Apples, Oranges and Fruit Salad: A Delphi Study
of the IMC Educational Mix.

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Abstract:

Once, we thought that comparing advertising and public relations was a bit like comparing apples and oranges. But with integration the new flavour, many academics are trying to cut and combine and create a fruit salad that will entice their customers and satisfy their stakeholders. While this has produced some culinary triumphs, it has also produced heartburn in equal quantity. This paper seeks the perfect recipe for IMC education by asking a Delphi panel of IMC champions questions relating to the place of IMC in the university setting; the teaching, research and curriculum development issues and the future for IMC education. The panel draws a chaotic picture of IMC education and identifies some important obstacles to curriculum development. It also predicts a number of key challenges for the future, including turf wars; the lack of faculty experience and enthusiasm to embrace IMC and the desperate need to grow the IMC brand. But perhaps the greatest challenge is how to create a generalist education in a culture of specialisation that exists both in the university and in the workplace.

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Introduction

Once, we thought that comparing advertising and public relations was a bit like comparing apples and oranges. While they both belonged to the broad general category of communications, they looked and sounded different and were even very different in practice. Then in the 1980's, someone suggested fruit salad. Since then, educationalists have sought the ideal combination of advertising, public relations, marketing, communication and planning units to create the perfect integrated marketing communication (IMC) program.

Despite the enormous amount of work done by academics to realign their curriculum with pedagogical changes, university demands and employer expectations, very little has been published on IMC education, with a particular sparsity of empirical investigation (Roznowski, Reece and Daugherty 2004). Much of the early work on IMC education focuses on two issues – firstly, how advertising and public relations curricula must change (or not) and secondly, where IMC courses should be located – in business or in communication faculties (Rose and Miller 1994; Wightman 1999).

The educational approach to date has largely focused on changing what already exists. That is, what is the best way to combine the apples and oranges we already have, rather than what is the best way to make fruit salad. Or to use the IMC vernacular, IMC education appears to take an inside-out approach (Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn 1993).

This paper seeks a recipe to guide academics in the preparation of IMC curriculum. It begins by sampling the work done on IMC education to date, as well as giving us a taste of the future. Using a Delphi panel of leading IMC academics globally, three main areas of IMC

education are explored – (1) the place of IMC in the university environment, (2) the curriculum content, teaching and learning and research issues and (3) the challenges and the future of IMC education.

This paper adds to the body of knowledge because it seeks answers to the questions of previous studies by posing them to a panel of IMC champions. While other studies have audited what is being taught in IMC courses internationally (Schultz, Kerr, Kim, Patti 2008) or examined the diffusion of IMC education (Kerr, Schultz, Patti, Kim 2008) to give us a current picture of what is happening in IMC education, there is a need to examine strategies for best practice or how to produce an environment conducive to integration (Roznowski et al 2004). In doing this, the paper seeks to understand the intentions of those who teach IMC (Kerr et al 2008) - whether their goal truly is to make fruit salad or just to present the same apples and oranges in a new way. This process begins with a review of the IMC educational literature.

Literature Review: The Fruit of IMC Educational Studies

Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn (1993, iv) wrote in the introduction to their revolutionary 1993 book, *The New Marketing Paradigm: IMC*, "Mass advertising is dying. Mass media is in deep trouble. Big, ponderous advertising agencies are sinking in the ooze. The 1990s call not just for a re-engineered approach to communications but for a re-invention of the entire marketing communications process. The functionally isolated, silo-ed organization of the past is truly dying. The 1990s call for integrated, coordinated, cohesive marketing communications programs which inform, assist, involve and, yes, persuade customers and prospects."

The authors warned the marketers and advertisers of their time that the traditional marketing process had been irrevocably altered by social, economic and technological change. IMC was conceptualised as a more holistic, strategic and customer-focused way of planning and managing the marketing communication process. It was "the integration of specialized communication functions that previously have operated with various degrees of autonomy" (Duncan and Everett 1993, 30). It was described by some marketers as a "magic bullet" to gain competitive advantage and maximize return-on-investment (Reilly in Schultz, Tannenbaum and Lauterborn 1993, ix). It was even championed by CEO of DDB, Keith Reinhard (1990) as "the New Advertising" and by Ogilvy and Mather as "Orchestration" (Duncan and Everett 1993).

There were also those who would call it "nothing new" or even "opportunistic". Spotts, Lambert and Joyce (1998, 210) suggest that "Many in marketing hold the perception that IMC is simply a new phrase for something we know has existed for a long time." To them, IMC was a blurring of boundaries and a redefinition of marketing concepts. Others felt that many small agencies had always integrated messages and coordinated more than one marketing communication discipline (Duncan and Everett 1993). Even strong supporters of IMC such as Duncan (2002) and Hartley and Pickton (1999) declared that IMC was not a new concept. Certainly the idea of integrating advertising and sales is as old as the 1930s (Spotts, Lambert and Joyce 1998). What made integration an implementable concept in the 1990s was the technology, the database, to facilitate the IMC process. Duncan (2002, 25) notes, "Although the concept of IMC - managing customer relationships - is not new, the processes used in managing IMC are new."

This conceptual divide between IMC as a "magic bullet" compared to "nothing new" is less evident in the literature in recent years. Part of this is due to the evolution of IMC from the tactical coordination of marketing communication disciplines to the strategic and

stakeholder focus, evident in the more recent definitions of IMC (Duncan and Caywood 1996). Support for IMC grows with the body of literature, which addresses issues of concept definition such as explanations of IMC, stages of IMC and message typologies, as well as implementation issues such as structure, organizational responsibility, attitudes towards IMC and integration of IMC disciplines. Much IMC theory has emerged from observations of IMC practice, conceptualized in models such as Schultz's Outside-in Planning or Duncan's IMC Message Typology and now it is being extended through empirical investigation. However, there is some suggestion that despite the advances in IMC theory development and the growing sophistication of its conceptualization, the understanding of some industry practitioners and academics has not advanced past the tactical level (Eagle, Kitchen and Bulmer 2007; Kitchen, Spickett-Jones and Grimes 2007).

The growing implementation of IMC in practice raised concerns of how it should be implemented in the university environment. The very first papers on IMC education reflected many of the obstacles to IMC implementation in the workplace – organizational structure, leadership and turf wars (Caywood and Ewing 1991; Duncan, Caywood and Newsom 1993; Rose and Miller 1993 and 1994; Griffin and Pasadeos 1998). The debate focused on the perceived threat to advertising and PR education from IMC and also turf wars over the disciplinary home of IMC, whether it should be housed in business or communication (Rose and Miller 1994; Griffin and Pasadeos 1998). A catalyst for this debate was the report of the taskforce on Integrated Communications, which declared "advertising and public relations students must be offered a more conceptually unified and integrated program of communication study" (Duncan, Caywood and Newsom 1993, 1).The taskforce recommendations to integrate public relations curricula with advertising and/or marketing raised the ire of the Educational Affairs Committee of the Public Relations Society of America. The society, representing the views of many public relations practitioners and

academics, contended that public relations fulfilled many organizational functions apart from marketing and hence its educational mandate was broader than IMC and more discipline-specific (Rose and Miller 1994).

In addition to public relations academics, other academics also concurred that the more generalist approach of IMC would hamper the in-depth instruction and specialization of many discipline-specific courses (Griffin and Pasadeos 1998).

While some saw it as a threat, other academics looked to IMC as a means of making their advertising or PR programs more contemporary and their enrolments more attractive (Griffin and Pasadeos 1998). IMC champions felt that because IMC had been introduced into practice, it should also be part of curriculum. Many communication graduates worked in corporations, where integration was encouraged through staffing arrangements and budget limitations (Caywood and Ewing 1991). Many felt that integration was not only necessary but inevitable. In fact,as early as 1991, Caywood and Ewing noted "professional schools training for the traditional past will find their graduates ill-equipped to enter the new world of integrated communications" (243).

A couple of benchmark studies have explored the debate from the perspective of practitioners and academics. Rose and Miller (1994) surveyed 564 advertising and public relations practitioners in eight cities across the US. They found that advertising practitioners, who equated training with career advancement, were most interested in direct marketing and promotions/event planning. Public relations practitioners were more interested in communications management, consulting and strategy planning. While both practitioner groups believed that the skills needed by advertising and public relations practitioners were different, they strongly agreed that advertising and public relations professionals needed to broaden their skills to become communication generalists. They supported the notion of

training programs, particularly at the executive education level, for both advertising and public relations consultants in the area of IMC. This was especially true in the smaller markets where interest in IMC was significantly greater. Rose and Miller (1994, 52) sum up, "Change for the better is always disquieting; however, the message is clear – advertising and public relations professionals see the need for continuing professional education that provides an integrated curriculum in integrated communications and/or IMC."

In 1998, Griffin and Pasadeos looked at the other stakeholders in the educational process, the academics themselves. They surveyed 222 US educators (110 advertising and 112 public relations) who felt that their current advertising and public relations programs covered content effectively and adequately prepared students for the workplace. Despite this, 73% of advertising academics and 81% of public relations academics acknowledged that employers were demanding skills outside the traditional disciplinary areas. Some academics felt that IMC might provide the answer, with 67% of advertising academics reported an interest in IMC curricula. Public relations academics were resoundingly negative, with 62% indicating a lack of interest in IMC.

Wightman (1999) summed up the perspective of many public relations faculty, saying "It is feared that integrated marketing communications is only an excuse for advertising agencies to engulf public relations in order to deal with the reduction in client budgets for mass media communications" (18). While some suggested that marketing schools were imperialist, others blamed journalism schools. Spotts, Lambert and Joyce (1998, 210) declared, "IMC is an opportunistic move – a marketplace survival strategy – developed by advertising agencies and schools of journalism and mass communication to respond to an industry shift toward marketing communication in a broad sense and away from advertising".

Wightman (1999), however, considered that the problem was bigger than any school alone and proposed that the culture of specialization within universities, where students were encouraged to take advertising or public relations majors and specialise in a particular field of communication study was to blame. Wightman suggests, "These students study hard and become the best specialised communicators money can buy. However, they have no concept of the overall picture of the communications environment within a corporation. They are also not prepared with the essential business principles that are crucial to success in earning a place among the dominant coalition" (22). Later studies still struggle with the balance between communication specialist and communication generalist and sometimes show little change in almost a decade of academic endeavour.

In a 2004 study by Roznowski, Reece and Daugherty (2004), which surveyed 94 marketing and communications professionals in Fortune 500 companies, 96% thought that all marketing and communications students should be taught the principles of IMC. More than half of those thought that IMC should be offered at the undergraduate as well as the graduate level. In terms of the disciplinary home, 41% thought IMC should be housed in communications schools, 31% in business, while 24% thought it should be housed in both. Their sentiment is not so different from that echoed a decade earlier. "If IMC is truly interdisciplinary, educators need to find ways to break down our own institutional barriers and functional-myopic walls in order to create a better well-rounded student who is prepared to take on the integrated business world" (Roznowski et al 2004, 54).

Taking this a step further, a study conducted in Australia (Kerr, Beede, Proud 2007) examined the content of IMC education that most interested advertising and public relations practitioners. Strategic areas such as strategy planning, communication planning, consumer behaviour and creative strategy were ranked highest by advertising professionals, while strategic planning, crisis and issue management and agency management topped the list for

public relations practitioners. In terms of professional training, preference for an IMC course was ranked 6th by advertising practitioners and 5th by their public relations counterparts. Supporting the findings of the Rose and Miller study more than a decade earlier, IMC tools such as direct marketing and promotion were of more interest to advertising than public relations practitioners.

These findings are also supported by a recent study by Battle, Morimoto and Reber (2008) which found that advertising employers sought recruits with a more job specific education to minimize need for in-house training than their public relations counterparts. Most of the advertising managers reported that their employees' duties often cross into public relations and marketing, mainly because other areas are short staffed or in need of certain skills such as strategic planning. Some public relations respondents said that budget concerns or the outsourcing of advertising work eliminated the need for a more communication generalist. The study concluded that many communication fields shared common skills and needs, supporting the notion of a more integrated curriculum. Reber et al 2003 also found students supported the teaching of broader communication skills, with 73% of students believing a combined communications degree would be more beneficial than more specialised education.

Clearly, IMC education presents a challenge to many advertising, public relations and IMC academics as well as university administrators. In the IMC Special Issue Editor in the Journal of Advertising in 2005, Charles Patti enumerated three such challenges to IMC educators. The first he declared was a need for an integrated, interdisciplinary approach to encapsulate the skills, expertise and talent in business, marketing and communication faculties. We have seen this same sentiment expressed repeatedly in the work of Rose and Miller (1994), Griffin and Pasadeos (1998), Wightman (1999), Roznowski et al (2004) and Battle et al (2008). Secondly, there is a need for learning materials that lead students into the

future, and finally, but perhaps most of all, there is a need for commitment to push IMC development. Patti (2005, 5) said, "One of the most exciting aspects about working in IMC is that there is so much yet to discover. This 'early days' status of IMC should encourage us to re-examine what we are teaching, how we are teaching, and how we are preparing our students for productive and satisfying careers."

So how have educators responded to these challenges? Perhaps the best description of the state of IMC education globally comes from an audit of IMC courses in six countries by Kerr, Schultz, Patti and Kim (2008). The study looked at the name, level of the program, whether it was a single course or an entire program and its disciplinary home. It found that most courses were called IMC in the US (79%), Taiwan (60%) and Korea (40%). They were more commonly known as marketing communications in the UK (75%), Korea (57%) and Australia (50%). Typically, they were single IMC courses, rather than IMC programs, running at the undergraduate in Korea, Australia and New Zealand and aimed at the graduate level in US (46%), the UK and Taiwan. The US also demonstrated a strength in executive education programs, suggesting that most IMC education in the US targeted the professional or the higher-degree student. IMC programs were mainly housed in the business schools in Australia, New Zealand and the UK and in the communication school in Korea. In the US, IMC courses are located in business (58%), communication (29%) and liberal arts (usually journalism 13%) (Kerr et al 2008).

Understanding the current state of IMC education, the study then sought to address one of Patti's challenges by looking for IMC champions who would push for IMC development. The study benchmarked curriculum development using the factors of diffusion (Rogers 1995) and suggested that "the development and diffusion of IMC curriculum is based on characteristics similar to all innovation (complexity, compatibility, relative advantage, observability, trialability), as well as the personal interests and social influences of those

academics who may be in a position to adopt an IMC curriculum" (Kerr et al 2008). It reported little evidence of academic leadership, apart from some IMC champions in the US such as Schultz and Duncan and Kitchen in the UK. It identified faculty familiarity and comfort levels with materials in previous courses, which created a reluctance to abandon material which has taken years to develop, as an obstacle to IMC diffusion. To this, it added a lack of appropriately qualified staff and textbooks, which were IMC in content, rather than just in name.

A subsequent study by Schultz, Kerr, Kim and Patti (2008) sought to define IMC from an educator's perspective by using a syllabi analysis to explore the content of the units, the delivery of IMC and the audience. While the views of practitioners have led to the development of IMC models and theory, it was hoped that what was being taught in the classroom would help define the discipline and build IMC theory.

In terms of content, five modules of content - marketing, communication, IMC, planning components and marketing communication tools – emerged from the syllabi analysis. "The content of the units studied appears to present IMC primarily as a process designed to assist in the coordination of marketing communication disciplines... sadly, the content analysed was almost devoid of any IMC constructs or theory. It was very reminiscent of a traditional marketing communication course or promotion management program rather than one devoted to the teaching understanding and practice of current-day IMC" (25).

Based on the analysis, Schultz et al (2008) proposed a three circles model of IMC theory development, as shown in Figure 1. They suggest that integration at its most simplest is the "development, organisation, alignment and implementation" of the three circles of audiences (people, organisations or stakeholders for whom the projects have been developed, the target of the IMC programs); delivery systems (method through which the programs will

be delivered); and the content (the information, messages or incentives). Each circle encompasses substantial theory and all three combined generate the magical synergy inherent in IMC.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

In conclusion, more recent studies on IMC education have moved away from the territorial debates to the more strategic issues of educational development. They have announced the expectations of stakeholders in the curriculum development process, investigated the process of curriculum development, identified the factors in IMC curriculum diffusion and developed a model for IMC education development. They have also audited current IMC teaching practice.

What we are still missing, perhaps, are some ideas of how the concepts explored in these papers may be implemented as best practice (Roznowski et al 2004). How we can create an integrated approach from the immovable sandstone of university structures and what the future may hold for IMC education. Using the Delphi method, the key questions raised by past studies have been asked of a panel of IMC champions, who understand and are actively involved in IMC education.

Research Questions and Methodology

The research questions have been drawn from the literature review and cluster around three reoccurring yet central themes – IMC's place in the university, the teaching, learning and research issues and the future of IMC education.

Part A: IMC'S place in the university environment

As early as 1993, academics were debating the disciplinary home of a discipline that has both marketing and communication in its title (Duncan, Caywood and Newsom 1993; Rose and Miller 1994; Griffin and Pasadeos 1998; Wightman 1999). The debate continues today (Roznowski et al 2004). Therefore, research question 1 explores IMC's home within the university setting.

RQ1: How should IMC be positioned and structured as an academic discipline in a university setting? Is it a business course or a part of the arts, liberal arts, communication departments? Where does it sit in relation to marketing or advertising? Is it a major study area in its own right or a minor or elective area of another discipline such as marketing?

Part B: IMC curriculum, learning and teaching and research issues

Regardless of where IMC is positioned within the university, academics still face the same challenges of making it work – how to develop the curriculum, what to teach and how to teach it. As the literature review showed, many studies looked at different aspects of these IMC educational issues (Caywood and Ewing 1991; Duncan, Caywood and Newsom 1993; Rose and Miller 1994; Griffin and Pasadeos 1998; Wightman 1999; Roznowski et al 2004; Patti 2005; Schultz et al 2008; Kerr et al 2008; Battle, Morimoto and Reber 2008). This literature raises the following three research questions.

RQ2: How should IMC curricula be developed? Should IMC be developed as a new course or is it a matter of modifying existing courses such as promotion management or ad management? Where should the content, the core constructs and the assessment come from? Is there an exemplary role model to borrow? What are the organisational or other obstacles to

good IMC curriculum? What external stakeholders should be active in the development of IMC programs?

RQ 3: What should students learn in an IMC course? What do you think should be in an ideal IMC course? How can we measure if students are learning?

RQ4: How should we teach IMC? Our teaching in marketing communication areas such as advertising and PR has largely been discipline specific, skills driven and activity based. Given that IMC is a more generalist discipline, how do we teach a discipline that combines, aligns and integrates?

A related and perhaps equally important issue is how the current research in the discipline is shaping the curricula (or not) and how research is incorporated into textbooks and other learning materials such as class resources (Patti 2005; Kerr et al 2008; Schultz et al 2008).

RQ 5: What is the role of IMC research in IMC curricula? Do you believe current IMC research is informing IMC practice? Why or what not? How do you introduce academic research or key IMC writers into your IMC course?

Part C: The challenges and the future for IMC Education

The literature has highlighted the challenges and even issued challenges to educators. Many of these challenges are similar to the complexities of implementing the discipline in practice (Rose and Miller 1994; Griffin and Pasadeos 1998; Schultz et al 2008). Some relate to the challenges of trying to implement any change in the rigid and immovable structure on which universities are inevitably founded (Wightman 1999). Others are perhaps part of the diffusion

process that hampers any new idea (Kerr et al 2008). These challenges are explored in the following three research questions.

RQ6: What challenges do you encounter in teaching an IMC course?

RQ7: What challenges do you see occurring in teaching an IMC course over the next ten years?

RQ8: What does the future hold for IMC educators?

A Delphi Approach

To explore the research questions and gain enlightenment and maximum consensus on these important issues in IMC education, a Delphi study was developed (Clark 2006). Pioneered by the RAND Corporation as a tool for technological forecasting, the Delphi method has been frequently applied in marketing research, tourism and sales forecasting and even advertising research (Richards and Curran 2002). Kelley (2007; 1998) has successfully applied this method for marketing education research.

The Delphi method uses an expert panel to deliver a collective, anonymous judgement on an issue or a problem. This judgement is precipitated by a number of waves of questionnaires, which are first open-ended and then seek calibration to find consensus. The series of responses converge towards a midrange or total group response, which is thought to be the true or correct answer to solve the problem (Best 1974; Larreche and Montgomery 1977; Taylor and Judd 1994; Kelley 2007).

There are a number of advantages in using the Delphi method. Firstly, the respondents are experts in the area. While this is the greatest benefit, it can also be the biggest downfall if

a strong panel is not recruited (Kelley 2007). Secondly, the process of reasoned consensus encourages thinking to move towards the best answer. And thirdly, all responses are anonymous, encouraging free thought and also allowing respondents to change their mind (Taylor and Judd 1994). This also eliminates some of the problems associated with face-to-face decision making, such as the halo effect, where some group members are intimidated by the key thinkers or dominant people in the group. It also eliminates the bandwagon effect, where coalitions form and influence decision making (Best 1974).

The main disadvantage in using the Delphi method is the cost in time and resources, as the method requires multiple informants and multiple waves of questionnaire (Bruggen 2007). The use of email as a Delphi tool quickens the process from months to weeks and carries the momentum of group discussion (Richards and Curran 2002, Kelley 2007).

Selection and recruitment of Expert Panel

The selection of the panel is possibly the most crucial decision in using the Delphi method (Kelley 2007). Undoubtedly, the key criteria must be the panel's expertise in the particular area. A challenge arises here as often the most experienced or qualified people are the most time poor. In terms of recruitment, 10 to 15 seems an appropriate size for an homogenous group (Taylor and Judd 1994). Heterogeneous groups require a larger panel from 15 to 30 (Larreche and Montgomery 1977; Taylor and Judd 1994).

The Delphi panel were recruited on the basis of two criteria. Firstly, their teaching and research expertise in the area of IMC. Secondly, their current teaching university to ensure a global representativeness. Four of the eleven respondents were US based, although all had

taught internationally. The remainder were key teachers in the UK, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

A pool of 15 people was selected for invitation to participate in the study. The timeframe did not suit three of these respondents, one accepted but did not participate, and the remaining 11 IMC educationalists contributed their expertise to the discussion. Table 1 shows the expertise of the panel in terms of its teaching experience, authorship of textbooks in the area and publication of journal articles on IMC and IMC education. It also shows their location by disciplinary home (business, journalism or communication) and geographically in the US, UK, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

The panel were sent the first open-ended questionnaire in December 2007, which they were asked to return within the week. Responses were analysed in the following week and a number of the panel's statements relevant to the research question were collated and incorporated into a second questionnaire. Participants were asked to rate their agreement with this series of panel-generated statements and to rate the probability of a future scenario on a scale of 0 (no agreement) to 100 (total agreement). The median response was sought and the statements ranked in terms of probability. Clarification was sought of any responses which fell outside the quartile range, although this was often supplied in the panel member's attached comments.

Findings

RQ1: How should IMC be positioned and structured as an academic discipline in a university setting?

There is not strong consensus that IMC is a study area in its own right, or even a separate discipline. It is seen, instead, as a key area of marketing, although it the panel warned that "marketing needs to broaden its thinking".

Even amongst our expert panel, there was no consensus on where IMC should be positioned in the university environment. However, there was strong agreement that IMC is often taught by both business and journalism. This arrangement was often seen as more "conflict" than "collaboration", with continued dispute over who owns "marketing" or "communication" and ultimately, who owns IMC. As a panel member commented, "Marketing is a term owned by the business school, so it raises problems when we try to offer IMC in a journalism school".

In terms of IMC's relationship with advertising and public relations, most of the panel felt very strongly that advertising and public relations degrees may be replaced by IMC, although there were two who disagreed equally as strongly. The same polarization was evident when the overwhelming majority felt that courses like promotion management or advertising management could be scraped if faculty had sufficient expertise to teach all aspects of IMC. Two of our panel felt that IMC could coexist without infringing upon the more discipline-based areas of advertising and public relations. As one commented, "I don't believe that IMC should be part of anything. It should sit beside advertising, marketing and public relations, as it is a major study area in its own right".

Perhaps the biggest obstacle to IMC's claim for university turf appears to be the IMC brand. It was felt that "few students (or professionals) know what IMC is, but they understand what they are getting with an advertising or pr degree". This lack of awareness often translates into a reduced demand for an IMC major, particularly at the undergraduate

level. Table 2 shows the panel's thinking and median response to the place of IMC in the university setting.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

RQ2: How should IMC curricula be developed?

There was strong consensus that the teaching of IMC had emerged from existing courses in advertising and promotion management. However, this was not felt to be the ideal path for curriculum development and the preference was to develop IMC as a new course, with new material, separate and distinct from advertising or public relations. IMC was seen as broader and more strategic than either of these more skills-oriented areas. It was also felt that IMC could save course and staff time by removing the duplication of having to take research, planning and campaigns courses in both advertising and public relations. It was strongly agreed that for the sake of the student, the curriculum must be integrated. One panel member commented, "Making sure the IMC course isn't simple duplicating promotion management or ad or pr campaigns. Hopefully the students get something new and different, but often they complain, "We've heard this before". That's why the whole curriculum needs to be overhauled in order to eliminate duplication".

The panel agrees that there was no single model for IMC curriculum development, although some educators supported the model developed by Northwestern University in Chicago. It was also suggested that in smaller and emergent markets such as Australia, New Zealand and Asia, perhaps a couple of universities in the region should specialise in IMC. This sentiment was not shared in the larger, more mature markets of the US and UK.

The panel identified the main obstacle to IMC curriculum development as the faculty themselves. They adapt, rather than embrace. Faculty lack the IMC knowledge and

experience or even the willingness to move outside their comfort zone. They find it hard to move away from the class notes, powerpoints and relevant resources they have invested years to develop. Nor do they have the support of dedicated IMC texts and resources to guide them, as these are little more than rebadged advertising or promotions management books. As one panel member commented, "The problem with faculty is that many pigeon hole themselves into a very narrow discipline and are unwilling to expand their own horizons ... It's the age old question of turf".

Again, we see some of the problems of implementing IMC in practice echoed in the academic environment. The panel note a lack of faculty understanding of what IMC is and an imperative for faculty to hold their own turf. Faculty adapt or build on what they have always taught, what they feel familiar with, or even what they have been required to teach, rather than embrace the substantive ideas and evolving concepts of IMC. This does not appear to be a rejection of IMC by faculty, but rather a rejection of change or a survival mechanism.

This turf war is amplified by the university culture of specialisation and inter-departmental conflict with other schools teaching similar subjects. This leads to an unproductive use of university resources as well as an annoying duplication for students.

In terms of external stakeholders who may make a worthy contribution to IMC curriculum development, the expert panel put alumni top of the list (median response 85%), followed by senior industry people (75%). The school advisory board was seen to be less effective in this role (60%) and external auditors a last resort (50%).

RQ 3: What should students learn in an IMC course?

An IMC course should not only address the contemporary and the generic, but also look ahead of practice to explore the emerging issues. It should be structured around the emergence of the IMC concept and its theoretical development, the strategic foundations of IMC, tools of IMC and look towards the future of IMC. In doing so, it should include customers, consumers and stakeholders, insight methods, behaviour metrics and a planning model. The consensus was that this should be a true IMC course, focused on IMC principles and practice, rather than taking a modified advertising or public relations perspective.

"Unfortunately, the teaching of IMC has emerged from existing courses in advertising, advertising management and promotion management. This has certain limitations because few instructors (and texts) break completely away from these areas. This results in IMC courses being essentially promotion management courses with a lecture or two about integration. Teaching true IMC is extremely difficult and I suspect done only at a very few universities."

The panel differentiated between the teaching of something called IMC, which was largely a repackaging of existing promotion management or advertising management courses, and curriculum that represented the true nature of IMC. They defined the repackaged promotions management as part of the lack of understanding of the discipline and the faculty resistance to change mentioned earlier. The true IMC course was broader and more strategic, covering emerging issues, IMC theoretical developments, strategic foundations, key concepts and models. This was only being taught at a handful of universities, as the panel acknowledged that most faculty do not understand IMC conceptually.

Like the discipline itself, it was felt that IMC education should be measureable. It was suggested that the best measure of students' learning were clear and concrete course objectives, directly linked to assessment outcomes (median agreement 90%). Another

measure might be employer feedback or reports from internship placement, although support for this was stronger in courses which contained an internship component.

RQ4: How should we teach IMC?

We are not only teaching integration, but we must integrate what we teach. The culture of specialisation in many universities encourages students to think in differentiated terms, looking for a point of difference, rather than a measure of consistency.

The generalist approach of IMC is often foreign to the more discipline-specific content in advertising and public relations or even most university programs and hence, the culture of specialisation invades the student mindset. IMC may require a consistent and empathic approach to guide the students to understanding, which may be enhanced by drawing on cross-disciplinary and integrative teaching strategies, including lecturers from multiple disciplines. Another way to bring it all together is to include a capstone or a client project that demands an integrated solution.

One panel member commented, "It is easy to teach the characteristics and management of advertising, publicity, sales promotion, personal selling ect. Students see the relevance of this. However, they are only moderately interested in the concepts of IMC. This then requires the instructor to demonstrate its value."

Teaching IMC may take time to integrate new ideas and concepts, according to another panel member. "I do find that students take several class sessions to understand what we're doing and how and why it's different than promotion or advertising management. But seeing this progress is satisfying in itself".

So how should we teach IMC? Slowly, giving students time to absorb and integrate the ideas of a more generalist discipline. Demonstrate how integration works. Use capstones and projects and cases. Use multidisciplinary teams in the educational process to show how it cross-functional teams might be championed in the organisational environment. This is summarised in Table 3.

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

RQ5: What is the relationship between teaching IMC and IMC research?

The consensus is that IMC research is not informing IMC practice. The industry neither cares nor finds value in what academics are researching. It is felt that the industry has borrowed the language and the concepts of IMC, without really understanding academia's interpretation of IMC. While the industry's view of IMC may be different, the panel felt that it still may be valid. In fact, practice could even be ahead of theory. One panel member observes, "Perhaps the question of agencies getting IMC (or not) is more relevant if rephrased in terms of what academics are not getting about practitioner-based IMC".

Another comments, "Much academic research seems irrelevant to practitioners, just as a lot of practitioner's research seems to be ignored by academics (for example, the tracking studies reported by UK Journal AdMap)".

This brings our own view of IMC into question. Perhaps we seek to define IMC too much and end up limiting our view of IMC – especially IMC research, when it is thought there is much to borrow from traditional research tools or even from related disciplines such as relationship marketing or direct marketing. Perhaps as one panel member suggests, "all that is IMC may not be called IMC". Table 4 presents the panel's responses.

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

Strategies for incorporating academic research into courses include the provision of readings, embedding the research into lecture and tutorial materials, student projects or discussions centred on research topics and through nominated text books.

Based on the findings so far, a mind map has been developed to bring together a visual summary the panel's thinking and agreement on the complex and interrelated issues of IMC curriculum. This is shown in Figure 2.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

RQ6: What challenges do you encounter in teaching an IMC course?

The teaching challenges today do not appear much different to those raised in the initial papers on IMC. They include keeping up-to-date, territorial claims on IMC from business and journalism and resulting duplication of courses, and a lack of understanding of IMC by faculty.

A panel member complains, "Many advertising and public relations faculty don't understand IMC conceptually. Most weren't trained within the IMC paradigm. If a professor who taught advertising and pr is now expected to teach within an IMC curriculum, I'll bet most of the courses will actually be the same advertising and pr classes, just with a different name. It will take time to hire IMC experts to teach the IMC curriculum and replace traditional ad and pr profs." The panel consensus on these challenges is presented in Table 5.

INSERT TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE

RQ7: What challenges do you see occurring in teaching an IMC course over the next ten years?

There are inherent problems facing all university courses over the next ten years, such as funding, shortages of research professors and a lack of faculty leadership. But in addition to these, IMC educators must address some unique challenges of their own. Emerging technologies, the changed media landscape, the consumer-empowered marketing environment and IMC measurement are all contemporary challenges not expected to be resolved in the short term. But like all academics with too many challenges and too little time, sorting out the trivial from those that are significant may be the key.

A second mindmap has been developed from the findings to show the obstacles to strong and progressive IMC curriculum development. This map of the challenges and obstacles facing IMC champions is shown in Figure 3.

<div align="center">INSERT FIGURE 3 ABOUT HERE</div>

RQ8: What does the future hold for IMC educators?

Some degree of optimism, perhaps. Integration becomes inevitable and the discipline becomes more accepted by the industry and students. Academics will reach consensus on key IMC constructs and some research gaps will be filled. Academics and practitioners will find common ground. There is also the thought that maybe IMC will change in name or blend in with a more mainstream business concept, which will put it at the forefront of business education. See Table 6 for the panel's view of the future.

<div align="center">INSERT TABLE 6 ABOUT HERE</div>

One panel member comments, "I'm optimistic. When TV advertising was all you had to do, top management could do marketing communications themselves without relying on experts. Now no company can ignore the integration of TV and new media, and this only heightens the need to integrate, from the perspective of each individual customer, the

communications they receive along the buying funnel. Experts able to so this, and still generate a return on marketing investment, will be in big demand".

Another observes, "It is impossible to know what the future landscape will look like, but it will be different. So, in many ways a good IMC teacher must be a futurist, tuned into consumer trends, keeping pace with cool hunters, the wired segments, and fast company magazines. There are many ways to do this – the point is that it must be done in order to understand what the environment is for IMC and how IMC might be influencing this environment".

The final mindmap is plan for the future and is shown in Figure 4. When assembled together, the three mindmaps draw on the collective insight and experience of the panel to give us the recipe for an integrated IMC educational environment, identify the problems inherent in its development and then providing us with a plan of attack.

INSERT FIGURE 4 ABOUT HERE

Limitations and Conclusion

As mentioned in the methodology section, the recruitment of the Delphi panel is one of the most critical tasks in this research project. While the selection of IMC champions were justified as a globally representation of some of the leading IMC educators, it must be acknowledged that they are only a sample and there are undoubtedly other alternative views that have not been raised by the panel. There are also other IMC educational issues outside the parameters of this study and certainly many of the issues raised within this broad-based study are deserving of more in-depth investigation. However, the methodology as much as possible allowed the panel to direct the discussion. So hopefully, the issues uncovered are relevant, contemporary or even emergent, as well as universal.

The most confronting issues are visualised in the last mindmap. The first and perhaps most difficult issue to resolve is the culture of specialisation at most universities and many workplaces. How can a generalist degree exist alongside a university imperative to specialise? Does this require a student to incorporate a number of specialisations in order to become a generalist? For example, if you take an advertising major plus a public relations major, does that make you more equipped to understand or practice IMC?

This culture of specialisation also fuels the turf wars between departments, hampers cross-disciplinary collaboration and escalates the duplication in teaching materials. The faculty, or course, must take some responsibility for this. Clearly, a knowledgeable faculty, motivated to embrace IMC, will not only empower student learning, but also breakdown university silos.

One way to support faculty would be to create a dedicated IMC text that included IMC theory, constructs, models and examples of practice to support lecturers less familiar with the content area. Another is collaboration and the creation of an IMC academic community. The creation of the Delphi panel demonstrated a likeness of mind and purpose that would be well-shared across IMC educators. And finally, we need to grow the IMC brand, so that faculty understand and embrace it and students list it as their preferred area of study.

So it appears that some will continue to serve up apples and oranges. Some will even call an apple or an orange, or an apple and an orange, IMC. Other IMC champions, however, patiently cut and mix and combine to create the perfect fruit salad, delivering something far greater than we expected to find on the menu.

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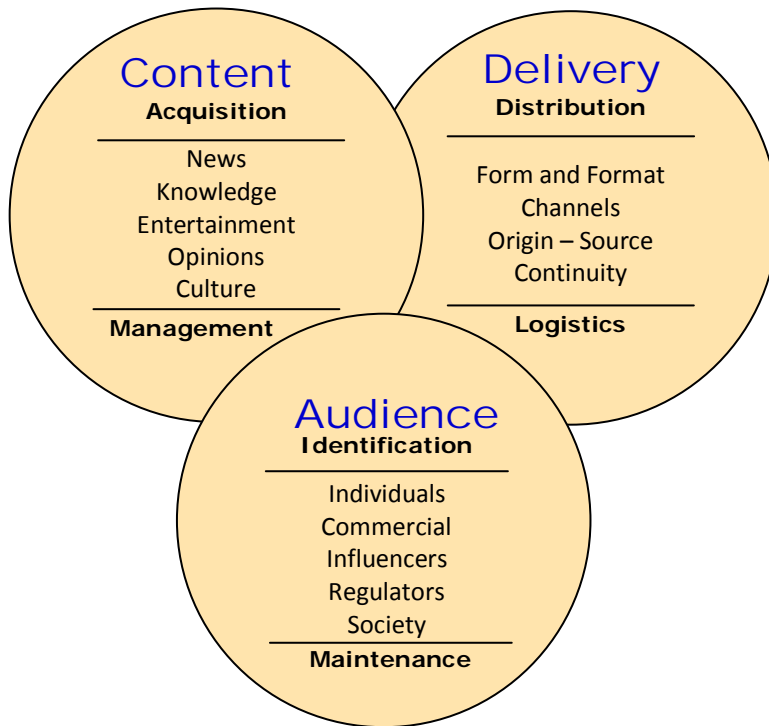
Figure 1. Schultz, Kerr, Kim and Patti's (2007) Three Circles of IMC Theory

Development Model

	Leading Teacher	Text book in related area	Publishes in IMC	Publishes in IMC Education	Discipline Home	Course or program	Years of teaching	Region
1.	√	√	√	√	Journal-ism	Program/ executive education	20+	US
2.	√	√	√	√	Business	Course/ program	20+	US
3.	√		√	√	Journal-ism	Course/ program	20+	US
4.	√		√	√	Journal-ism	Course	5-10	US
5.	√		√	√	Business	Course/ program	10-2	UK
6.	√		√		Commun-ication	Program	10-2	ASIA
7.	√		√		Commun-ication	Course	5-10	ASIA
8.	√			√	Business	Course/ program	10-2	AUST
9.	√	√	√		Commun-ication	Course	5-10	AUST
10.	√				Business	Course	5-10	NZ
11.	√	√			Business	Course	20+	NZ

Table 1. Description of Delphi panel

Statement	Median
IMC is often taught in both business as promotion management and in journalism by advertising and PR faculty.	95
IMC should be treated as key area in marketing.	90
IMC is a part of marketing, but marketing needs to broaden its thinking.	90
Often IMC is a conflict between business and communication schools as to who owns "marketing" or "communication" or "IMC".	80
Courses like promotion management and advertising management could be scraped if, and I repeat if, the faculty knows enough to teach all aspects of IMC.	80
IMC should take a managerial perspective and teach the subject from point of view of the organization.	80
Ad and PR degrees may be replaced with an IMC major.	75
One of the negatives of an IMC major is branding. That is, few students (or professionals) know what IMC is, but they understand what they are getting with an advertising or PR degree.	70
IMC is a major study area in its own right.	60
I do not believe that IMC is a discipline unto itself.	55
Often IMC is a collaboration between business and communication schools.	50
IMC can be positioned as any and all of these – arts, liberal arts, business, communication, journalism.	10

Table 2. Median response to disciplinary home of IMC.

Statement	Median
Instructor needs to understand that the integration of ideas needs to take place and must be able to guide students in this process of understanding.	90
Build a capstone that demands a fully integrated plan.	90
Project based. Use client projects that require a more integrated solution.	90
Using detailed case studies or interactive web based studies to solve a problem.	85
Effective cross-disciplinary and integrative teaching strategies, using multi-disciplinary teaching teams.	80
We should teach a discipline-specific, skills-driven and activity-based course.	80
Integrate the key elements of the functional fields and spice it up with interdisciplinary fields such as textual metrics, databases, descriptive and analytical stats.	70

Table 3. Median response to how IMC should be taught.

Statement	Median
There is a large amount of traditional marketing and marketing communication and PR research that can be used to support an IMC course.	90
Industry has opportunistically used the IMC language and concepts without internalizing the basic philosophy.	85
Industry may have adopted a different but no less valid interpretation of IMC in practice.	85
Practice may be ahead of theory.	80
All that is IMC may not be called IMC.	80
I doubt that IMC research is affecting IMC practice.	75
Practitioners may find little value in academic research.	75
I don't think the industry cares what academics are researching.	70
While research is relevant to practice, there are many obstacles to IMC implementation.	70
There is concern amongst academics that real world IMC practice is not evolving or moving through expected developmental stages.	70
Academia may not be prepared to modify its vision of IMC on basis of real world practice.	50

Table 4. Incorporation of IMC research in curriculum design.

Statement	Median
Keeping up with the latest developments.	85
Bringing a business approach with corporate goals not just communication goals.	85
Marketing is a term owned by the business school, so it raises problems when we try to offer IMC classes in a journalism school.	85
Many faculty don't understand IMC conceptually.	80
Making sure the IMC course isn't simply duplicating promotion management or advertising or PR campaigns.	80
If a professor who taught advertising and PR is now expected to teach IMC, I'll bet most of the courses will actually be the same advertising and PR classes.	80
Making sure I know enough about all aspects or have someone to give a specific lecture on certain aspects eg data mining	80
Desire by students to run to tactics or to get overly hung up on strategy.	75
Same challenges as for any other course in terms of maintaining current knowledge and teaching an increasingly diverse range of students.	70
Unteaching some traditional marketing (note not market) values.	70
It takes students several class sessions to understand what we're doing and why it is different from promotion or advertising management.	40
Students struggle to understand the differences between IMC and advertising and PR.	25

Table 5. Challenges in teaching an IMC course.

Statement	Median Probability
No company can ignore the integration of TV and new media and this only heightens the need to integrate from the perspective of each individual customer, the communications they receive along the buying funnel.	95
IMC lecturers will update their knowledge of IMC.	80
US universities are not set up to provide newly minted PhDs who know anything about a broad picture.	80
The future for IMC educators is bright as the discipline receives better acceptance in industry and better employment prospects for students.	75
University programs will either offer a broad strategic communication degree such as IMC or an intense creatively focused advertising degree (like portfolio schools do in the US).	75
If IMC becomes blended with a more mainstream business theme/ideas/concept, it might truly be on the forefront of business education.	70
Some of the challenges and major research gaps will be filled.	70
Academia and practitioners may find some common ground.	70
Academics will reach consensus on key IMC concepts and definition.	70
There will be continue to be confusion on what IMC can do for curriculum and for students.	60
The courses may be called something other than IMC – maybe strategic communication or brand communication.	60
There will be a false belief that IMC replaces advertising, PR and other functional areas.	50
The US academic system is not set up to combine advertising, PR and marketing.	50
IMC will experience slow growth, with some acceleration as adoption grows.	50
As long as people continue to teach promotion or advertising management, their jobs will be secure because the student population has little idea what IMC is.	45
There will be traditional longing for traditional fields.	40
Unless IMC merges with other discipline areas or business/marketing areas, the future for IMC educators is not very bright.	40

Table 6. Mean probability of future challenges.