



Integrated Communications Management in Organisations: Bibliometric Insight into Past and Future

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Abstract

Background: Integrated Communications Management (ICM) has emerged as a critical strategy in the evolving economy of organisational dynamics. This paper delves into its evolution, challenges, and thematic axes, addressing theoretical controversies and practical applications. **Objective:** This paper aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of ICM literature from 1989 to June 2023, scrutinising 971 publications from Elsevier Scopus. The study seeks to unveil patterns in productivity, authorship, collaboration networks, international contributions, and thematic structures. **Methods/Approach:** Employing systematic bibliometric methodology, this study analyses selected publications from the Scopus database. It integrates quantitative productivity metrics, citation analysis, qualitative mapping, and network exploration. **Results:** The findings highlight a significant surge in ICM studies since 2009, delineating thematic axes such as strategic communication, integrated marketing communications, social media, and public relations. Philip J. Kitchen is the most prolific author, while the most productive source, the Journal of Communication Management, plays a significant role in shaping the field of ICM. Remarkable collaboration networks are led by P. J. Kitchen, A. Siano, and A. Moreno. **Conclusions:** The analysis underscores the growing interest in ICM, emphasising ongoing interdisciplinary research and theoretical refinement. It advocates for further exploration to enhance both theoretical understanding and practical applications.

Keywords: Integrated Communications Management; bibliometric analysis; thematic axes; strategic communication; interdisciplinary research

JEL classification: M14; M19; M31; M37; C88

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Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of the 21st century, organisations of diverse types find themselves navigating a challenging and intricate environment (Heide et al., 2018). Their pursuit of primary goals involves a nuanced understanding of stakeholders, employees, emerging markets, attractive segments, and niches (Verčič et al., 2015; Frandsen & Johansen, 2015). This endeavour is compounded by an array of contemporary challenges, ranging from the burgeoning influence of empowered customers through social media and new technologies (Šerić et al., 2014) to cyclical financial crises, global warming, and an absence of political will to address multifaceted issues.

The proliferation of information networks in society, in which every company is intricately woven, has expanded exponentially, creating a web of interactions between organisations and their public (Shumate et al., 2018). The complexity of today's society, coupled with the surge in new technologies generating vast amounts of data, signifies that significant game-changing forces are on the horizon (van Ruler, 2021; López-García et al., 2023). Much like the impact of artificial intelligence, these forces compel organisations to reassess their approach to communication management.

Organisations are now facing fundamental changes in their external environment, which is propelled by information and communication technology (ICT). Digitalisation, globalisation, and information deluge underscore the need for organisations to adapt their communication strategies (Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2021; Globočnik Žunac et al., 2021).

In the economy of increasingly competitive marketing, a shift from traditional techniques toward more diversified approaches has become evident. The rapid evolution of industry products and services presents significant opportunities and challenges, demanding a strategic approach (Heath et al., 2018). Recognising the inadequacy of relying on the usual communication tools, organisations are embracing IC as an effective management approach to adapting to changes in the market environment (Luxton et al., 2015; Kitchen, 2017; Porcu et al., 2017).

While Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has gained broad acceptance since its emergence in the early 1990s, controversies persist, primarily centred on conceptual issues. Researchers continue to grapple with developing a cohesive theoretical base that aligns and applies all tools and techniques within the IMC practice. Disagreements persist regarding the theoretical robustness and practical application of IMC, contributing to a somewhat vague and uncertain theoretical position (Kliatchko, 2005; Tafesse & Kitchen, 2017).

Despite the conceptual intricacies surrounding IMC, its prominence in the marketing literature has grown significantly, fuelled by advancements in information and communication technology. Defining IMC proves challenging due to varied interpretations and values in academic and commercial spheres. A critical review of previous IMC definitions reveals five crucial attributes, emphasising the importance of directed communication, an outside-in approach, well-established relationships, holistic inclusion of communication activities, and coordination between communication disciplines (Kitchen et al., 2004).

The primary goal of this study is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the landscape of Integrated Communications Management (ICM) using bibliometric methods. By leveraging bibliometric analysis, we aim to explore the evolution, trends, key contributors, and thematic structure of the scholarly literature on Integrated Communication (IC). The research questions stated below drive this study to investigate the productivity of research on IC, the recency and impact of published

literature, prominent countries, authors and journals, collaboration networks, thematic trends, and gaps in the existing literature.

- RQ1: *How is the evolution of scientific production on Integrated Communication (IC) in the Scopus database?*
- RQ2: *Which are the main thematic lines on the IC topic?*
- RQ3: *What are the main research gaps and future trends of IC scientific literature?*

This type of research question is often formulated in bibliometric studies on IC (Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2012; Nunhes et al., 2019; Marinescu & Cicea, 2018; Resqi, 2022; Wu et al., 2022), as their answers allow a better understanding of the topic. To address these questions, we employ a systematic bibliometric approach that integrates quantitative productivity and citation metrics with qualitative mapping and network analysis. This methodological framework enables us to provide a comprehensive overview of the field and identify areas for future research.

This paper identifies two gaps: the study of Integrated Communication Management (ICM) literature is mostly centred on IMC, not studying deeply other areas (e.g., strategic communication), and not considering Spanish literature sufficiently in their reviews (Salgado Moreno et al., 2024; Sadi & Álvarez-Nobell, 2024). The novelty of this bibliometric study lies in the evaluation of other areas of integrated communication, widening the scope of the literature analysis.

The structure of this paper is organised to facilitate a coherent presentation of our research findings and analysis. Following this introduction, the paper proceeds with a literature review section, which provides an overview of previous research on IC and clarifies key concepts, theoretical frameworks, empirical findings, and debates in the field. Subsequently, we delineate the applied research methodology employed in this study, detailing the systematic steps undertaken for bibliometric analysis. The methodology section is followed by a presentation of our results, which encompasses findings related to productivity per year, publication recency, authorship analysis, most cited authors and documents, thematic trends, and international collaboration networks.

We then discuss our findings, contextualising them within the broader scholarly discourse on IC and addressing their implications for theory, practice, and future research. Finally, we conclude the paper by summarising our key findings, highlighting this study's contributions, and outlining avenues for future research in the field of ICM. This structured approach enhances the clarity and coherence of our paper, guiding readers through the analytical journey and facilitating a deeper understanding of our research outcomes.

Literature review

With the purpose of building the foundations of a research paper and to contextualise the research questions, a literature review must be conducted in every research (Pejić-Bach & Cerpa, 2019); moreover, writing a thorough and lucid literature review is critical (Abdullah et al., 2023). Literature on IC offers a rich tapestry of definitions, theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, discussions on channel integration, critiques, as well as debates due to the evolution of Integrated Communication from a tactical communication tool to a strategic management tool and strategic business process (Schultz & Kitchen, 2004; Kliatchko, 2008; Kitchen, 2017). This literature review takes into consideration three phases: IMC, IC, and SC. Integrated Communication Management (ICM) refers to any of these specific managements (according to context/approach) and encompasses all of them as well.

Integrated marketing communication

While IC has gained broad acceptance since its emergence in the early 1990s -known as IMC for being centred in the marketing area, controversies persist, primarily on conceptual issues; Duncan and Caywood (1996) debate the challenges of evaluating IMC effectiveness, advocating for rigorous measurement frameworks. Critiques and debates regarding the conceptualisation, implementation, and evaluation of IMC add depth to the discourse. Schultz and Kitchen (2004) critique the oversimplification of IMC, advocating for a more strategic approach beyond message integration.

Organisational barriers, including a lack of horizontal communication, pose significant obstacles to its implementation. Scholars highlight issues such as resistance to change, turf battles, ego problems, and managerial parochialism as major barriers to integration (Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2012).

Kitchen and Burgmann (2010) identified challenges in organisational IMC implementation, such as siloed structures and resistance to change. Schultz (1993) advocates integrating advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and direct marketing into cohesive communication strategies. Later, Fill (2009) explores the integration of digital and traditional channels, emphasising synergy and consistency in IMC campaigns.

Disagreements persist regarding the theoretical robustness and practical application of IMC, contributing to a somewhat vague and uncertain theoretical position (Kliatchko, 2005, 2008; Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2012; Porcu et al., 2017). As markets, consumers, technologies, media, and data-handling capabilities undergo rapid transformations, marketing professionals are compelled to reassess their approaches continually. Technological turbulence drives the demand for integration, as evidenced by scholars (Porcu et al., 2017; Macnamara & Gregory, 2019), and IC brings tangible benefits, aligning short- and long-term marketing, ensuring consideration of all target audiences, encouraging individual communication, enhancing synergy and recall, and delivering financial benefits (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010).

The literature abounds with theoretical frameworks and models pivotal for comprehending and implementing IMC and its strategies. Duncan and Moriarty (1998) propose a framework highlighting synergy, consistency, and integration across communication channels in IMC campaigns. Additionally, Kitchen & Schultz (2003) present the IMC Planning Model, delineating the strategic process for campaign development and execution.

Researchers continue to grapple with developing a cohesive theoretical base that aligns and applies all tools and techniques within the IMC practice. Its prominence in the marketing literature has grown significantly, fuelled by advancements in information and communication technology (Muñoz-Leiva et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2022). However, defining IMC proves challenging due to varied interpretations and values in academic and commercial spheres. A critical review of previous IMC definitions reveals five crucial attributes, emphasising the importance of directed communication, an outside-in approach, well-established relationships, holistic inclusion of communication activities, and coordination between communication disciplines (Kitchen et al., 2004).

Integrated communications: Toward a holistic approach

The evolution of Integrated Communication (IC) from a tactical tool to a strategic business process highlights the need for a holistic approach (Kliatchko, 2008; Thøger Christensen et al., 2008). A conceptual framework developed by Porcu et al. (2017) defines IC in four dimensions: message consistency, interactivity, stakeholder-centred strategic focus, and organisational alignment. This framework has proved to be useful

for applied research developed in the tourism and hospitality sector (Porcu et al., 2017).

Because of the rapid growth within the execution and adoption of IC tactics, earlier research suggested that further analyses are required. However, studies on IC continue to be somewhat neglected within hospitality; additionally, it also looks like buyer perceptions and viewpoints of marketing and sales communications tend to be disregarded (Šerić & Gil-Saura, 2012). In this respect, consumer perceptions of IMC ought to be considered very carefully since that is perhaps one of the most important impacts on investment effectiveness.

Nikadimovs (2019) conducted a review on IMC, revealing that not enough tourism and hospitality IMC implementation research has been carried out. Although research has increased lately, only a fraction of it was relevant to this industry, and even fewer addressed IMC implementation and evaluation issues. Following his study, some hospitality management efforts have not implemented IMC due to a lack of confidence and resources for IMC concept integration.

Distinguishing IMC from IC, Grigorescu and Lupu (2015) emphasised their differences, positioning IC as a broader discipline that encompasses marketing and extends to corporate design, culture, public relations, and corporate communication. Recognising the evolving landscape of IC, Taffese & Kitchen (2017) advocate for an integrative review, building on three alternative IC frameworks: conceptualisation at the marketing campaign level, organisation level, and the role of advertising agencies. However, no empirical studies supported by their integrative theoretical model are known so far.

Strategic communication

The growing digital content ecosystem has significantly increased the number of effective communication channels used by an organisation's customers, employees, partners, shareholders, and communities. An integrated communication strategy helps businesses deliver a cohesive message across digital and traditional channels to engage audiences, build and sustain trust and provide a positive brand experience.

Strategic communication (SC) is an important key theme of integrated communication and a distinctive approach focusing on the process of communication, offering complementary insights, and opening up new fields for interdisciplinary research. Hallahan et al. (2007) defined SC "in its broadest sense, (as) communicating purposefully to advance (the organisation's) mission". The type of organisation was not limited to businesses (for-profit) but included activist organisations, non-profits, social and civic movements, NGOs, political parties, as well as governmental entities.

Barker (2013) identified the most critical factors which provided the impetus to the core concepts of Integration, marketing and communication to ensure competence and accountability to all stakeholders and proposed the alignment of all communication based on a Strategic Integrated Communication (SIC), an alternative perspective seen as the process of strategically managing mutually beneficial organisational and stakeholders relationships where the planning recognises the added value of a strategic integrated communication approach through the integration of all functions, which is information-driven, interactive, and focused on consistency in brand, messages, knowledge creation and sharing, processes, functions and the strategic intent of the organisation.

According to Carrillo (2014), SC is closer to the organisation's management policies than to communication itself. Its foundations lie at the heart of the organisation, which would be Image and Communication Management, so in her opinion, a proper definition of SC should highlight certain aspects that have as yet not been adequately

considered: SC has to be managed communication (not all communication is SC, but all SC is managed communication); SC and communication strategies are two different things ("Strategic communication" has to put all the forms of communication available to the organisation at the service of its goals, with the result being far more than the sum of the partial communication strategies); and organisations must have an interactive relationship with all stakeholders, not just with partial target audiences or publics (its stakeholders maintain a relationship with the organisation which means they may come into contact with it through various channels and media by will and or interests).

For Grigorescu & Lupu (2015), SC is needed to adopt a new strategy subordinated to the global organisational strategy, as the informational explosion leads to the impossibility of complete processing of this information and a large part of the information is shielded and eliminated. Therefore, the answer is to send a unitary message on every channel of communication; with this, unidirectional and inefficient mass communication has been replaced by integrated communication.

Nothhaff et al. (2018) shared that SC had "emerged as a global field of communication research". They suggested that this global field was going strong by lauding the efforts of scholars from a multitude of disciplines, such as "public relations, corporate communication, organisational and internal communication, public diplomacy, political communication, advertising, marketing, health and intercultural communication".

Plowman and Wilson (2018) see that practitioners are involved in social media strategy development and tactical implementation yet see their involvement as linked mostly to their organisations' strategic rather than tactical social media activities. In addition, practitioners delineate social media strategies and tactics differently than theoretical conceptualisations. They saw practitioners view the distinction between social media strategies and tactics differently than how they are defined in the academic literature and that aspects of strategic planning that are more operational, according to theory, including focusing content on specific themes, engaging influencers, and selecting specific social media channels, were seen as strategic by practitioners. Moreover, practitioners see tactical approaches to social media engagement that are related to strategy, based on theory, such as long-term relationships and building community, as tactical.

Shumate et al. (2018) introduce a multidimensional network perspective as a theoretical and methodological touchstone for the study of SC, embracing various disciplinary traditions that are found under the SC umbrella (e.g., advertising, corporate communication, organisational communication, and public relations) and gives primacy to communication as the constitutive element through which organisations make strategic decisions about network positioning and representation to stakeholders. In this sense, SC research embraces the interconnectedness of organisations, messages, and stakeholders; this interconnectedness brings into sharp focus the constitutive role of communication in the creation, maintenance, and dissolution of complex relationships between interrelated stakeholders and organisations (similar approach to Hallahan et al., 2007; and Frandsen & Johansen, 2015).

The understanding of the concept of alignment, which has been acknowledged as a central aspect of SC but never explicitly defined, has been pointed out by Zeffass and Volk (2018). Building upon a comprehensive literature review and systematisation of concepts at the nexus of SC and management research, a working definition and an integrative conceptual framework of alignment of IC were suggested. The new framework combines the multiple perspectives and types of alignment discussed so

far, differentiating between external and internal alignment, intrafunctional and cross-functional alignment, management–strategy–activities alignment and process-structure-culture-people alignment. As there are gaps on this topic yet, Zeffass and Volk (2018) open six avenues for future conceptual, empirical, and critical research to inspire SC scholars to carry out further research on this topic.

Lock et al. (2020) see SC as an umbrella term to comprehensively address and include the different elements offered in the public relations, corporate communication, organisational communication, and communication management fields. SC is a close neighbour to many others for the –older and more established– disciplines within the social sciences, such as business management, psychology, or sociology, and a transfer of theories from these disciplines has taken place: stakeholder theory, trust models, systems theory have entered SC research providing fruitful avenues to study organisation-society relations.

According to Heath et al. (2018), scholars and practitioners approach SC from a variety of paradigmatic perspectives. At least four distinct conceptualisations can be identified: (1) SC as public relations/corporate communication, (2) SC as a comparative framework for examining processes employed across various functions, (3) SC as a structure to integrate purposeful communication functions within organisations, and (4) SC as a meta-process that amalgamates functional roles and stresses organisation-wide strategy, discursive processes, and critical analysis.

All these theoretical and empirical studies are significant for IC literature. However, this research has some limitations. First, most of these papers partially qualitatively review the integrated communication literature. Thus, they do not provide a quantitative overview of how IC literature has evolved. Second, these review papers did not provide a comprehensive outlook on the conceptual structure of IC literature separately. Considering these limitations and the substantial growth of IC literature (Taffese & Kitchen, 2017; Heath et al., 2018), it becomes necessary to quantitatively examine the different attributes of IC literature by means of a bibliometric analysis.

Bibliometric studies on integrated communication

A notable amount of information on integrated communication has been produced due to information and communications technologies (ICT) development, among them bibliometric studies. This type of research is of high importance for new investigation development, as new knowledge must be built over previous research. Among several investigations, Young et al. (2015) developed a bibliometric analysis of published articles between 1993 and 2014, where four common underlying conceptual topics were identified, and the research topics; Tackie & Anning-Dorson (2021) conducted a scientometric approach to assess IMC research's authors, literature, and countries in 1995-2020 period; and Resqi (2022) performed "Marketing Communications: A Bibliometric Study In The Use Of Technology And Social Media For Marketing", to evaluate the most relevant themes related to marketing communications from 2015 to 2022, visualising the network of authors, as well as countries and journals. Keyword analysis showed that marketing communication studies referred to marketing done through social media in 2021 and 2022, as well as the benefits of social media and technological advancements. We outline three types of research taken as antecedents on the IC topic. Their results show a wider, deeper bibliometric analysis and a stronger impact on the scientific literature in recent years (see Table 1).

Table 1
Bibliometrics of three referenced studies

Authors / Items		Wu et al. (2022)	Resqi (2022)	Muñoz-Leiva et al. (2012)
Database		WoS and Scopus	Scopus	Scopus
Study timeframe		2000-2020	1991-2020	2015-2012
Keywords		Integrated Marketing Communications; Scientometric; CiteSpace; Web of Science; Scopus	Integrated Marketing Communication s; Brand equity; IMC implementation	Integrated Marketing Communications; IMC; Bibliometric Study; Co-Word Analysis; Conceptual Evolution
Productivity	Per Years	✓	✓	✓
	Per Authors	✓	✓	✓
	Per Journals	✓	✓	✓
	Per Countries	✓	∅	✓
Citation and Co-Citation	H-Index	✓	✓	✓
	Authors Co-citation	✓	✓	✓
	Authors Citation	✓	✓	✓
	Journals Citation	✓	✓	∅
	Documents Citation	✓	✓	✓
	Documents Co-Citation	✓	✓	✓
	Countries Citation	✓	✓	✓
	Authors collaboration	✓	✓	✓
	Price Index	∅	∅	∅
Authors affiliation (Organisation)	✓	✓	∅	
Authors Affiliation (Country)	✓	✓	✓	
Thematic Area	✓	✓	✓	
Keywords	✓	✓	✓	
Content Analysis (Trends)	✓	✓	✓	
Gaps and Future Research Lines	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Authors’ elaboration

“Discovering Prominent Themes of Integrated Marketing Communication Research from 1991 to 2012: A co-word analysis approach” by Muñoz-Leiva et al. (2015) performed a bibliometric analysis of IMC (1991-2012) emphasising a co-word analytic approach. Their analysis of IMC aimed at its evolution from its inception in 1991 up to 2012 (included). The authors applied a bibliometric approach combining co-word analysis and science mapping to detect and visualise conceptual sub-domains and identify the most relevant themes. The thematic networks extracted showed associations between the main issues the IMC community was addressing, enabling

the authors to examine its intellectual structure over two decades. The quantitative analysis of a corpus of IMC manuscripts provided a structure for the conceptual sub-domains, classification of the themes showing internal associations into four groups, and identification of the main research trends forecasting its future direction. In response to the call for greater theoretical clarification of the IMC discipline, this paper provides a snapshot of the thematic evolution of IMC research over time, providing experts with a better understanding of the state of the art and suggesting future research directions.

"Marketing Communications: A Bibliometric Study in the Use of Technology and Social Media for Marketing", by Resqi (2022), is the second one. This research paper used multiple bibliometric parameters instead of a single co-word analytic approach while reviewing the whole period of IMC literature in the 1991-2020 period. H-index and citations per ratio are used to demonstrate productivity and impact; descriptive analysis and network analysis (e.g., keywords co-occurrence networks and co-citations analysis) have also been performed to identify intellectual and conceptual structure. Sources and authors were identified in the most productive countries as well. VOSviewer software for bibliometric mapping was applied using two standardised factors: the number of links and the strength of links to demonstrate the visual nodal network, allowing researchers to explore the conceptual and intellectual structures of the research field.

The third one, "Mapping the literature of integrated marketing communications: A scientometric analysis using CiteSpace", by Wu et al. (2022), identified hot research topics and the evolutionary process of IMC in the 2000-2020 period. Theory and models, brand communication, media research, customer research, and marketing strategy were the five hot research topics. In contrast, social media and brand-building research will continue to be hotspots for future trends research, and "experiential marketing" will see a growth process. Considering the regular pattern of IMC concept change and comparing the evolution of IMC concepts and research topics in different periods, the authors concluded that the content and form of "integration" are constantly changing, which should be one of the reasons why scholars have not reached a consensus on the concept of IMC.

The literature review on ICM provides a comprehensive overview of the existing knowledge landscape in this field. It encompasses definitions, theoretical frameworks, empirical studies, discussions on channel integration, and critiques and debates. These elements serve as a foundational understanding for our research endeavour. Firstly, the review clarifies the conceptual terrain by presenting various definitions and conceptualisations of IC, highlighting its strategic nature and emphasis on coordinated communication efforts with diverse stakeholders (Schultz et al., 1998; Kliatchko, 2008; Porcu et al., 2017). This sets the stage for our study to delve deeper into understanding how organisations strategically manage their communications.

Secondly, theoretical frameworks and models elucidated in the literature, such as those proposed by Duncan and Moriarty (1998) and Kitchen and Schultz (2003), offer valuable insights into the principles underlying effective IMC strategies. Our research aims to build upon and possibly extend these and other frameworks (Porcu et al., 2017; Taffese & Kitchen, 2017) by examining their applicability in contemporary organisational contexts. Thirdly, empirical studies cited in the literature review provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness and challenges of implementing IC strategies.

By synthesising these findings, our study seeks to contribute to the empirical knowledge base by exploring specific contexts or dimensions of IC effectiveness that may not have been extensively addressed in prior research. Our research aims to

address some of these gaps, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of IC and integrating emerging communication technologies into IC strategies.

Methodology

A systematic methodology, underpinned by logical steps, guides the bibliometric analysis to unravel the landscape of ICM. The process initiates with the meticulous selection of terms to construct a comprehensive search equation aimed at identifying relevant publications on Integrated Communication.

The initial step is to select the terms of the search equation for publications on IC. The equation is defined as follows: TS= ("integrated marketing communications"); OR TS= ("integrated marketing communication"); OR TS= ("integrated communications"); OR TS= ("integrated communication"); OR TS= ("Integrated Communications Management"); OR TS= ("Integrated Communications"); OR TS= ("Strategic Communications"); OR TS = ("Gestión de Comunicación Estratégica"); OR TS= "Comunicación Integrada Corporativa (CIC)"; OR TS= ("Gestión de comunicación organizacional integrada"); OR TS = ("Gestión de comunicación integrada"), ensuring a thorough exploration of the topic across titles, abstracts, and keywords.

The bibliometric analysis, combining quantitative productivity and citation metrics with qualitative state-of-the-art mapping and social network exploration, aims to discern patterns and contributions within the scientific literature on IC in organisations. Figure 1 depicts the methodological framework, showcasing the systematic approach underpinning this research.

The search was conducted on Scopus (Elsevier), a database renowned for its substantial impact on the social sciences and encompassing 38,589 scientific journals in diverse research areas, from which a total of 971 documents from 456 sources were extracted. Extracting and processing data from more than a database makes info integration complex, as their platforms have different structures (Nunes et al., 2019). The definition of the search criteria is shown in Table 2.

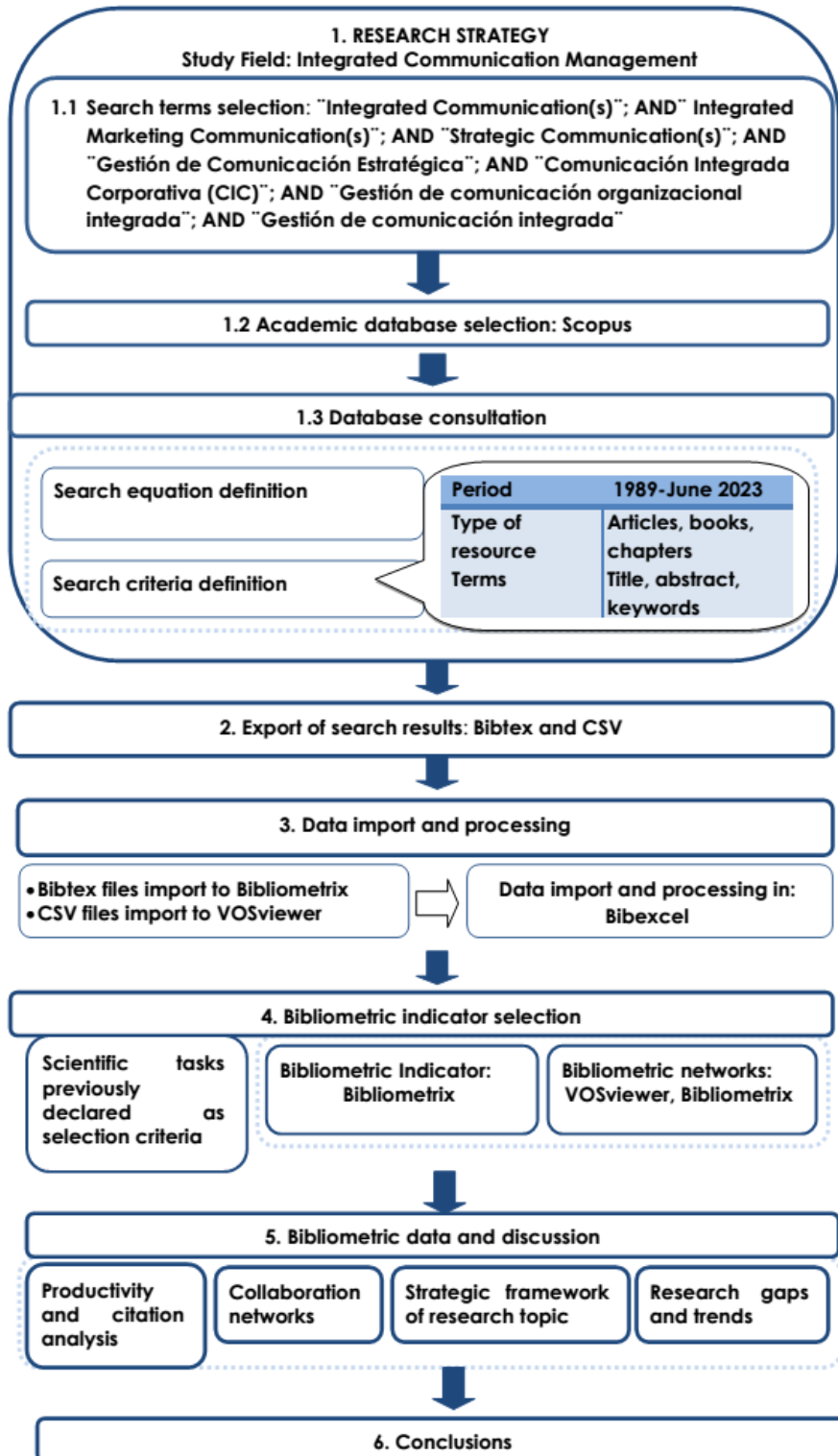
Table 2
Search Criteria

Search criteria	Search strategy
Database	Elsevier Scopus
Keywords	Integrated Communication(s); Integrated Marketing Communication(s); Strategic Communication(s); Gestión de Comunicación Estratégica; Comunicación Integrada Corporativa (CIC); Gestión de comunicación organizacional integrada; Gestión de comunicación integrada (in title, abstract and keywords)
Period	From 1989 to June 2023
Type of documents	Articles
Type of source	All articles in scientific journals, books, book chapters, encyclopaedia Social Sciences, Economics, Business, Management, Marketing,
Thematic areas	Communication
Languages	English, Spanish

Source: Authors' elaboration

Articles that meet the search criteria and data are exported in Bibtex and CSV files for further normalisation through the R's bibliometrix package (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), addressing any positives and duplicates.

Figure 1
Methodology for the Bibliometric Study



Source: Adapted from Ávilas Hernández et al. (2023)

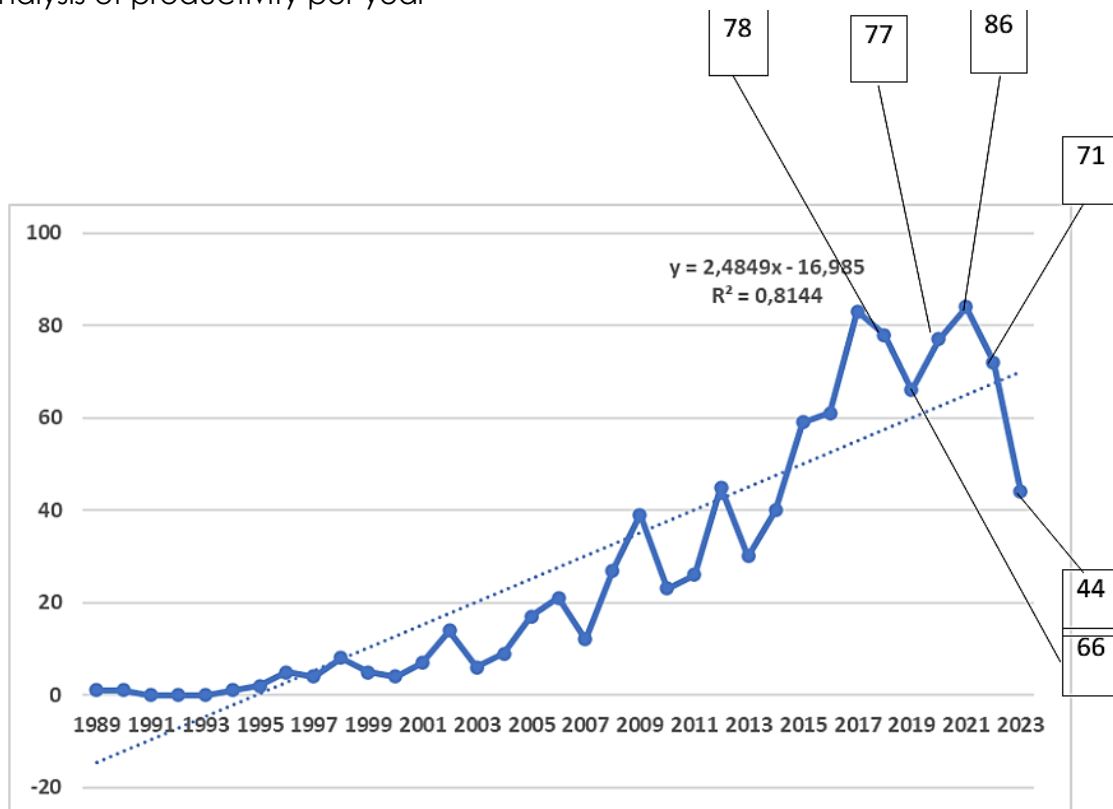
Results

Timeline and country analysis

The productivity per year indicator is an important indicator for visualising the tendency of literature production in specific timeframes. A graph showing the number of documents per year is required as a starting point for productivity analyses. The number of published papers per year is shown on the y-axis, while the years from 1989 to 2023 are shown on the x-axis. Figure 2 illustrates a consistent productivity increase from the inception of publications on IC, with a remarkable number of published papers from 2018 to 2022.

Notably, a surge in studies is observed from 2009 onward due to the renewed interest of scholars, following an initial period of both enthusiasm and criticism. The high number of papers appearing this year, including seven papers published in the second special issue on IMC in the Journal of Marketing Communications (vol. 15, issue 2-3) and a number of conferences focused on the topic (for example, three papers presented at the 16th International Economic Conference – IECS 2009, held in Sibiu, Romania), was followed by a not so productive 2010 year (the European Journal of Marketing, the Journal of Promotion Management, and Marketing Intelligence and Planning, did show interest in IMC research, publishing only over 20 papers). Then, there was again an increasing trend of papers in scientific journals.

Figure 2
Analysis of productivity per year

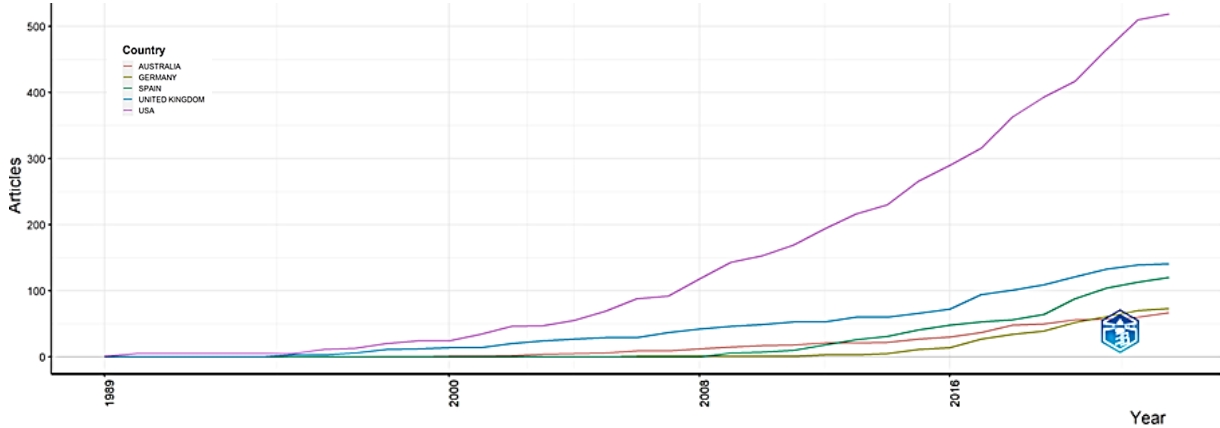


Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Figure 3 depicts the international research landscape, indicating a notable uptick in global research contributions from 2008 onward. Starting in 2012, there has been a sustained, remarkable growth of research/papers in the USA, followed far by the United Kingdom (U.K.) and Spain, showing high interest in the topic by scholars at the

international level. Germany and Australia had a minor productivity, although it was still ascendant.

Figure 3
Countries' Production Over Time



Source: Authors, based on Scopus

The Price Index is the ratio of the topicality of the available bibliography on the issue under investigation, highlighting the late papers' relevance. It is calculated from documents produced in the last five (5) years out of the total number of publications. Out of the 971 documents, 504 papers (nearly 52 % of research) were published/indexed between 2018 and 2023, for a Price Index of 0.5190.

Author, affiliation, and journal analysis

The productivity index identifies the most prolific authors in a specific topic of research to understand their contributions. According to Lotka's law, at least 60% of authors of papers in a research field make a single contribution in an analysed period. As the number of contributions (papers) of an author increases, the single-document contributors decrease. Productivity Index (Ip) determines authors' productivity, calculated by the formula $I_p = \log_{10}n$, where n is the number of publications per author. If $n \geq 10$, then $I_p \geq 1$; in case of $1 < n < 10$, then $0 < I_p < 1$; while if $n=1$, then $I_p = 0$. The productivity index analysis reveals a nuanced distribution, with only 7 authors displaying high productivity (over 0.8 index). See Table 3.

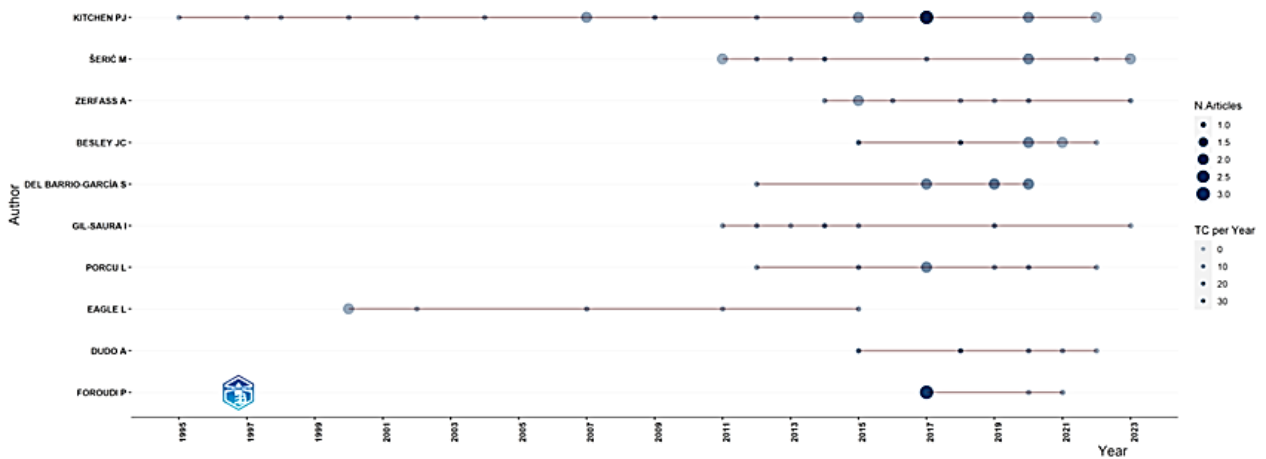
Table 3
Analysis of productivity and systematicity of authors

Authors	Number of contributions	Number of authors	Productivity Index
Kitchen, P. J.	19	1	1.28
Šerić, M.	11	1	1.04
Zerfass, A.	8	1	0.90
Del Barrio-García, S.; Gil-Saura, I.; Porcu, L.; Besley, J. C.	7	4	0.85
Eagle, L.	6	1	0.78
Kim, Y.; Dudo, A.; Foroudi, P.; Laurie, S.; Mortimer, K.; Siano, A; Smith, B. G.; Tench, R; Moreno, A.	5	9	0.70

Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Philip J. Kitchen and Maja Šerić are prolific authors, equalling or exceeding ten publications. Also, details about the author's role in the research on IC from 1989 to 2023 must be known (most consistent investigator and last year's contributors). The authors' production over time illustrates the systematic contributions of P.J. Kitchen, a key academician since 1995 (see Figure 4). The following scholars have a remarkable production: M. Šerić, A. Zerfass, J. C. Besley, S. del Barrio-García, I. Gil-Saura, and L. Porcu, in the last five years.

Figure 4
Authors' production over time



Source: Authors, based on Scopus

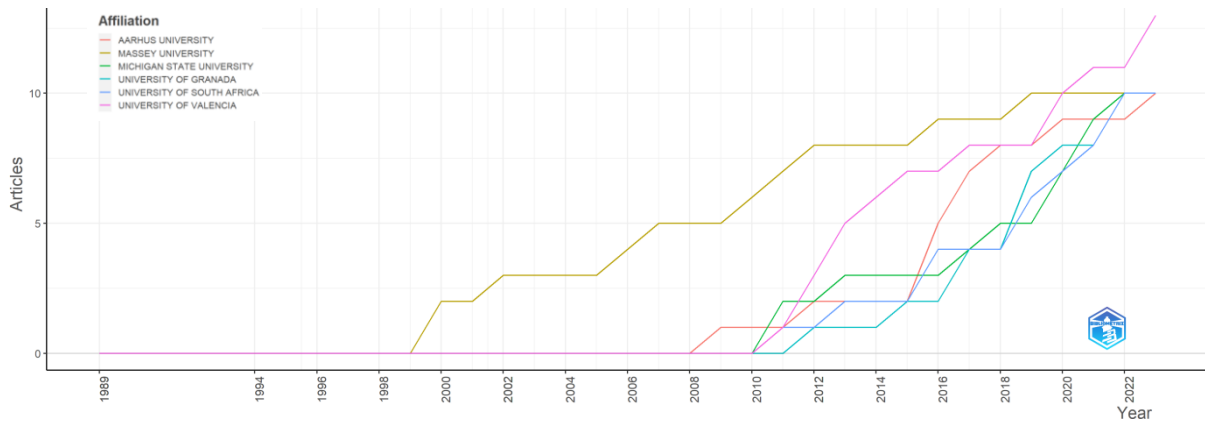
The ten most productive and influential research institutions on this topic are listed below (in Table 4); around 40 % of them are from Spain and the USA. Valencia, Massey, Aarhus, Granada, South Africa, and Michigan are the six universities that conducted the most research on integrated communication from 2011 until 2023. The first three are leading the way (see Figure 5).

Table 4
Affiliation' Production Over Time

Affiliation	Articles
University of Valencia (Spain)	13
Aarhus University (Denmark)	10
Massey University (New Zealand)	10
Michigan State University (USA)	10
University of Granada (Spain)	10
University of South Africa	10
Northwestern University (USA)	9
Leipzig University (Germany)	8
Lund University (Sweden)	8
Queensland University of Technology (Australia)	8

Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Figure 5
Affiliations' production over time



Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Table 5 lists the most productive journals, with the Journal of Communication Management, Journal of Marketing Communications, Public Relations Review, and Corporate Communications leading the way. The Journal of Communication Management, Corporate Communications, Journal of Marketing Communications, Sustainability, and Communitas published more papers on integrated communication from 2018 to mid-2023, showing higher interest in this topic.

Table 5
Most Productive Journals

Journal	1989-2023 Articles	2018-2023 Articles
Journal of Communication Management	62	38
Journal of Marketing Communications	52	12
Public Relations Review	40	6
Corporate Communications	29	14
European Journal of Marketing	24	2
Emerald Emerging Markets Case Studies	15	4
Journal of Promotion Management	12	1
Communicatio	10	2
Sustainability	10	10
Business Horizons	9	1
Communitas	9	9

Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Citation analysis

The h-index is a quality indicator of individual researchers' impact within the scientific community. It relates the number of sources to the author's productivity. Table 6 shows a relationship between the h-index and the number of citations, where local authors with 130 or more citations are selected. Philip J. Kitchen is leading the list with nearly 600 citations and high impact (14 h-index), followed by Maja Šerić, Salvador del Barrio-García, and Ansgar Zeffass.

Table 6

Most cited authors and h-index

h-index	Authors	All citations
14	Kitchen, P. J.	599
7	Šeric, M.	221
7	Del Barrio-García, S.	187
7	Zerfass, A.	134
6	Gil-Saura, I.	218
6	Porcu, L.	195
5	Besley, J. C.	199
5	Kim, Y.	190
5	Eagle, L.	133
4	Christensen, L. T.	216

Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Table 7 shows the ten most cited articles, with more than 150 citations. Surprisingly, the most cited document was not published in any of 8 most relevant journals.

Table 7

Most Cited Documents

Author	Article title, journal, online access	Citations
Mangold W. G. & D. J. Faulds (2009)	Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. <i>Business Horizons</i> , 10.1016/j.bushor.2009.03.002	2041
Keller, K. L. (2015)	Building Strong Brands In A Modern Marketing Communications. <i>Journal of Marketing Communication</i> , 10.1080/13527260902757530	524
Maznevski, M. L. (1994)	Understanding Our Differences: Performance in Decision-Making Groups with Diverse Members. <i>Human Relations</i> , 10.1177/001872679404700504	299
Welch, M. (2007)	Rethinking internal communication: a stakeholder approach. <i>Corporate Communications</i> , 10.1108/13563280710744847	
Batra, R. (2016)	Integrated Marketing Communications: New Findings, New Lessons and New Ideas. <i>Journal of Marketing</i> , 10.1509/jm.15.0419	253
Baxendale, S. (2015)	The Impact of Different Touchpoints on Brand Consideration. <i>Journal of Retailing</i> , 10.1016/j.jretai.2014.12.008	197
Kreiss, D. (2016)	The Limits of Peer Production: Some Reminders from Max Weber for the Network Society. <i>New Media & Society</i> , 10.1177/1461444814562445	182
Coombs, W. T. (2015)	The value of communication during a crisis: Insights from strategic communication research. <i>Business Horizons</i> , 10.1016/j.bushor.2014.10.003	168
Manser Payne, L. (2017)	Omni-channel marketing, integrated marketing communications and consumer engagement: A research agenda. <i>Interacting Marketing</i> , 10.1108/JRIM-08-2016-0091	163
Van den Bosch, A.L. (2005)	How Corporate visual identity supports reputation. <i>Corporate Communications</i> , 10.1108/13563280510596925	152

Source: Authors, based on Scopus

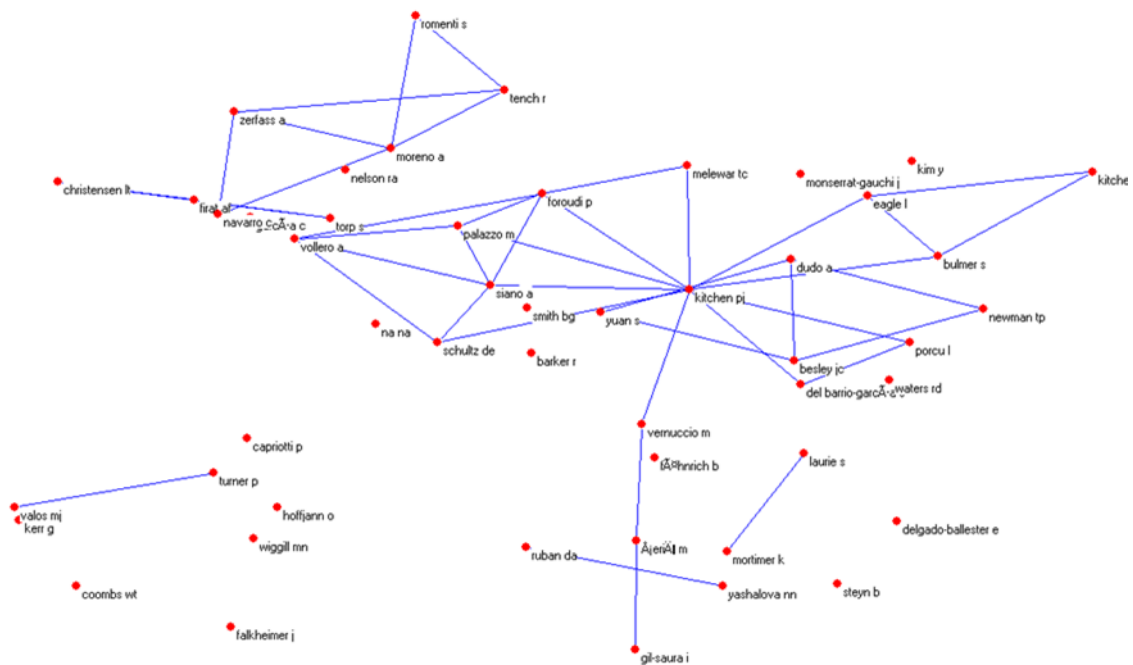
The number of citations of an article has traditionally been seen as a sign of its quality and impact on the scientific community. The most cited article about IC on the Scopus database is *Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix*, by W. G. Mangold & D. J. Faulds (2009), arguing that social media is a hybrid element of promotion

mix because traditional sense, it enables customers to talk to their customers, while social media conversations are outside the direct control of managers. Methods such as providing consumers with networking platforms and using blogs, social media tools, and promotional tools to engage customers are suggested to enhance consistency with the organisation’s mission and performance goals.

International collaboration

International research collaboration is crucial to scientific progress. Around 69 % of the total publications (671 papers, Scopus database) were signed by more than one author. Figure 6 delves into collaboration networks, revealing prominent collaborations led by authors like P. J. Kitchen, A. Siano, and A. Moreno, fostering a robust research community.

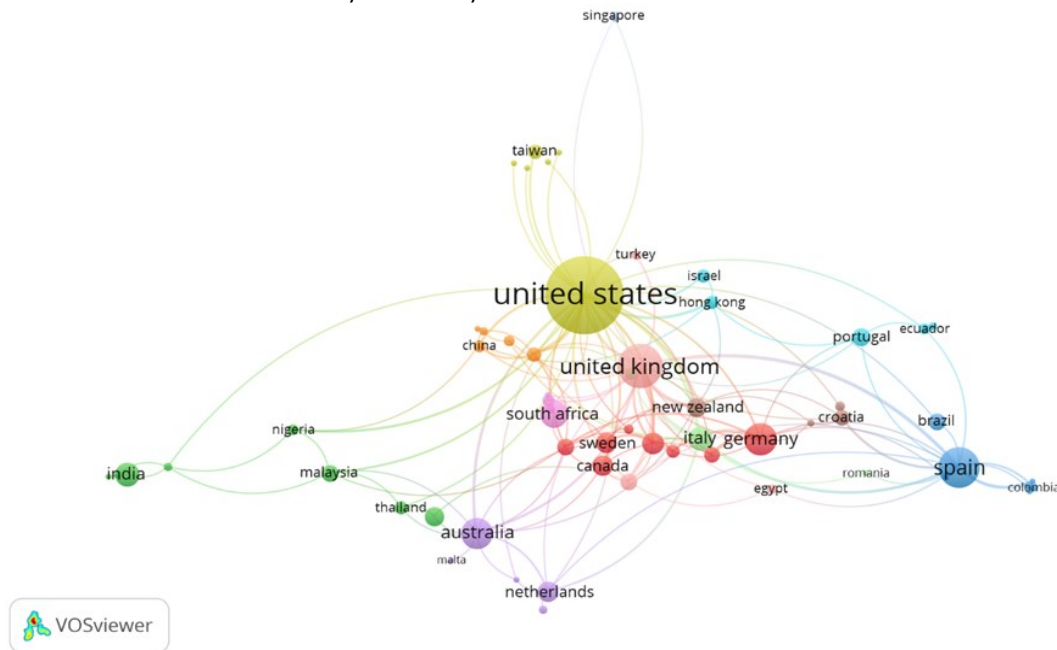
Figure 6
Collaboration Network Among Authors



Source: Authors, based on Scopus

The international collaboration network structure depicts the leading country of a network, the number of countries strongly linked to the leading country in a node, and the number and strength of links. The VOSviewer software for bibliometric mapping is applied to graphically illustrate this process by using two standardised weights: the number of links and the strength of links to demonstrate the visual nodal network (Figure 7). There are some significant collaboration networks. USA, U.K. and Spain play team leader roles, each of them with several countries: the USA, with New Zealand, South Africa, India, Sweden, China, and Taiwan; U.K., with Sweden, Canada, Germany and Italy; Spain, with U.K., Croatia, Italy, Netherlands, Portugal, Ecuador, Colombia, and Brazil. Less strong collaboration networks involve Australia, Malaysia, and Thailand.

Figure 7
Collaboration Network by Country



Source: Authors, based on Scopus; processed in VOSviewer

Significantly, the USA, the U.K. and Spain are also on the list of the most productive and influential countries.

Keywords, topics, and themes

Table 8 presents the most used keywords on IC topics. A total amount of 971 documents from 456 sources (most Scopus-registered articles in journals, some books and chapters) have been analysed, spanning from 1989 to June 2023. From this total, 49 were the most used keywords; 20, the most frequent topics in IC literature, where SC, IMCs, social media, and public relations are the four highly frequent (used ≥ 100 times) keywords over time.

Table 8
Most frequently used keywords on IC topics

Keywords	Frequencies	Keywords	Frequencies
Strategic communication	213	Crisis communication	34
Integrated marketing communications	129	IMC	34
Social media	104	Strategic communications	32
Public relations	102	Social corporate responsibility	30
Advertising	78	Corporate communication	29
Integrated marketing communication	78	Corporate communications	29
Communication	71	Branding	25
Marketing	45	Integrated communication	24
Communication management	39	Public diplomacy	23
Marketing communications	38	Brand equity	21

Source: Authors, based on Scopus

It is noteworthy that seven keywords (including public relations and advertising) -- out of the 20 most popular keywords directly refer to IMC. However, they were used in the literature with slight variations; this has implications for marketers; for example, "communication" emphasises "the act of communicating", and "communications" emphasises "the technology used for transmitting the message"; "Integrated marketing communications" is customer-centred concept (Schultz, 1993; Duncan & Caywood, 1996; Duncan & Moriarty, 1998; Fill, 2009), whereas "integrated communications" focus on all stakeholders of a company (Kliatchko, 2008; Porcu et al., 2017).

Eleven of the 20 more frequently used keywords refer to SC, which is suggested as a global research field still needing further theoretical development with the support of specific, interdisciplinary research methods. The evolving interest in key themes over the years shows that SC has emerged as the most prominent topic (see Figure 8).

After Covid-19 affected countries and international economics, SC has still been a high-frequency topic in recent years (Van Ruler, 2021; Seiffert-Brockmann, 2021), sharing an interest with stakeholder engagement, marketing mix, sustainability, and trust communication strategies as a trend, by scholars.

Figure 8
Keywords word cloud

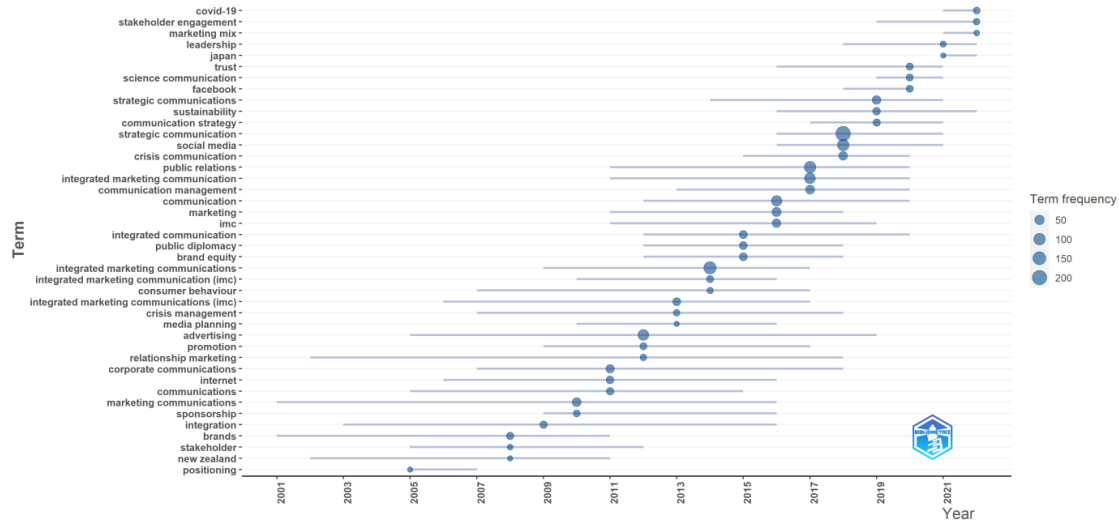


Source: Authors, based on Scopus

After processing data, topics of investigation on integrated communication (IC) over time are identified. While brands, marketing communication, corporate communication, internet, promotion, relationship marketing, and sponsorship were prevailing frequency terms in communication research between 2008 and 2012 years, there was a shift in interests in the next stage (see Figure 9). SC, social media, public relations, IMC and advertising surged as topics with higher frequency (strongest interest) in research papers from 2012 to 2019, followed by other topics, namely crisis communication, marketing, and communication management. In the case of crisis communication, the use of digital platforms is recommended, considering its simultaneous reaction and direct communication possibilities with the affected public, without the mediation of information media (Zora Rezo et al., 2021). The shift in topics research proves the evolution of communication studies from non-integrated to effective IC approach in response to an intense, more competitive global market.

After Covid-19 affected countries and international economics, SC has still been a high-frequency topic in recent years (Van Ruler, 2021; Seiffert-Brockmann, 2021), sharing an interest with stakeholder engagement, marketing mix, sustainability, and trust communication strategies as a trend, by scholars.

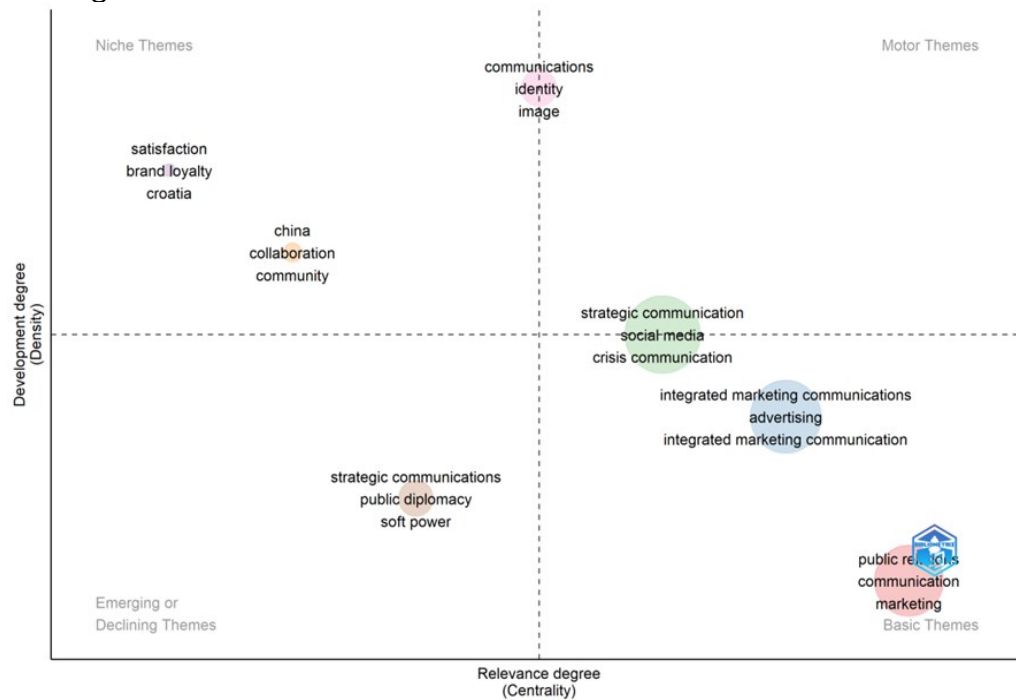
Figure 9
Topics over time



Source: Authors, based on Scopus

By delineating thematic groups and categorising them into specialised topics, motor themes, basic issues, and emerging or disappearing themes, a comprehensive thematic structure of IC is presented. The strategic framework (chart) distributes the different thematic groups into four quadrants, delimited by centrality (X) and density (Y) axes. Each labelled globe constitutes the central node of a particular network to which other thematic groups are related based on conglomeration algorithms (see Figure 10). The distribution is defined as follows: (i) 1st quartile ($>X/2; <Y/2$) - Specialised topics; (ii) 2nd quartile ($<X/2; <Y/2$) - Motor themes; (iii) 3rd quartile ($<X/2; >Y/2$) - Basic issues, and (iv) 4th quartile ($>X/2; >Y/2$) - Emerging or disappearing themes

Figure 10
Strategic Chart



Source: Authors, based on Scopus

Thematic groups in the 1st quartile (brand loyalty, satisfaction, Croatia, China, collaboration, and community) are peripheral issues (niches), as they are not of high importance for the research field. Croatia and China can be seen there as topics of specific development in ICM research, although they are not significant.

Motor themes on ICM are visualised in the 2nd quartile, which includes SC, social media, and crisis communication, representing areas of high interest for ICM studies. Identity, image, and communications are topics with the highest development degree, in need of more relevance for the scientific community; this can be achieved by proposals of theoretical and methodological designs relating these topics to SC, social media and crisis (Heide et al., 2018; O'Connor & Shumate, 2018; Lock et al., 2020; Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2021).

The 3rd quartile includes IMC(s) and advertising, with a higher development degree than others (public relations, communication, and marketing); all these basic themes represent interesting research opportunities (Sadi & Álvarez-Nobell, 2024). Finally, SC, public diplomacy, and soft power are emerging or disappearing topics in the 4th quartile. If academicians and practitioners are interested in them, they can be considered a potential study gap.

Discussion

The bibliometric study has shed light on the multifaceted nature and evolving landscape of ICM in organisations. This analysis not only enhances the understanding of ICM but also highlights key dimensions, shaping its conceptualisation and application in practice. For instance, Porcu et al.'s (2017) conceptual framework delineating IMC across four dimensions, including message consistency, interactivity, stakeholder-centred strategic focus, and organisational alignment, offers a structured approach to understanding the core elements of ICM. By acknowledging these dimensions, organisations can better navigate the complexities of contemporary communication environments and align their strategies with broader organisational goals. Similarly, Taffese and Kitchen's (2017) advocacy for an integrative review underscores the importance of comprehensively examining IC frameworks at different levels. This recommendation highlights the need for a holistic understanding of IC, considering its implications not only at the tactical level but also at the strategic and organisational levels.

In this study several bibliometric techniques on the Scopus database were applied to provide a quantitative outline of the evolution of Integrated Communication (IC) literature and identify conceptual, intellectual, and citation and publication structures, similar objective to Al-Mamun et al. (2022) and Wu et al. (2022) researches. Additionally, the last ones took and processed data from the WoS database, too, with no significant differences in the outcomes.

IC literature has evolved through different stages of publications, and a higher amount of documents were published in the last 10 years --as stated by Al-Mamun et al.(2022) and Wu et al. (2022), similar productivity findings to this research. The evolution reveals thematic axes that provide a comprehensive view of its development. SC emerges as a crucial thematic axis, emphasising the strategic nature of communication practices in both organisational and public domains, as highlighted by Frandsen and Johansen (2015). Although clearer conceptualisation and a more realistic understanding of SC are identified as a prerequisite for maturation, progress -as opposed to sophistication, ultimately depends on the development of discipline-specific, unique, and robust methods (Nothhaft et al., 2018).

IMC forms another pivotal axis, reflecting the shift towards consumer-centric approaches and relationship marketing paradigms. Moreover, as emphasised by Plowman & Wilson (2018), the growing influence of social media underscores the need for leveraging technology in marketing communications to enhance effectiveness and reach.

Philip J. Kitchen leads the list of most productive and influential authors, according to Al-Mamun et al. (2022)'s bibliometric study. Still, Wu et al. (2022) referred to D.E. Schultz and P.J. Kitchen as the core authors of IMC studies in the WoS database. In this study, P.J. Kitchen is the most productive and influential author since 1995, followed by M. Šerić in the last 5 years.

The Journal of Marketing Communications was the most productive, influential journal (in 1st or 2nd position) –according to Muñoz-Leiva et al. (2012) and Al-Mamun et al. (2022). On the other hand, the Journal of Advertising Research was the publishing review leader on I.C., as stated by Wu et al. (2022). Comparatively, this study finds the Journal of Management Communication as the publishing review leader, not only by the total amount of articles in the 1989-mid 2023 period but also by its published papers in the last 5 years.

This research's practical implications are significant for both scholars and practitioners. SC cannot stand alone, as nested in and complementary to ICs. It searches for integration of different areas/disciplines, advancing the global strategy of organisations towards their mission fulfilment, which is Integrated Communication in essence, as several scholars have pointed out (Hallahan et al., 2007; Carrillo, 2014; The Routledge Journal of SC (2015); Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2015; Nothhaft et al., 2018; and Heath et al., 2018).

Acknowledging the study's limitations, including its reliance on the Scopus database and focus on articles rather than broader sources, is essential. Future research should address these limitations by exploring alternative databases and considering a more diverse range of literature sources for a nuanced exploration of the subject over specific periods.

Expanding upon the existing discussion, it is imperative to critically engage with the literature by delineating differences, identifying gaps, exploring surprises, and outlining future trends in research. By scrutinising existing frameworks and theoretical insights, researchers can contribute to the ongoing discourse on ICM, fostering a deeper understanding of its complexities and implications for organisational communication strategies and practices.

Conclusions

The bibliometric analysis, supported by R software, offers crucial insights into the IC literature. Key turning points in IC research, notably 2009, 2013, and 2015, marked shifts in interest, with 2017 and 2021 emerging as prolific years, establishing IC as a hot topic in marketing and corporate communications. With 456 articles, the ascending trend of research between 2009 and 2021 demonstrates sustained interest in marketing and corporate communications, advertising, IMCs, communication management, crisis communication, social media, and SCs. Notable journals like the Journal of Communication Management, the Journal of Marketing Communications, Corporate Communications, and Public Relations Review have contributed significantly, proposing approaches and models for ICM studies. The most influential author, Philip J. Kitchen, leads the literature, followed by Maja Šerić and Ansgar Zerfass. Collaboration networks, illustrated in the strategic framework, unveil research gaps and opportunities. SC, social media, crisis communication, IMC, and advertising are identified as areas for future studies. Communication, identity, and image represent

niche themes warranting further exploration. The study unveils critical periods in Integrated Communication development and emphasises the changing nature of the concept of "integration" and the lack of consensus among scholars. Research gaps in SC, as indicated by various scholars, underscore the need for more studies on the impact of big data, automation, and the profession's transformation (Wiesenberg et al., 2017). The study concludes by providing a roadmap for future research directions, emphasising the importance of advanced methods, large-scale studies communication (Heide et al., 2018; O'Connor & Shumate, 2018; Lock et al., 2020; Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2021), and interdisciplinary collaboration to advance the field of SC.

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