



Stakeholder significance within integrated marketing communications.

Whilst it could be argued that the external audience is more important for fully implementing integrated marketing communications (IMC), it is clear that the internal audience is of equal importance. According to Kliatchko (2008), external audiences can be defined as individuals such as customers and consumers whereas internal audiences may include managers and employees of an organisation. This comparative article analyses IMC as a philosophy, contrasting arguments regarding the importance of both internal and external stakeholders for fully implementing IMC.

Whilst IMC arguably exhibits a high degree of external-customer focus (Shimp, 2000), Fill (2013) argues that effective implementation is not possible without contribution and engagement from an organisation's internal audience. This illustrates that internal audiences are significant in ensuring successful IMC within the marketplace. Percy (2008) therefore emphasises that the internal audience is equally as important in enhancing IMC implementation throughout all brand touchpoints; suggesting that internal stakeholders within an organisation are key to creating additional value, improving IMC performance through interactive promotional tools including personal selling and PR. McCorkindale (2016) expands on this, stating that regardless of power and legitimacy of managers and employees, all internal stakeholders significantly impact IMC implementation and overall communications effectiveness.

McArthur and Griffin (1997) argue that the internal audience is less important because employees are too preoccupied to conduct consistent IMC and implementation could result in increased employee stress (Beard, 1996). However, Zvobgo and Melewar (2011) indicate that internal audiences are responsible for synergistic communication regarding brand theme and image, suggesting that employees are important in ensuring communication consistency and brand alignment within the external macroenvironment and microenvironment.

Whilst Gersch (2015) argues that IMC focuses upon building relationships with mainly external audiences, Lings and Greenley (1999) argue that interaction between both audiences is key to building effective CRM and successfully implementing IMC; implying that the internal audience is important in developing effective relationships with external audiences (Gummesson, 1991), increasing brand engagement. Consequently, effective CRM may rely on internal stakeholders which Barnes and Howlett (1998) argue, determines the quality of external audience relationships. This indicates the need for two-way symmetrical communication between both audiences and internal CRM.

Equal contribution synergistic communication.

Zvobgo and Melewar (2011)

Internal and external stakeholders are of equal importance.

Fill (2013)

References:

- Barnes, J.G. Howlett, D.M. (1998). Predictors of equity in relationships between service providers and retail customers. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, **16**(1), pp.5-23.
- Beard, F. (1996). Integrated marketing communications: New role expectations and performance issues in the client-ad agency relationship. *Journal of Business Research*, **37**(3), pp.207-215.
- Fill, C. (2013). *Marketing Communications brands, experiences and participation*. 6th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.
- Gersch, M. (2015). Customer relationship management. In: Kleinaltenkamp, M. Plinke, W. Geiger, I. *Business Relationship Management and Marketing Mastering Business Markets*. Berlin: Springer International Publishing.
- Gummesson, E. (1991). Marketing orientation revisited: the crucial role of the part-time marketers. *European Journal of Marketing*, **25**(2), pp.60-67.
- Kliatchko, J. (2008). Revisiting the IMC construct: a revised definition and four pillars. *International Journal of Advertising*, **27**(1), pp.133-160.
- Lings, I. N. Greenley, G. E. (2005). Measuring internal market orientation. *Journal of Service Research*, **7**(3), pp.290-305.
- McArthur, D. N. and Griffin, T. (1997). A marketing management view of integrated marketing communications. *Journal of Advertising Research*, **37**(5), pp.19-26.
- McCorkindale, T. (2016). Stakeholders. In: Carroll, C. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Corporate Reputation*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Percy, L. (2008). *Strategic Integrated Marketing Communications: Theory and Practice*. New York: Taylor & Francis Group.
- Shimp, T. (2000). Advertising promotion. Supplemental aspects of integrated marketing communications. 5th ed. California: Harcourt College Publishers.
- Zvobgo, M. Melewar, T.C. (2011). Drivers of Globally Integrated Marketing Communications: A Review of Literature and Research Propositions. *Journal of Promotion Management*, **17**(1), pp.1-20.