As a long-time friend and colleague of Professor Edoardo Teodoro Brioschi, I am delighted to provide a paper dedicated to him in this celebratory issue of THE REVIEW OF MASS COMMUNICATIONS. As an early proponent of the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Professor Brioschi has researched and taught countless students in the theory and practice of the discipline.

I have been honored by his support and association with the field of IMC for over a decade. It is in this spirit that the paper that follows has been developed. In that, I trace the development of IMC and outline the changes and adaptations that have occurred since the founding of the concept in the late 1980s. It was then that the faculty of Northwestern University first identified the need for a new and somewhat revolutionary view of the entire field of marketing-oriented communication. None of this will be new for Professor Brioschi as he has been instrumental in developing much of that thinking. But, as IMC has grown, it seems appropriate to salute him for his contributions. Thus, I am indebted and grateful to Professor Brioschi not only for his leadership and support, but, most of all, for his friendship for more than twenty years.

The title of this paper is somewhat different. It suggests IMC was first a revolution that has now evolved into something different. Yet, it continues in the same vein. At least, that is what I hope the title implies. Integrated Marketing Communication was indeed a revolution when the concept was first advanced in the late 1980s. And, it has evolved almost continuously ever since. What my colleagues and I developed and described in the first IMC book, Integrated Marketing Communications: Putting It Together and Making It Work (McGraw-Hill, 1993), provided only the bare skeleton of what IMC has grown and evolved to be over the past dozen years. The concept has come a long way, driven in many cases by the new technology of the information revolution and globalization of the marketplace. But, at the core, it is still the same concept, that is, an answer to the question of how organizations can use all forms of marketing communication to build relationships between themselves and their customers and prospects. In this ar-

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IN THE BEGINNING: THE NEED FOR A NEW, INTEGRATING DISCIPLINE

One could argue that marketing communication came of age in the United States in the 1970s. Until that time, advertising had been the driving force in marketplace applications, research and teaching. But, as media expansion fueled the opportunity for public relations, computers and retail store data provided the base for the development of sales promotion and the increased availability of customer data and databases, supplemented by advanced postal systems, provided the impetus for direct marketing, there was need for change. Thus, the field of marketing communications was born.

In spite of the dramatic marketplace changes, most research, teaching and corporate applications in the 1970s continued to be on advertising. When attention was shifted to the new communication forms, the focus was the same that is, trying to understand and apply each of the activities separately and independently.

In the 1980s, there was little interest in even trying to connect the new communication approaches to the communication monolith called «media advertising». Thus, in many organizations, there was advertising and «everything else». This led to the artificial classification of «above-and-below-the-line» promotional investments, a concept with which many organizations and academicians still struggle.

With the increasing emphasis by marketers and marketing organizations on the «promotional mix», it became clear that a new, more over-arching view of the field of commercial communication was needed by marketers. As marketing organizations began to invest more of their available communication resources in forms of communication other than traditional media advertising, the first group specifically impacted was the advertising agency. The agency saw advertiser budgets shifting to other areas as the amount of money invested in mainstream media advertising declined. Their natural reaction was to attempt to protect their «bottom-line». The best way to do that, the agency executives reasoned, was to become a «one-stop communication shop». By that, they meant they would begin to offer other forms of communication planning, implementation and delivery, offering a wider palette of communication alternatives than just media advertising.

In the middle 1980s, US advertising agencies began to buy, acquire or merge with specialist agencies, initially in sales promotion and public relations. That was followed by acquisitions in direct marketing and eventually areas such as sponsorships, product placement, events and the like, all which were believed to be relevant forms of promotion and communication. It was during this time that the massive communication holding companies such as Omnicom, WPP, IPG, Publicis, Havas and others began to coalesce and emerge.

BUILDING A BASE FOR INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

While Integrated Marketing Communications as a concept had been bouncing around in advertising seminars, conferences and the trade press, during the entire decade of the 1980s, it was not until the end of that period that the American Association of
Advertising Agencies (AAAA), the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) and other relevant US-based advertising and promotion trade groups formed a coalition. Their goal was to find a way to meet the increasing changes in communication forms and formats. Their solution was an association with the Graduate Programs in Advertising/Promotion, Corporate Public Relations and Direct Marketing, housed in the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL (a suburb of Chicago). These Medill graduate programs had a long history of research, teaching and professional development in advertising. The group had also embraced the new communication areas as well. Thus, the school and the faculty made a perfect partner for the professional groups seeking to find a viable solution to the integration question.

One of the first steps in the development of IMC was a national study, conducted by the Northwestern faculty, among advertisers and agencies to develop an understanding of, applications in and commitment to the principles of integrated marketing communication (Caywood, Wang and Schultz, 1991). For that study, a definition was created by the faculty and the consortium members that defined Integrated Marketing Communications as:

«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 e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communications impacts»

As can be seen, the IMC concept initially was defined as a method or process that enabled the marketing organization or agency to align and focus the external marketing communication activities in ways it believed would be more efficient and effective for them.

While the initial focus of IMC was developed by advertising agencies, the results of the Caywood et al study clearly pointed out that integration, to be successful, had to be driven by the marketing organization. It was not something that could be originated or initiated by the agency, certainly not without client support. This changed the focus of the concept and the driving forces behind the development and implementation of the methodologies that came later.

As a result of the research conducted by the Northwestern University faculty, that group decided to fully embrace the concept. Beginning with the 1991 entering graduate class, a new Integrated Marketing Communications curriculum was offered. It replaced the long-standing Graduate Advertising/Promotion, Corporate Public Relations and Direct Marketing instructional programs with a coordinated approach to the study and teaching of IMC. Other graduate level programs, such as the one at the University of Colorado at Boulder followed in 1992. Most other schools began teaching and researching areas of IMC later, generally in the mid-to-late 1990s.

In spite of the professional marketplace acceptance of the principles and practice of Integrated Marketing Communications, the academic community was reticent. Many academicians suggested that IMC was nothing new or that it was an old concept, dressed up in new terminology. Critics such as Cornellissen, Lock and Drobis argued...

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that IMC, since it had developed as a professional methodology, lacked a substantive theoretical base. That controversy continues to this day, although the resistance to the concept of integration and IMC appears to be declining.

ENTER THE NET, THE WEB AND INTERACTIVITY

Just as the concept of IMC was beginning to develop inside marketing organizations, the communication field was turned upside-down by the commercialization of the Internet and the World Wide Web. The ability of marketers to create on-going, interactive communication programs with customers and prospects around the world radically changed the entire concept of marketing communications. While the impact of the net and the web were limited at first, by the middle of the 1990s, these new approaches were believed to be the «wave of the future». Thus, the IMC concept had to be adapted to fit these radically new communication methodologies.

Unfortunately, in the middle 1990s, the practical applications of IMC were not sufficiently strong to overcome the natural inclination of the marketing and communications industry, along with the academicians, to treat the new, interactive forms of communication as separate and unique elements in the marketing communication mix. Once again, the «above-and-below-the-line» concept took precedence. Thus, during the mid to late 1990s, IMC continued to be confined to traditional media forms as new concepts, theories and approaches were developed for the emerging electronic forms of communication. So, rather than viewing all forms of marketing communication holistically, the academic and professional communities alike continued to plan, develop and measure them separately and independently. It was a replica of the approach used in the 1980s when the fields of direct marketing, sales promotion and public relations were developing.

Unfortunately, these «silo-ed» views of communication and communication management exist to this day, particularly in the academic community. Traditional marketing communications on one side of the marketer’s house, electronic, interactive, web and the like on the other. Rather than developing concepts and approaches as ways to coordinate, align and implement all marketing communication activities holistically among customers and prospects, the general approach has continued to be to develop, plan and measure each element separately and independently. This has created ongoing consternation among IMC researchers, academicians and practitioners who continue to believe that coordinated marketing communication programs are likely the most effective way to employ the finite resources of the marketing organization.

DATA AND DATABASES DRIVE IMC IN THE 1990S

The emergence of the marketer’s ability to capture, store, analyze and manipulate vast amounts of customer and prospect data and information was a key driving force in the development and implementation of IMC during the mid-1990s. As the marketing organization increased its ability to identify, value and communicate with customers and prospects individually or in groups smaller than the mass market, radical changes in the views of mass advertising developed. While the :30 television commercial and price-oriented sales promotion continued to be the primary conduits used by consumer product companies to communicate with and attempt to influence their customer’s behaviors, those engaged in services and business-to-business developed vastly superior
communication approaches, based primarily on the use of the new technologies. The concepts of «one-to-one», interactive and more refined versions of traditional direct marketing emerged in these organizations because it allowed them to better target, deliver and measure the impact of their communication efforts. This acceptance and use of data and data-driven marketing approaches has had a major impact on how IMC has developed over the last five to seven years, particularly in the western markets.

The changes in how marketing communication programs were developed and implemented by data-driven marketing organizations in the late 1990s became apparent through a series of «best practices» studies conducted by the American Productivity & Quality Center, headquartered in Houston, Texas.

The first study was led by Don and Heidi Schultz of Northwestern University. It focused on «best practices» in IMC among US-based marketing organizations.

Emerging from that study was the understanding that IMC was a process that a marketing organization typically developed and implemented over time, not something that was done in one fell implementation swoop. The various levels of IMC development and implementation are clearly shown in the chart that emerged from the APQC study.

Figure 1 - The 4 Stages of Integration

As shown, IMC in the studied companies seemed to follow a natural progression. That is, the marketing organization first focused on tactical coordination of communication activities, that is, finding ways to coordinate and align communication activities such as common logotypes, colors, print designs and formats.

The second stage occurred when the organization expanded its definition of marketing communication to include a broader array of audiences. Rather than simply trying to integrate its external communication with customers and prospects, in this stage the marketing organization expanded their integration efforts to include employees, distribution channels and other stakeholders.

The next logical integrated step occurred when the firm began to use the customer and consumer data it held internally or could gather from external sources. That commonly permitted more formal targeting approaches and laid the groundwork for development of a more formal approach to marketing communication measurement.

The final stage of integration, at least when the study was conducted, was the attempt by the marketing organization to develop financial models of investments and returns from marketing communication programs. At the time the «best practice» study

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3 Integrated Marketing Communications (1997), Best Practice Report, American Productivity & Quality Center, Houston, TX.
was conducted, 1997, few organizations had reached this level of integration sophistication. But the study pre-saged the current work that has developed in the areas of marketing communication return-on-investment.

This best practices study clearly pointed out how IMC was developing in the late 1990s. IMC was a process, something that the organization developed and implemented over time. It was not something that the marketing firm «did» and then moved on. It focused the activities of the firm on customers and prospects, not on the communication techniques and approaches. It also demonstrated the managerial implications of IMC, that is, the concept of treating marketing and communication activities as investments, not simply as open-ended annual expenses. Clearly, at the end of the 20th century, in the more advanced marketing organizations, IMC began to be viewed at a more strategic rather than simply at a tactical level. Thus, in the decade of the 1990s, IMC moved from the marketing communication planner’s office to the board room. A dramatic change in how the IMC concept would and should be viewed in the future.

Along with the IMC «best practices» studies, APQC also conducted a series of follow-up studies focusing on the emerging area of brands and branding. Those set the stage for the next level of IMC development.

**ENTER BRANDS AND BRANDING**

Brands have existed for centuries but it was not until the middle-1980s that they became the focus of senior management. During that time, the financial community began to value brands for their ability to generate on-going income flows for the organization. Thus, brands became important, not just to the marketing people, but, to the financial managers of organizations as well. As a result, IMC and branding concepts emerged along parallel tracks in the 1980s and 1990s.

It was in the early 1990s that marketing organizations began to realize the importance of brand communications and brand consistency. Thus, the view of the brand as the coordinating element in the marketing organization emerged. And, with this view, the need for communication integration, particularly brand communication consistency, provided a major impetus to IMC. Clearly, if the brand was to be coordinated and consistent, the communication activity of the firm needed to be integrated and consistent as well. Thus, over the past few years, there has been a gradual integration of brand and marketing communication thinking. Since it is assumed that the brand must be viewed in total, the growth of holistic thinking about brand communication emerged as well. Much of the base for the development of IMC in the last few years has come from the two studies conducted by APQC on brands and branding and a more focused view of business-to-business branding. Each of these studies illustrated the commonality of branding and integration.

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4 *Brand Building and Communication: The Power Strategies for the 21st Century* (1999), Best Practice Report, American Productivity & Quality Center, Houston, TX.
5 *Leveraging Customer Information: Driving Strategic Direction and Marketing Profitability* (2000), Best Practice Report, American Productivity & Quality Center, Houston, TX.
6 *Business-to-Business Branding: Building the Brand Powerhouse* (2001), Best Practice Report, American Productivity & Quality Center, Houston, TX.
Over the past five years or so, IMC has moved from simply a view of how the organization could and should align, coordinate and integrate its various marketing and communication programs to one where the integration process focuses more on the communication of brand and branding activities. This has led to the concept of «brand touchpoints». This is an approach that includes all forms of marketing and communication as the locus of the integration needs, not just the planned and measured forms of communication delivered by the organization that traditionally have defined IMC.

THE CRITICAL IMPORTANCE OF IMC PROCESSES

Over the past decade, it has become increasingly apparent, at least to a number of IMC practitioners and academicians, that the approach must focus on the development of replicable processes that can be implemented across countries, industries and organizations. At the beginning of 2004, Schultz and Schultz published a text titled *IMC, The Next Generation* (McGraw-Hill, 2003). That book provided one methodology that seems to sum up the needs and requirements of IMC at the beginning of the 21st century. The concept of «Next Generation IMC» is summed up in the definition they provided in that text:

«Integrated marketing communication is a strategic business process used to plan, develop, execute, and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communications programs over time with consumers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences».

Schultz and Schultz also provided a revised IMC process from that developed in the early 1990s. That is illustrated in Figure Two, below.

![Figure 2 - Five-Step Integrated Marketing Communication Process](image)

1. Identify customers and prospects
2. Valuation of customers/prospects
3. Creating and delivering messages and incentives
4. Estimating return on customer investment
5. Budgeting, allocation, and evaluation

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9 Ibid.
As shown, this «next generation» IMC methodology starts with customers and prospects, not with communication activities. It attempts to identify the customers or prospects with whom the organization wishes to communicate. It covers a financial value on the customers or customer groups with whom the communication is to be directed. That allows the organization to develop a «closed-loop» investment and return system to measure the impact and effect of the communication program. Further, it reduces the communication alternatives to «messages» and «incentives», that is, the delivery of long-term brand concepts and the short-term promotional activities that are required in the marketplace today. It provides an estimation of the returns that are expected from the successful delivery of the marketing or communication programs. This helps the firm to develop investment and return approaches for their marketing communication activities. Perhaps the most important of the five steps is the last, that is, the evaluation, adjustment and recycling of the communication efforts. This clearly illustrates that marketing and communication are things that are conducted on a continuing and continually improving basis, not just a set of campaign activities that are unconnected and uncoordinated.

This 5 Step IMC process appears to be the most sophisticated form of IMC today. It has increasingly been adopted by marketing organizations around the world and has great promise for the future. Clearly, it is much more strategic and managerially focused than were the initial efforts in IMC that were developed at the outset in the late 1980s. Yet, it is not, in my view, the final stage of Integrated Marketing Communications. That is still to come. Real integration occurs only when the entire marketing organization is totally and holistically integrated. Unfortunately, that appears to be long way from reality for many marketing organizations that continue to be organized into functional silos that cannot and will not communicate internally, thus making any type of external integration all the more difficult. There is one approach being developed that holds promise. It is discussed in the final section of this paper on the future of IMC.

THE FUTURE OF IMC - INTEGRATED ORGANIZATIONS

Over the past several years, it has become increasingly clear that the challenges to IMC are not just from the marketing and communication managers or groups, but they come from the organization itself. 21st century organizations, unfortunately, are still organized using the forms, formats and structures initially developed in late 19th century. That is, functional groups or departments that are focused on individual activities that are assumed to contribute to the overall success of the organization. While this functional structure is easy to manage and control, it does or has little to do with how a firm can or should serve customers. It essentially was developed to help organizations produce and distribute something they made, not necessarily something the customer wanted. The well documented shift of marketplace control from the manufacturer or marketer to the customer or consumer is already apparent today. Yet, most so-called «marketing organizations» are still structured to develop and deliver products and services based on the assets they manage or control. An example of a typical, non-integrated 21st century «marketing organization» is illustrated in Figure Three below.
As shown, the firm is organized around functional activities, reporting upward to senior management. Customers are off to the side, not being considered very important to the success of the organization. This is the typical 4Ps structure that assumes if the product, pricing, place or distribution and promotion are well managed by the organization, customers and profits will magically appear. Such might have been the case a half-century ago, but, clearly that is not the case today. Customers and consumers have wide choices of products and services, a wide selection of suppliers, the ability to negotiate price and terms and massive amounts of product, service and marketplace knowledge.

Clearly, going forward, marketing and marketing communication is not something a department or a group within the organization do, it is something the entire organization must do on a continuing basis. To do that, internal coordination is therefore needed. Thus, we see the future of IMC not of being just the integration of marketing and communication activities or even the coordination and alignment of brand contacts or touchpoints. Instead, integration in the future must mean integration of the organization with a focus on customers and prospects.

The IMC, The Next Generation approach illustrated in the previous section was developed specifically to fit that need. Figure Four shows how the 5 Step IMC process can be used to bring the organization together as a unified whole, focused on customers, not just on marketing activities, communication programs and certainly not on the products and services the organization develops or wants to vend.

Source: Adapted from Cranfield School of Management.
As shown, the Five Step IMC process can be used to bring the organization together without disrupting the current organizational structure. It is a way to integrate, align and coordinate the entire range of activities of the marketing firm and enable them to serve customers. We believe it is a practical and possible next step in IMC although likely not the final one.

WHERE DOES IMC GO FROM HERE

In the brief article, I have traced the introduction and development of IMC over the past dozen or so years. These are the years Professor Brioschi and I have lived through and the developments we have seen occur in IMC. Clearly, there have been substantial changes and even more clearly, there are additional changes still to come. As I think all of us have learned, IMC is not an activity. It is not something that is done and then the developers move on. IMC is a journey and an exciting and rewarding career for academics and practitioners alike. Professor Brioschi has contributed much to developing this IMC pathway for the future and I am sure his continuing contributions will be just as important. I look forward to joining him on that journey into the future of IMC. I know it will be as rewarding as has been the past.
RIASSUNTO

Il contributo approfondisce lo sviluppo della IMC, delineando le trasformazioni e gli adeguamenti in atto da quando è stato istituito il concetto.

Alla fine degli anni Ottanta, periodo a cui risale la prima formulazione di tale concetto, la Comunicazione Integrata di Marketing ha rappresentato un’autentica rivoluzione, cui ha fatto seguito un’evoluzione pressoché incessante. Ciò non toglie che, di fondo, si tratti sempre dello stesso concetto, ovvero di una risposta all’interrogativo di come le aziende si possano avvalere di tutte le comunicazioni di marketing per instaurare relazioni proficue con clienti e potenziali clienti.

La IMC costituisce un processo che le aziende normalmente sviluppano e attuano nel corso del tempo, non certo qualcosa che si possa attuare in un sol colpo.

Nel corso degli ultimi anni, è divenuto sempre più chiaro che le sfide raccolte dalla IMC non proven-gono soltanto dai responsabili del marketing e della comunicazione, bensì dalle stesse aziende.

Ad ogni buon conto, il processo della IMC può essere utilizzato per compactare l’azienda senza smembrarne l’attuale struttura organizzativa. È un modo per integrare, adeguare e coordinare l’intera gamma di attività dell’azienda, mettendo le stesse al servizio del cliente.

RÉSUMÉ

Le texte approfondit le développement de la IMC, tout en définissant les transformations et les adaptations en cours dès qu’on a institué ce concept.

Vers la fin des années Quatre-vingts, période à laquelle remonte la première formation du dit concept, la Communication Intégrée de Marketing a représenté une véritable révolution suivie d’une évolution quasi incessante. Il n’en reste pas moins qu’il s’agit toujours, dans le fond, du même concept, c’est-à-dire d’une réponse à la question par biais de laquelle on souhaite savoir comment les entreprises peuvent s’autoriser de toutes les communications marketing pour instaurer des relations profitables avec leurs clients ainsi qu’avec leurs clients potentiels.

La IMC constitue un processus que les entreprises développent et mettent en œuvre normalement au fil du temps, loin d’être quelque chose qu’on puisse réaliser d’un seul coup.

Tout au long des dernières années, il est devenu de plus en plus évident que les défis relevés par la IMC ne viennent pas seulement des responsables du marketing et de la communication, mais aussi des entreprises elles-mêmes.

Néanmoins, on peut utiliser le processus de la IMC pour souder l’entreprise sans qu’il faille démemb-rer son actuelle structure organissative. C’est une façon d’intégrer, adapter et coordonner toute la palette d’ac-tivités de l’entreprise, en mettant ces dernières au service du client.