

# Mapping the Integrated Marketing Communications Research: A Bibliometric Analysis

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## ABSTRACT

Given the growing popularity of integrated marketing communications (IMC) among academicians and businessmen, this study examines the trends of theoretical development in IMC during 1991-2020 by using a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of 303 academic research papers. In addition to examining the citation and publication structures in terms of authors, institutions, countries, and sources, this study explores the publications and citations trends and identifies conceptual and intellectual structure of IMC literature. The results demonstrate that IMC literature follows a steady but slow growth rate, although average citations per document are high. Kitchen, PJ. (author), Northwestern University (institution), USA (country), and Journal of Marketing Communications (source) contributed the most to IMC literature. With 216 multi-authored documents, IMC can be recognized as a field of high research collaboration. About 84% of the keywords appeared only once in IMC literature. In addition, the foundation of IMC rests on a small number of articles by a few researchers published in handful number of journals. Finally, the keyword co-occurrence network analysis identifies different clusters of IMC research, of which clusters marked with the keywords (1) brand equity, (2) measurement, (3) IMC and consumer empowerment represent the highest research potential.

**Keywords:** Integrated marketing communications; bibliometric analysis; Scopus database; brand equity; IMC implementation.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The root of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) can be traced to 1991, when Northwestern University recognized IMC as a new master degree concept to harmonize various communication tools (Caywood & Ewing 1991). Since then, IMC has been defined in a number of ways; in a narrow sense, IMC refers to simple integration of communication elements to influence consumer behavior (Alexander, Teller et al. 2020). In boarder sense, IMC can realign organizational structure, value creation, and marketing processes to create competitive advantage apart from ensuring communication effectiveness (Kliatchko & Schultz 2014, Yousaf & Xiucheng 2020). Over time, IMC has evolved from a tactical tool to a strategic management tool and strategic business process (Kitchen 2017, Avraham 2020). Recent researchers have adopted a firm-wide approach to define IMC. According to Luxton, Reid et al. (2015) “*IMC is a firm-wide market relating deployment mechanism that enables the optimization of communication approaches to achieve superior communication effectiveness*” (p. 1).

Several articles review IMC (Kliatchko 2008, Porcu, Del Barrio-García et al. 2012, Tafesse & Kitchen 2017, Ahmad & Mokhtar 2019, Swani, Brown et al. 2019, Vashisht, Royne et al. 2019). Among them, Kliatchko (2008) revisited the IMC construct and identified four pillars: stakeholders, contents, channels, and results. The interplay of these four pillars at different levels of IMC provides the basis for a new definition of IMC: “*IMC is an audience-driven business process of strategically managing stakeholders, content, channels, and results of brand communication programs*” (Kliatchko 2008, p. 140, Zvobgo & Melewar (2011) reviewed IMC literature to identify two sets of drivers of globally integrated marketing communications: market-situational factors and organizational factors; and recommend different research propositions. Porcu, Del Barrio-García et al. (2012) identified several antecedents of IMC including-top management, market orientation, decision making approach, business size and position; and suggested examining their effects on communication outcomes, brand outcomes, stakeholder relationships, and business-external agencies relationship. Seric and Saura (2012) scrutinized

conceptual and methodological issues of IMC to explore research avenues in different industry and country contexts. Munoz-Leiva, Porcu et al. (2015) performed bibliometric analysis on IMC (1991-2012) based on WoS and Scopus database emphasizing a co-word analytic approach. Tafesse and Kitchen (2017) developed an integrative framework of IMC to demonstrate the relationship among several constructs; such as- organizational support processes, integration scope, integration strategy, integration modes, and IMC outcome. Ahmad and Mokhtar (2019) studied the theoretical, methodological, conceptual, and thematic evolution of IMC. Swani, Brown et al. (2019) and Vashisht, Royne et al. (2019) reviewed documents on advertising tools of IMC to suggest future research directions. Finally, a recently published paper reviewed IMC from only three directions: author, country, and document (Tackie & Anning-Dorson 2021).

These academic review papers are definitely significant for IMC literature. However, these papers suffer from some critical limitations. First, almost all these papers qualitatively reviewed a fraction of the IMC literature (Zvobgo & Melewar 2011, Tafesse & Kitchen 2017, Šerić 2018, Ahmad & Mokhtar 2019). Thus, they do not provide a quantitative overview of how IMC literature has evolved over time. Second, these review papers did not provide a comprehensive outlook of conceptual and intellectual structure of the whole IMC literature. Considering these limitations of previous review papers and substantial growth of IMC research (Kumar, Keller et al. 2016, Tafesse & Kitchen 2017), it becomes worthwhile to quantitatively examine the different attributes of IMC literature using a bibliometric analysis. Although one bibliometric review paper was written on IMC (Munoz-Leiva, Porcu et al. 2015), this paper is unique for three reasons: first, it uses multiple bibliometric parameters instead of single co-word analytic approach; second, it considers the whole period of IMC literature (1991-2020); third, it accesses its data from the single largest database of impactful journal -Scopus database. However, the purposes of this study are:

1. To provide a comprehensive quantitative overview of the evolution of IMC literature;
2. To examine the conceptual and intellectual structure of IMC research.;
3. To explore how the landscape of IMC has changed over time, and which authors, institutions, countries, and sources contributed the most to its development;
4. To identify areas for future research.

The results show that the IMC literature have evolved through three distinct stages of publications. Kitchen, PJ., Northwestern University, USA, and Journal of Marketing

Communications are the most productive author, institution, country, and source respectively in IMC literature. High collaboration among authors and high average citations explain the importance of IMC research in research community. Finally, the keyword co-occurrence network and co-citation analysis explore different conceptual and intellectual structure of IMC research including- brand equity, measurement, IMC and consumer empowerment perspectives.

The rest of the paper is constructed as follows: the following section discusses the adopted methodology; section 3 and 4 present and discuss the findings from analysis. Finally, the conclusion section summarizes the findings, limitations, and future research agenda.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

There are many types of review papers, such as- theory based reviews (Hassan, Shiu et al. 2016, Gilal, Zhang et al. 2019), theme based reviews (Kahiya 2018, Hao, Paul et al. 2019), framework based reviews (Rosado-Serrano, Paul et al. 2018, Paul & Rosado-Serrano 2019), review focusing methods, constructs, contexts and theories (Canabal & White III 2008, Paul & Singh 2017), framework and theory development reviews (Paul 2019, Paul & Mas 2019), and bibliometric reviews (Kim & McMillan 2008, Chabowski, Samiee et al. 2013, Randhawa, Wilden et al. 2016, Martínez-López, Merigó et al. 2018). This study adopts a bibliometric review technique to demonstrate how IMC literature evolved over time in addition to showing citations and publications structures in terms of authors, countries, institutions, and sources. In addition, bibliometric analysis reveals the intellectual and conceptual structure in a particular research field. The search process for this analysis was conducted in February, 2020. The search process focused on business, economics, and social science disciplines that were available on the Scopus database during 1991 to 2020. Scopus database is the largest multi-disciplinary database for peer-reviewed documents in the field of social science research; it is renowned as a reliable source for quantitative analysis (Norris & Oppenheim 2007, Bartol, Budimir et al. 2014, Guerrero-Baena, Gómez-Limón et al. 2014, Durán-Sánchez, Del Río et al. 2019). Three phases were used for our search “integrated marketing communications”, “integrated marketing communication”, and “IMC”. The data set focuses on articles, although other types of documents, such as books, book chapters, and review papers are also considered. Only the English language manuscripts have been considered. A total of 496 manuscripts matched the criteria and were included in the initial list. To identify the most relevant documents in the field of IMC, a manual overview of the title



received at least h-citations since its publications, and citations per ratio measures the impact of each published document. These two indicators generate a single index that integrates publications and citations into a single parameter. Descriptive analysis and network analysis (e.g., keywords co-occurrence networks and co-citations analysis) have also been performed to identify intellectual and conceptual structure. The VOS viewer software for bibliometric mapping is applied that uses two standardized weights: the number of links and the strength of links to demonstrate the visual nodal network (Bastian, Heymann et al. 2009, Van Eck, Waltman et al. 2010, Van Eck & Waltman 2016). This software allows researchers to explore the conceptual and intellectual structures of a particular research field (Van Eck & Waltman 2010, Watson & Schwak 2019). Finally, the most cited 20 manuscripts were also examined to demonstrate their relevance.

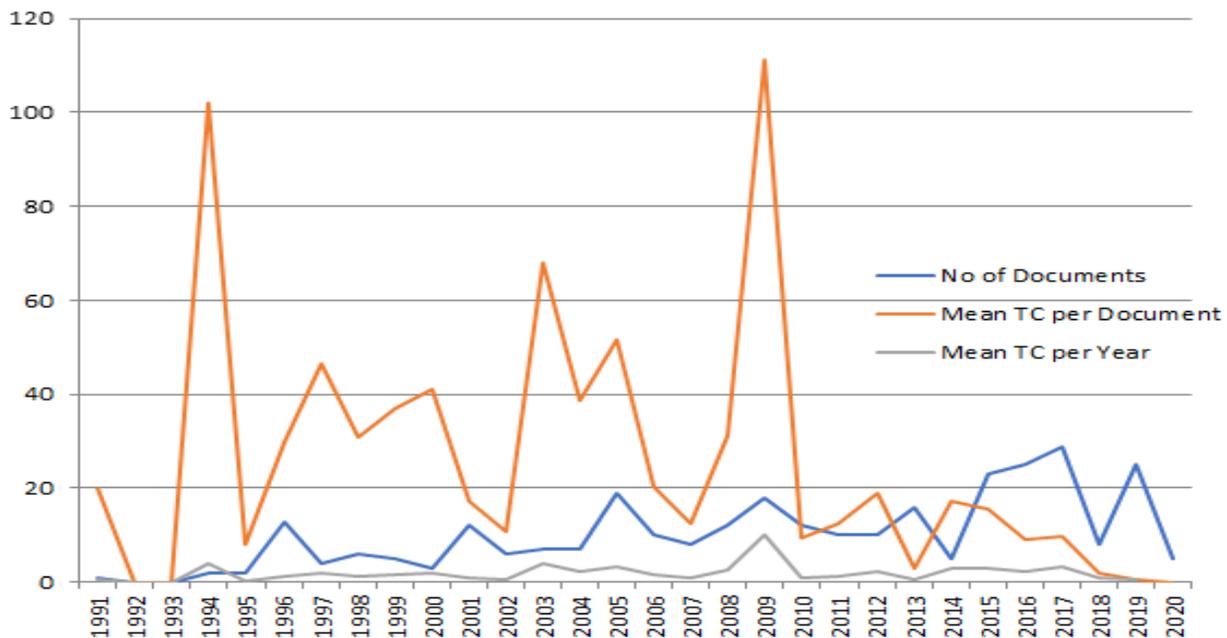
### **3. RESULTS**

This study identifies a total number of 303 documents: 271 articles, 4 books, 10 book chapters, and 18 review papers by 509 authors who are affiliated with 340 institutions from 43 countries. These documents have been published in 127 sources (books, & Journals) citing 13,382 references; and they have received a total citation of 7,445. IMC literature is characterized with low levels of productivity as only 303 documents were published in 3 decades. The average citations per document is high with a citation ratio of 24.57 per document. Collaboration among the authors is also dominant as 216 (out of 303) documents are multi-authored.

#### **3.1 Publication and citation structure**

Figure 2 demonstrates the number of documents published and the citation trends for IMC literature since its inception in 1991. During the initial period, from 1991 to 1995, very few documents were published in IMC literature, as a new area of study it took some time for this area to create impact. In the 1996, the number of documents increased significantly. However, there was slowdown in the growth of the number of documents from 1996 until 2000; during this period, the number of documents doubled in publications. The third period, from 2001-2005, reflects a substantial growth in the number of documents. During the fourth period, between 2006 and 2013, a total number of 96 documents were published accounting for 31.7% of all documents in IMC literature, reflecting a substantial growth in IMC literature with a solid baseline of  $\geq 10$  documents per year. Within the later period, from 2014 to 2020, 120 documents were published. An average of 20 documents were published each year. It indicates that IMC as research field has

been able to draw a significant attention from the researchers. As a result, the scope of inquiry has widened, and the opportunity for identifying new topics, investigating existing topics in greater depth and in different contexts has been created. The average article citations appear to be less homogenous; documents published during 2009 received the highest average citations, followed by those published in 1994 and 2003, respectively. In terms of average citations per year, documents published during these years appear to be the most relevant ones; in 2009, a total number of 18 documents were published, with each receiving an average of >110 citations in the following 11 years. The mean citations per year remains steady over time except a sharp peak in 2009.



**Figure 2:** Publications and citations trends

### 3.2 Most productive and most authors, institutions, countries and sources

This section identifies 25 most productive authors, countries, institutions, and sources for IMC literature (Table 1). The number of articles has been considered as the dominant variable for determining the ranking of these authors, institutions, countries and sources.

Philip J. Kitchen is the most productive and influential author in IMC literature with a total of 15 documents and 430 citations. Kevin Lane Keller is also most influential author, despite his poor position in productivity ranking, each of his articles has received high average citations that

indicates that his papers are within the highly cited and impactful manuscripts. Other influential authors are Kalyan Raman, Prasad A. Naik, Sandra Luxton, Simon Torp, Felix Mavondo, Don E. Schultz, and Mike Reid. All of them have received >150 citations and have an h-index of  $\geq 3$ . The most cited paper by Philip J. Kitchen focuses on the drive of IMC, theory of IMC, challenges, barriers, practices, and problems of IMC. In fact, out of total 15 documents by this author, 11 documents relate to these topics in particular theories and practices of IMC. It is interesting to note that all of his manuscripts were published in journals that focus marketing communications - *Journal of Advertising Research* (3 papers), *Journal of Marketing Communications* (1 paper), *Journal of Promotion Management* (1 paper), *International Journal of Advertising* (1 paper) and *European Journal of Marketing* (3 papers). The most cited document of the second most productive author, Don E. Schultz, focuses on a wide range of topics including IMC definition, time and budget allocation for IMC, perceived drive and barriers of IMC, interaction among agencies, IMC measurement issues and communication criteria. The 9 documents by Don E. Schultz cover a vast area of topics including theory, practices, challenges, barriers, transitioning, diffusion, and changing landscape of IMC. His manuscripts were published from 5 different journals including *Journal of Advertising Research* (5 papers) and *International journal of advertising* (2 manuscripts). Other vastly productive authors in IMC literature address different issues such as- the impact of IMC on brand equity/branding; perception, practice, theory, definition, dimensions, and applicability of IMC; IMC education; impact of ICT and organizational culture on IMC; and level of integration among IMC tools, media, channels etc. These topics represent the hot areas of the last three decades in IMC literature.

Northwestern University is the most productive and influential institution in IMC literature with a total number of 15 documents and >600 citations, followed by Monash University (Australia), Dartmouth College (UK), and University of Alabama (USA). The average citations per document from this university are also high (41.7). Besides Northwestern University, Dartmouth College (UK), University of Alabama (USA), University of Melbourne (Australia), University of Wisconsin (USA), and Louisiana State University (USA) have also received high average citations per document but do not occupy top positions in the rankings. These institutions published only a few papers, but their papers are within the most influential ones. In terms of productivity, only 3 institutions published >10 articles of work: Northwestern University, University of Valencia, and Monash University, with the University of Valencia receiving the

lowest citations in this group. The ranking of these institutions changes considerably when “average citations per document” is considered as dominant variable. In this instance, Dartmouth College, University of Alabama, and University of Melbourne lead the rankings. It is interesting to note that, the most cited work in IMC literature was not written by the authors from any of those top 25 most productive institutions. This article was written by two authors at Murray State University (USA) and University of Louisville (USA) (Mangold and Faulds 2009). As more and more productive authors began to contribute in IMC literature, the dominance of different institutions evolves over time.

The USA is the most productive and influential country with a total of 84 publications and >4,000 citations. In terms of productivity, only 4 countries have produced >10 documents: USA, UK, Australia, and Spain. These countries also received the largest number of total citations. If the average citation per document is considered as a ranking variable, the rankings change considerably; Denmark leads the rankings followed by USA, Canada, Japan, and Sweden respectively. Korea, Australia, and Taiwan also received high average citations per document. 6 documents by US authors received >100 citations. Out of those 6 documents, two were published in *Journal of Advertising* and the remaining were in *Business Horizons* (1 manuscript), *Journal of Marketing Communications* (1 manuscript), *Journal of Marketing Research* (1 manuscript), and *Journal of Advertising Research* (1 manuscript). The authors of the most cited paper - “*Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix*” Mangold, W. G., Faulds, D. J., are also from USA. It is interesting to note that these 6 authors vary in their focus: two discussed IMC tools and media synergy, two focused on relationship between brand equity and IMC, and the remaining two focused on IMC environment and IMC theory. Australian and Philippian authors also produced two manuscripts that are among the 10 most cited documents in IMC literature, with each having >100 citations. Both of these manuscripts were published in *Journal of Advertising*. The first article focuses on demonstrating market performance in relation to IMC actions, and the second one reviews existing literature to introduce four pillars of IMC. In total, US authors contributed to 15 (out of 25) of the most cited manuscripts in IMC literature followed by UK (3/25), Australian (2/25) and Philippine authors (2/25). Out of those 15 papers by US authors, 3 were published in *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 3 are in *Journal of Advertising*, and 2 are in *Journal of Advertising Research*. Another noteworthy issue is that out of total 84 documents (in terms of total productions) by US authors, 80 documents are single country

publications and only 4 documents are multiple country publications. A similar pattern is observed in almost all of the most productive countries: the UK, Australia, Spain, and The South Africa. It indicates that researchers from those countries feel more comfortable to collaborate with the researchers from their home country than with those of different countries.

All the IMC documents were published from 127 different sources, out of which 25 sources accounts for > 60% (187) of total publications. Out of those 25 sources, 18 sources have an impact factor > 1. However, *Journal of Marketing Communications* is the most relevant source with 40 manuscripts and >1000 citations. The h-index for this journal is also the highest that strengthens its rank position. It is noteworthy that 12 out of 25 most productive authors had no document in *journal of Marketing Communications*. In terms of productivity, only 6 journals published > 10 documents in IMC literature: *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *journal of Promotion Management*, *International journal of Advertising*, *journal of Advertising*, and *Journal of Advertising Research*. It is interesting to note that the most cited document was not published in any of these sources; rather, it was published in *Business Horizons*. Apart from *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 3 other sources have received > 500 citations: *Business horizons*, *journal of Advertising* and *journal of Advertising Research*. Of the top 25 most cited documents, 5 were published in *Journal of Advertising*, 3 were published in *Journal of Marketing Communications*, and 3 were published in *Journal of Advertising Research*.

**Table 1: Most productive authors, institutions, countries and most relevant sources in IMC literature**

Author	H	TC	NP	C/P	Institutions	NP	TC	C/P	Country	NP	SCP	MCP	TC	C/P	Sources	H	TC	NP	C/P
Kitchen, PJ	11	430	15	28.7	Northwestern University	15	626	41.7	USA	84	80	4	4113	48.9	J. Mark. Commun.	16	1008	40	25.2
Schultz, DE	7	493	10	49.3	University of Valencia	14	136	9.7	UK	19	14	5	357	18.8	Eur J Mark	11	350	19	18.4
Šerić, M.	5	119	9	13.2	Monash University	11	428	38.9	Australia	18	16	2	494	27.4	J. Promot. Manag.	8	131	16	8.2
Reid, M	7	290	7	41.4	University of Granada	8	68	8.5	Spain	14	12	2	209	14.9	Int. J. Advert.	11	436	15	29.1
Porcu, L	4	67	6	11.2	Middlesex University	6	70	11.7	South Africa	9	9	0	31	3.4	J. Advert.	12	809	13	62.2
Eagle, L	4	59	4	14.8	Queensland University of Technology	6	70	11.7	Indonesia	5	5	0	3	0.6	J. Advert. Res.	12	705	12	58.8
Kerr, G	4	48	4	12	Deakin University	5	44	8.8	Italy	5	4	1	61	12.2	J. Bus. Res.	7	257	8	32.1
Kitchen, P	3	54	4	13.5	University of Hull	5	114	22.8	New Zealand	5	1	4	59	11.8	Mark. Intell. Plan.	5	81	5	16.2
Laurie, S	2	38	4	9.5	University of Northampton	5	38	7.6	Taiwan	4	4	0	102	25.5	Public Relat Rev.	5	53	5	10.6
Luxton, S	4	238	4	59.5	Esc Rennes School of Business	4	117	29.3	Turkey	4	2	2	26	6.5	Adv. Sci. Lett.	0	0	4	N/A
Melewar, TC	4	120	4	30	Loughborough University	4	27	6.8	Denmark	3	2	1	156	52	Afr J Hosp Tour Leis	0	0	4	N/A
Mortimer, K	2	38	4	9.5	Massey University	4	59	14.8	India	3	2	1	7	2.3	Bus. Horiz.	4	1474	4	368.5
Naik, PA	4	341	4	85.3	University of Alabama	4	283	70.8	Thailand	3	2	1	20	6.7	Corp. Commun.	4	155	4	38.8
Carlson, L	3	90	3	30	University of Georgia	4	122	30.5	Canada	2	2	0	97	48.5	Int J Appl Bus Econ Res	1	3	4	0.75
Ewing, MT	2	46	3	15.3	University of Melbourne	4	277	69.3	Finland	2	2	0	9	4.5	J. Commun. Manag.	2	11	4	2.8
Foroudi, P	3	70	3	23.3	University of Murcia	4	77	19.3	Germany	2	1	1	29	14.5	J. Mark. Manag.	2	40	4	10
Grove, SJ	3	90	3	30	University of Salford	4	82	20.5	Hong Kong	2	2	0	19	9.5	J. Nonprofit Public Sect. Mark.	3	17	4	4.3
Henley, TK	3	17	3	5.7	University of South Africa	4	36	9	Israel	2	2	0	4	2	Int. J. Res. Mark	3	169	3	56.3
Hongcharu, B	0	0	3	N/A	University of Wisconsin	4	217	54.3	Korea	2	0	2	63	31.5	Int. Rev. Manag. Mark.	2	29	3	9.7
Keller, KL	3	406	3	135.3	Clemson University	3	90	30	Norway	2	1	1	17	8.5	J. Curr. Issues Res. Advert.	3	133	3	44.3
Mavondo, F	3	165	3	55	Dartmouth College	3	406	135.3	Sweden	2	1	1	84	42	J. Mark. Educ.	3	82	3	27.3
Nelson, RA	2	24	3	8	Donguei University	3	119	39.7	Greece	1	1	0	1	1	Communicatio	1	6	2	3
Patti, CH	2	11	3	3.7	Louisiana State University	3	144	48	Japan	1	0	1	44	44	Eur. Manag. J.	1	16	2	8
Raman, K	3	322	3	107.3	Loyola University New Orleans	3	17	5.7	Kenya	1	1	0	1	1	Int J Bus Globalisation	0	0	2	N/A
Torp, S	3	156	3	52	Swinburne University of Technology	3	69	23	Nigeria	1	1	0	6	6	Int J Hosp Manag.	2	51	2	25.5

\*H=H-index; TC=total Citations, NP=Number of documents; SCP=Single country publications, MCP=Multiple country publications. Standard abbreviation of Journal name is used.

### 3.3 Most cited publications and reference analysis

The most cited publications have been identified in IMC literature. They are the most significant papers. However, the most cited documents are not always the most relevant ones in a particular literature. Table 2 demonstrates the list of the top 25 most cited publications in IMC literature; of which, only one article received > 1000 citations and only 8 received > 100 citations. These 25 documents were published in 13 different sources, of which 9 sources have a web of science impact factor >2; and all publications have a web of science impact factor > 1. About 68% of the most cited documents were published in five journals: *Journal of Advertising* (5 documents), *Journal of Marketing Communications* (3 documents), *International Journal of Advertising* (3 documents), *Journal of Advertising Research* (4 documents) and *Journal of Marketing* (2 documents). The most cited manuscript by Mangold and Faulds was published in 2009 in *Business Horizons*. This work has also received the highest ratio of citations per year. It is interesting to note that the articles published after 2010 are not in the list of most cited documents except 2 papers. Another interesting finding is that some authors have contributed to more one than of the most cited works: Don E. Schultz (3 papers), Philip J. Kitchen (2papers), Kliatchko (2 papers), and kelvin lane Keller (2 papers).

The most cited manuscript, with 1412 citations by (Mangold & Faulds 2009), focuses on recognizing social media as a hybrid element of the promotion mix that shapes conversations around this media. The second most cited article with 309 citations reviews the brand resonance model to demonstrate how integrating different communication methods can create brand equity in the dramatically changing marketing communications environment (Keller 2009). The third most cited paper by (Naik & Raman 2003) was referenced in 296 articles. The impact of synergistic impact of IMC on media mix, media budget, and communication effectiveness were empirically assessed in this research. The authors proposed with an increase in synergy in multimedia communications, both media budgets and attention to less effective media should be increased. Academic researchers also investigated the symbiotic role of IMC on brand equity and the role of brand equity on IMC strategy.

**Table 2: Most cited articles**

Documents	Titles	SO	LC	TC	TC/Y
Mangold and Faulds (2009)	“Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix”	Bus. Horiz.	13	1412	117.7
Keller (2009)	“Building strong brands in a modern marketing communications environment”	J. Mark. Commun.	20	309	25.8
Naik and Raman (2003)	“Understanding the Impact of Synergy in Multimedia Communications”	J. Mark Res	32	296	16.4
Madhavaram, Badrinarayanan et al. (2005)	“Integrated marketing communication (imc) and brand identity as critical components of brand equity strategy: A Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions”	J. Advert.	21	131	8.2
Rust and Oliver (1994)	“Notes and comments: The death of advertising”	J. Advert.	0	113	4.2
Kliatchko (2008)	“Revisiting the IMC construct: A revised definition and four pillars”	Int. J. Advert.	42	111	8.5
Schultz and Kitchen (1997)	“Integrated marketing communications in U.S. advertising agencies: An exploratory study”	J. Advert. Res.	37	103	6.4
Reid, Luxton et al. (2005)	“The relationship between integrated marketing communication, market orientation, and brand orientation”	J. Advert.	21	103	4.3
Tsai (2005)	“Integrated marketing as management of holistic consumer experience”	Int. J. Res. Mark	0	95	5.9
Mulhern (2009)	“Integrated marketing communications: From media channels to digital connectivity”	J. Mark. Commun.	25	93	7.8
Kitchen and Schultz (1999)	“A multi-country comparison of the drive for IMC”	J. Advert. Res.	39	92	5.8
Stammerjohan, Wood et al. (2005)	“An empirical investigation of the interaction between publicity, advertising, and previous brand attitudes and knowledge”	J. Advert.	10	92	4.2
Nowak and Phelps (1994)	“Conceptualizing the integrated marketing communications’ phenomenon: An examination of its impact on advertising practices and its implications for advertising research”	J. Curr. Issues Res. Advert.	37	91	3.4
Low (2000)	“Correlates of integrated marketing communications”	J. Advert. Res.	49	87	4.1
Batra and Keller (2016)	“Integrating marketing communications: New findings, new lessons, and new ideas”	J. Mark	6	76	15.2
Baxendale, Macdonald et al. (2015)	“The Impact of Different Touch points on Brand Consideration”	J. Retail	1	76	12.7
Christensen, Firat et al. (2008)	“The Organisation of integrated communications: Toward flexible integration”	Eur J Mark	11	73	5.6
Beverland and Luxton (2005)	“Managing integrated marketing communication (imc) through strategic decoupling: How Luxury Wine Firms Retain Brand Leadership While Appearing to Be Wedded to the Past”	J. Advert.	3	73	4.6
Kliatchko (2005)	“Towards a new definition of integrated marketing communications (IMC)”	Int. J. Advert.	35	70	4.4
Garretson and Burton (2005)	“The role of spokes characters as advertisement and package cues in integrated marketing communications”	J. Mark.	2	69	4.3
Geissler (2001)	“Building customer relationships online: The Web site designers’ perspective”	J. Consum Mark.	0	68	3.4
Schultz and Schultz (1998)	“Transitioning marketing communication into the twenty-first century”	J. Mark. Commun.	25	66	2.9
Peltier, Schibrowsky et al. (2003)	“Interactive integrated marketing communication: Combining the power of IMC, the new media and database marketing”	Int. J. Advert.	21	65	3.6
Holm (2006)	“Integrated marketing communication: From tactics to strategy”	Corp. Commun.	16	63	4.2
McArthur and Griffin (1997)	“A marketing management view of integrated marketing communications”	J. Advert. Res.	26	61	4.7

\*Note: SO=Source, LC=local citations, TC=Total citations, TC/Y= citations per year.

Kliatchko (2008) redefined IMC by incorporating four pillars: stakeholders, content, channel and results; to emphasize audience-driven business process. The remaining most cited documents also discussed various aspects of IMC including- media strategy, media planning, brand orientation, and performance measurements.

### 3.4 Conceptual structure and topics on IMC

The most frequently used keywords in IMC literature are presented in table 3. In all 303 publications, a total number of 699 keywords were used, of which 83.98% (587 keywords) appeared only once and only 3.29% (23 keywords) of keywords appeared  $\geq 5$  times. Integrated marketing communications, integrated marketing communication, IMC, and advertising are four highly frequent, known, and most important keywords used over time in IMC literature. These keywords were used  $\geq 20$  times. It is interesting to note that 5 out of 20 most popular keywords directly refer to IMC. However, they were used in IMC literature with slight variations; it has implications for marketers; for example “communication” emphasizes “the act of communicating”, and “communications” emphasizes “the technology used for transmitting the message” (Edmiston-Strasser 2009); “Integrated marketing communications” is customer centered concept, whereas, “integrated communications” focus on all stakeholders of a company (Einwiller & Boenigk 2012). 4 out of 20 keywords are related to branding. It indicates that the popularity of branding concepts is increasing within IMC domain.

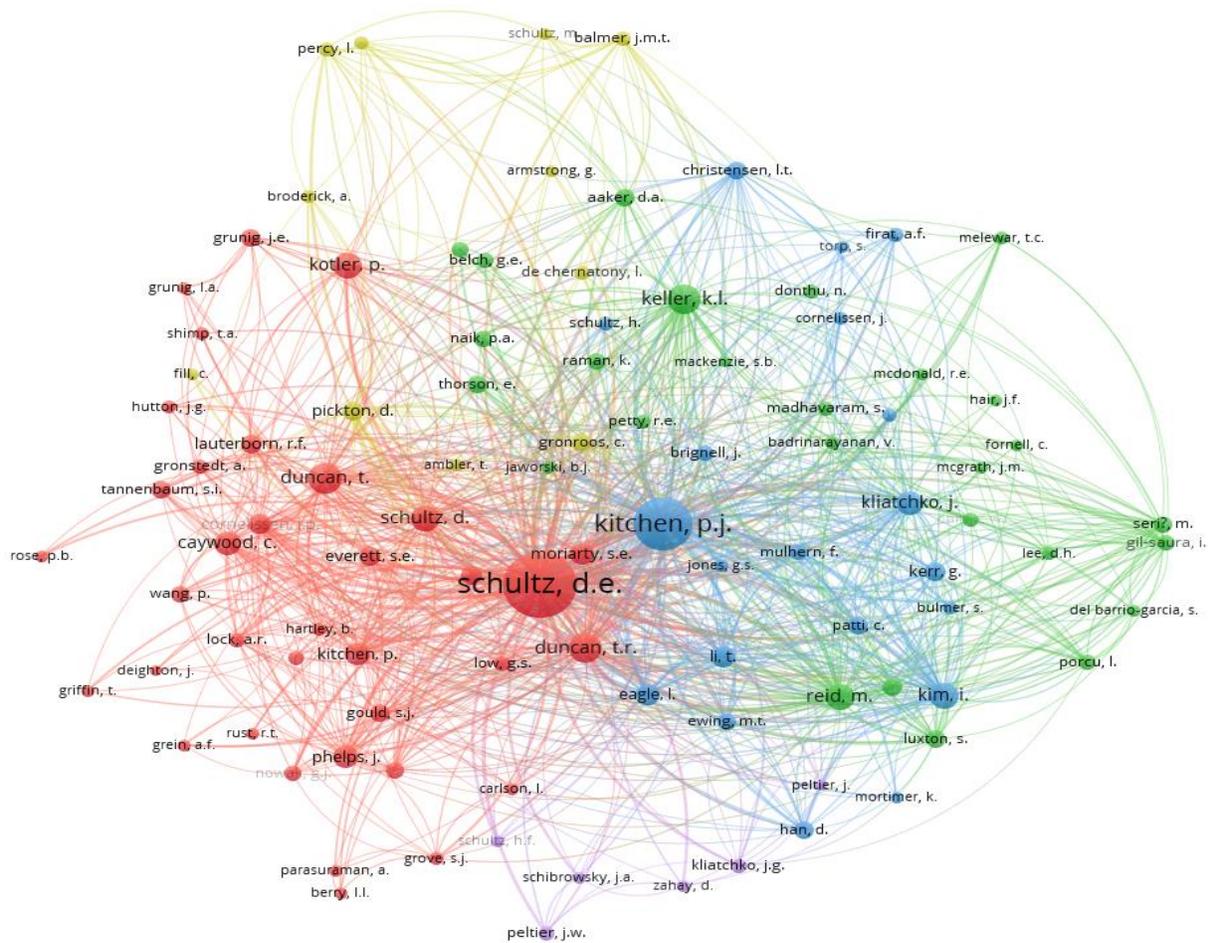
**Table 3:** Frequency of keywords

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>
Integrated marketing communications	79	Communication	9
Integrated marketing communication	42	Integrated marketing communication (IMC)	9
IMC	29	Brand image	8
Advertising	24	Corporate communications	8
Integrated marketing communications (IMC)	20	Measurement	7
Marketing communications	18	Branding	6
Marketing	13	Communications	6
Public relations	12	Marketing communication	6
Brand equity	11	Relationship marketing	6
Social media	10	Brands	5

Analysis of keyword co-occurrence generates a network of main themes which demonstrates their relationships to represent the conceptual space of a particular field. Figure 3 demonstrates the keyword co-occurrence map of 106 author keywords that have been used at least twice in IMC literature. The weight of each word is denoted by the size of each node and the strength of the relationship is denoted by the closeness of the words and lines. The keyword co-occurrence analysis demonstrates eight nodes. The highest number of keywords (22 items) belongs to the 'brand equity' node. Most of the keywords in this node, such as brand awareness, brand image, brand identity, brand equity, corporate image, brand loyalty, integrated communication and satisfaction, demonstrate the relationship among branding, customer perception, integration, and IMC implementation. The second node (15 items) is led by the keyword- communication followed by corporate communication and message consistency. This node is connected with the keywords like tourism, place marketing, customer satisfaction, and destination positioning. The third node with 15 items is led by the keyword measurement. This node shows strong connections with communications, effectiveness, firm-wide IMC, social marketing, and marketing engagement. The fourth node (13 items) can be marked with the keyword 'advertising' which has the second highest number of occurrences (25 times) of all the keywords in IMC literature. Its link strength is also very high, this node has strong connection with the concepts that are linked to communication media, IMC tools, and branding. The fifth node, led by the term 'marketing communication', is one of the most important nodes in IMC literature; this node demonstrates its connection with the keywords linked to media planning and communication strategy development. The sixth node (9 items) is marked by the keyword integrated marketing communication, which is the central theme of our discussion. This keyword appeared the maximum number of times in IMC literature. It also has the highest total link strength. However, this node is concerned with the constructs related to the execution of IMC programs using different mediums and tools; and assessment of its performance. The seventh node (9 items) demonstrates strong connection with the constructs of strategic orientation of communication effectiveness and customer perception with the key term integrated marketing communications (IMC). Finally, the last node (8 items), is signified by the term consumer empowerment. It demonstrates a strong connection with market-orientation and consumers. It is concerned with highlighting the importance of establishing strong relationship with advertising agencies for implementing consumer-oriented IMC programs through innovative communication mediums.



integration issues of IMC programs in addition to exploring the relationship between IMC and brand equity. The third community (20 items) comprises of authors P. Kitchen; J. Kliatchko; G. Kerr; I. Eagle, and M.T. Ewing. They examined definition, drive, practice, process, pillars, and strategies of IMC; they also researched social media as a viable tool of IMC. The fourth group (11 items), the yellow one, addresses measurement and success issues of IMC by examining its dimensions and demonstrating how IMC is a customer-focused strategy. Finally, the last group (6 items) involving J.W. Peltier; D. Zahay; J.A. Schibrowsky and J.G. Kliatchko, studied the need to conceptualize customer data integration to ensure a synergistic to implement interactive IMC.



**Figure 4:** Co-citation analysis by author

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Recognizing the limitations of the prior review papers (Kliatchko 2008, Porcu, Del Barrio-García et al. 2012, Tafesse & Kitchen 2017, Ahmad & Mokhtar 2019, Swani, Brown et al. 2019, Vashisht, Royne et al. 2019), this study intends to quantitatively review the theoretical evolution of the IMC literature and examine conceptual, intellectual, and the publication and citation structure in IMC research. Since the inception of IMC concept in 1991 (Caywood & Ewing 1991), it has passed through five distinctive phases of development. During the first two periods, the growth of IMC literature was very slow as it was a very new concept then. During the third and fourth period, the growth of IMC literature was substantial. As a result, a greater number of researchers began to focus on conducting research in this area. During these time period, IMC began to evolve from tactical communication tool to strategic management tool and strategic business process (Kliatchko 2005, Schultz, Kim et al. 2014, Kitchen 2017, Avraham 2020). Moreover, recognizing the firm wide impact of IMC, several researchers adopt a firm-wide approach to define IMC as a tool to integrate different communication tools to create greater competitive advantage (Porcu, Del Barrio-García et al. 2017, Kam & Tse 2020). Finally, during the last stage of evolution, a significant portion of researchers began to contribute to this field in total more than 100 papers were published during this time span. As a consequence, the scope of identifying new topics widened and the opportunity to investigate existing topics in greater depth were created. As per the prince law, this period is recognized as the period of exponential growth (de Solla Price 1963).

Although the overall productivity of IMC research was low as only 303 articles were published in 30 years, the impact of publications was high. On an average each document received more than 24 citations. This means as a growing research field, IMC has a strong academic influence. The results of the study demonstrated that the top 25 most productive countries were responsible for 64.7% publications on IMC. This implies that some countries have more interest in carrying out research in IMC. Among them, USA has the maximum publications (84) and maximum citations (4113). Even, both the most productive institutions and the most productive authors with most academic influence were also from USA. All these things indicate the concentration of IMC research in USA. It was also found that 60% of the total publications were from 25 sources, 18 of which have an impact factor greater than 1. To surprise, the most cited document was not published from any of those 25 sources, and only 6 journals have more than 10 publications. It

indicates that these 6 journals are most respectable in the field of IMC research. However, in recent days, a number of journals have begun to publish documents on IMC. Another interesting finding is that more than half of the most productive and most influential institutions are from USA. However, the most cited work in IMC literature was not written by the authors from any of those top 25 most productive institutions. (Mangold and Faulds 2009), the authors of the most influential article, were from Murray State University (USA) and University of Louisville (USA). Around 73% of the total publications were authored by more than one individual. Most research collaborations were noted among USA, UK, New-Zealand, and Canada. Interestingly, these countries were also in the list of most productive and most influential countries. These international research collaborations have widened the understanding of IMC and enhanced the influence of published articles.

The analysis reveals that only 19 words have been used more than 5 times in IMC literature. These keywords capture the true essence of IMC research. These keywords mainly focused on the theoretical aspects of IMC, IMC tools and strategy, and branding efforts. Even, the focus of top 25 most cited documents was on those four specific areas. It means that these areas of IMC research are the most developed ones. The examination of conceptual structure through keywords co-occurrence network also confirms this observation. Almost 7 of the 8 clusters of IMC research were related to these areas. For example, the focus of the first three nodes were related to brand equity, communication strategy, message consistency, and IMC tools. Our analysis of intellectual structures spotlights the details of those areas in addition to focusing on research clusters. D.E. Schultz; T.R. Duncan; S.E. Moriarty; C. Caywood; and P. Kitchen evaluated the academic aspects of IMC research; K.L. Keller; K. Raman; S. Madhavaram; R.E. Petty; P.A. Naik; and J. Belch examined the strategic issues of IMC; and P. Kitchen; J. Kliatcho; G. Kerr; I. Eagle, and M.T. Ewing emphasized on examining the tactical aspects of IMC.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this paper, several bibliometric techniques on Scopus database are applied to provide a quantitative outline of the evolution of IMC literature and identify conceptual, intellectual, and citation and publication structures in IMC. IMC literature have evolved through different stages of publications: in the initial stages, only a few documents were published; however, during the recent time (2014-2020), a large number of documents have been published on IMC. During the

last seven years, on an average > 20 documents were published each year. Although all papers in IMC have received at least 1 citation, only a few papers have crossed the boundary of 100 citations. The findings reveal that Philip J. Kitchen, Northwestern University, and the USA lead the lists of most productive and most influential authors, institutions, and countries respectively. *Journal of Marketing Communications* is the most productive and most influential journal followed by *European Journal of Marketing*. Findings from the 25 most cited publications reveal that the most influential papers are published in 13 different sources, 9 of which have an impact factor >2; and 17 of these influential documents were published in 5 sources. The keyword co-occurrence network analysis explores 8 different clusters in IMC literature, among which clusters marked with the keywords brand equity, measurement, IMC and consumer empowerment offer the highest research potential. Despite some limitations, this study is of critical importance because it provides a pertinent and timely quantitative overview of the evolution of IMC literature; gives a synopsis of the most influential and most productive authors, institutions, countries and sources; and identifies the opportunities for future research. It will assist scholars in determining the institutions and countries where they can pursue advance research. Finally, this study is an anchor point for future literature reviews and meta-analysis.

### **5.1 Limitations**

Like all others studies, this bibliometric study has some critical limitations. firstly, only Scopus database was accessed to collect data; future studies should focus on other databases including WoS database to examine trends in IMC literature. Secondly, only articles, books, book chapters, and review papers were considered for this study. All others documents were automatically excluded from the study. Potential researchers may take into consideration this fact. Finally, this study examines the contributions for the whole period of IMC evolution; therefore, it lacks a focus on a particular time period.

### **5.2 Future research directions**

Future research endeavors may undertake comparative study to explore the development of IMC research during particular time period. In addition, the examination of the frequency of the keywords used in IMC studies reveals that a significant portion of the keywords were used only once. It indicates that these areas were not research in depth. Moreover, very limited attention has been paid to the optimization problem of IMC. It can be a good area for future research. The in-depth examination of conceptual and intellectual structure in IMC research reveals that among

different identified clusters of IMC research, clusters headed by the keywords- brand equity, measurement, IMC and consumer empowerment represent under-developed areas. Researchers may also focus on these areas.

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