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INTEGRATION SCENARIOS IN FOOTBALL

Elisavet Argyro Manoli, Loughborough University, UK

The author would like to request that only the following extended abstract should be published in the proceedings of the conference.

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

Even though Integrated Marketing Communications have attracted considerable attention within the academic community for almost three decades (Kliatchko & Schultz, 2014), their practical application is yet to be studied to the same extent. The few studies that examine IMC’s implementation tend to focus on successful and large organisations, which often represent the ‘best case’ integration scenario, while ignoring less successful and smaller companies where integration might not occur. As a result, an optimistic and rather myopic view of the IMC implementation landscape has been presented, which might not correspond with the state of integration in practice.

This study aims at acquiring a more holistic view of IMC’s practical implementation, by studying a full industry sector of client organisations (the football industry), and examining whether and to what extent IMC is implemented. For this reason, a qualitative research design is employed, in order for rich information to be collected, allowing the author to gain an insight to both the practices encountered and the views expressed. In more detail, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the census of the organisations comprising the industry sector selected, the Premier League clubs of five consecutive seasons (2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15), 30 in total.

Investigating the full industry sector selected allowed for a more thorough look in integration in practice to be achieved, which suggested that a number of companies do not practice integration. This would in turn suggest that had the study used an existing model, such as, the four levels of IMC’s development (Kitchen and Schultz, 1999, p. 34), in order to access integration, a less accurate picture would have been drawn. As a result, the five levels of IMC are suggested, which enhance the above mentioned model by adding level 0, in order for the companies that do not practice integration to be also represented.

Additionally, through the analysis of the findings four integration scenarios were identified, which represent the four integration states encountered in the industry. The four integration scenarios are examined, alongside the conditions under which they exist, which are the nature of IMC’s implementation and the practitioners’ knowledge. These scenarios capture the full spectrum of integration states that can be observed in this particular sector, however, it could be argued that they might possibly capture the potential integration scenarios encountered in other sectors as well. As a result, it could be suggested that they provide a holistic view of the integration states an organisation might fall under, and therefore allow for a more thorough and rounded view of IMC’s implementation, which could support and potentially influence the current and future integration practices.