

IMC AS A STRONG MARKETING TOOL FOR TELECOM COMPANIES

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ABSTRACT

This study emphasizes on the customer perception for the integrated marketing communication practices by telecom companies, services which they are using for themselves for their own benefits and requirement. The purposes of integrated marketing communication should be to maximize customer delivered value and it should be in such a way that it completes or fulfill every individual in one or the other way. Integrated marketing communication plays a very important role to develop the ability and capacity of firm to innovate and in successfully delivering competitive response through value added offering to their customers so that they are attracted more in numbers.

For the present study both exploratory and conclusive research methods were used so to get the perfect result to be come out from this research. The conclusive research method here is descriptive in nature which clearly describes the individual customer requirement and how to satisfy their need of the time and the research design is single cross sectional. In this study primary data has been collected through questionnaire method, in which the individual are the general people who has filled the questionnaire. The research was conducted with the help of a questionnaire measuring the perceptions and acceptability of integrated marketing communication of telecom companies according to the customer who will be the user of the future and are the user of today. The chosen research design mainly emphasizes on the discovery of ideas and development of insight into the subjects under study for the overall benefit of the entire customer individual to meet their requirement of the today's need. Hence can be said it could be beneficial for the individual on one side and can be beneficial for the company and can raise the economy of the country and can lead to the development of the nation as a whole.

Key words: - IMC, Customer Perception, Integrated Marketing Communication Practices, Telecom Companies, Services, Digital/Interactive Media etc.

INTRODUCTION

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

The **American Marketing Association (2014)** defines Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) as “A planning process which is designed to assure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant for that person and consistent over time and it will be productive in future.”

The IMC planning process has been compared with composing a musical score. In a piece of music, while every instrument has a specific task, the goal is to have them come together in a way which produces a melodious music. *It's the same in IMC, where advertising might be your violin, social media your piano, public relations your trumpet and so on and hence the result could be effective and desirable.*

○ Why IMC?

Five major shifts or changes in the worlds of advertising, marketing and media have caused an increased interest in (and need for) IMC. These include:

A shift From...	To...
Traditional Advertising	Digital/Interactive Media
Mass Media	Specialized Media
Low Agency Accountability	High Agency Accountability
Traditional Compensation	Performance-Based Compensation
Limited Internet Access	Widespread Internet Availability

Source: - http://imc.wvu.edu/about/what_is_imc

According to **encyclopedia IMC**, The first definition for integrated marketing communication was coined from the American Association of Advertising Agencies(also 4A's) in 1989, defining IMC as "an approach for achieving the objectives and goals of a marketing campaign through a well-coordinated and well-organized use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other (**Business Dictionary Online, 2014**). "The 4A's definition of IMC recognizes the strategic roles of various communication disciplines (advertising, public relations, sales promotions, etc.) to provide clarity, consistency, and increased impact for the result to be delivered when combined within a comprehensive communications plan. Basically, it is the application of consistent brand messaging across both various traditional and non-traditional marketing channels.

OVERVIEW OF TELECOM SECTOR

Globalization, liberalization and privatization are the three most spoken words in today's world. These initiatives paved way for all-round reforms and changes being made, especially in developing economic country, like India. All these countries who are still developing realized that development of effective and efficient means of communications and information technology is important to push them onto the path of development and can make them stand among the developed one. The growth of the telecom sector in India during post-liberalization has been phenomenal which can be visibly seen. This study aims to throw light on the factors that contributed to growth and development in this segment and presents an insight on the present status of the telecom industry in today's scenario as its playing a big role in marketing.



As by the report of **Department of Telecommunication Ministry of Communication and Information Technology Government of India New Delhi (Report 2012-2013)** Telecommunications has evolved as one of the basic amenities of infrastructure like electricity, roads, water etc. and has also emerged as one of the critical components towards the economic growth required for overall socio economic development of the country and for the betterment of the citizen. The Indian telecom sector has registered a phenomenal expressive growth during the last few years and has become second largest telephone network in the world, after China. A series of reform has been measured by the Government, wireless technology and active participation of private sector has played an important role in the exponential growth of telecom sector in the country for the overall development. National **Telecom Policy-2012 (NTP-2012)** was announced during the current financial year with the primary objective of maximizing public good by making

telecommunication and broadband services available, affordable, reliable and secure across the entire country by which these citizens are mostly benefitted.

✓ **Present Status:-**

In the last decade, the Indian telecom sector in general and mobile telephony in particular has witnessed phenomenal growth as compared to previous decades and people are also benefitted out of these. As on May 2014, out of the 938 million connections in the country, 910 million are wireless. The popularity and proper use of the cell phone and wireless communication devices has resulted in a proliferation of cell towers across the whole country to prevent any disruption to communication caused to general people.



Source: -

ec.europa.eu

Table 1.1:- Status of INDIAN TELECOM INDUSTRY

Size of the Industry	562 million Subscribers, 525.1 million wireless connections per annum
Geographical distribution	Gurgaon, Noida, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Pune, Chennai, New Delhi, Mumbai and other cities.
Output per annum	Rs 136,833 crore per annum & Increasing 20% for every month
Percentage In GDP	6% to Share

Source: - <http://www.indianmirror.com>



source:-

<http://www.indianmirror.com>

According to the Current report of **Indian Mirror 2014** the Indian Telecom Industry is the fastest growing and 5th largest industry in the world with 110.01 million connections. The subscriber base has grown by 40% in 2005 and has reached the expectations of 250 million in 2007. Over the years, it was found out that two out of every three new telephone connections are wireless. Consequently, in today's time wireless now accounts for 54.6% of the total telephone subscriber base, as compared to only 40% in 2003. Wireless subscriber has grown to 2.5 million new subscribers every month from 2007, as customer feel it to be easy to use and more comfortable with.

The wireless subscriber base skyrocketed from 33.69 million in 2004 to 62.57 million in 2005 and even can be seen. The wireless technologies currently which are used in the Indian Telecom Industry is Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) and Code Division Multiple Access (CDMA). The industry presently has 9 GSM and 5 CDMA operators providing mobile services in 19 telecommunication circles and 4 metro cities, covering more than 2000 towns across the country and the connectivity numbers are still growing for Indian Telecom Industry day by day. Telecom Industry in India is regulated by the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)**. It has been able to earn a good reputation for its transparency and competence by their own efforts and they will prove this in sometime much better than this. Telecom Industry community has three types of players (**Blog- Indian Mirror, 2014**).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Venkatram (2012) "The Telecommunications industry today is a key enabler of productivity across economies and societies of the world. The Telecom industry is not only a significant contributor towards the economic activities of countries, but also towards the growth of other industries along with the overall growth of individual. In recent times, developing nations have witnessed a significant transformation within this sector due to the impact it has left on their economies. The booming and

emerging economies of China and India have been impacted the most by the rapid growth of the Telecom industry in the past decade comparatively than the past and enormous changes have been seen”.

According to **Pritish and Saxena (2015)**“The Telecommunications Industry of India is one of the vast and leading industries among the other companies of the world which helps in connecting different parts of the people of the country through various modes like telephone, radio, television, satellite and internet and made their communication an easy one. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India governs this industry by providing a regulatory framework and favorable environment for its efficient operation and even sees to it that it is beneficial for every individual. The Indian telecom industry stands as the second-largest in the world due to its rapid advancement and has made each person life more simpler and is in cut-throat competition with the telecom industries of the other developed countries and in coming time will be above all in the world. The telecommunication services offered by this industry are easily accessible at affordable prices to the customers of urban and rural areas of India and hence people are using more and more to fulfill their requirement. India’s telecom network encompasses a highly developed and unique technology in the world so far it is concern”.

Schultz (1993) defined IMC as a concept of marketing communication planning that combine and evaluate strategic role of different communication discipline to get the clarity, consistency and greater impact for individual and try to find out that it should be in everyone’s reach.

According to **Percy et al.(2001)** planning and execution of all marketing communications are required in a same way to meet the objective of telecommunication for the individual keeping in mind every individual of rural or urban. Process of producing and applying the different communication programs for all individual development and the probability to have its impact in future in the coming time, overall IMC process starts with the customer and aims to fulfill their requirements and work to determine and define the methods and forms to develop the influential communications programs for every individual either belonging from rural or urban (**Schultz, 1993**).

Each strategy of telecommunication has its own importance which can be accessed from the results and has strong impact of such strategy which are made for people. IMC is supposed to be as a key competitive advantages for many organizations (**Kitchen and Schultz, 2001; Weilbacher, 2001; Smith, 2002**) because sales and profit can be increased while saving the time, money and stress by applying IMC and hence so much of time of individual is saved and it’s a saying that time is money we can save money by saving time(**Smith, 2002**).

Naeem, Bilal and Naz (2013) “Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is being practiced worldwide at very large scale as it is very much in demand. This paper is reviewed to enhance the understanding of what is IMC, its impact and the difference between IMC and traditional marketing communication and which could prove out to be more beneficial. Integrated marketing communication is consumer oriented approach rather than organizational oriented which focuses on organizational needs, it is more over customer oriented for the welfare of customers. IMC is performed in a manner of synergy rather than in isolation, beneficial for all. IMC is associated with some positive results like brand awareness, customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, positive brand image, unique brand association, greater profitability, increased sales and cost savings and hence more number of customer are avail its benefit. IMC has major impact on organizational performance and brand equity and for the individual. There are some barriers for successful implementation of IMC program which need to be identified and overthrown out”.

According to **Valeecha & Reza (2013)** “Advancement in technology in recent years has transformed the purpose of communication which was the connection between the two and encouraged the emergence of new communication channels based on internet technology but the concept of communication is same although the method requirement is new due to the advancement of the era, that have fashioned bold new approaches in the management of the marketing mix to make the new concept more popularize among all and make it spread to every corner of the world. A “new” phenomenon i.e. “social media” has come to the front line of media that allow companies to connect with customers on a level never before thought possible which is made possible now . The purpose of this study is to explore and analyze how social media is helping Telecom brands in Pakistan bolster communication and how consumers perceive or respond to it and how much they are responding after coming to know about it , whether the response by them is positive or negative. Consequently, the focus is on identifying those factors which are critical for its success. The results confirm that, good and relevant content should be at the heart of any social media strategy and to successfully exploit its potential or capacity; companies need hard to design experiences which deliver tangible value in return for customers' time, attention, endorsement and data”.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study emphasizes completely on the customer perception and the way of look out for the integrated marketing communication practices by telecom companies the services which they are using for themselves. The purposes of integrated marketing communication should be to maximize customer delivered value and it should be in such a way to satisfy the customer’s need. Integrated marketing communication plays a very important role in the ability and capacity of the firm to innovate and in successfully delivering competitive

response through value added offering for their customers, hence can satisfy the customers and can attract more number of customers by doing so.

For the present study both exploratory and conclusive research methods were used for achieving proper result. The conclusive research method here is descriptive in nature and the research design is single cross sectional. In this study primary data has been collected through questionnaire method. The research was conducted with the help of a questionnaire, measuring the perceptions and acceptability of integrated marketing communication of telecom companies. The chosen research design mainly emphasize on the discovery of ideas and development of insight into the subjects under study during research.

SAMPLING PROCEDURE

Name of the telecom companies which was used for the data collection about the knowledge of integrated marketing communication are given below.

Table 2: Names of telecom companies Chosen for the Study Purpose

S. No	Name of the Private Telecom companies
1	Airtel
2	Vodafone
3	Reliance
4	BSNL

Source: Author's Compilation

For collecting data from respondents' convenience sampling procedure was followed.

OBJECTIVES

- To study the impact of the perception of various demographic factors about Integrated Marketing Communication and whether they are satisfied with the services given to them and what all are required to fulfill their satisfaction need.

RELIABILITY FOR DATA COLLECTED

Reliability coefficient test was done by using Cronbach's alpha (α) analysis. In order to measure the reliability for a set of two or more constructs, Cronbach's alpha is a commonly used method where alpha coefficient values are ranged between 0 and 1 with higher values indicating higher reliability among the indicators.

Table 4: Reliability Statistics for the responses of customer of Telecom Industries

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.874	20

Source: Author's Compilation

From the above **Table 4** it could be interpreted that Cronbach value for the responses of the 100 customer respondents study was found to be 0.921, which is an excellent demonstration of the quality of data and confirms approx 87.4% reliability of the collected data.

Cronbach's α (alpha) is an important psychometric instrument to measure the reliability of the data. The reliability coefficient indicates that the scale for measuring trust and commitment is reliable. So, various statistical tools can be applied and tested.

ANALYSIS OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES AND IMC RELATED VARIABLES

This part of analysis gives the level of agreement of respondents with integrated marketing communication.

H₀₁ :- There is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female towards the IMC as a strong marketing tool for telecom companies.

H₁₁ :- There is significant difference between the opinion of male and female towards the IMC as a strong marketing tool for telecom companies.

Table 5

Report			
Gender	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Male	2.35	66	1.23
Female	3.24	34	0.725
Total	5.59	100	1.955

Table 5 shows that mean value for male is 2.35 and for female is 3.24 among 66 respondents as male and 34 as female out of total 100 respondents. The std. deviation for male is 1.23 and for female is 0.725.

Table 6:- ANOVA Table

ANOVA Table ^a							
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Cagg * Gender	Between Groups	(Combined)	2.542	1	2.542	2.6702	0.082
	Within Groups		182.56	98	0.952		
	Total		185.102	99			
a. With fewer than three groups, linearity measures for Cagg * Gender cannot be computed.							

In the **Table 6** the variation (Sum of Squares), the degrees of freedom (df), and the variance (Mean Square) are given for the within and between the groups, as well as the F value (*F*) and the significance of the F (*Sig.*). *Sig.* indicates whether its null hypothesis or not– the population means are all equal or not– has to be rejected or not. As you can see, there is a significant difference between the two Mean Squares (2.542 and 0.952), resulting in a non significant difference ($F = 2.6702$; $Sig. = 0.082$). The *Sig.* value is higher than the *Sig.* level of 0.05. This means that **H₀₁ must be accepted** which states that there is no significant difference between the opinion of male and female towards the IMC as a strong marketing tool for telecom companies. Means that the table is signifying acceptance of IMC as a useful marketing tool.

H₀₂:- There is no significant difference between opinions of various age groups of respondents towards the IMC as a strong marketing tool for telecom companies.

H₁₂:- There is significant difference between opinion of various age group of respondents towards the IMC as a strong marketing tool for telecom companies.

Table 7:- Case Processing Summary

Case Processing Summary						
	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Age * agg	100	100.0%	0	0.0%	100	100.0%

Table 7 shows the case processing summary of various age groups and IMC related variables. This shows that the total number of observation was 100.

Table 8:- Cross tabulation

Age * agg Cross tabulation							
Count							
		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Age	15-25	6	9	23	10	3	51
	26-40	2	12	18	7	2	41
	41-55	0	0	4	2	2	8
Total		8	21	45	19	7	100

Above **Table 8** illustrates that out of 100 respondents 8 respondents are those who strongly agreed and in this 6 fall under the age group of 15-25 and 2 fall under age group of 26-40, while 21 respondents agreed in which 9 were of age group between 15-25 and 12 were of age group between 26-40, while 45 respondents were neutral for this ,do not showed any deviation in which 23 fall under age group between 15-25, 18 respondents fall under age group between 26-40 and 4 fall under the age group between 41-55, while 19 respondents were disagreed in which 10 were from the age group between 15-25, 7 were from age group between 26-40 and 2 were from age group between 41-55, while 7 respondents were strongly disagree for this in which 3 were from the age group between 15-25, 2 were from age group between 26-40 and 2 were from age group between 41-55 and hence can be concluded that the major portion of the customers respondents are neutral between the relationship of IMC and age. Maximum respondents are between 15-25 age groups out of 100 respondents.

Table 9:- Chi-Square Tests

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	23.822 ^a	10	0
Likelihood Ratio	24.526	10	0
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.021	1	0
N of Valid Cases	100		

From the above **Table 9** it could be interpreted that Asymp. Sig. (2- Sided) column values are less than .05 which shows that the relationship between the different age groups and IMC related variables average score of customers respondents is statistically significant. So it could be understood that there is significant difference between age and IMC as a strong tool of marketing.

Table 10:- Symmetric Measures

Symmetric Measures					
		Value	Asymp. Std. Error ^a	Approx. T ^b	Approx. Sig.
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	0.132	0.068	3.214	.002 ^c
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	0.125	0.072	2.135	.019 ^c
N of Valid Cases		200			
a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.					
b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.					
c. Based on normal approximation.					

From the above **Table 10** it could be interpreted that the value of Approx Sig. columns shows the relationship between the average score of customer's response and IMC variables are **positively significant**. Observation was performed by Pearson's and Ordinal by Ordinal analysis which was performed by Spearman Correlation at different intervals. Correlation was found **positively significant** by observed values, like for Pearson's it was (0.068) and for Spearman it was (0.072). Their Approx Sig. value for Pearson's R was 0.002 and for Spearman Correlation was found 0.019.

CONCLUSION

From the research and statistical analysis done on the data collected through questionnaire we can easily conclude that **there are significant differences between the gender and IMC practices adopted by the selected telecom companies and there is significant difference between various age groups of respondents and IMC practices adopted by the selected telecom companies.**

Thus the awareness about the IMC term and related practices among the respondents is not same as for the respondents of different categories like gender wise as male and female wise. Means these demographic variables or gender discrimination significantly affect the IMC related practices by telecom companies and it's really an important thought. It also Implies that maximum respondents are satisfied that IMC is leaving good impact on marketing and advertising and hence general people are not facing so much of problem regarding telecom companies.

SUGGESTIONS FOR CUSTOMERS USING TELECOM SERVICES

Following issues should be administered or taken care by the customers for successful implementation of Integrated Marketing communication development of methods implementation in telecom activities for better results.

1. Customer must be curious to make himself literate to avail the new trends of telecom services.
2. Customer should ask for help as and whenever they feel or they face any type problem in any kind of telecom activities or services.
3. Customer should follow the guidelines which are supervised for them to avail any telecom companies' service, the services which they are using or any other services if required feel free to suggest.
4. Positive participation in development of IMC related practices in telecom companies and feel free to give feedback for further positive changes if required.

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