

AGENCY AND CLIENT PRACTITIONERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF IMC

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ABSTRACT

Agency practitioners from PR agencies, advertising agencies, and other communication agencies and client practitioners from private and public organizations were surveyed regarding their perceptions and practices of integrated marketing communications (IMC). As a result of this study, agency practitioners evaluated PR and client practitioners evaluated advertising as the most important tool in the IMC development stage. Among Nowak and Phelps' definitions of IMC, 'the one voice concept' was seen as the most appropriate definition of IMC by them. 'Cost saving' was considered as the least important benefit and 'high cost' as the least important barrier of an IMC program.

Keywords: Integrated marketing communications (IMC), advantages of integration, barriers for implementation, changes in the marketplace, Nowak and Phelps' identification.

INTRODUCTION

Duncan and Everett (1993, p. 30) state about changes of marketplace below:
The pressure to integrate marketing communications is a result of numerous factors. Key among these are communications agency mergers and acquisitions, increasing sophistication of clients and retailers, increasing cost of traditional advertising media, increasing global competition, increasing pressure on organizations, bottom lines, decreasing effectiveness of traditional media, the decreasing cost of database usage, and other trends such as zapping, media fragmentation, and loss of message credibility.

The concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC) has attracted greater attention and has been center of many studies in marketing; however, changes of marketplace, which is the fundamental and answer of the rise and development of IMC (Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han, and Li, 2004), have not been focus of the IMC studies.

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Many researches in the field have concentrated on exploring IMC perceptions and implementations of agencies. They either have focused on advertising agencies (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997; Gould, Lerman, & Grein, 1999; Kitchen & Schultz, 1999) or have compared and contrasted advertising and public relations agencies (Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han, and Li, 2004; Kitchen & Li, 2005; Oyman & Inam, 2005). Some of them have researched clients' perspectives of IMC (Low, 2000; McArthur & Griffin, 1997). The studies that included both agency and client practitioners' perceptions and practices of IMC are limited with the studies by Duncan and Everett (1993) and Eagle and Kitchen (2000). Therefore, the purpose of this study, which compares client and agency practitioners' opinions in Turkey, are six-fold:

- (1) To investigate the changes in the marketplace.
- (2) To learn the acceptance level of Nowak and Phelps' definitions to IMC.
- (3) To discover the opinions on various benefits in implementing an IMC program.
- (4) To examine the importance levels of communication tools in developing an IMC program.
- (5) To reveal the existence of potential barriers in implementing an IMC program.
- (6) To observe if an effectiveness of an IMC program is measured and if its development is controlled.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

There are many marketplace changes that contributed to the growth of IMC such as the development of information technologies, powerful and global consumers, commercial clutter, audience and media fragmentation (Kitchen & Li, 2005).

Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han, and Li (2004, p. 1418) have a look at changes in the marketplace from the perspective of marketing communications business and note below that: The most basic driving force behind IMC is changes in the market environment in which business is conducted. No-one from either the academic arena, clients or marketing service organizations doubts that the marketing communications industry - including the structure of advertising agencies, the relationship between advertising agencies and public relations agencies, and even the function of various promotional tools - has undergone dramatic change over the last few decades.

Consumers' Knowledge of Market Information

The marketplace has been shaped and evolved from manufacturer and distributor orientation (product centric marketplace) to customer orientation (customer centric marketplace) (Kitchen & Li, 2005; Kliatchko, 2005). By the use of integrated marketing communications (IMC), marketers shifted from thinking “inside out” to “outside in” (Harris, 1998). Consumers have realized their power of forming the production stage of products on behalf of their needs and wants. The widespread availability of products has equipped consumers with market based information and they have started to compare products at ingredient level in the store aisles. This new market condition has created the perception that all brands in a category are the same; the only real difference is price. Besides, consumers are no longer homogenous, thus, mass market network television is no longer reliable to reach them (Richman, 1991). Proctor and Kitchen (2002) state that today’s firms have been dealing with sophisticated and well educated consumers. According to Duncan (2002, p. 29) “Customers in industrialized countries are sophisticated selectors of brands, and many in less developed markets are catching up fast. At the same time, they are smarter and more demanding, and they are also distrusting”. Maloney (2000) states that mass media contributed to attitude change by making people curious about persuasive statements and this led people to seek further information by trying the advertised product.

Some authors take a different view of contribution of mass media to consumers’ market knowledge. Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn (1995) for example, disagree with what Richman (1991), Proctor and Kitchen (2002), and Duncan (2002) said about consumers’ marketplace information. Unlike them, Schultz et al. believe that this new market condition made consumers less informed. Since marketers underscore the price reductions of products and convince consumers that the products are pretty much the same. Managers became more sales promotion centered and shifted their advertising budgets to sales promotion in which discounts, samples, coupons, and cent-off-deals are used. Reduced advertising budget has led consumers to find less product information in the marketplace. Dwek (1993) argues that consumers are less informed than ever before in the information age. He offers PR as a solution in the creation of consumer confidence by supplying more information via news.

Nevertheless, Baker, Hunt, and Scribner (2002) distinguish between knowledgeable consumers and novices in relation to simple and complex message information. They suggest that knowledgeable consumers may ignore the simple information because of the fact that they already have it in memory; on the other hand, novices may not understand complex information. Thus, knowledgeable consumers should be provided with more complex information, while novices should be provided with simple information. The significance of this suggestion lies behind the notion that novices will be more influenced by new product information than knowledgeable consumers.

Hines (1999) goes further by dividing target audience into two groups and believes that people have different media needs. According to him, "some people are passive and need bombardment with billboards, radio commercials, signage, and special events. Others are more active and will seek out technical reports, web pages, and magazine reviews" (p. 25).

The Product Explosion and the Competition

For Packard (1981), one of the major dilemmas which forced marketers to look for an effective and powerful persuasive communication tool is the identical products with the growing standardization.

Duncan (2002, p. 29) states about brand and product proliferation as below:

Forty years ago, the average grocery store carried about 8,000 items, counting all the brands and their different sizes and flavors. Today, that number is closer to 30,000. Such proliferation is not limited to items in food, drug, and mass merchandising stores. The number of services has also expanded. Look in the Yellow Pages and you'll find dozens of competing companies in most service categories. Customers can suffer from "brand-choice overload" when there are too many products, too many brands, and too many commercial messages.

The product explosion and the competition, decreased the duration of the average product lifetime in a market. Hannies (1996-1997) stated that the average product lifetime has changed since the early 20th Century. It used to be 50 years during the early 20th Century. It had dramatically shrunk to 50 months by the end of the Korean War and had shrunk further to 50 weeks in the 1990s. Today, the average product lifetime is 50 days.

The Media Explosion and Advertising Clutter

Many believe that consumers are less likely to believe advertising (Lamons, 2002; Hallahan, 1999; Crooke, 1996), advertising is in decline, because it is too expensive (Harris, 1993, 1994; Kitchen, 1996; Strout, 1999) and therefore, there are emphasis and expenditure on MPR (Kitchen, 1996).

Many organizations have seen integrated marketing communications as a solution to cluttered marketing environment and have responded to changing marketplace by integrating their communication efforts (Hackley & Kitchen, 1998). Marken (1995) claims that: The consumers' demand for better product value as well as more service and support have made management realize they have to do a better job of communicating the good work they were doing beyond new product advertising. In addition, the rising clutter of advertising has forced management to look for additional and more cost-effective means of communicating (p. 47).

Harris (1998) reports the statement below with regard to the natural result of advertising clutter and media diversity:

In a communication saturated society, consumers develop communication avoidance routines. They don't notice print ads; they tune out commercial messages. Message senders are finding it increasingly difficult to reach the minds and hearts of target customers. As mass advertising and even target advertising loses some of their cost-effectiveness, message senders are driven to other media. They discover, or rediscover, the power of news, events, community programs, atmospheres, and other powerful communication modalities (p. 14).

The above discussion of the literature creates the following research question:

RQ1: What are the changes in the marketplace according to agency and client practitioners? Do practitioners agree that IMC is a solution to those changes?

Various Definitions of IMC

Varying terminologies have been given to integrated marketing communications (IMC) such as "... 'new advertising', 'orchestration', '360° branding', 'total branding',

'whole egg', 'seamless communication', 'relationship marketing', 'one-to-one marketing', 'integrated marketing', and 'integrated communications' ” (Kliatchko, 2005, p. 7; see also Oyman & İnam, 2005, p. 390).

The American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) in 1989 provided a definition for IMC that:

A concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and PR – and combines them to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact through the seamless integration discrete messages (quoted in Christensen, Torp, & Firat, 2005, p. 160).

Before the study conducted by Caywood, Schultz, and Wang in 1991 (which is considered as the first study on IMC), there were little discussion, description, and effort for developing the concept. The Caywood et al. study scattered the concept of the integration of the marketing communication activities (as cited in Schultz & Kitchen, 1997; Kitchen & Schultz, 1999; Kitchen, 2005).

Integrated marketing communication is the concept in which an organization's communication elements including PR, advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and others are combined and closely coordinated within a single unit (Shimp, 1993).

From the organization's standpoint marketing communications may serve several purposes: it may increase awareness; it may create demand for a product by providing incentives; and it may help to distinguish the brand from competing products (Churchill & Peter, 1995).

For Varey (1998, p. 181) “marketing communications has the role of converting prospects into customers and retaining existing customers-it is thus primarily promotional in nature and intent”. Harris (1998) clarifies that:

Integrated marketing communications is the culmination of the shift that began in the post-World War II period, from selling what we make to making what consumers want. IMC is

focused on what customers want to know about products and services, not what marketers want to tell them in order to sell them (p. 3).

Nowak and Phelps (1994) identify three broad concepts of IMC: the one voice concept, the integrated marketing communications concept, and the coordinated marketing communications concept. The one voice concept reflects a firm's focus on a single message, theme, image, and position that emphasize unity among all marketing communications tools including brand advertising, public relations, sales promotions, and direct response advertising. The one voice concept underlines unity among various communication tools so that a single positioning strategy can be created. The integrated marketing communications concept promotes brand image and consumer behavior by focusing on advertising, public relations, and so on. The coordinated marketing communications concept emphasizes the coordination of the various marketing communications tools in order to reach multiple audiences with a synergistic effort (see also Gould, Lerman, & Grein, 1999; Kliatchko, 2005; Grove, Carlson, & Dorsch, 2002; Grove, Carlson, & Dorsch, 2007).

For Kitchen, Brignell, Li, and Spickettjones (2004), the once voice concept is the starting point of integrated marketing communications. Kitchen et al. (2004, p. 19) state that "Certainly, if its meaning simply amounts to bundling promotional mix elements together to create the 'one voice' phenomenon, then it is not saying much that is new, relevant, or even interesting. Yet, this was the starting point of IMC". IMC concept should be much more comprehensive than the one voice concept in nature, as it requires a complete harmony with employees of an organization, products, services, distribution channels, sales power, pricing, POP, after sale services, total quality, reliability and satisfaction of working area, and consumer satisfaction (Bozkurt, 2000).

Recently, we have started to see a new term being used as Integrated Communications (IC) in place of IMC (Grunig & Grunig, 1998; Wightman, 1999; Richman, 1991). M was dropped from IMC to make the concept more suitable to public relations and advertising. Another reason of dropping the "M" was a need to expand the definition to include stakeholders other than consumers (Grunig & Grunig, 1998).

Richman (1991) defines IC as:

Integrated communications is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines—for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations—and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications' impact through the seamless integration of discrete messages (p. 11).

In light of the literature review for the possible definitions of IMC, a research question was designed as below:

RQ2: How do agency and client practitioners define IMC? Which one of Nowak and Phelps' (1994) identifications of IMC does best describe practitioners' view?

Advantages of Integration

Blending integrated marketing communications elements harmoniously increases marketers' opportunity of meeting with their customers. Although it is difficult to evaluate the results of programs, the marketers have more advantages from integration, since the same message which is delivered through various communication techniques and several media outlets, increases the efficiency of transmission (Brannan, 1995).

Integrated marketing communications has various advantages. It brings all the communication tasks under one roof, and enables management to determine which tools are more effective with certain audiences through different media. The Energizer battery campaign, for example, was successful in making the pink bunny memorable on TV commercials, but failed to make Energizer memorable. When the company put the bunny on its packaging and point-of-purchase (POP) displays, sales increased in the US (Hines, 1999).

IMC means a company delivers the same message by various communication tools to its several target markets including stakeholders, employees, shareholders, customers, and community leaders. PR materials for example, say the same things as direct mail and advertising (Lindell, 1997). That is, all of the publics of the organization will hear the same message that is delivered through different communication functions which may not be easier ("Difficult market", 2002). Meanwhile, the value of IMC lies not only combining multiple

communication or promotional tools (e.g., advertising is combined with public relations), but also combining media tools (e.g., television is combined with print media) (Stammerjohan, Wood, Chang, & Thorson, 2005).

Other benefits of IMC are decreased media waste, cost effectiveness, coordination, consistency of communication programs, more creative works, and well-defined strategy (Kliatchko, 2005).

The research question on the benefits of IMC follows:

RQ3: According to agency and client practitioners what are the benefits of an IMC program? And which communication tools are more important in developing an IMC program?

Barriers to Implementation

The sensitive issue which requires an explanation is that there are some obstacles for implementing IMC. The problem is that the message offered in communication often comes from different company sources. Advertising messages are planned and implemented by the advertising department or advertising agency. Sales management develops personal selling communications. Other functional specialists are responsible for public relations, sales promotion, direct marketing and other forms of marketing communications. Nevertheless, promotion budget should be split in terms of different departments (Bozkurt, 2000).

The existence of different organizational cultures and structures between agencies and client's organizations could be a serious limiting factor of IMC planning (Eagle & Kitchen, 2000).

The difficulty of evaluating the results of IMC programs is another obstacle and a severe criticism to IMC (Eagle & Kitchen, 2000; Schultz & Kitchen, 2000; Kitchen, Brignell, Li, & Spickettjones, 2004; Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han, & Li, 2004). It will be difficult to evaluate the results of IMC; because, it includes the integration and operation of various communication tools under one roof. If the result is successful, finding and evaluating which tool(s) contributed to the success and which tool(s) failed will be challenging.

IMC is considered as an expense by the management of many organizations and during economic crisis, budget reductions start from reducing communication expenses of the organizations (Oyman & İnam, 2005).

Other reasons why there may be some barriers for implementing IMC can be derived from fear of change, short term planning, hierarchical organization, inside out communications planning, media fragmentation, and lack of database development. The best solution is to have support from the top management. Since integration cannot be accomplished by the middle managers, commitment from the top management for integration is essential (Gonring, 1994).

Scholars have been approaching the integration from different perspectives. PR scholars, for example, feel that PR should have a dominant function; while marketing scholars think that marketing function should be dominant in the integration. Each discipline has initial interest in coming first in this new structure, thus it is hard to find agreement on the issue (Wightman, 1999).

Batra, Myers, and Aaker (1996) offer a solution to this integration problem by suggesting advertising professionals as a coordinator. They believe that "... the easiest way to organise for IMC is to have just one outside communications *supplier*, such as an ad agency, and to have centralized responsibility for all brand communications within the client company ..." (p. 102). However, it is difficult to plan and implement IMC with an outside agency. Because, it will be difficult to share organizational information with an independent agency which mainly located outside, and therefore, is far from the organization.

On the other hand, Lyes (2000), Grunig and Grunig (1998), and Richman (1991) believe that marketing communications strategy should be brought under the PR roof. PR professionals have the education and skills to orchestrate and coordinate all of these communication messages of a company.

Grunig and Grunig say that different disciplines recognize different problems. Marketing department would see the problem of selling products, human resources department would see the problem of motivating employees, finance department would see the problem of acquiring resources, and finally manufacturing department would see the problem of

producing products as being most important. He also suggests that the importance of public relations is to bring these different problems and their solutions into the strategic management arena. PR practitioners are in the best position to manage the integrated communication process because they are involved in every facet of the organization.

Nevertheless, Hartley and Pickton (1999) report that customer contact management and database management are relatively important functions; therefore, they should be considered in an area of integration. In a study, Low (2000) found that small, consumer focused, service oriented companies tend to be more integrated and likely to practice IMC rather than big, company focused, and product oriented companies. Richman (1991) sees this problem as lack of education. She believes that marketers have a strong business background but lack of communication skills. In general, marketers are trained in business schools and do not have enough knowledge on communication and media relations. They are also trained to focus on getting short-term results in place of long-term relationships with the public.

The related research question is as below:

RQ4: What are the most serious barriers of an IMC program according to client and agency practitioners? Who controls the development of an IMC program? Do practitioners measure the effectiveness of an IMC program?

RESEARCH METHOD

An electronic survey conducted in the form of a questionnaire. The survey instrument consists of multiple choice questions and a 7-point Likert scale rating with scales ranging from ‘very strongly disagree’ to ‘very strongly agree’ and from ‘very strongly unimportant’ to ‘very strongly important’. The questions of this survey study (see Appendix) were created by looking at both previous researches in IMC (e.g., Kitchen, Schultz, Kim, Han, & Li, 2004; Kitchen & Li, 2005) and by reviewing the related literature.

The participants were queried with multiple choice questions about the type of organization they work for, their job position, IMC as a solution to changes in the marketplace, controlling the development and measuring the effectiveness of an IMC program. The participants were also asked to rate their opinions with a 7-point Likert scale

about changes in the marketplace, the definitions of the IMC, the importance of tools, the benefits and the barriers of an IMC program.

Nowak and Phelps' (1994) three approaches to the IMC concept (the one voice concept, the integrated marketing communications concept, and the coordinated marketing communications concept) were included in the study. In the questionnaire, the one voice concept was defined as 'It is bundling promotional mix elements together to create the one-voice'; the integrated marketing communications concept was identified as 'It is a program in which unified messages are delivered to consumers'; and the coordinated marketing communications concept was described as 'It is a coordination and implementation of all communication elements of an organization (e.g., advertising, PR, direct marketing, logos, jingles, and so on)'.

The research sample was selected from the member list of the Association of Public Relations in Turkey (Türkiye Halkla İlişkiler Derneği), the Turkish Association of Advertising Agencies (Reklamcılar Derneği), the Association of Advertising Creators (Reklam Yaratıcıları Derneği), the Association of Advertisers (Reklam Verenler Derneği), the Association of Indoor & Outdoor Advertising (Açık hava Reklamcılar Derneği), the International Advertising Association in Turkey (Uluslararası Reklamcılık Derneği) and the member list of the 'Advertising Agencies' and 'PR and Communication Consultancy Firms' of the World of Marketing (Pazarlama Dünyası) Internet cite¹.

While deciding about the research sample purposive sampling was employed. Agency practitioners who are responsible of IMC from PR agencies, advertising agencies, and other communication agencies and client practitioners who are in charge of IMC activities in their organizations from the private and public sector would seem to be necessary to be included in this exploratory study.

The total sample size of the study was 1461 and the sample size

- for the Association of Public Relations in Turkey was 93;
- for the Turkish Association of Advertising Agencies was 81;

¹ Sektörel Şirketler (n.d.). Retrieved January 2, 2008, from <http://www.pazarlamadunyasi.com/DesktopDefault.aspx>

- for the Association of Advertising Creators was 255;
- for the Association of Advertisers was 57;
- for the Association of Indoor & Outdoor Advertising was 141;
- for the International Advertising Association in Turkey was 82;
- for the Advertising Agencies of the World of Marketing Internet cite was 548;
- and for the PR and Communication Consultancy Firms of the World of Marketing Internet cite was 204.

The study was conducted by electronic mail and the questionnaires were sent out three times in two months' time. The study produced 48 responses and 47 of them were in a useable format. The response rate of the study is 3.2%. Cronbach's alpha was found as highly reliable: 0.856. The SPSS computer package was used; frequencies and mean scores were computed to analyze the findings.

FINDINGS

Profile of the Practitioners

The total of 47 respondents including agency practitioners (57.4%) and client practitioners (42.6%) agreed to participate to the study. The respondents' participation was from public relations agencies (10.6%), advertising agencies (29.8%), private and public organizations (42.6%), and other communications agencies (17.0%). 41 of the respondents were holding managerial position and 6 of them were holding staff position in their workplace.

Table 1 Profile of the Practitioners

		Frequency	%
Type of practitioner	Agency practitioner	27	57.4
	Client practitioner	20	42.6
Type of agency	PR agency	5	10.6
	Advertising agency	14	29.8
	Other communication Agencies	8	17.0

Job title	Manager	41	87.2
	Staff	6	12.8

N=47

Changes in the Marketplace

Table 2 shows how client and agency practitioners responded to various statements on changes in the marketplace. Agency and client practitioners displayed strongest agreement for ‘today’s companies are dealing with well educated, sophisticated and savvy consumers’. On the other hands, agency and client practitioners didn’t agree with the statements that ‘advertising is in decline, because it is too expensive’ and ‘consumers are less likely to believe advertising’.

Table 2 Changes in the Marketplace

Changes	Agency practitioners		Client Practitioners	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Advertising is in decline, because it is too expensive	3.14	2.08	3.25	1.80
There are increased emphasis and expenditure on MPR	4.03	2.00	4.00	1.25
MPR is a solution in the creation of consumer confidence by supplying more information via news	4.81	1.79	5.00	1.20
Consumers are less likely to believe advertising	3.85	2.01	3.40	1.46
The product explosion and the competition, decreased the duration of the average product lifetime in a market place	4.70	1.97	4.85	1.59
Today’s companies are dealing with well educated, sophisticated and savvy consumers	6.03	1.60	5.85	1.22
There is a shift of advertising budget to sales promotion	5.33	1.64	4.20	1.43
Heavy uses of sales promotion materials made consumers less informed about products and services	3.69	2.03	4.00	1.33

Note: A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 7=very strongly agree and 1=very strongly disagree

IMC as a Solution to Changes in the Marketplace

Table 3 outlines the practitioners' agreement for IMC as a solution to various changes in the marketplace. The majority of agency and client practitioners agreed that IMC was a solution to such changes.

Table 3 The Practitioners' Agreement for IMC as a Solution to Changes in the Marketplace

		IMC is a solution to these changing factors in the marketplace			Total
		Yes (%)	No (%)	Not sure (%)	
Type of practitioner	agency practitioner	92.5	3.7	3.7	100.0
	client practitioner	95.0	5.0	0.0	100.0
N		44	2	1	47

The Definitions of IMC

Among the various definitions of IMC, Nowak and Phelps' identification of three broad concepts of IMC were tested in this study. Agency practitioners agreed with a higher mean score that 'IMC is bundling promotional mix elements together to create one-voice'. This definition considers 'IMC as one voice concept' which is among Nowak and Phelps' approaches. Client practitioners also agreed on the same approach in addition to accepting that 'IMC is a strategic business process in which a brand oriented communication program is used' as an ideal definition of IMC.

Table 4 Various Definitions of IMC

Definitions	Agency practitioners		Client Practitioners	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
It is a coordination and implementation of all communication elements of an organization (e.g., advertising, PR, direct marketing, logos, jingles, and so on)	5.24	1.83	5.90	1.37
It is a program in which unified messages are delivered to consumers	3.63	2.38	4.95	1.98
It is a terminology that refers to the coordination of advertising program or PR program	2.70	2.25	4.80	2.06
It is a strategic business process in which a brand oriented communication program is used	4.69	2.20	6.00	.79
It is bundling promotional mix elements together to create one-voice	5.39	1.97	5.95	1.35

Note: A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 7=very strongly agree and 1=very strongly disagree

The Importance of Tools in Developing an IMC Program

It is important to note that there was a difference between agency and client practitioners' perceptions for the importance of communication tools. Although one third of agency practitioners were from advertising agencies, agency practitioners saw 'public relations' as the most important communication tool in developing an IMC program. Client practitioners, on the other hands, ranked 'advertising' as the most important element of an IMC development program.

Table 5 The Importance of Tools

Tools	Agency practitioners		Client Practitioners	
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>
Advertising	5.96	1.77	6.55	.60
PR	6.07	1.46	6.30	.73
Sales promotion	5.73	1.28	5.80	1.00
Direct marketing	5.26	1.61	5.65	1.08
Personal selling	4.19	2.13	5.10	1.25

Note: A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 7=very strongly important and 1=very strongly unimportant

The Benefits of an IMC Program

'Increased communication effectiveness' and 'greater communication consistency' were considered the most obvious benefits of an IMC program by both agency and client practitioners. The practitioners rated 'cost savings' as the least important benefit of an IMC program (See Table 6).

Table 6 The Benefits of an IMC Program

Benefits	Agency practitioners		Client Practitioners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Increased communication effectiveness	6.62	1.21	6.75	.44
Cost savings	4.81	1.94	4.50	1.63
Improved decision making	5.77	1.47	5.55	.94
Clearly defined roles	5.14	2.01	4.60	1.31
Improved media effect	5.85	1.93	6.25	.78
It gives a company a competitive edge	6.22	1.47	6.05	.88
Greater communication consistency	6.37	1.11	6.30	1.17
Management and coordination of the various agencies	5.55	1.67	5.65	1.42
Focusing the campaign on the customers' needs	5.11	1.84	5.50	1.46

Note: A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 7=very strongly agree and 1=very strongly disagree

The Barriers to an IMC Program

Among the several barriers to an IMC program, ‘client's tendency of concentration on short term goals’ and ‘difficulty of involvement of client’s top management’ were considered to be the most serious barrier by agency practitioners. ‘Difficulty of controlling other participating agencies’, on the other hands, was seen as the most serious barrier by client practitioners. ‘High cost of running an IMC program’ was attracted the least agreement by agency and client practitioners as being a barrier to an IMC program.

Table 7 The Barriers to an IMC Program

Barriers	Agency practitioners		Client Practitioners	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Difficulty of involvement of client's top management	5.65	1.71	5.55	1.31
Difficulty of controlling other participating agencies	5.07	1.71	5.85	1.30
Turf battles among the participating agencies	5.03	2.16	5.00	1.33
Client's organizational structure constrains IMC	5.46	1.85	5.25	1.65
Client's corporate culture constrains IMC	5.23	1.98	5.60	1.27
Participating agency's different organizational structures constrain IMC	4.23	2.12	4.65	1.46
Participating agency's different corporate cultures constarin IMC	4.68	1.86	4.55	1.05
High cost of running an IMC program	3.26	2.12	3.90	1.68
Lack of specialized staff to participate in an IMC program	5.60	1.95	5.05	1.66
Client's tendency of concentration on short term goals	6.15	1.12	5.40	1.23
Clients see agency people as creative people and not involved in strategy creation and important decisions	4.42	1.94	4.55	1.46
There is an indefiniteness on who should manage the various types of communications under one roof	5.19	2.02	4.85	1.46
The difficulty of aligning corporate and marketing messages	3.76	1.96	4.45	1.63

Note: A seven-point Likert scale was used, where 7=very strongly agree and 1=very strongly disagree

Controlling the Development of an IMC Program

It is seen from Table 8 that the majority of client and agency practitioners agreed that controlling the development of an IMC program is jointly conducted which shows an ideal approach to a control mechanism.

Table 8 Controlling the Development of an IMC Program

	Type of practitioner		N
	agency practitioner %	Client practitioner %	
Advertising agency	7.4	0.0	2
jointly by advertising agency and client	37.0	40	18
jointly by PR agency and client	14.8	5	5
jointly by Ad agency, PR agency and client	22.2	20	10
by all responsible parties	11.1	25	8
Other	7.4	10	4
Total	100.0	100.0	47

Measuring the Effectiveness of an IMC Program

The majority of both client and agency practitioners claimed that they measured the effectiveness of an IMC program after it had been conducted.

Table 9 Measuring the effectiveness of an IMC Program

	Type of practitioner		N
	Agency practitioner %	Client practitioner %	
Yes	79.1	90.0	37
sometimes	20.8	5.0	6
No	0.0	5.0	1
Total	100.0	100.0	44

CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Although the sample of this study is a small portion of Turkish agency and client practitioners, the results show certain trends, attitudes, executions, and problems in IMC concept.

Changes in the Marketplace

Agency and client practitioners' agreed that consumers are well educated, savvy, and sophisticated than ever before and today's companies' task of reaching them is more challenging as they are dealing with such consumers (Richman, 1991; Proctor and Kitchen, 2002; Duncan, 2002; but not Schultz, Tannenbaum, and Lauterborn, 1995 or Dwek, 1993). This shows that consumers in Turkey are also considered careful selectors and with this characteristic they are not much different than consumers abroad.

Agency and client practitioners didn't support that 'consumers are less likely to believe advertising' (Lamons, 2002; Hallahan, 1999; Crooke, 1996) and 'advertising is in decline, because it is too expensive' (Harris, 1993, 1994; Kitchen, 1996; Strout, 1999). Agency and client practitioners were also uncertain about 'increased emphasis and expenditure on MPR', not providing support for Kitchen's (1996) research result conducted in the UK. This research result reveals Turkish practitioners' opinions on various matters and why they think in this way remains unanswered. It may be because they still use advertising as a primary communication tool in their programs which may be investigated and can be the focus of other studies in Turkey.

IMC as a Solution to Changes in the Marketplace

There is a strong belief among practitioners that IMC is an answer to changes in the marketplace (Hackley & Kitchen, 1998).

The Definitions of IMC

Among Nowak and Phelps' (1994) three approaches to IMC, the one voice concept was seen as an appropriate definition of IMC. Agency practitioners ranked the one voice concept as the most appropriate and client practitioners as the second most appropriate definition by supporting the statement based on 'MC is bundling promotional mix elements together to create one-voice'. This may show that Turkish practitioners have been unifying messages by blending communication mix elements to each other. The one voice concept is considered as the beginning stage of the IMC concept by Kitchen, Brignell, Li, and

Spickettjones (2004). Certainly, the practitioners should go beyond unifying messages coming from various sources in order to take more integrated and coordinated approaches to IMC.

The Importance of Tools in Developing an IMC Program

Thus sequence of the importance of those promotional tools in the development of an IMC program varies in accordance with agency and client practitioners. Interestingly, agency practitioners accepted PR as the most important communication tool in developing an IMC program, although 1/3 of agency practitioners were made up from advertising agencies. This displays that the majority of advertising agencies have started to see PR more than advertising as an important communication tool. This may be a natural result that in Turkey advertising agencies have become communication agencies and leaving more room for PR. Of course, practitioners' usage of promotional tools can be questioned in other studies; and data can be supplied by interviewing them to get detailed information. Client practitioners, on the other hand, evaluated advertising as an important tool. Personal selling was seen as the poor component among the other promotional elements in IMC development. Sellers are the contact points of the companies, and therefore, personal selling must be as important as the other promotional tools and should be among IMC consideration.

The Benefits of an IMC Program

Agency and client practitioners have ranked 'communication consistency and communication effectiveness' as the most obvious benefits of an IMC program. This opinion is consistent with their perception of IMC as one voice concept. As they have seen IMC as one voice, the expectancy of IMC benefits is related to communication consistency, unity, and effectiveness as a result of such program. 'Cost saving' was the last coming benefit among their expectancy. This result also confirms why agency and client practitioners did not support that 'advertising is in decline, because it is too expensive'.

The Barriers to an IMC Program

Agency and client practitioners prioritized different barriers to an IMC program. Agency practitioners claimed that 'client's tendency of concentration on short term goals' was

the biggest barrier. This supports why agency practitioners believe the importance of PR which requires long term relationship for the development of IMC and explains why in agency practitioners' effective promotional tool evaluations advertising and sales promotion, which entails quicker sale result in shorter term, came after PR.

Agency practitioners also reported that 'difficulty of involvement of client's top management' was the second big roadblock in front of the programs. Resistance to change is an important matter in many organizations. The management of organizations may fail to adapt to marketplace changes, new ideas and concepts of IMC. The managers may tend to feel that what they have done went well so far and it is unnecessary to change their mentality for cooperation and to involve themselves in IMC programs. But, as Gonring (1994) indicates getting support, cooperation, and full commitment from top management of organizations are essential to overcome other barriers.

For client practitioners, 'difficulty of controlling other participating agencies' was the most serious problem. This shows that who controls the participating agencies is not clear in most programs. More coordination, cooperation, and integration by the participating agencies are needed during the development and execution of IMC programs in Turkey. Every single agency -PR, advertising, ect.- may want to come first in the integration and to take a big portion of promotional budget (Wightman, 1999). They may also want to have a leading position in this new structure. In such circumstances, competition among responsible agencies is unescapable and this makes controlling participating agencies difficult. In my opinion, client practitioners should be in charge and responsible for integrating and orchestrating participating agencies during each phase of the program. Client practitioner has knowledge about his/her organization s/he works for and is in the best position to know strengths and weaknesses of the organization. Here, the important thing is that the selection of the appropriate client practitioner from the organizations. The title of an appropriate candidate does not matter -whether PR manager, advertising manager, or other communication executives- the selection should be based on his/her communicational abilities, performances, and characteristics. The person should have organizational and managerial skills, should be good at communicating to various publics, understanding the nature of communication, and a leadership characteristic.

Both agency and client practitioners didn't see 'high cost of running an IMC program' as one of problematic areas of IMC. In other words, Turkish practitioners neither saw 'high cost' as a barrier, nor 'cost saving' as a benefit. However, both agency and client practitioners should be careful about Turkish managers' mentality of seeing promotional activities as unneeded expenses in many companies in Turkey. Promotional activities, especially advertising among them, are seen as extra efforts coming after production, packaging, pricing, and delivering which are considered as fundamental marketing activities. At times of economic recession- which has been currently experienced by many countries all around the world- the management of many Turkish companies take decision of budget reductions and this reduction starts with reducing the expenses of communication activities of the companies (Oyman & İnam, 2005). Because, communication activities have always been associated with extra expenses of an organization and are considered as luxury and unnecessary especially during economical downfalls. So, they are operated when everything goes well. As Richman (1991) notes marketers have business background and they are not trained enough to have communication and media background. As tomorrow's executives and marketers are trained in today's marketing, finance, and business administration schools, there is a need for a curriculum development for those departments and for including more programs indicating the importance of communication so that longer term communicational goals of organizations can be considered by them in place of focusing short term goals. This may change the attitudes of Turkish managers' evaluation of marketing communications and can generate the full commitment of client's top management.

Controlling the Development of an IMC Program

Although, other participating agencies are difficult to be controlled, it is seen that for controlling the development of an IMC program, they prefer behaving jointly.

Measuring the Effectiveness of an IMC Program

Effectiveness of an IMC program has been said to be measured by the majority of the practitioners. Measurement- such as message comprehension, attitudinal or behavioral changes- occurs as a result of a need to evaluate communication programs. However, in this

study, how the practitioners measure the effectiveness of an IMC program and their measurement system remain unclear and can be investigated in other studies.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE OF THE STUDY

1. Please indicate your current working field:
 Advertising Public Relations

2. The organization you are working for:
 Advertising agency PR agency Private and/or public sector
 Other, please specify _____

3. Please indicate your current job position:
 Manager Staff Other, please specify _____

4. Please mark your options with an X for 1= very strongly disagree; 7=very strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertising is in decline, because it is too expensive							
There are increased emphasis and expenditure on MPR							
MPR is a solution in the creation of consumer confidence by supplying more information via news							
Consumers are less likely to believe advertising							
The product explosion and the competition, decreased the duration of the average product lifetime in a market place							
Today's companies are dealing with well educated, sophisticated and savvy consumers							
There is a shift of advertising budget to sales promotion							
Heavy uses of sales promotion materials made consumers less informed about products and services							

5. Do you think IMC is a solution to these changing factors, which were mentioned in the previous question, in a market place?
 Yes, certainly No, not at all I am not sure

6. Please mark your options with an X for 1= very strongly disagree; 7=very strongly agree

How do you perceive and define IMC?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is a coordination and implementation of all communication elements of an organization (e.g., advertising, PR, direct marketing, logos, jingles, and so on)							
It is a program in which unified messages are delivered to consumers							
It is a terminology that refers to the coordination of advertising program or PR program							
It is a strategic business process in which a brand oriented communication program is used							
It is bundling promotional mix elements together to create the one-voice							

7. Please mark your options with an X for 1= strongly unimportant; 7=very strongly important

Which communication tools are more important in developing an IMC campaign?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Advertising							
Public Relations							
Sales Promotion							
Direct marketing							
Personal Selling							

8. Please mark your options with an X for 1= very strongly disagree; 7= very strongly agree

Which ones below are the possible benefits of an IMC campaign?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Increased communications effectiveness							
Cost savings							
Improved decision making							
Clearly defined roles							
Improved media effect							
It gives a company a competitive edge							
Greater communication consistency							
Management and coordination of the various agencies							
Focusing the campaign on the customers' needs							

9. Please mark your options with an X for 1= very strongly disagree; 7=very strongly agree

What are the potential barriers to IMC programs in Turkey?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Difficulty of involvement of client's top management							
Difficulty of controlling other participating agencies							
Turf battles among the participating agencies							
Client's organizational structure constrains IMC							
Client's corporate culture constrains IMC							
Participating agency's different organizational structures constrain IMC							
Participating agency's different corporate cultures constrain IMC							
High cost of running an IMC program							
Lack of specialised staff to participate in an IMC program							
Clients' tendency of concentration on short term goals							
The clients saw agency people as 'creative people' and not involved in strategy creation and important decisions							
There is an indefiniteness on who should manage the various types of communications under one roof							
The difficulty of aligning corporate and marketing messages							

10. Who controls the development of an IMC campaign?

- Advertising agency Jointly by advertising agency and client
 PR consultancies Jointly by PR consultancies and client
 Media agency Other, please specify _____

11. Do you measure the effectiveness of an IMC campaign?

- Yes Sometimes No

Thank you very much for your answers and cooperation