

UČINCI SUDJELOVANJA VRHOVNOG MENADŽMENTA U INTEGRIRANOJ MARKETINŠKOJ KOMUNIKACIJI

EFFECTS OF TOP MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT IN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

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SAŽETAK

U literaturi nema mnogo empirijskih dokaza o tome kako sudjelovanje vrhovnog menadžmenta u marketinškoj komunikaciji utječe na stupanj integrirane marketinške komunikacije - IMC. Istovremeno, neki autori smatraju kako bi taj odnos trebalo više istražiti.

U ovom radu predstavljamo jedan od mogućih pristupa istraživanju toga odnosa. Rezultati našega istraživanja pokazuju kako se veće sudjelovanje vrhovnog menadžmenta u marketinškoj komunikaciji može povezati s višim stupnjem IMC-a.

ABSTRACT

There is scarce empirical evidence in the academic literature of how top management involvement influences the degree of integrated marketing communications. At the same time, some authors believe that this relationship should be explored more extensively.

In this paper we present one possible approach to investigating the relationship between top management involvement and the degree of integrated marketing communications. Our research established that a greater involvement of top management in

Istraživanje odnosa menadžmenta i IMC-a u samome je začetku. Savjetujemo da se ovo istraživanje koristi kao podloga za buduća istraživanja o odnosu sudjelovanja vrhovnog menadžmenta u marketinškoj komunikaciji i stupnja IMC-a

marketing communications could be associated with a higher degree of IMC.

Investigating the relationship between management and IMC is indeed at a very early stage. We suggest that this study has provided a basis for future research on the relationship between top management involvement in marketing communications and the degree of IMC.

1. INTRODUCTION

Several researchers in the area of integrated marketing communications (hereinafter: IMC) have highlighted that existing models do not adequately capture the relationship between managerial aspects and the degree of IMC. According to Swain,¹ an important issue in implementing IMC is the control of IMC. McArthur and Griffin² found that directing marketing communication activities was clearly an internal, upper management affair. In line with Gould,³ there is a need to develop an instrument which would connect/combine managerial aspects with measuring the degree of integrated marketing communications.

In this paper we present a possible answer to this suggestion and go on to investigate the relationship between top management involvement in marketing communications and the degree of IMC in a company. The aim of the research was to determine to what extent the involvement of top management in marketing communications of a company influences the degree of IMC.

2. CONCEPTS OF TOP MANAGEMENT INVOLVEMENT AND DEGREE OF IMC

Management involvement in marketing communications has been investigated from different aspects. Kliatchko⁴ argues that the involvement of top management is a necessity for integrated marketing communications. Duncan and Everett,⁵ McArthur and Griffin⁶ and Low⁷ searched for proof of IMC through the role of the manager in coordinating marketing communications.

There have been several attempts to capture the degree of IMC. Phelps and Johnson, Smith et al., Duncan and Moriarty, Pickton and Hartley, and Low presented different instruments for measuring the degree of IMC. Firstly, Phelps and Johnson⁸ presented three dimen-

sions of IMC: 1. one-voice, 2. integrated communication and 3. coordination of marketing communication actions. Smith et al⁹ presented an instrument with seven dimensions: 1. vertical objectives integration, 2. horizontal/functional integration, 3. marketing mix integration, 4. communication mix integration, 5. creative design integration, 6. internal/external integration and 7. financial integration. A year later Duncan and Moriarty¹⁰ presented their five-dimensional model for measuring the degree of IMC: 1. interactivity, 2. strategic consistency, 3. organisational infrastructure, 4. mission marketing and 5. planning and evaluation. After that Pickton and Hartley¹¹ presented an instrument with nine dimensions of integration: 1. promotional mix integration, 2. promotional mix with marketing mix integration, 3. creative integration, 4. intra-organisation integration, 5. inter-organisation integration, 6. information and database systems, 7. integration of communications targeted towards internal and external audiences, 8. integration of corporate and 'unitised' communications and 9. geographical integration. And last but not least, Low¹² presented his view on measuring the degree of IMC through three dimensions: centralisation of planning, strategic consistency and message consistency.

The aim of this paper is to investigate:

- degree of top management involvement in each step of the IMC planning process;
- differences in top management involvement between manufacturing and service companies as well as between medium-sized and large companies;
- if there are differences in achieved the degree of IMC between manufacturing and service companies; and finally
- effect of top management involvement in decisions about marketing communications on the degree of IMC.

3. HYPOTHESIS

McArthur and Griffin,¹³ Schultz,¹⁴ Kitchen and Schultz,¹⁵ Low¹⁶ and Swain¹⁷ found out that the control of inte-

grated marketing communications can lead to a higher degree of IMC in a company. They concluded that organisations should take a leading role in strategic decisions, and the control of IMC in order to successfully integrate marketing communications. We formulated the following hypothesis:

H1: Top management involvement in marketing communication decisions is positively related to the degree of IMC in a company.

H2: Top management involvement is strongly related to the involvement in decisions about the budget for marketing communications.

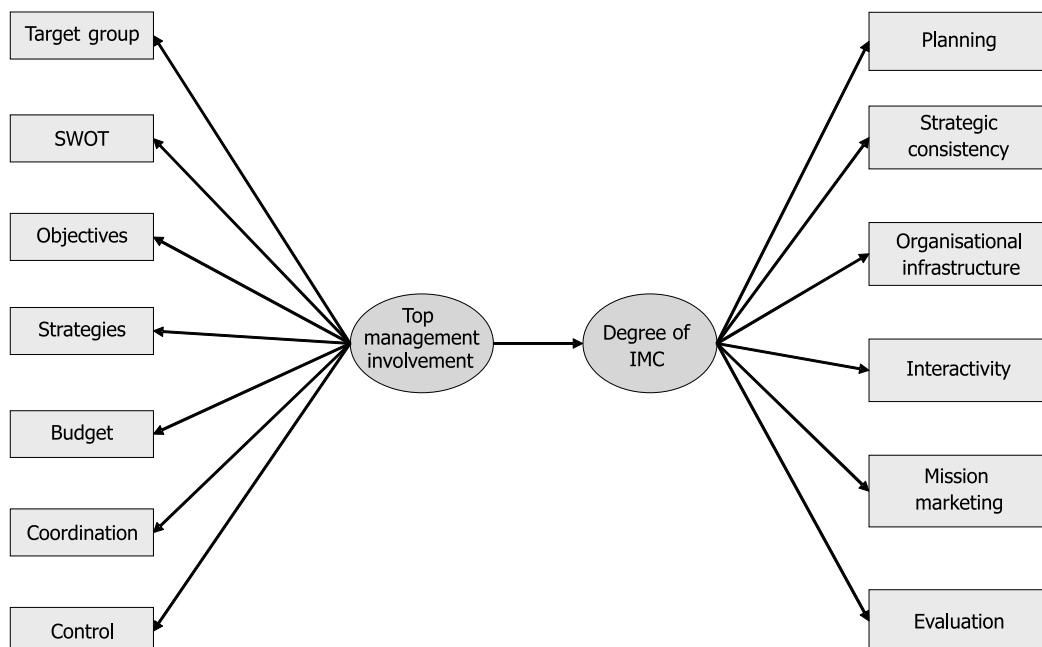
H3: In decisions about marketing communications, top management is involved in the control of IMC the most.

Low¹⁸ and Reid¹⁹ investigated if there are differences between different types of companies. Low focused

on the differences between service and manufacturing companies and found out that the degree of IMC is likely to be higher in service companies. He also found out that there is a negative correlation between the size of the company and the degree of IMC. This corresponds to his view on IMC, that a centralisation of marketing communications coordination is the crucial point in achieving a higher degree of IMC.

Reid's²⁰ results showed just the opposite. He found a positive correlation between large manufacturing companies and the degree of IMC while at the same time finding a negative correlation between small service companies and the degree of IMC. He argues that this is a result of larger companies moving a step forward in the planning of marketing communications as such companies have more mechanisms for data gathering and converting them into useful data for marketing communication planning. Based on that, further hypotheses were designed:

Figure 1: Research model



Source: Research

H4: There are differences between top management involvement in service vs. manufacturing companies.

H5: There are differences between top management involvement in medium-sized vs. large companies.

H6: Degree of IMC is higher in services companies than in manufacturing ones.

H7: Degree of IMC is higher in medium-sized than in large companies.

For that reason we had to:

- define the operationalisations of the variables,
- measure and collect data needed for research,
- conduct the analysis.

The research model is presented in Figure 1.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In the operationalisation of the variables we followed the steps of the IMC planning process²¹ as defined by Duncan:²²

1. Identify target audiences
2. Analyse SWOTs
3. Determine marketing communication objectives
4. Develop strategies and tactics
5. Determine the budget
6. Evaluate effectiveness (control of marketing communications)

In the operationalisation of the top management involvement we were asking respondents to define to what extent (1 – not at all; 7 – to a great extent) their top management is involved in the decisions regarding a specific step.

The instrument for measuring the degree of IMC was developed based on Duncan and Moriarty,²³ who presented 5 dimensions of IMC: interactivity, strategic consistency, organisational infrastructure, mission

marketing and planning and evaluation. Based on the Kliatchko²⁴ model, we divided these dimensions into two groups: planning and evaluation. The dimensions were upgraded with some statements on the instruments for measuring the degree of IMC from different authors.²⁵ In the final questionnaire 35 items were used to capture IMC, measured on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Preliminary testing of the questionnaire was conducted on a smaller representative sample and various items rephrased to improve managers' understanding of the concepts. Special attention was paid to the validity of the questionnaire. To test the hypotheses, we used the structural equation modelling (SEM) with LISREL 8.72.

5. RESEARCH RESULTS

Data were obtained through a self-administered questionnaire, sent to the marketing managers of medium-sized and large companies in Slovenia in March 2007. Questionnaires were sent out to 1700 companies, with 175 responses obtained in due time.

Results of descriptive analysis of the top management involvement (Table 1) showed that, in general, top management was most involved in decisions about the marketing communication budget, followed by the involvement in marketing communication strategies and decisions about target groups. Results showed that it is least involved in the coordination of marketing communication activities. We can argue that the coordination is the least strategic activity in the IMC planning process and that, therefore, top management is more involved in other activities of the IMC planning. A low result for the top management involvement in the control of IMC came as the biggest surprise to us. The results of descriptive analysis showed that managers are not involved in the control of marketing communications so much as they are in other activities as part of the IMC planning. Based on these findings we had to reject the hypothesis that top managers are involved in the control of IMC the most (*H3*).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for involvement of top manager variables

Variables	N	Average	St. Deviation
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about the budget for marketing communications?	175	6.42	1.00
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about the strategies of marketing communications?	175	5.81	1.29
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about target groups?	175	5.71	1.46
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about marketing communication objectives?	175	5.66	1.39
To what extent is top management acquainted with SWOT analysis?	173	5.45	1.73
To what extent is top management involved in the control of marketing communications?	175	5.02	1.75
To what extent is top management involved in the coordination of marketing communication activities?	175	4.70	1.85

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; n=175

Measure: 1 – not at all; 7 – to a great extent

Furthermore, we investigated if there were differences in top management involvement, on the one hand, between medium-sized and large companies and between service and manufacturing companies on the other hand. In analysing the differences between groups of companies, the independent samples T-test was employed. The analysis shows that there are differences between medium-sized and large companies, as well as between service and manufacturing companies. First, we present results of the analysis of differences between service and manufacturing companies.

The independent samples T-test (Table 2) showed significant differences in the top management involvement in the decisions about marketing communication objectives and in the top management acquaintance with SWOT analysis. In both cases it was evident that the top management of manufacturing companies was more involved in these activities than was the top management in service companies. Based on these results we can **accept** the hypothesis **H4**, and confirm that there are differences between the top management involvements in service vs. manufacturing companies.

Table 2: Independent samples T-test for service and manufacturing companies

Variable	Company type	N	Average	St. Deviation
To what extent is top management acquainted with SWOT analysis?***	Service	96	5.16	1.80
	Manufacturing	77	5.76	1.60
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about marketing communication objectives?***	Service	96	5.44	1.51
	Manufacturing	79	5.91	1.21

Legend: *** t-test for equity of means is significant below 0.05 (2-tailed);

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; n=175

In analysing the differences between medium-sized and large companies (Table 3), we discovered that they differ in 7 out of 11 variables. In all 7 cases the average in medium-sized companies is bigger than in large companies. The results showed that top management in medium-sized companies is more involved than top management in large companies in almost all steps of the zero-based marketing communication planning.

Medium-sized companies employ top management more in the decisions about target groups, objectives, strategies and budget for marketing communications. Based on these results we can *accept* hypothesis *H5*, and confirm that there are differences between the top management involvement in medium-sized compared to large companies.

Table 3: Independent samples T-test for medium-sized and large companies

Variable	Company size	N	Average	St. deviation
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about target groups? ***	Medium	81	6.20	1.14
	Large	94	5.29	1.58
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about marketing communication objectives?***	Medium	81	5.99	1.32
	Large	94	5.37	1.40
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about strategies of marketing communications? ***	Medium	81	6.09	1.20
	Large	94	5.55	1.32
To what extent is top management involved in decisions about the budget for marketing communications? ***	Medium	81	5.09	1.84
	Large	94	4.35	1.80

Legend: *** t-test for equity of means is significant below 0.01 (2-tailed);

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; n=175

In this part we investigated the involvement of top managers in the steps of IMC planning processes in different types of companies. Furthermore, we investigated if there are any differences concerning the degree of IMC in those companies. We wanted to test the hypothesis that the degree of IMC is higher in service companies and that the degree of IMC is negatively correlated to company size. Both hypotheses were tested by using the independent samples T-test.

Firstly, we calculated the degree of IMC representing the average of all 22 variables extracted with factor analysis (Table 6). When testing, we could not find a significant difference between the degree of IMC in service companies when compared to manufacturing companies (Table 4), or between medium-sized and large companies (Table 5). Based on these results we must reject hypotheses *H6* and *H7*.

Table 4: Independent samples T-test for service and manufacturing companies

Variable	Company type	N	Average	St. deviation
Degree of IMC	Service	96	4.99	1.07
	Manufacturing	79	4.76	1.06

t-test for equity of means is 0.15 (2-tailed)

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; n=175

Table 5: Independent samples T-test for medium-sized and large companies

Variable	Company size	N	Average	St. deviation
Degree of IMC	Medium	81	4.77	1.07
	Large	94	4.94	1.09

t-test for equity of means is 0.31 (2-tailed)

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; n=175

6. DEGREE OF IMC

Then we investigated the degree of IMC. As mentioned before, we included 35 variables to capture the degree of IMC in a company. By means of exploratory factor analysis we wanted to extract components/dimensions of IMC.

Five dimensions with 22 variables of IMC were extracted. The organisational infrastructure and strategic consistency were united into a new variable called strategic organisation. Similarly, Reid²⁶ came up with a conclusion that these two variables present one dimension. Variables with factor loadings above 0.5 were kept in the final factor analysis. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Exploratory factor analysis for measured variables of the degree of IMC with VARIMAX rotation

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
When planning marketing communication action, we set a measurable objective.	0.86				
When planning advertising, we set a measurable objective.	0.80				
When planning public relations, we set a measurable objective.	0.74				
When planning sales promotion, we set a measurable objective.	0.73				
When planning direct marketing, we set a measurable objective.	0.68				
The people managing our communication programmes demonstrate a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of all major marketing communication tools.		0.75			
At the beginning of a promotional campaign, the company chooses a common strategy which utilises all of our marketing communication activities.		0.73			
Employees and all your major communication agencies (e.g. advertising agency) taking part in the planning and implementation of marketing communication strategies, have regular contacts with each other regarding your brand.		0.72			
When planning the marketing mix for your brand, a specialist for marketing communications is involved.		0.71			
We have a long-term strategy for marketing communication.		0.61			
We evaluate the outcome of the objectives set for advertising.			0.79		
We evaluate the outcome of the objectives set for public relations.			0.76		
We evaluate the outcome of the objectives set for marketing communication action.			0.72		
We regularly check message consistency with other elements of the marketing mix.			0.66		
We evaluate the outcome of the objectives set for direct marketing.			0.58		
Marketing communication messages are consistent with the company mission.				0.85	
We communicate mission of the company to our customers.				0.84	
Marketing communication messages are consistent with the company values.				0.78	
We keep a record of the information gained through dialogue with our customers.					0.90
When planning marketing communications, we take into account information gained through dialogue with our customers.					0.84
We are aware of all intrinsic brand-contact points for our product.					0.58

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; n=175

In order to capture the degree of IMC, we used a rather large number of variables. For the purpose of further analysis we calculated the average of variables that were extracted with factor analysis for each dimension of IMC. In evaluating the measurement of the model, we determined the validity and reliability of the model. Firstly, we focused on the validity of indicators. All indicator loadings were significant (at $p < 0.01$ or better). Secondly, we examined the reliability of the indicators by looking at the squared multiple correlations (R^2), composite (construct) reliability and average variance extracted of the indicators. Multiple squared correlations (Table 7) for the indicators of the top management involvement showed that the indicator for the top management involvement in decisions about objectives was highly reliable, the indicators showing the top management involvement in decisions about target groups, SWOT analysis and the control of marketing communications were semi-reliable, with the indicators of the top management involvement in the strategies and coordination of marketing communication being the least reliable. The indicators for the degree of IMC were all acceptable, with the exception of the indicator for the evaluation of IMC; the most reliable was the indicator for planning and the least reliable that for the evaluation of IMC.

Table 7: Estimates in the measurement model for independent and dependent variables (LISREL estimates, method of maximum likelihood)

$X_1 = 1.000 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.576$
$X_2 = 0.840 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.406$
$X_3 = 1.222 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.861$
$X_4 = 1.138 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.253$
$X_5 = 0.916 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.484$
$X_6 = 0.553 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.176$
$X_7 = 0.933 * \xi_1, R^2 = 0.501$
$Y_1 = 1.000 * \eta_1, R^2 = 0.697$
$Y_2 = 0.914 * \eta_1, R^2 = 0.582$
$Y_3 = 0.972 * \eta_1, R^2 = 0.659$
$Y_4 = 0.789 * \eta_1, R^2 = 0.434$
$Y_5 = 0.366 * \eta_1, R^2 = 0.0921$

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; $n=175$

In addition to assessing the reliability of individual indicators, we calculated a construct reliability and average variance extracted for both latent variables. Top management involvement demonstrated acceptable reliability in both cases. When testing reliability

Table 8: Construct reliability and average variance extracted

Construct	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
Top management involvement	0.851	0.537
Degree of IMC	0.816	0.491

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; $n=175$

Table 9: Construct reliability and average variance extracted for the degree of IMC

Construct	Construct reliability	Average variance extracted
Degree of IMC	0.886	0.591

Source: Marketing communication research, 2007; $n=175$

for the degree of IMC, we found the average variance extracted to be a bit lower than desirable²⁷ (Table 8). In the next step we eliminated the evaluation as an indicator of the degree of IMC, and the construct reliability

and average variance extracted indicated good reliability of the latent variable the degree of IMC (Table 9).

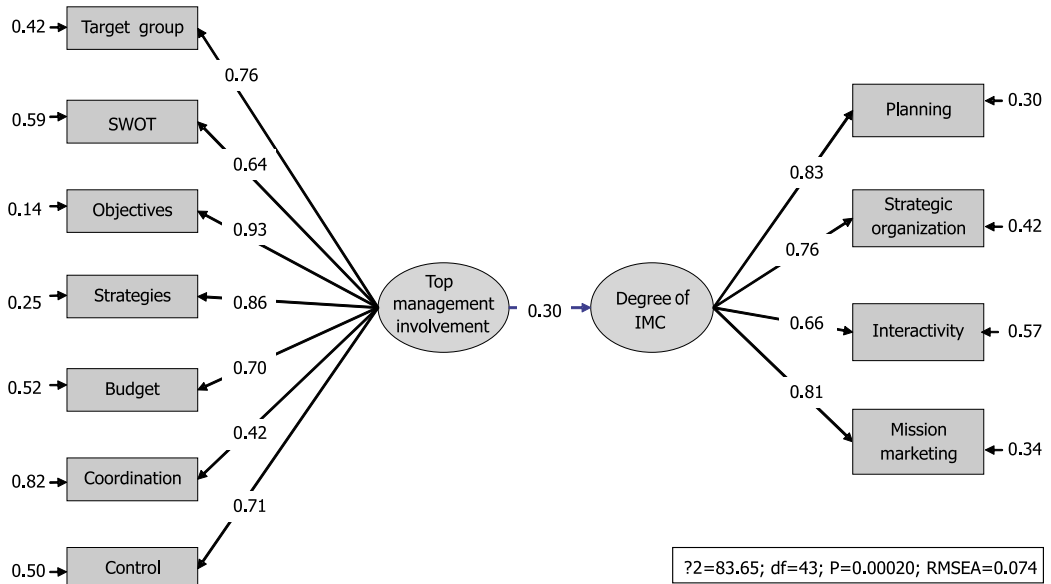
Below we present a final model for testing the hypothesis (Figure 2). Based on results of the model ($\chi^2=83.65$;

df=43; P=0.00020; RMSEA=0.074; GFI=0.920; CFI=0.950; NNFI=0.936), we could conclude that the model is acceptable.

Results of the model showed that we can **accept hypothesis H1**, that the top management involvement in marketing communication of a company is positively correlated to its degree of IMC. Although the top

management involvement is related most strongly to the involvement of top management in the decisions about objectives ($\lambda=0.93$), strategies ($\lambda=0.86$) and target groups ($\lambda=0.76$), we can also **confirm** that the top management involvement is strongly ($\lambda=0.71$) related to the involvement in decisions about the budget for marketing communications (H2).

Figure 2: Structural model "top management involvement and IMC" with a standardised solution



Source: Research

Table 10: Hypotheses and conclusions

No.	Hypothesis	Conclusion
H1	Top management involvement in marketing communication decisions is positively related to the degree of IMC in a company.	accept
H2	Top management involvement is strongly related to the involvement in decisions about the budget for marketing communications	accept
H3	In decisions about marketing communications, top management is most involved in the decisions about IMC budget and in the control of IMC.	reject
H4	There are differences between the top management involvements in service vs. manufacturing companies.	accept
H5	There are differences between the top management involvements in medium-sized vs. large companies.	accept
H6	Degree of IMC is higher in service companies than in manufacturing ones.	reject
H7	Degree of IMC is higher in medium-sized than in large companies.	reject

Finally, we present the hypotheses tested in this research and conclusions based on the results of the research (Table 10).

7. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to investigate to what extent the involvement of top management affects the degree of IMC in companies, while also investigating possible differences between the top management involvement in service and manufacturing companies as well as those between medium-sized and large companies and, finally, to investigate the degree of IMC in those two groups of companies.

Although some authors argue that the involvement of top managers in control of marketing communications is crucial for IMC, our research showed differently. Top management should be especially attentive to decisions about the objectives and strategies of marketing communications, since they have been proven to have a significant weight in the overall top management involvement.

Furthermore, based on the results, we can conclude that a stronger involvement of top management in marketing communications could be associated with a higher degree of IMC. The correlation is low ($\beta = 0.3$), however statistically significant. We also found out that the top management of medium-sized companies is more involved in decisions about the IMC process than in large companies. At the same time, this did not result in a higher degree of IMC in medium-sized compared to large companies. By all means this provides support to encourage the top management of all companies to take a more active role in all steps of the IMC planning process.

Some authors suggested that there are differences in the degree of IMC when comparing service and manufacturing companies (Reid²⁸, Low²⁹), with other

research showing quite contrary results (e.g. Grove³⁰). In our research we could not establish statistically significant differences between these two groups of companies. At the same time, we could not establish a significant difference between medium-sized and large companies.

Last but not least, one of the most important conclusions of the research presented here is a confirmation of the four dimensions of the degree of IMC: planning, interactivity, mission marketing and strategic organisation. In the conceptualisation phase, we were building our research model on the five dimensions of IMC defined by Duncan and Moriarty³¹: interactivity, organisational infrastructure, strategic consistency, mission marketing, planning and evaluation. Based on the Kliatchko³² model, we subsequently divided planning and evaluation into two separate dimensions: planning of IMC and evaluation of IMC. Based on the results of factor analysis, we had to, firstly, combine strategic consistency and organisational infrastructure into one variable: strategic organisation. Secondly, we found out through validity and reliability tests that the evaluation is a poor indicator and weakens the degree of IMC construct. Following from this, we could confirm the result from research obtained by Reid³³ with similar conclusions regarding the dimensions of IMC.

Investigating the relationship between management and IMC is indeed at the very beginning. We suggest that this study has provided the basis for future research on the relationship between the top management involvement in marketing communications and the degree of IMC. With this research, we showed that the top management involvement is an important antecedent to the degree of IMC and this relationship should be researched more closely. We would propose to upgrade the research with the extension of the top management involvement (centralisation of management). Investigating the relationship in this way could provide further insight into the relationship between management and the degree of IMC.

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Notes

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- ¹⁶ Low, S.: op. cit., pg. 27-39.
- ¹⁷ Swain, W.N.: op. cit., pg. 46-65.
- ¹⁸ Low, S.: op. cit., pg. 27-39.
- ¹⁹ Reid, M.: Performance auditing of integrated marketing communication (IMC) actions and outcomes, **Journal of Advertising**, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2005, pg. 41-54.
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ He defines this process as zero-based planning. The "zero" means that planning starts with no preconceived notions about what marketing communication functions or media are needed (Duncan, T.: **Principles of Advertising & IMC**, 2nd ed, McGraw-Hill, 2005, pg. 172).
- ²² Ibid.
- ²³ Duncan, T., Moriarty, S.: op. cit., pg. 335.
- ²⁴ Kliatchko, J.: op. cit., pg. 7-34.
- ²⁵ Phelps, J.E., Johnson E.: op. cit., pg. 159-172.; Smith, P., Berry, C., Pulford, A.: op. cit., pg. 125.; Pickton, D., Hartley, B.: op. cit., pg. 447-465.; Low, S.: op. cit., pg. 27-39.
- ²⁶ Reid, M.: op. cit., pg. 41-54.
- ²⁷ Values less than 0.5 indicate that measurement error accounts for a greater amount of variance in the indicators than does the underlying latent variable (and hence doubts can be raised regarding the soundness of the indicators and/or latent variable itself) (Diamantopoulos, A., Siguaw, J.A.: **Introducing Lisrel**, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 2000, pg. 91.).
- ²⁸ Reid, M.: op. cit., pg. 41-54.
- ²⁹ Low, S.: op. cit., pg. 27-39.
- ³⁰ Grove, S.J., Carlson, L., Dorsch, M.J.: Comparing the application of integrated marketing communication (IMC) in magazine ads across product type and time, **Journal of Advertising**, Vol. 36, No. 1, 2007, pg. 37-54.
- ³¹ Duncan, T., Moriarty, S.: op. cit., pg. 30-39.
- ³² Kliatchko, J.: op. cit., pg. 7-34.
- ³³ Reid, M.: op. cit., pg. 41-54.