

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION, INSTRUMENT OF MODERN ORGANIZATIONS DEVELOPMENT IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide, on the one hand, a conceptual framework of the importance that integrated marketing communication has acquired today and, on the other hand to outline an overview of the main communication tools used in Social Media.. The methodology used was the literature review. The main conclusions of this study show that marketing communication environment has changed greatly. Technology and the Internet have fundamentally changed the way people and businesses communicate and interact. Integrated marketing communication is the means by which companies inform, persuade and remind consumers, directly or indirectly, on the products and / or services they market. Consequently, integrated marketing communication has become a fundamental aspect, a business vision and an essential factor in the success of marketing activity. Most of today's businesses are achieved through digital networks that are designed to connect people and companies. The online environment has fundamentally changed consumer notions about comfort, speed, price, product and services information. The result is a new way to create value for customers and build long-term and profitable relationships with them.

Key words: *integrated marketing communication, modern communication instruments, online environment, consumer behavior , social media.*

JEL Classification: *M30, M31, M37*

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive environment, organizations must constantly communicate with current and potential stakeholders, to offer high quality products and / or services, to establish attractive prices and to facilitate their access to customers. Therefore, marketing communication is the focus of all these activities, given that consumer perceptions and attitudes towards certain products and / or services may be influenced by communicational messages sent by the company (Yeboah and Atakora, 2013).

According to Kitchen and Schultz (2001), the concept of integrated marketing communication, initially considered the needs and interests of consumers, starting from the assumption that the integration of its components is a value both for consumers and for companies. Today it is a fact that the market is led and influenced by consumer.

As the market is saturated by products and / or services, most companies try to differentiate themselves by providing information on their functional attributes through communicational messages. However, these features have become very easy to be copied by competitors. Therefore, the challenge to differentiate lies with the marketers and communication specialists, who shall transmit these emotional and/or rational values that can influence the purchasing behavior of consumers. In this regard, identifying those external stimuli that could become key factors in designing a communicational message and that can therefore, influence consumer's decision and choice to purchase a product represents a strategic aspect.

The challenges facing global businesses and the people who lead them are now, more than ever, intertwined in the direct empowerment and involvement of customers and stakeholders. Social technologies, on a mass scale, connect people in ways that facilitate sharing information, thereby reducing the opportunities for marketplace exploitation—whether by charging more than a competing supplier for otherwise identical goods and services or charging anything at all for products that simply don't work (Evans and McKee, 2010). Purchase decisions are now influenced by complex networks of friends, family, and peers. The new market winners will be the companies that excel at identifying and engaging with their customers' influencers across the Social Media (Paul May, Founder and CEO, BuzzStream, Austin, TX).

The tools used in Social Media offers: the opportunity to understand, first-hand, what markets are saying, the opportunity to identify specific influencers and to quantify the impact that Social Media has as a result on

markets and the businesses and organizations that serve them, and the opportunity to learn faster, to adapt more quickly, and to build and bring to market the next generation of globally acceptable, sustainable goods and services (Evans and McKee, 2010).

II. THE EVOLUTION OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

With regard to the concept of integrated marketing communication has appeared a variety of definitions. In table 1 are presented a series of representative definitions of this concept.

Table 1. Integrated marketing communication (IMC) – reference definitions

Definitions of IMC	Author
<i>“A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan, able to evaluate the strategic role of highly diverse communication tools – for example, advertising in general, direct response, sales promotion and public relations – and to combine these tools to ensure clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact by integrating separate messages in a unified structure”</i>	<i>American Association of Advertising Agencies (1989)</i>
<i>„ Strategic coordination of all messages and media used by an organization in order to influence the perception of the value of a brand”.</i>	<i>Duncan & Everett (1993)</i>
<i>„Drafting and implementation process of future programs of communication with current and potential customers”.</i>	<i>Schultz (1996)</i>
<i>“A process that involves managing and organizing all "agents" in the analysis, planning, implementation and control of business communication components, respectively contacts, messages and promotional tools geared towards a target audience carefully selected so as to obtain the largest economy, efficiency, effectiveness, consistency and intensification of the communication efforts leading to the achievement of corporate marketing objectives”.</i>	<i>Pickton & Broderick (2001)</i>
<i>"The process of managing customer relationships that lead to the creation of a brand value [...]a cross-functional process used for creating and maintaining profitable relationships with customers and stakeholders through strategic control or influence that these groups have sent messages and the encouragement based on factual data, of a dialogue with them”.</i>	<i>Tom Duncan (2002)</i>
<i>„A process that includes planning, creation, integration and implementation of various media, such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing etc., through which a product / brand addresses its target audience”.</i>	<i>Terence Shimp (2003)</i>
<i>„ The concept that a company integrates and coordinates multiple channels of communication to send a clear, consistent and compelling message about the organization and its products”.</i>	<i>Kotler (2003)</i>
<i>„Integrated marketing communication is a process that can develop, implement and evaluate programs of persuasive communication with current and potential customers, employees, associations and other relevant audiences inside or outside the organization. Its purpose is to generate both financial effects in the short term, and build profitable customer relationships in the long term”.</i>	<i>Belch & Belch (2003)</i>
<i>“An approach that involves a new way to conceive and realize the communication with the market, which requires effective coordination of various communication tools in marketing [...] with other activities within a company that also influences the picture or how the products or brands are perceived by consumers”.</i>	<i>Rodriguez (2006)</i>
<i>„Coordination and integration of all communication tools in an ongoing program in order to maximize their impact on consumers”.</i>	<i>Kenneth & Baack (2007)</i>
<i>“The concept and practice of aligning symbols, messages, procedures and behaviors, for a company to communicate with clarity, consistency and continuity within and outside formal organizational boundaries”.</i>	<i>Christensen, Firat & Torp (2008)</i>
<i>„An interactive and systemic planning process and cross-functional optimization of messages, in order to communicate with coherence and transparency to achieve synergies and encourage profitable relationships on short, medium and long term”.</i>	<i>Kitchen and Del Barrio-Garcia (2012)</i>

Over time integrated marketing communication specialists have provided a number of definitions that have served to snap a picture of its evolution from a conceptual standpoint. So, the first definition proposed by the American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1989, highlighted the critical role that it has integrated marketing communication, which is to transmit the target audience clear and consistent message using in parallel

several tools of communication. In 1993, Duncan and Everett caught the definition given of the concept of integrated marketing communication a very important aspect, which organizations you should consider, namely strategic coordination of all messages and communication tools to influence consumers perception about the brand and / or company. Don Schultz, professor emeritus-in-service of integrated marketing communications at Northwestern University and one of the architects of the integrated marketing communication philosophy, considers integrated marketing communication as a process of elaboration and implementation of future programs of communication with current and potential customers. Pickton și Broderick, in 2001, brought a significant improvement to the concept of integrated marketing communication, meaning that in the definition offered they captured the importance of the analysis process, planning, implementation and monitoring of messages and communication tools used by a company to achieve the objectives of communication in terms of efficiency, effectiveness and coherence. One ayear later, Tom Duncan, author of "Principles of advertising and integrated marketing communication" and professor at Northwestern University, USA, through the definition offered to the concept of integrated marketing communication has highlighted its role as a cross-functional process used to create and maintain profitable relationships with customers and stakeholders. Terence Shimp, professor at University of South Carolina, in 2003, offered a new perspective on the concept of integrated marketing communication, considering necessary the coverage of some steps, such as planning, creation, integration and implementation of various means of communication such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing etc., through which a product / brand addresses its target audience. Several years later (2006), Rodriguez considered this concept a new way to conceive and realize the communication with the market, which requires effective coordination of various communication tools in marketing with other activities within a company that also affects the image or the way the products or brands are perceived by the consumers. Christensen, Firat and Torp, in 2008, offer a new vision of the concept of integrated marketing communication, specifically they stress the importance of aligning symbols, messages, procedures and behaviors by a company, so that it can communicate with clarity, consistency and continuity within and outside formal organizational boundaries. In 2012, Kitchen and Del Barrio-Garcia considered integrated marketing communication as the process through which companies plan and optimize the messages conveyed in order to communicate with coherence and transparency and create and maintain profitable relationships on short, medium and long term with the customer.

In conclusion, the concept of integrated marketing communication has evolved considerably, increasingly more authors appreciating as being relevant in any communicational action a series of aspects that aim to analyze, plan, integrate, coordonate, optimize the messages and media by an organization aiming to send a clear, consistent and compelling message about products and / or services, to maximize the impact on consumers and to generate financial effects on short term and to build profitable customer relationships on a long term.

III. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN THE ACTUAL CONTEXT

There are a number of reasons why specialists use integrated marketing communication. A fundamental reason is that they understand the value of integration at a strategic level, the various components of marketing communication. By coordinating all communicative nature efforts, , organizations can avoid overlapping the instruments of communication, their synergetic usage and and developing effective programs.

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) has undoubtedly contributed to the development of the most important communication tools in the last decade of the 20th century, despite the fact that most theories and contributions in terms of integrated marketing communication approach are very recent. Many organizations consider integrated marketing communication as a key competitive advantage associated with marketing (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999).

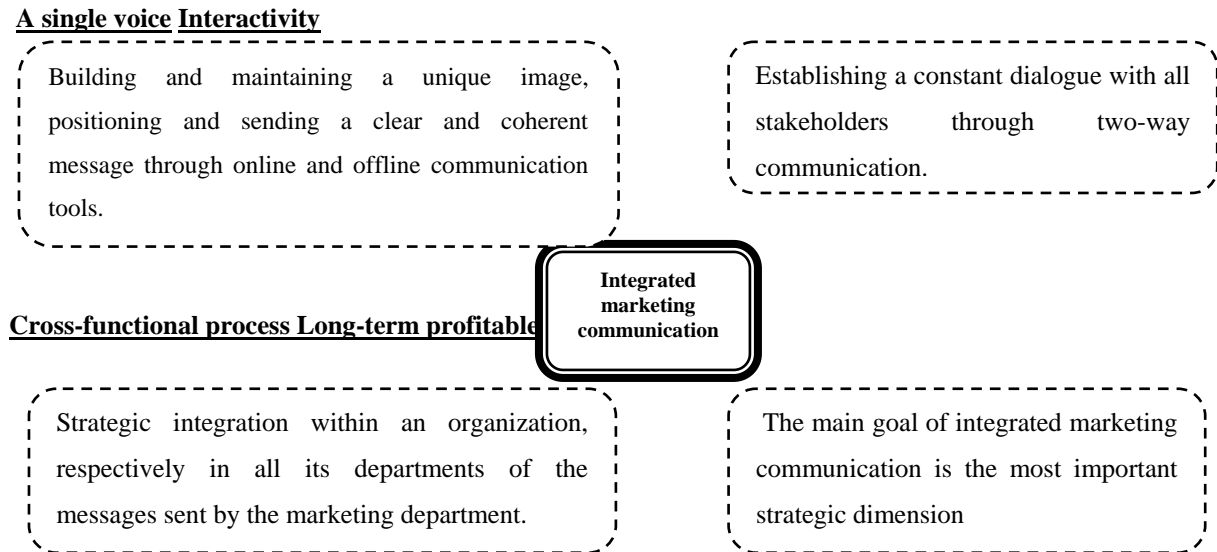
In a global market characterized by high dynamism and fierce competition, the challenge for most companies is to identify the most effective ways through which to communicate with consumers so that they understand the benefits resulting from the purchase and consumption of goods and / or services (Clow, 2010). Consequently, integrated marketing communication has become a fundamental aspect, a business vision and an essential factor in the success of marketing activities. Its importance has increased considerably in recent decades, given the fact that marketing and communication have become two inseparable activities, all companies using various forms of marketing communication in order to present the products to their target audience (Shimp, 2003).

According to Nowak and Phelps (1994), the success of an integrated marketing communication campaign is to change positively the image of a mark and buying behavior. Factors such as, increasing global competition, technological progress and consumer information extremely fast, are forcing companies to undertake communication efforts with a strong impact on the target audience (Sisodia and Telrandhe, 2010).

In practice, the impact of integrated marketing communication activity on consumer behavior is often sequentially, particularly in situations where the buying process involves several stages. However, timing of exposure is an issue that sequential communication is still an unexplored aspect in the context of resource efficiency. Integrated marketing communication enables organizations to communicate with their target audiences through multiple channels, such as media advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, public

relations, online marketing etc. Consumer purchasing behavior can be influenced by communication messages sent through these channels of communication (Kitchen and Schultz, 2001).

Figure 1. The dimensions of integrated marketing communication



Source: Remaking after Porcu, L., Del Barrio-Garcia, S., Kitchen, Ph., p.15, 2012

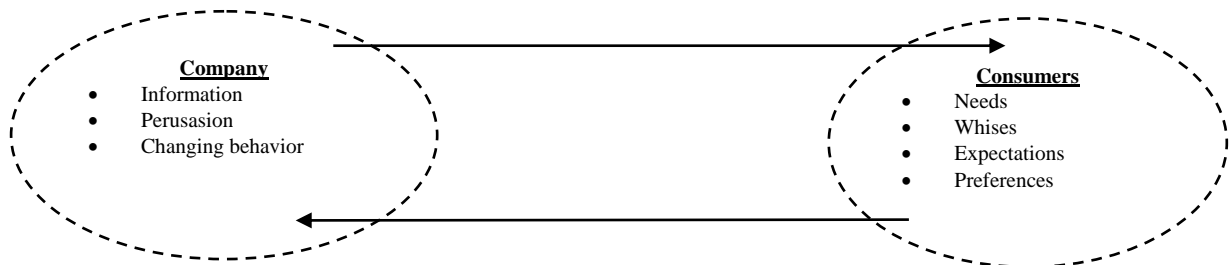
As consumers turn to as many as possible sources of information, the value of integrated marketing communication has increased considerably. Highly targeted, integrated marketing communication campaigns are based on the strengths of existing means of communication to favorably influence the behavior of target audience. Designing an effective message and selecting the most suitable instrument of communication are important steps in terms of creating and maintaining consumer preferences for a product / brand or company.

Integrated marketing communication purpose is to influence or change, directly, actual or potential consumer behavior. This takes into account all sources by which a consumer comes into contact with a product or brand as potential channels of transmission of the message and include all relevant means of communication consumer can become receptive to.

Integrated marketing communication process begins from the consumers, representing the starting point in determining the types of messages and channels that will satisfy their need for information, conviction and action. Associating a product / service with communication tools - advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations, online marketing etc. – must be included in the message sent to the company, so that the company to have various contact sources. Energy use in integrated marketing communication means actually "speaking with one voice". Coordination of messages and means of communication is essential to build a solid picture of the product / brand and for inducing the consumer to action.

Figure 2. Changing the role of communication from a consumer perspective

Means of communication / Message



Information, ideas, opinions, attitudes

Source: Olimpia Oancea, *Integrated marketing communication*, Sitech Publisher, Craiova, , p. 26, 2013

Creative integrated marketing communication programs can support organizations organizations in their efforts to ensure the sustainability of created image of a product / brand or even the company itself. Today, organizations must adapt to new realities in the environmentin which act and to adopt integrated marketing communication as the means by which they can develop lasting relationships with both customers and stakeholders (Laric and Lynagh, 2010).

Integrated marketing communication's role is to build and strengthen profitable relationships with actual and potential customers and to generate synergy by coordinating all components of communicational mix into a coherent program that can have maximum effect. Communication is one of the most important activities that can ensure long-term success of organizations. If they accept that their communication is the foundation for all relationships with consumers it is also necessary to accept that only an integrated approach to marketing communication can provide a sustainable competitive position.

IV. MODERN INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOOLS - SOCIAL MEDIA

Social Media is becoming more important, as people search for new ways of communicating with each other and aggregating information at the same time. The success of Social Media however, cannot be attributed to information and the ability to listen to what others publish on the Internet. One has to keep in mind that relationships are a part of human life and people tend to bond naturally with others. An emotional value is sometimes as important, as the factual value of the message. The rapid success of portals like Facebook, Instagram or YouTube are a perfect illustration (Sedkowski, 2016).

Social Media is a collection of online platforms and communication tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, experiences, etc., and is designed to facilitate online conversations and interactions between groups of people. Social Media is a communication platform. Social networking is the act of connecting social media platforms. Social Media is the way companies join conversations in an authentic and transparent way to build relationships with current and potential customers (Doreen Moran, Digital and Social Marketing Strategist). Terms "Social Media" and "social networking" are very often used incorrectly. So that, "Social Media" is the umbrella term for a variety of web tools and applications that enable a community to come together, to communicate and to generate ideas and opinions. Social Media activates social networks, generates and provides access to content.

A social network is a site that uses one or more of Social Media instruments in order to provide connectivity, interaction, communication and information exchange between people (Simon, 2010). Boyd and Ellison (2008) defined social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.

At the international level it has been developed a number of social networks and their impact on consumer behavior today is increasingly higher. Further, there will be presented the main online communication tools used in Social Media.

Facebook

Facebook is a web-based, interactive network that allows users to share information and thoughts over a wide area. It makes possible a connection to those with shared interests across political, economic and geographic borders (National Association of Counties, 2016). Facebook is the most popular social network in the world and the most comprehensive suite of marketing tools in Social Media.

Facebook is a social networking website launched in February 2004. The founder is Mark Zuckerberg, back when he was a student at Harvard. Although, when the site was originally launched, it was limited only to Harvard students, later, the privilege was extended to high school students and then it could be used worldwide (Boyd, 2008). Since July 2010, Facebook has more than 500 million active users. In January 2009, Facebook was ranked as the most used social network worldwide. Also in May 2010, Google announced that the social network Facebook was the most visited site in the world (Times, 2010). Facebook users can create a personal profile, add other users as friends and can make exchange messages, including automatic notifications, photos and comments when they want to update their personal profile. In addition, Facebook users can create communities of people with common interests, whether at work, school etc.

YouTube

The videos are now an essential part of any successful social marketing strategy and of generating leads. According to Forbes, three quarters of executives surveyed said at work are viewing videos on business websites at least once a week. Optimizing this channel to get as many as possible leads is to create videos that are designed both to entertain and to educate the visiting public. Objectives should be based on raising awareness of the company or products and / or services provided by it, providing information and humanizing the organization. The next step is to optimize these videos using keywords, giving them the chance to be found in any search on Google engine (Marketo, 2014).

MySpace

MySpace is a social networking site, which is headquartered in Beverly Hills, California. In 2006, MySpace became the most popular social networking site in the United States, but in 2008 was taken over by its main competitor Facebook, which officially became the most popular social networking site worldwide. Approximately 43.2 million network users per month visit the social networking MySpace. A unique feature of MySpace users is the ability to customize your profile information to provide detailed information about themselves and the main areas of interest (Natta, 2010).

MySpace has a number of advantages and functions as an advertising platform on Facebook and YouTube. To have a user base larger than both companies, statistics show that users spend more time on MySpace than the other two sites. MySpace provides an important way for companies to reach a global audience. Moreover, MySpace offers a multitude of options for advertisers: platform with applications similar to Facebook for groups of users with common interests, the steady stream of traditional online advertising methods through the website are just some of the ways through which corporations can reach consumers (Mrinal, 2008).

Twitter

“Twitter is a web-based, rapid-fire information and opinion network made up of 140-character messages called “Tweets.” Spaces and punctuation count toward this limit, so Twitter has its own kind of shorthand that you will begin to learn” (National Association of Counties, 2016).

Twitter appeared in 2006, gaining popularity primarily because it offered several different options, such as micro-blogging and secondly, because it was used by many celebrities (Jasra, 2010). As of 2011, Twitter had 200 million registered users and is one of the 10 most popular websites in the online environment. Twitter is a vibrant community where companies can collect leads and bring together thought leaders to discuss relevant topics in the industry in which it operates. Also, Twitter is one of the most effective canvassing channels used to gather feedback from customers about specific products offers, as well as a forum for prospective customers to discover more about the company and what can provide (Marketo, 2014).

LinkedIn

“LinkedIn is a social networking website for organizations and people in professional occupations. Launched in 2003, it currently reports more than 175 million registered users. LinkedIn is, as TechRepublic commented, “the de facto tool for professional networking” (National Association of Counties, 2016). LinkedIn is the largest professional network online, with 161 million members in over 200 countries. It can be used, like Facebook and Twitter, as a generator of leads. LinkedIn is sometimes considered only as a Social Media platform, therefore it does not have in mind that this is a professional site that has the capacity to support generating the leads. LinkedIn offers on one hand the ability to create a personal profile and it can be permanently updated and, on the other hand, an additional value in many aspects, such: (a) joining new groups in order to expand the circle of contacts and get as multiple connections; (b) posting links with content, so that it becomes a source of information and to attract connections; (c) participating to Q & A (questions and answers) to maintain its position of leaders; (d) building a LinkedIn page for your company in order to position themselves in relation to other existing companies.

Google+

Google+ is a social network that lets you send links, videos, photos and other contents of people who have similar interests (Google Romania, 2016). Google+ quickly became an essential part of any strategy of Social Media. With currently over 90 million users, Google+ plans to increase their number by the fact that all Gmail users are required to create an account on Google+. Google+ also plays a very important role in the business of Search Engine Optimization of a company because it facilitates its appearance in search results. Google+ page is a good opportunity for a company to offer a complete picture of the whole business. Google search engine results are more relevant when taking into account the social media connections. Therefore, an important aspect is entering keywords within the information posted on different social networks so that they lead to displaying the company in the Google search network. Google's search algorithm includes customized results attracted in particular from Google+ network (Marketo, 2014).

Pinterest

Every day, millions of people use Pinterest to explore their own interests, to find products they want to buy or to connect with people who share common interests. A "pin" is an image or video that can be added by any user in Pinterest network. "The pins" can be added directly from websites or applications by using the Pin It button. Pinterest network users can watch all the panels of other users or just those that most wake interest. Any Social Media strategy that uses Pinterest network has to start with the company website by using high quality images. It is also very important that the Pin It button to be added on site to facilitate the access to future users of this network (Marketo, 2014).

Foursquare

Foursquare is a location-based social networking website launched in March 2009, and has become one of the most popular location based social networks. For brands, Foursquare provides advertisers' ways to connect with audiences that love the things they offer, in the real world. Pinpoint optimizes ad analytics, targeting and measurement, and is the only programmatic platform that has the first-party location data to ensure accuracy and quality (foursquare.com, 2016). Foursquare is an application based on a social network that can be used to locate or announcement of events online. This location-based service has over 30 million users worldwide. Each user on Foursquare can create a profile and add friends. The software provides users GPS location capabilities. Furthermore the application allows users to use the check-in option in proximity to locations where they are, and to share these check-ins with their friends on social communities like Foursquare, Twitter or Facebook. Also, an event announced on the social network Foursquare can get instant popularity by "mouth to mouth" communication. The new version of the application, besides its new look, benefits from improved functionality. Its users may obtain information about almost any location without having to first use check-in option. Foursquare lets you add events and connect to Facebook and Twitter accounts (Marketo, 2014).

Xing

XING is the largest business network in the DACH region: Germany, Austria, Switzerland and has 13 million users worldwide. 6.6 million of them use it for business networking, job search, career etc.. An important element of the social network XING is represented by the events, because it can allow users to maintain business relationships in the offline (XING, 2016). The diversity of XING specific marketing actions offers great opportunities for event organizers. The full potential of XING is conducted when the events are taken directly from the network. Through social network XING, recommendations can be automated, and the effects are similar to those of viral marketing. In this way, based on profile information, events are automatically recommended for users who may be interested. Another marketing tool for events is Ad Creator XING. Xing AdCreator is above all an advertising tool in business network. Through this tool a company can determine its promotional budget and target audience by region, interests etc. Then it can target its adds to all XING users and thus it can increase the search in an efficient way (Marketo, 2014).

Instagram

Instagram is a fast, beautiful and fun way to share pictures with friends and family. As a way of working that involves the following steps: snaps a picture, choose a filter to transform its look and then post it to Instagram. Also, the image can be shared on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr. Instagram was first introduced as software application for iPhone in October 2010 and in April 2012 on the Android operating system market. In September 2012, Facebook bought Instagram for a billion dollars. Instagram now has 90 million monthly active users. This application allows its users to express themselves through photos. In order to use Instagram is necessary a device that functions as an operating system like Android or iOS (Apple). Instagram is not available on Windows or Blackberry devices (Instagram, 2013).

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a smartphone application that allows users to send messages to other users, being in many cases used as a substitute for SMS messages. WhatsApp account is based on a person's phone number and automatically generates a list of contacts. WhatsApp accounts are identified by the telephone number. When a new contact is added to the list of existing contacts, WhatsApp will also add this person to the WhatsApp list assuming that the person concerned is an application user. Users need an invitation to access a group. Like other Android applications, WhatsApp uses Google services (Terpstra, 2013).

My Space

MySpace is a tool available online that allows users to create their own profile pages that may include lists of their favorite music, books, films, photographs of themselves and their friends, as well as links to pages within and outside MySpace social media. The service also allows users to send and receive private messages from other MySpace users and restrict the disclosure of certain information. MySpace does not charge its users to create an account to set up personal profiles, so it is possible for a user to establish an identity or a false name. Its users also have the ability to retain or delete certain information stored in their accounts (MySpace.com, 2004).

V. CONCLUSIONS

Changes in business environment, technological innovation, diversification of consumer demands and changes in the practices of integrated marketing communication have led organizations to improve relationships with consumers and strive to send consistent messages to all stakeholders - consumers, employees, their partners, the state, local authorities, providers - using a wide range of integrated marketing communication tools.

The organizations realize that the ability to communicate effectively with their target audiences is critical to their success. Many companies see the integrated marketing communication as a way to coordinate and manage their communication programs in order to send a consistent message to consumers about the company and / or its products.

In an economy with a strong competitive feature, the organizations need to capitalize the integrated marketing communication in a most effective manner, to ensure the creation and maintenance of long-term relationships with current and potential customers. By approaching the integrated marketing communication, the companies "speak with one voice" and the impact of messages sent is a maximum one.

Social Media capitalizes online communication tools that are designed to promote information sharing and conversations and that will ultimately lead to engagement with current and potential customers. Social Media enjoys a marketing strategy that involves distributing valuable, relevant and compelling content and that promotes a certain type of behavior that can influence the activity of an organization. The effectiveness of communication tools used in social media is to develop a content strategy that contributes to positioning products, services and / or trademarks by disseminating provocative and informative content which is also useful for users.

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