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A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATED COMMUNICATION

ABSTRACT

In a cut-throat market environment where providing the best product no longer safeguards the success of a company, the significance of having an appropriate Integrated Communication (IC) strategy in place has never been more important. In intimidating market circumstances, companies increasingly seek refuge in stakeholder relationships; in the process they began to focus on customer share rather than market share. Even though companies have realised the importance of IC, the proper implementation thereof can become a challenge if a clear vision or insight of what IC entails is found wanting. This article aims to demonstrate the importance for companies to follow an IC approach to engrave its corporate values and personality on the hearts of customers by shedding light on the essence of IC. A conceptual analysis was employed as research strategy while the concept under investigation was IC. The steps of conceptual analysis that were applied included an investigation of IC's historic evolution, identifying terms similar to IC, defining IC's attributes and antecedents, and also highlighting the consequences of IC implementation. The results not only provide companies with an understanding of this complex phenomenon, but also provide insight that might lead a company to implement IC with more confidence.

Keywords: Integrated Communication; Integrated Communication strategy; Integrated Communication essence; Integrated Communication attributes; Integrated Communication antecedents; stakeholder relationships; customer share; conceptual analysis

INTRODUCTION

Companies that compete in an overcrowded market have become more aware of how sustainable relationships with stakeholders are able to increase their market share (Kotler, Burton, Deans & Armstrong 2013: 504). In these types of markets, communication is essential for creating long-term relationships with stakeholders and can provide the company with more stability through long-term profitability (Kotler & Pfoertsch 2011: 68). However, some companies are still battling to master the art of creating lasting relationships with stakeholders (Kumar & Meenakshi 2008: 117). Integrated Communication (IC) has become important in building relationships, as it enables corporate values to serve as a driver for daily corporate and managerial activities (Shimp & Andrews 2013: 11). Through this communication strategy, companies can engage in purposeful two-way communication with stakeholders to ensure that the company meets the expectations of these stakeholders (Shimp & Andrews 2013: 681). A steadfast IC strategy should enable a company to act on each message sent to internal and external stakeholders. This should not only increase a company's ability to be recognised in an overcrowded market, but it could also provide the opportunity for companies to set the standards when it comes to communicating with stakeholders (Shimp & Andrews 2013: 207).

Even though several companies claim that they make use of an integrated approach, when their strategies are reviewed the results indicate a different story (Grobler & Niemann-Struweg 2013; Koekemoer 2004). According to Wells and Hollins (2002: 88), some marketers and companies overlook the use of IC as they are not aware of the potential and impact that it can have on a company. Without having a clear vision of IC and all the components and strategies it entails, proper implementation of this communication approach becomes a challenge. To address this problem, a conceptual analysis of IC was done to investigate its true nature. In this article it is argued that knowledge regarding IC could equip companies with the necessary insight that might lead to more effective implementation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A conceptual analysis creates a knowledge foundation of a certain concept (Becker & Correira 2005: 325). Through this research method a number of specific phases are followed to explore the fundamentals of a concept. First of all the concept (in this study IC) needs to be contextualised through investigating its historic evolution and development. This discussion refers to the different marketing communication eras that led to the development of IC and illustrates how each era influenced IC. In the next phase the similar and surrogate terms of the concept of IC are identified, as it is important to be aware of these terms prior to the development of a working definition of IC. During the following phase the defining attributes of the concept are discussed and combined in a working definition of the concept. This is followed by the exploration of the antecedents of the concept. In this study the antecedents refer to structures within the company that need to be in place for a company to create a tailored IC strategy. It is only after a better understanding has been reached regarding the structures that should be in place prior to the implementation of IC, that the consequences of implementing IC can be reviewed during the final phase of the research. This review includes the advantages and disadvantages of implementing IC in the business strategy, and enlightens an understanding of IC and how it can add value to an organisation's health and wealth. The data of the conceptual analysis of IC will now be provided according to the phases mentioned previously.

THE HISTORIC EVOLUTION OF IC

An exploration of the history of IC provides insight into how the concept took shape through the different marketing eras. This investigation consists of the major events in history that led to the changes in marketing perspectives as well as the prevailing attitudes of these eras (Hurd, Barcelona & Meldrum 2008; Fassnacht, Schmidt-Gallas & Dewan 2008: 77). To understand the impact of these events on the marketing and communication perceptions, the different eras were compared to indicate how these attitudes influenced the overall focus of marketing (Hurd *et al.* 2008). The marketing elements used in the specific eras are highlighted to indicate the priority of marketing during these eras. Finally, the impact of these marketing strategies on the internal and external stakeholder groups is compared to demonstrate the importance of having an integrated communication strategy (Boone & Kurtz 2012; Koekemoer 2004). Table 1 summarises the four marketing eras that led to the shift from a once distribution-driven market to an approach that is more strategic to building sustainable stakeholder relationships (Fassnacht *et al*. 2008: 77).

TABLE 1: THE DEVELOPMENT OF IC THROUGH THE MARKETING ERAS

	Production Era	**Sales Era**	**Marketing Era**	**Service marketing Era**
The events that influenced marketing	Henry Ford's mass production line	The Industrial Revolution	The Great Depression	The advent of the World Wide Web
Prevailing attitude of the era	A good product will sell itself: "They can have any colour they want, as long as it is black".	Creative advertising and selling will overcome the consumer's resistance to buying.	The consumers are in control; find their needs and fulfil them.	Long-term relationships with these customers will ensure repurchase.
Focus of the marketing era	Improving internal processes rather than focusing on external influences.	Production increased and therefore sales should increase by using personal selling.	Marketing is seen as more than just selling products.	Relationships with internal and external stakeholder groups.
Marketing elements	Marketing is seen as an afterthought just to sell products. No investments were made on improving marketing.	Personal selling	Consumer behaviour was studied and marketing became part of product development.	Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC): The marketing mix.
Impact on consumers	They had to buy whatever was on the market.	Sales techniques were used to stimulate demand.	Customers could buy a product that fulfils their needs.	Customers feel that the company takes their opinion to heart.

Table continues

	Production Era	Sales Era	Marketing Era	Service marketing Era
Impact on internal stakeholders	Labour intensive work without proper control.	Sales persons sold products without having knowledge of or input in the products.	Internal stakeholders had an input in product development.	Internal stakeholders feel that the company takes care of their needs.

(Sources: Boone & Kurtz 2012; Hurd *et al.* 2008; Koekemoer 2004)

Table 1 demonstrates that the demand for the development of the concept of IC progressed as the different eras passed. The least favourable circumstances for the development of the concept of IC were during the production era. The deterioration of the market due to the negligence of stakeholders, especially internal stakeholders, soon led to the advent of the sales era. During this era, companies started to realise the important role of internal stakeholders with regard to selling products (Hurd *et al.* 2008). The sales era soon ended as the great depression era took over before the outbreak of World War II (Hurd *et al*. 2008). Companies started to invest in studying consumer behaviour to better understand their needs. Furthermore, during this era, another ground-breaking development was made in the corporate structure of companies (Koekemoer 2004). Staff members were allowed to provide input on the development of products and there was an increase in the need to include staff in decisions that affected the company.

Finally, the era of service marketing evolved with the development of the World Wide Web and an increase in information technology (Willmer 2011: 120; Hurd *et al.* 2008). As people started to connect via several communication platforms provided through the Internet, the focus moved from selling products to engaging in two-way communication with different internal and external stakeholder groups. This new focus led to the development of IMC and the marketing communication mix elements. Through creating unified messages by means of these elements, the company succeeded in building a relationship with customers, but also led to a workforce who was loyal and dedicated to reaching the overall objectives set by the company (Smith & Taylor 2004: 16).

From the discussion of the different marketing eras that led to the development of the concept IMC, it is clear that the development of information technology had a direct influence on the evolution and development of IMC (Willmer 2011: 120). IMC enables companies to succeed in integrating basic promotional mix elements with other elements of the brand to such an extent that the company forms a unity (Shimp & Andrews 2013: 12). However, true integration in all organisational communication efforts require an IC approach. Through IC, companies can develop synergy in all departments and communication functions of the company and not just in the marketing communication function (Pickton 2004: 237). In the following section, surrogate and similar terms will be provided to demonstrate how IMC differs from IC and to identify the available variations of this concept available in literature.

SURROGATE AND SIMILAR TERMS OF IC

Some authors refer to IC as strategic communication (Frandsen & Johansen 2015: 230), corporate communication (Cornelissen 2014), or even communication integration (Barker & Angelopulo 2006: 40). Although different terminology is used by these authors, it still encapsulates the essence of IC.

Throughout literature, some authors refer to IC, but the definitions they provide focus more on IMC and the way in which marketing communication should be used to communicate the core values of the company (Schultz, Patti & Kitchen 2011). Rodgers (2000) defines these types of terms as similar terms, as they provide a similar, yet different interpretation of the concept.

It is evident that some authors use different terminology to describe IC. These similar terms include some of the attributes of IC, but do not provide a true reflection of IC. Therefore, through the process of reviewing literature to develop a working definition of the concept, the focus should be on including attributes that complement IC and not IMC. The following section provides a working definition that reflects the true nature of IC.

A WORKING DEFINITION OF IC

The working definition of IC was developed through the identification of literature that could serve as the fundamental explanation of what IC entails. The first citation used is that of Duncan and Moriarty (1997: 15), who define IC through strategic drivers that encapsulate the essence of IC. These drivers are divided into three categories, namely corporate focus, corporate processes and infrastructure. Some of these drivers were used as a vantage point in creating the working definition of IC through combining these drivers with more contemporary viewpoints from literature. The first driver category of IC identified by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) is corporate focus. Within this category, it appears that IC has a strong stakeholder focus and is driven by creating and maintaining relationships with these stakeholders.

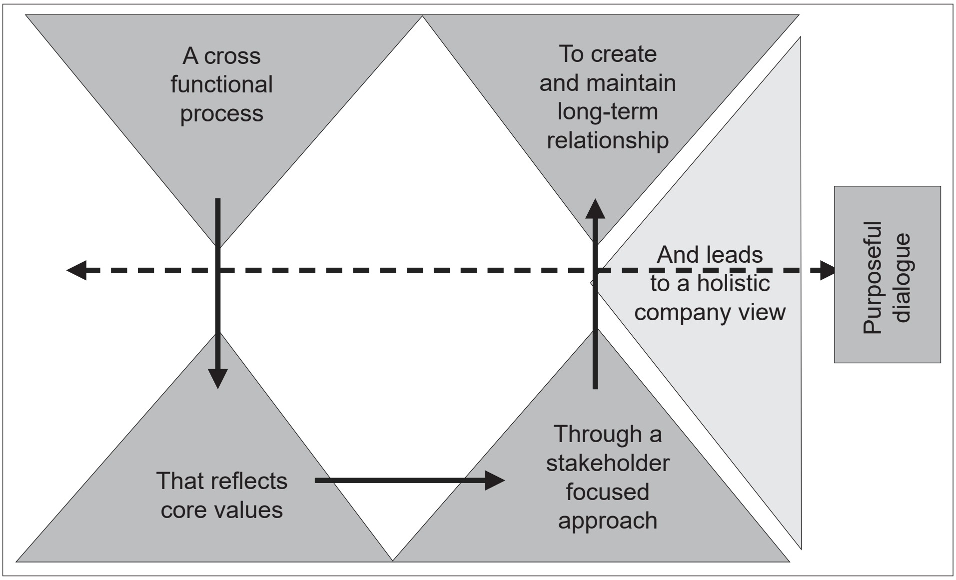
In Duncan and Moriarty's (1997) second driver category of IC the focus is on the infrastructure that needs to be in place to be able to implement it successfully. Within this category, cross-functional management was emphasised. According to Gitlow (2001), cross-functional management can be defined as the integrated efforts of all business management functions to create and achieve a unified rational target that is achieved through the actions of all departments or business functions.

Duncan's (2002: 8) definition of IC seems to serve as the bridge between Duncan and Moriarty's (1997) drivers that are constituted in the corporate process and infrastructure categories. Duncan defines IC as:

> A cross-functional process for creating and nourishing profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by strategically controlling or influencing all messages sent to these groups and encouraging data-driven, purposeful dialogue with them.

Although all the above-mentioned elements of IC are important in the implementation of the strategy, purposeful interactivity is a key defining element of IC that binds the entire concept (Duncan 2002). Without purposeful interactivity with stakeholders there is no way of establishing or maintaining relationships. Figure 1 illustrates how each mentioned defining element of IC shapes the concept.

FIGURE 1: THE FUNDAMENTAL ELEMENTS OF IC



Based on the definitions provided and the illustration of how the identified elements of IC form the concept, the working definition of IC is stated as follows:

> A cross-functional process generating purposeful dialogue that reflects the core values of the company. These values are channelled via a stakeholder-focused approach to create and maintain long-term relationships that meet the demands and expectations of each group. When these values are reflected in the relationship with the different stakeholder groups, the company will be able to create a holistic view of what it stands for.

DEFINING ATTRIBUTES OF IC

The working definition reflects a set of attributes of IC. Each of these attributes should be discussed separately to create a better understanding of how it contributes to the concept of IC.

Cross-functional planning

Although it is not always possible for a company to manage all touch points of the brand, the company needs to make use of cross-functional planning to ensure that all controlled touch points of the brand communicate the same set of brand values (Roll 2006: 113). This cross-functional process includes the ability of the company to create a corporate focus that aids the development of a unique compensation system that enables the company to prosper from certain core competing traits that are different from those of competitors (Grunig, Grunig & Dozier 2009).

Purposeful dialogue

Another defining characteristic of IC is that it focuses on two-way communication between the stakeholders and the company. As IC includes both internal and external stakeholders, it is vital to ensure that all stakeholder groups are well-defined and that continuous feedback is given to every involved stakeholder group on a frequent basis (Barker & Angelopulo 2006: 198). Not only will engaging in conversation with stakeholder groups reinforce relationships with these stakeholders, but it will also enable the company to identify areas of potential development of the brand or product (Pitt 2014).

Core value communication

A company can only reach true integration when all the communication efforts of the company have a focus on communicating the corporate values in a way that reaches all stakeholder groups with impact (Shin 2013: 9). According to Pride and Ferrel (2014: 567), the brand or company will increase the chances of stakeholders buying into or associating themselves with the values that a brand offers instead of just buying a product if the values are reinforced through all brand communication.

Stakeholder focused

When a company focuses on the person rather than the product, the focus on communication leads to commitment from both parties and results in a mutual achievement of goals and a feeling of fulfilment for both parties involved (Baran, Galka & Strunk 2008: 123). For a company to create relationships with the different stakeholder groups it is vital to identify these groups as well as their value to the company (Olsen 2005: 43).

Long-term stakeholder relationships

When the different internal and external stakeholder groups feel that their input is taken to heart by the company or brand, they develop a sense of belonging and become more loyal to the company. Therefore, through ensuring that the proper communication channels are in place, thereby encouraging stakeholders to engage in conversation with the brand, the company will be able to build long-term relationships with the stakeholders (Gregory & Willis 2013: 14).

Holistic view

According to Yeshin (2012: 77), true communication integration can only be reached when all the internal and external communication channels of the company reinforce the core values of the institution. Baker (2003: 146) concurs with this notion by stating that when integration of all communication efforts is ensured, the company can prosper from clearer and more realistic objectives.

ANTECEDENTS

An antecedent variable is the variable that should be identified and defined prior to the identification of the focal dependent variable with the aim of understanding the origin of the dependant variable (Aneshensel 2013: 288). In this study, it is necessary to identify the primary circumstances that need to be in place for IC to be implemented successfully in a company. To explain the antecedent structures that need to be in place prior to IC implementation, the domains of IC will be discussed. This will be followed by the rules for implementing an integration strategy to ensure that the necessary circumstances are in place when IC is implemented.

The domains of IC

The role of IC in the company is to communicate the core values and principles of the institution, not only through marketing communication, but also by creating custom messages for all the different business functions and stakeholder groups. These functions can be divided into three domains of communication within the company, namely the business management, marketing management and communication management (Niemann 2005). With a strong focus on all three domains, stakeholders will not only experience the brand through its marketing communication efforts, but also recognise certain values in the daily activities of the company (Smith & Taylor 2004: 16). By making use of IC within the different business functions a company can create a competitive advantage.

Business management

IC should serve as the foundation on which all communication endeavours of the company are rooted. Without the presence of IC in the business management function of the company, it will continue to operate by using a silo structure (Lambert 2008). This results in each department focusing entirely on reaching their own department's targets and surviving the pressure of another month end. The only way a company can truly be regarded as integrated is when a strong set of corporate values has been created and when these values are acted out by all the different departments in the same way in everyday tasks (Schein 2010). In order to create this strong set of corporate values and to increase brand equity, the company needs to define its brand personality and the way in which it wants the different stakeholders to perceive the brand (Aaker 2009). Relationships with stakeholder groups can only be created when the brand offers a certain set of values with which the stakeholder can associate (Hollis 2008). When corporate values are communicated in a way that best suits the demands and preferences of the different stakeholder groups, the company can build lasting relationships. By providing the different departments with a unified set of corporate values, each department can ensure that the corporate values are communicated in everyday tasks (Ind 2007: 116).

Marketing management

IC in the marketing management strategy of the company involves the way in which marketing materials and communication functions are used to create and develop unified messages to various stakeholder groups to increase brand value and drive sales (Copely 2004: 14). The focus on the integration of the marketing management function of a company is to ensure that consistent messages of the brand values reach the different stakeholders in such a way that these stakeholders want to associate themselves with the brand. Although the customers and potential customers are seen as very important stakeholder groups to communicate through the use of marketing communication, the internal marketing communication strategy should also be noted. Internal marketing can be defined as an establishment of the needs of employees and the way in which their needs can be addressed by referring to the corporate values (Copely 2004). An ideal internal marketing strategy ensures that the interests of the company are met and accepted by staff while they have a sense of acceptance and support from the company.

Since it is important to have a proper marketing communication strategy for the internal and external stakeholder groups in place, the company needs to assess all the stakeholder groups and the way in which they prefer to communicate. The actual messages sent through these communication channels can only be unified after the importance of each marketing communication function has been determined. This knowledge will also enable the company to use zero-based budgeting when allocating financial resources. Zero-based budgeting can be defined as the process where increments of costs are compared with increments of benefits before the allocation of budgets is calculated for each function (Debarshi 2011: 469). Therefore, when the company understands the value and impact of all communication channels of the company, better decisions regarding budget allocations can be made.

Communication management

Through the presence of an integration strategy in the business and the marketing management functions, the company is in a better position to have a strong brand personality that reaches each stakeholder group with maximum impact. However, the communication management function of the company should also be integrated, as IC is defined as a complete cross-functional process. A cross-functional process can be defined as the integration of skills and resources that each department or function of the company has to offer to optimise the output of the entire company (Monczka, Handfield, Giunipero & Patterson 2009). This process involves the responsibility of management to ensure that there is a proper communication flow between different departments, so that each department can use their level of expertise to contribute to the overall mission and vision of the company (Boone & Kurtz 2010: 279). By enabling the different departments, especially the marketing communications and financial departments to collaborate in reaching the ideals of the company, the different departments can aid in determining a more accurate Return on Investment (ROI) (Reece 2010).

The role of IC in business management is to ensure that the company creates a strong set of brand values that can be acted out in all business functions. When these values become visible in every department, the departments no longer function as individual entities. This integration leads to each department using their distinct set of skills and expertise to contribute to the overall brand personality and value of the brand. Through integration in the marketing management function of the company, the company will be able to link the desires of the different stakeholder groups to the values of the brand. This should contribute to create long-term relationships as the different stakeholders feel that the brand offers them more than just a product or service. The knowledge about how stakeholder groups prefer to communicate also enables companies to use zero-based budgeting to allocate financial resources according to the performance of each communication function.

Thus successful implementation of IC requires the domains of IC to be in place prior to implementation of the concept. IC can be seen as a disciplinary approach and with the proper guiding structures, a company should be able to ensure that the necessary structures are in place before IC is implemented. To provide further guidance on the implementation of IC, the rules of integration are included in the discussion.

The rules for integration

As internal conflict and a lack of interest from management or staff members can become a hurdle when implementing IC in the company, this implementation process has to be supported. Smith and Taylor (2004: 19) suggest certain rules for the successful implementation of an integration strategy in the company. These rules will contribute to the practical implementation of IC.

The first rule for successful integration is to ensure that senior management have knowledge of and provide support during all stages of the implementation process (Smith & Taylor 2004: 19). Implementation of an integration strategy causes a lot of change in the company and can often result in confusion and even a feeling of alienation of staff as they struggle to adapt to the changes (Murray, Poole & Jones 2006). It is only when management has a clear understanding of how the change will be implemented that the strategy can be communicated to the rest of the staff members. This directly leads to the second rule of integration, which is that integration should take place on the vertical and horizontal levels of the company (Smith & Taylor 2004: 19). Proper integration requires a team effort and therefore staff members at every level in the company need to be part of the integration process (Hickman2010: 118).

Consistency in communication efforts enhances a clear focus of the marketing communication strategy of the company (Smith & Taylor, 2004:19). During the integration of all communication efforts, the value of each communication channel should be determined (Barker, Valos & Shimp 2011: 6). By having a clear understanding of the impact of messages sent through a specific communication channel, the company will be able to use zero-based budgeting when allocating financial resources (Smith & Taylor 2004: 19).

With the last three rules for integration, the focus is on building relationships with stakeholders through brand values by following a customer-first approach. These relationships can only be sustained when strong communication platforms are created for each stakeholder group according to their specific needs and expectations of the company (Smith & Taylor 2004: 19). These three rules can be considered as the core of an integrated communication strategy because without the support of personalised communication channels for each stakeholder group it would be difficult to build relationships (Aaker 2012).

Table 2 provides a summary of how the three domains of IC form part of the antecedent structures for the implementation of IC. The rules for integration is also included in this table, as it is vital for a company to see IC as a disciplinary approach and to identify certain precautions regarding the implementation of IC.

TABLE 2: ANTECEDENTS OF IC

	Business Management	**Marketing management**	**Communication management**
Structures that need to be in place prior to IC implementation	Define brand personality and core values Identify all stakeholders	Create unified messages that convey core values Invest in internal marketing communication Determine the communication preference for stakeholder groups Apply zero-based budgeting	Management should set clear objectives for each department Create unified messages that convey core values Use cross-functional planning Ensure unity of effort in all departments
Rules for integration	Senior management should provide support The aim of IC should be on building relationships	Include integration of the vertical and horizontal levels of the company Have a clear focus of the marketing communication strategy Identify the most effective communication platforms Apply zero-based planning	Include integration of the vertical and horizontal levels of the company Identify the most effective communication platforms

(Sources: Smith & Taylor 2004: 19; Niemann 2005)

CONSEQUENCES

The aim of a consequences variable is to follow the focal dependant variable to explain its aftermath (Aneshensel 2013: 288). To understand the scope and impact of IC it is necessary to review the consequences or the impact that the implementation of IC could have on the different domains within a company. Although IC seems to be an effective strategy to use to create a transparent brand identity, there are certain advantages and disadvantages that a company have to consider before implementing this strategy. The following discussion will aim to identify the challenges, but also the advantages in each domain during and after IC implementation.

Implementation of IC in the business management function

Ang (2014: 4) suggests that, although IC provides a broad spectrum of advantages for a company, the implementation of this strategy often leads to internal conflict and disparity. One of the first problems a company faces when it comes to IC is the decision whether it should be implemented in the company or not. This issue could result in internal conflict between management and staff, as the corporate culture embedded in the company's structure is usually reluctant to change (Alvesson 2013: 186). Percy (2014: 18) acknowledges the negative impact that staff can have on the implementation of IC by stating that a rigid organisational culture and resistance of staff to accept changes can easily bring the implementation of IC to a standstill. As IC requires all functions within the company to contribute to the development and implementation of the company's IC strategy, a lack of interest or participation from internal stakeholders might be one of the biggest concerns of IC implementation.

Kitchen and Uzunoglu (2014: 6) acknowledge the benefits that can be obtained through IC by stating that it is a strategy created to build the most important asset any company has, namely, its relationships with its customers. One of the main benefits of IC is that it enables a company to engage in two-way communication with each stakeholder group on a more personal basis. These more personal conversations might result in an increase in brand equity as committed employees could communicate strong brand values that will cause customers to identify the company values through the actions of its staff members (Ind & Bjerke 2007).

Implementation of IC in the marketing management function

One of the main concerns of implementing IC is that most IC enthusiasts perceive marketing communication as a form of support to IC, instead of one of the managing functions of IC (Grunig & Grunig 2013: 61). As this perception may easily cause undeliverable results, a company may start to feel that IC is an unreachable ideal (Hohpe & Woolf 2004). Furthermore, even if the implementation of IC is accepted by the internal stakeholders of the company, the application of zero-based budgeting through IC may result in internal competition between departments as they compete for a budget. Fortunately, IC also enables companies to follow an approach where the value of each stakeholder is determined before a more personal communication platform can be created to meet the demands of each individual group (McManus 2007: 95).

IC enables a company to apply zero-based budgeting when resources need to be allocated to the different marketing communication channels (Thorson & Moore 2013 148). Zero-based budgeting ensures that communication efforts are result-oriented to achieve greater impact of messages (Atrill, McLaney, Harvey & Jenner 2012).

Implementation of IC in the communication management function

When a company focuses more on the financial gain and well-being of each department, the focus on attending to customers' demands is lost and staff members lose interest in implementing IC (Perrey & Spillecke 2013: 18). This is often the result of management not providing the different departments with the support needed to implement IC. Another reason for the loss of interest from staff with regard to implementing IC is often because managers prefer to outsource the implementation of an IC strategy (Michaels 2011).

Fortunately, when the company succeeds in implementing IC, it is able to support and motivate each staff member to become a brand ambassador who lives out the company's values and meets the promises of the company (Bauer, Bloching, Howaldt & Mitchell 2005: 136). This motivation is supported through a cross-functional planning structure that enables the different business functions to collaborate and the corporate values become the driving force of all communication endeavours (Rosenau & Wilson 2006). When all business functions or departments have a shared set of values and an overall goal to achieve, it will reduce internal conflict between departments, as the different business functions will form a unity (Simonsen 2010: 18).

Although the mentioned disadvantages pose a threat to the implementation of IC, it should rather be seen as challenges that can be overcome. Table 3 provides a summary of the advantages and disadvantages that should be taken into consideration when the actual IC framework will be developed.

TABLE 3: CONSEQUENCES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IC

	Business management	**Marketing management**	**Communication management**
Disadvantages or challenges of implementing IC	Internal conflict Corporate culture reluctant to change or accept IC Lack of interest or participation from internal stakeholders	Marketing communication is seen as support of IC rather than a managing function IC is seen as complex and unreachable ideal Zero-based budgeting could cause internal competition	Departments may fail to see the reason for IC implementation Management outsources IC implementation

Table continues

	Business management	Marketing management	Communication management
Advantages of the implementation of IC	Build stakeholder relationships Two-way communication Increase brand equity	Personal communication platforms Meet the demands of stakeholder groups Zero-based budgeting ensures that communication efforts are result-oriented	Staff become brand ambassadors Core values become the driving force of communication Cross-functional planning creates shared values, goals and unity

After reviewing IC in terms of the historic evolution that led to the development of the concept and the defining attributes that constitute IC, a clear picture of the essence and scope of IC emerged. However, to understand the full impact of implementing this concept into a business structure, the antecedents and the consequences of implementation of IC also have to be reviewed. By using the information gathered through the guidance of a conceptual analysis, the authors were able to identify the most prominent themes of IC and the most important factors that need to be in place for IC to be implemented. The structure developed through the conceptual analysis facilitated the identification of the most prominent themes of IC to develop a structure that encapsulates its scope.

IDENTIFICATION AND STRUCTURING OF THE DOMINANT THEMES AND CONSTRUCTS OF IC

To implement IC successfully in a company, integration should take place in all its domains or functions. Table 4 provides a visual demonstration of how the knowledge foundation of IC created through the conceptual analysis supports the identification of aims and objectives for each theoretical domain.

TABLE 4: CONSEQUENCES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF IC

	Business management	Marketing communication management	Communication management
Driver of IC	Focus on stakeholder loyalty Create sustainable relationships Core value communication	Consistency in marketing communication messages Purposeful interactions Zero-based planning	Consistency in strategic communication messages Cross-functional management Core competencies Overall integrated strategy

Table continues

	Business management	Marketing communication management	Communication management
Characteristics of IC	Two-way communication Manage relationships Increase brand equity Cross-functional planning	Two-way communication Manage relationships Increase brand equity Cross-functional planning	Stakeholder focused Two-way communication Manage relationships Increase brand equity Cross-functional planning
Antecedents for IC implementation	Integration: Internal communication Building relationships Establishing values	Clear IMC strategy Zero-based budgeting Stakeholders-first approach Build relationships through brand value Strong information systems	Get support from management Integration at all business levels Zero-based budgeting Build relationships through brand values
Possible disadvantages or challenges faced through IC implementation	Internal conflict Lack of participation from internal stakeholders Internal stakeholders do not accept core values	IC is seen as too complex Marketing communication is seen as support of IC Zero-based budgeting might cause internal competition	Management outsources IC implementation Departments fail to see bigger picture
Possible advantages obtained through IC	Increase brand equity Build stakeholder relationships Two-way communication	Creating personalised communication platforms Meet the demands of all stakeholders Bigger message impact through zero-based budgeting	Staff engagement Cross-functional planning

SUMMARY

This discussion of the historic evolution of IC served as a vantage point to identify how the concept evolved through the different eras, and differs from one era to another. After this discussion, a working definition of IC was created and the different elements that shaped this concept were identified and explained in more detail. The antecedents of IC were identified to contextualise the circumstances needed for IC to be implemented. In this discussion, the three domains of IC were identified, namely business management, marketing communication management and communication management. The consequences of IC implementation was also highlighted to illustrate the possible outcomes that could be reached through the implementation of IC. This investigation shed light on the fundamentals of an integrated approach to communication. It also underlines the importance of the integration of communication through all domains within the company, to ensure that all communication efforts reflect and support the true nature of a company and contribute to sustainable relationships with stakeholders.

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