

CONCEPTS OF KLIATCHKO'S PILLARS OF INTEGRATED MARKETING  
COMMUNICATIONS AND ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS OF IMC

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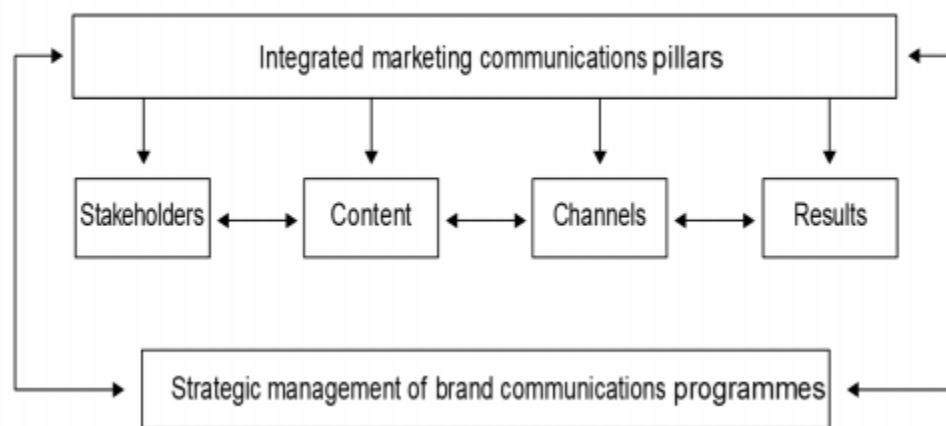
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## The Underlying Concepts of Kliatchko's Pillars of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and Alternative Interpretations of IMC

Today's marketing is at a hyper-competition with businesses having saturated the markets and consumers having to make choices regarding the brand to pick. Integrated Communication Marketing (IMC) refers to the process of coordinating activities across several communication methods (Percy 2018, p. 94). It is aimed at persuading people to develop an interest in something and deliver a message to a specific audience. IMC makes marketing efficient by relying on different communication methods to deliver a message to the consumer. Kliatchko derived that the IMC process must center on the customer, and the power shift from brands to consumers with the advent of technological rise explains the concept (Taylor 2010, p. 67). Kliatchko describes four pillars of IMC which have been discussed below.

### The Four Pillars of IMC

**Figure 1: Four pillars of IMC**



The first pillar is stakeholders and refers to all relevant markets that a business interacts with either internal or external. The internal audience is composed of people within an organization, such as the employees and the managers. The external audience is composed of

consumers, customers, intermediaries, and prospects outside the business. To manage the external market, IMC proposes that the entire process of creating a communication program be centered on the target market (Terence 2010, p. 134). It will enable the business to effectively address the needs of the market and, in the long run, help in establishing long-term and profitable relationships for the business.

Content is the second pillar, and IMC encourages a deep knowledge and understanding of the various markets when developing marketing content. The business should understand the consumers beyond demographic and psychographic data. A business can appreciate consumer insights and preferences to guide the creation of compelling content (Kitchen & Burgmann 2010, p. 101). In IMC, the content can be different between messages and incentives. Incentives refer to rewards of short-term offers that a business gives its consumers for doing valuable things to the business. Messages refer to a concept or idea being delivered to a consumer.

Channel is the third pillar of IMC. In determining the marketing or communication channel to use to market a brand, relevance and preference are used as the determinants in preparing an integrated media plan. The IMC planning approach factors the perspective of the consumer to help decide the best channel to use in reaching the target audience (Turner 2017, p. 68). IMC recommends businesses to conduct brand contact audits of its consumers. In addition, they should examine the consumers' purchase paths to identify the contact points and the relevant channels that the consumers prefer as sources of information (Kehinde 2011, p. 68). Another advantage of the brand contact audit is that it will help marketers in understanding how consumers want to communicate and interact with the business.

Results are the fourth pillar and involve measuring the results of the various marketing communication programs against the set objectives by a business. The IMC approach factors in

both the outcome and behavioral response from the customer. A good example is the number of purchases made by either consumers or prospects. Another example is the financial returns in terms of income received from the consumers. This is different from the traditional based models used to measure effectiveness that concentrated on measuring communication effects and output (Porcu, Barrio-García & Kitchen 2012, p. 89). For example, the traditional models focused on brand recall or awareness, and the number of media placements bought. IMC advocates for accountability in the programs for business results. Accountability is enhanced through customer valuation and estimating return-on-customer-invest (ROCI). This approach helps a business to predict the sales made investing in certain customers and those that have been verified and evaluated at different points to ensure the effectiveness of the IMC program (Bruhn & Schnebelen 2017, p. 148). The measuring of IMC programs adopts a predictive modeling approach focusing on the customers that bring returns for a brand. It helps in estimating both effect and impact that investment on a brand will have on the program.

### **Alternative Interpretations of IMC**

The concept of IMC has been defined and interpreted in several ways. Schultz (1993) defines IMC as a marketing concept that recognizes the value of a well-strategized plan (Reinold & Tropp 2012, p. 128). The plan analyzes the strategic roles to ensure clarity, consistency, and maximum impact on communication. It considers the various strategies applied, such as direct response, advertising, and sales promotion.

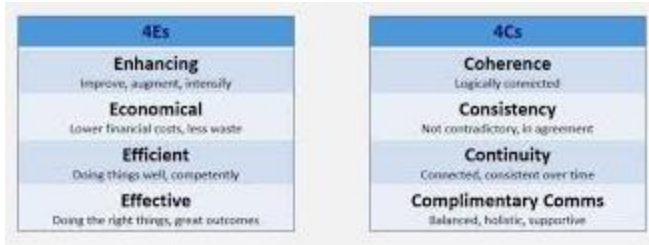
Pickton and Broderick (2001) state that IMC's decision should be based on marketing communication channels, as this will result in the greatest benefits to stakeholders. According to Kotler (2003), IMC is a way of defining the marketing from the perspective of the customer (Keller 2016, p. 290). Both Gurau (2008) and Kitchen et al. (2004) are of the view that marketing

communications should not be considered as a simple message transmitted through a channel but instead be viewed as complex coordination of information targeting a specific audience (Mihart 2012, p. 121). Keegan et al. (1992) summarized the definition of IMC by stating it as the strategic coordination of messages intended to influence the perception of a brand. Keller (2001) used multiple communication options in the communication program by designing the different communication options in the program (Naeem, Bilal & Naz 2013, p. 125).

### **How the Work of Pickton and Broderick can be compared to Kliatchko's**

Pickton and Broderick define marketing communication as a set of coordinated activities applied to meet the needs of consumers and generate profits through customer satisfaction. There is a need for proper communication to add value to the process to meet the needs of the customers (Fill & Turnbull 2019, p. 135). He suggests ensuring that the communication process is effective to ensure the consumer gets the message in the right means. He also emphasizes the importance of coordination in the communication strategy with different departments being responsible for different elements in the communication strategy.

Whereas Kliatchko developed the four pillars of IMC, Pickton, and Broderick listed 4Es and 4Cs that will help in realizing the benefits of integration. By adopting a standardized message through the terms, IMC can be achieved (Blakeman 2018, p. 100). For the 4Cs, coherence means communications being connected in a logical manner. Consistency, on the other hand, implies no contradictions. Continuity refers to communication being consistent over time, while complementary refers to the sum of parts being greater than the whole part. For the 4Es, enhancing implies improving or intensifying the process, while economical means that the least costs should be incurred with minimal wastage. Efficiency means being competent, while effectiveness implies delivering the expected outcome while doing the right thing.



Thus Pickton and Broderick support Kliatchko's view that organizations should conduct proper research to identify the needs for marketing communication to ensure there is clarity in their messages, consistency, and credibility (Kitchen & Burgmann 2015, p. 64). In addition, there is a need for organizations to be consistent in their marketing communication to not only create better awareness but also build a solid brand.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, integrated marketing communication (IMC) is the coordination of different communication methods to improve a business's reach to the right customers by producing stronger messages. There are different interpretations of IMC with Kliatchko defining the process as being centered on the customer through four pillars, namely stakeholders, content, channels, and results. The work of Pickton and Broderick compare to Kliatchko's as they both agree that businesses need to center their marketing on the consumer and using the right channel to deliver the message about the brand. Pickton and Broderick's work is based on 4Es and 4Cs that will help in realizing the benefits of the integration.

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