of IMC to rebrand Egyptian tourism following the turmoil caused by the instability that took place post the two uprisings that erupted in the country in the years 2011 and 2013 respectively.

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