

Integrated Communication as Strategic Communication

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Abstract

Between any form of communication there is an unbreakable connection that can lead to the improvement of the organizational competences because communication remains one of the basic activities with a great influence on agencies, groups, communities and environments. The communication in successful organizations is clearly the integrated one. Integrated communication could only be successful when included and subordinated to the global organizational strategy and requires careful planning and coordinated efforts. This is the easiest way to explain the title of this work as the result of a sustained effort of studying this concept. Integrated communication is still little known, too little recognized and used and the advantages of this type of communication are neglected most of the time in small and average organizations. This statement has been demonstrated especially by being adopted by all great corporations. The present work presents in its second half the results of a research made last year regarding the situation of the integrated communication in the organizations of south Romania. The aim of this research is to identify the results of applying this concept.

Keywords: *integrated communication, business communication, strategic communication, management*

JEL classification: D83, H830, M00

Introduction

Between, any form of communication there is an unbreakable connection that can lead to the improvement of the organizational competences because communication remains one of the basic activities with a great influence on agencies, groups, communities and environments.

Integrated communication is a concept that makes sure that all the communication forms and the messages are interrelated and work together in harmony, a concept that appeared as a reaction to a changing marketing environment.

The dramatic changes of the last years have raised the concept to a higher level, required by the needs. Integrated communication is a business strategic

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approach used to plan, develop and make a measurable, convincing, evaluation to introduce in the market in time the external and internal communication program with consumers, clients, employees and other relevant targets.

The aim of the integrated communication is to generate both short term financial results and on long term building the brand image and the action value. On the other hand, strategic communication, regardless the domain where it is practiced, has as objective supporting and achieving the aims, no matter if we talk about national aims (Paul, 2013:3) or organizational aims (Self, 2014:74)

1. Literature review

In what business strategic communication is concerned, the approaches are different respecting their global localization: if in the United States strategic communication is the result of the fusion between public relations and advertising (Holtzhausen, Zerfass, 2014:3), in Europe, strategic communication is the same with the integrated communication (Verhoevena et al, 2011:96) through the managerial decisions of using some complex communicative programs at all contact levels between the organizations and their public.

The explanation is simple: the organizational communication both inside and outside required an adjustment imposed by the external factors. More exactly, the informational explosion leads to the impossibility of complete processing of this information and therefore a large part of the information is shielded and eliminated. The answer is to send a unitary message on every channel of communication and this way the unidirectional and inefficient mass communication has been replaced by the integrated communication. This new type of communication requires adopting a new strategy included and subordinated to the global organizational strategy (Tănăsescu et al, 2014:29).

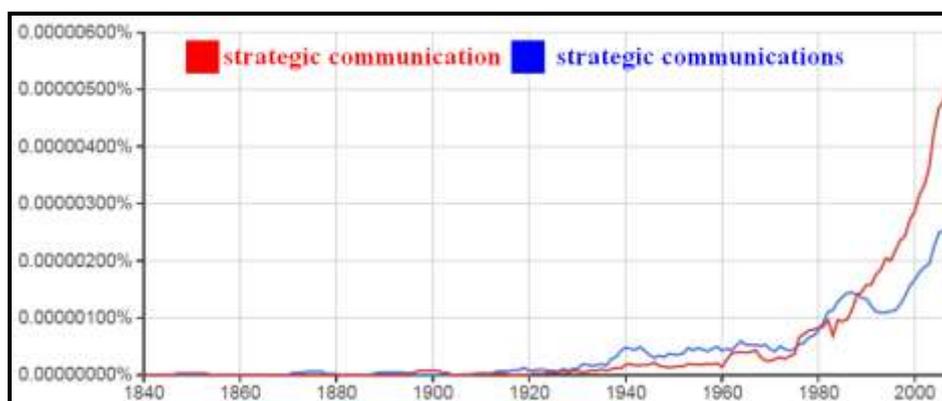
We also need to clarify that the term *communication* and not *communications* is correct when we refer to the integrated function of communication (Van Riel, 1995:137). This aspect was clarified in 1987 by Peter C. Jackson who clearly stated that the term *communications* is specific to telecommunications (Luck, Moffatt, 2009:311). It is very interesting to see (graph 1) how often these two terms appear scanned by Google Books:

Between marketing integrated communication (IMC) and integrated communication (IC) there are a lot of confusions owed to the fact that apparently they have many elements in common but there are several features that make a clear distinction between them:

- IMC handles products and services (Porcu et al, 2012:321) and IC refers to the organization as a whole: what it is, what it stands for, what it wants (Barker, Angelopulo, 2006:374);
- IMC is focused only on clients (Schultz & Schultz, 1998:20), and the IC includes all stakeholders including the community in which the organization operates (Stuart et al, 2007: 155);
- IMC communicating with customers (Schultz, 1993:17) and IC decide and direct all communication organization (Cornelissen, 2014:6-7);

- IMC communication is one-direction and focused on the issue of messages (Winer, 2009:111) and IC communication is bidirectional and there is also interest in dialogue with stakeholders (Chicco, Chandler, 2002:132);
- in IMC the recipient of messages is the external audience (Joseph, 201:65), and in the IC the message recipients are both external audiences and internal ones (Ristino, 2013:2).

Graph 1 The frequency of appearance of these terms in the books scanned by Google Books



Source: Google Books Ngram Viewer, <http://books.google.com/ngrams/>

It is already known that the effective communication increases the chances of achieving objectives (Angelopulo, Schoonraad, 2006:3) and in order to avoid fragmentation of communication an integrated approach is required (Duncan, 2002:30). IC includes, aligns and integrates internal and external communication, aimed at achieving the objectives of the organization (Massie, Anderson, 2003: 223) and creating a positive image of trust in the organization and building long-term relationships (Duncan, 2002:31). So it is understandable that in accordance with the strategic plan of the organization, all actions will be taken concerning communication inside or outside the organization, IMC was not totally right, this mission (Niemann-Struweg, Grobler, 2007:59).

One of the central concerns of managers is to maintain close contact with stakeholders (Lotila, 2010:395) and the IC because of its importance it can receive and send messages through which it aligns the organization with the aims of the interested ones (Pollach et All 2012:204). Thus it is very clear that IC is nothing but a synonym for strategic communication, every element of IC being found in the IC business communication strategy.

2. The research methodology

Methodological investigation falls between components and partial statistical observation and can take several forms. Of these an important place,

according to some authors, is held by the inquiries based on interviews of individuals taken by specialized investigators and investigations conducted on the basis of questionnaires distributed directly or mailed to different communities or knowledge of their issues and problems (Bob et al, 2013:122). Regardless the organizational form, statistical surveys are by definition random or probabilistic selections made by representative surveys.

Surveys and polls are widespread in sociological research as a source of information needed to solve specific problems. Specialists sometimes have useful and representative information regarding the phenomenon.

The research subject of this study falls under this category. It comprises a total of 36 closed questions with five possible answers organized from the maximum quality to the minimum quality level.

The study conducted among managers of organizations in southern Romania, aims to provide a clearer picture on the current state of interest and concern for the importance of improving communication and management by using integrated communication.

The identified problem that made us start our research is the confusion between the marketing integrated communication and the low use of integrated communication.

The aim of this research is to determine the extent to which managers have decided to use the integrated communication, starting from the premise that it can be practiced by any type of organization, and the extent to which managers are interested in practicing this type of communication.

The study was conducted by using a simple, random grouping scheme.

The research method was the sociological inquiry conducted by an opinion poll.

For the research the *semantic differential* was used, a five-scales version.

The data was collected by the frontal *interview* as investigative technique

The instrument of data collection was the questionnaire, which in addition to identification, included a total of 36 questions.

The processing of the data collected was done using SPSS program.

The sampled we analyzed, was represented by 1117 managers from organizations in southern Romania, both in the public and private sectors.

To establish representative sample size in order to obtain statistically significant data, we used the formula (Biji et al, 2010: 245):

$$n = \frac{t^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2} = 1067,$$

where:

n = the sample size;

t = probability theoretical value accepted which guarantees research results (obtained from the relevant statistical tables of student distribution, t = 1.96 for a of trust level of 95%);

p = proportion of sample units feature sampling holding (0.50);

e = error limit of representativeness used (3%).

After applying this formula, the sample obtained was corrected for total size of the population as follows:

$$n_1 = \frac{n}{1 + \frac{(n-1)}{N}} = 1062,$$

where:

n = the sample size obtained by calculation in the first formula;

N = total population = 222,358 (O.N.R.C., 2014).

The sample used for this study is higher than the value obtained after the calculation laying down on sample size $1117 > 1062$, so the sample is representative.

The observation unit is represented by the organization, regardless of size, public or private.

The study unit is established as the manager, regardless of genre.

The data collection period was between 06/15/2014 and 30/10/2014.

3. The Results of the Research

The research sample was made on a sample of 1117 respondents from the public and private sectors. As a result, they were created two databases: one for the public sector of 281 records and other for the private sector of 830 entries.

The area of the survey was composed of related regions counties: Ilfov, South East, South Muntenia, South West Oltenia. Suitable the area, sample structure is presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Sample structure by region (number of respondents)

Regions	Total	Public sector	Private sector
Bucuresti Ilfov	69	15	54
Sud Est	281	90	191
Sud Muntenia	479	103	376
Sud Vest Oltenia	288	73	215
Total	1117	281	836

Source: my own projection

A questionnaire was applied with 36 questions, structured on four hypothesis

- H1 – Integrated communication concept is known in the researched organizations with questions: Q1, Q3, Q4, Q7, Q8, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q26, Q28 and Q34;
- H2 – Availability cultural and financial implementation of integrated communication implementation with questions Q5, Q6, Q13, Q14, Q16, Q17, Q23, Q29, Q32 and Q33;

- H3 – There is a high degree of utilization of integrated communication with questions Q19, Q20, Q21, Q24, Q31, Q35 and Q36;
- H4 – Effects of using integrated communication is reflected in the performance of the organization with questions Q2, Q9, Q15, Q18, Q22, Q25, Q27 and Q30.

This paper presents research results regarding the degree of existence inside the researched organizations, of the cultural and financial availability for implementation of integrated communication (H2) and the degree to which the effects of the use of integrated communication is reflected in the performance of the organization (4).

The questionnaire was chosen a coding system type (-2, -1, 0, 1, 2). If all the answers for large collectivity such as this sample tends toward normalization, then the answer appears NEITHER / NOR coded as 0.

As a result, the scale codes, was moved in space R+.

By coding were obtained two data matrices:

- The matrix of the public sector $S_{pu}(i, j)$ with $i = 1, \dots, 281, j = 1, \dots, j_{max}$, and
- The matrix of the private sector $S_{pr}(h, k)$ with $h = 1, \dots, 836, k = 1 \dots k_{max}$,

The average score was calculated for each question according relationships Q:

- for public sector: $Q_{j,i} = (\sum_{i=1}^{281} S_{pu(i)}) / 281$,
where $j=7, \dots, 42$,

- for private sector: $Q_{j,i} = (\sum_{i=1}^{830} S_{pr(i)}) / 836$,
where $j=7, \dots, 42$.

The formula is adapted by calculating the average $Ma = (1/n) * \sum x_i$.

The first step in working with the data was to analyze the inter-conditioning inside the hypothesis.

The analysis was conducted separately on local respondents for the public sector and the private sector.

The average of Hypothesis 2 for public and private sector,

$$M^{H2} = \frac{\sum(Q5, Q6, Q13, Q14, Q16, Q17, Q23, Q29, Q32, Q33)}{10},$$

where Q5, ..., Q33 represent the average;

The average of Hypothesis 4 for both sectors,

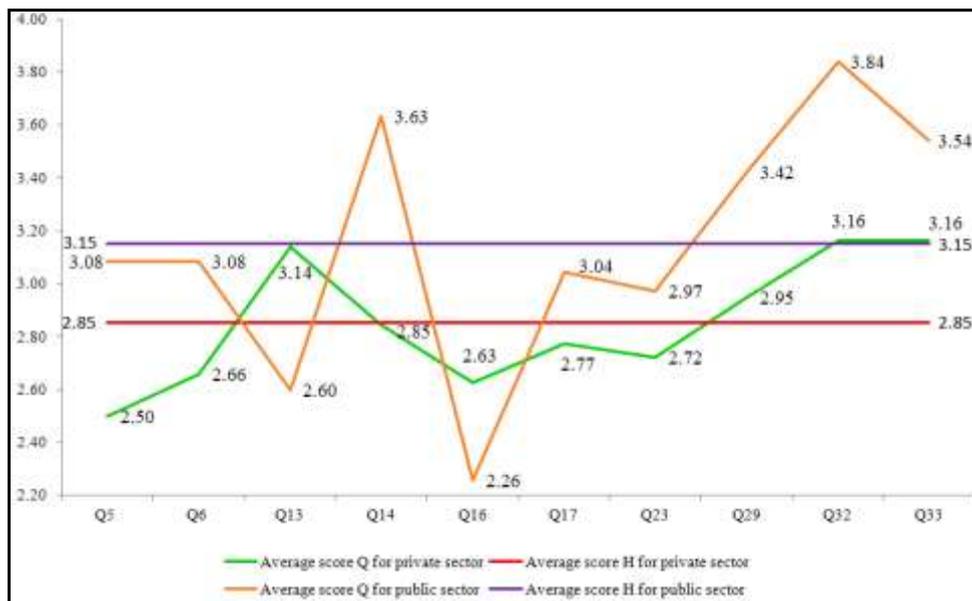
$$M^{H4} = \frac{\sum(Q2, Q9, Q15, Q18, Q22, Q25, Q27, Q30)}{8},$$

where Q2, ..., Q30 represent the average.

H2 – Availability cultural and financial implementation of integrated communication with questions: Q5; Q6, Q13, Q14, Q16, Q17, Q23, Q29, Q32, Q33.

From the analysis of the responses to questions designed to test this hypothesis and after the calculations made for determining the average scores we have realized the comparison between the average score for the hypothesis private and public sector (Graph 2).

Graph 2 Comparison between the average score on the hypothesis and the average score on questions



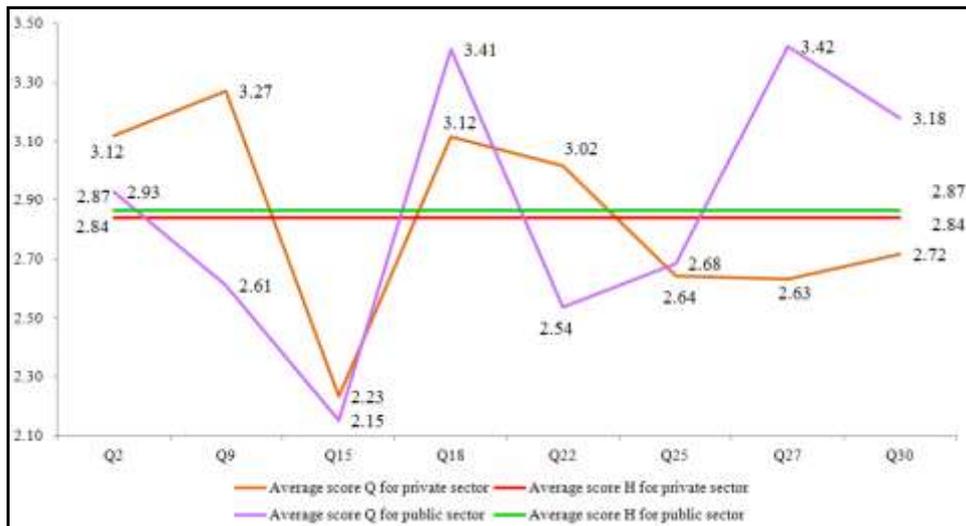
Source: my own projection

The average of the hypothesis and the responses for the two sectors analyzed- public and private are not much different and fall within the characteristic range of indecisions related to the issues stated by the hypothesis.

H4 – effects of using integrated communication reflected in the performance of the organization with questions Q2, Q9, Q15, Q18, Q22, Q25, Q27, Q30.

From the analysis of the responses to questions designed to test this hypothesis and after the calculations made for determining the average scores we realized the comparison between the average score for the hypothesis for private and public sector (Graph 3).

Graph 3 Comparison between the average score on the hypothesis and the average score on questions

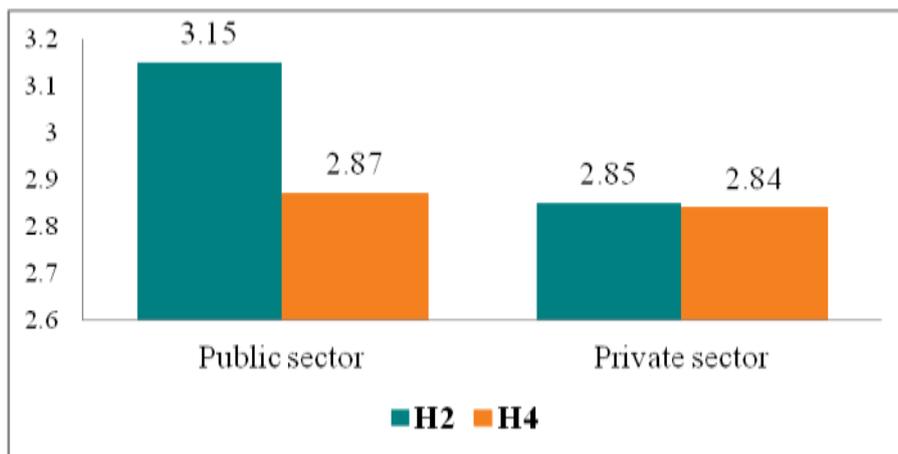


Source: my own projection

Similar situations resulting from previous assumptions and the hypothesis averages of responses, are not much different and fall within the characteristic range of indecisions related to the issues stated by the hypothesis. There is a slight difference that appears in hypothesis environments - very similar values for both the public sector (2.87) and the private sector (2.84).

Values of the scores of the two hypothesis were compared and showed that public sector shows an evolution concentrated by Hypothesis 2 (Graph 4).

Graph 4 Public sector options versus private sector options (average score)



Source: my own projection

In the second stage of analysis we took the survey data classification according to two possible answers.

In fact classification consists in representing data on the two hypothesis depending on the specific response options segmentation variants.

It is an essential step in processing the data due to the calculation of additive assumption (additivity - if at least two mutually exclusive events are used, achieving one, automatically means the failure of the other).

Using chi-square significance calculation (χ^2) is based on the hypothesis H_0 (null hypothesis) which states that the samples or populations under study are similar, or in other words, any difference is attributed to luck, and not to single factor. The null hypothesis defines the absence of some differences that may arise in any statistical comparison. It is used to define significance of difference. Significance of difference, called statistical significance is the conclusion as the difference between samples, populations, or both, is due to factors others than chance.

The significant difference occurs when the null hypothesis is rejected. As a result, at least one of the alternative hypothesis is accepted, then the difference can be explained by other factors than chance.

Probability value for which the difference is due only to chance is called significance level. If it is less than 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted; say the difference is statistically significant. The level of significance is denoted by α or p-value research and was chosen a priori.

- $H_0: P_1 - P_0 = 0$ or $P_1 = P_0$
- $H_a: P_1 - P_0 \neq 0$ or $P_1 \neq P_0$

Where P_1 is the characteristic probability sample studied and the probability P_0 same characteristics in population or literature or theoretical probability.

The data for the two hypothesis are the following (Table 2):

Table 2 - Classification survey data depending on the specific response options segmentation variants

Segmentation variables	Hypothesis	Degrees of freedom	p	Chi-Square calculated	Chi-Square Distribution Table
Age	2	7	0,900	3,21	2,833
	4	7	0,900	4,38	2,833

Diagnosis:
 For 7 degrees of freedom chi-square calculated $3.21 > 2,833$ chi-square distribution table for a probability $p = 0.900$ rejecting the null hypothesis H_0 .
 For 7 degrees of freedom chi-square calculated $4.38 > 2,833$ chi-square distribution table for a probability $p = 0.900$ rejecting the null hypothesis H_0 .
 Conclusion: Given the relationship of age - 2.4 is significant assumptions, their findings are significant components analysis.

Segmentation variables	Hypothesis	Degrees of freedom	p	Chi-Square calculated	Chi-Square Distribution Table
Highest degree	2	5	0,950	1,20	1,145
	4	5	0,950	3,15	1,145
<p>Diagnosis: For 5 degrees of freedom chi-square calculated $1.20 > 1.145$ chi-square distribution table for a probability $p = 0.950$ nonnulla accept hypothesis H1. For 5 degrees of freedom chi-square Calculated $3.15 > 1.145$ chi-square distribution table for a probability $p = 0.110$ nonnulla accept hypothesis H1 and H0 is rejected. Conclusion: the entropy relationships studies - 2,4 assumptions, it is significant because of strong polarization segmentation variable.</p>					
Regions	2	6	0,900	3,602	2,204
	4	6	0,900	3,05	2,204
<p>Diagnosis: For 6 degrees of freedom chi-square calculated $3602 > 2204$ chi-square distribution table for a probability $p = 0.900$ rejecting the null hypothesis H0. For 6 degrees of freedom chi-square calculated $3.05 > 2204$ chi-square distribution table for a probability $p = 0.900$ rejecting the null hypothesis H0. Conclusion: in both cases in relation to geographical arrondissementes, the results will be guaranteed with a probability of 0.900.</p>					

Source: my own projection

For both cases the results will be guaranteed with a probability of 0.900.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, the main conclusion is that in the studied organizations there is interest for integrated communication.

The study achieved its objectives by conducting a screening for the use of integrated communication inside the organizations in southern Romania and identifying interest in practicing this type of communication.

Regarding the assumptions from which I left in conducting this study, we can say that:

Hypothesis 2 – Availability of cultural and financial implementation of integrated communication - infirmed.

The responses demonstrate that the managers of our researched organizations are undecided in the decisions regarding the implementation of this type of communication within the organizations they lead, the main obstacle in making this decision being the financial one.

Hypothesis 2 – The effect of using integrated communication performance is reflected in the organization - infirmed.

Integrated communication is not part of the overall strategy of the organizations studied and can not influence the performance of these organizations, participants and the survey managers have other strategic priorities that do not concern the communication strategy of the organizations they lead.

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