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City integrated marketing communication – identification and measurement framework

New challenges resulting from dynamic changes observed in the twenty-first century are driving the evolution of approaches to city marketing communication. This article adapts the integrated marketing communication (IMC) concept for cities and develops a measurement framework and a theoretically consistent, valid, and reliable measurement tool for assessing city integrated marketing communication (CIMC). A literature review and previous qualitative studies provided the basis for conceptualising and identifying the specific constructs of CIMC, namely strategic consistency, interactivity, and stakeholder--centred focus. The research developed a theoretically consistent, valid, and reliable measurement tool for assessing CIMC. Empirical validation of the CIMC scale was conducted on data collected from a survey completed by representatives of municipal offices responsible for marketing communication in 279 Polish cities. The value and originality of this article derive from the development of the measurement framework and the new scale for assessing CIMC, which provide the foundation for further research on model solutions in this area. The measurement tool also contains subscales that can be used in research on specific dimensions of city marketing communication. The CIMC scale will assist practitioners in their decision-making processes and facilitate comparisons of cities in a local and international context.

Keywords: city integrated marketing communication (CIMC), city marketing, integrated marketing communication (IMC), place marketing, measurement framework, scale development

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1. Introduction

The contemporary practices of a large number of cities indicate that their authorities are pursuing new management solutions to enhance the effectiveness and integration of marketing communication. This article addresses the challenges involved in developing such an approach and responds to the call for a "wholesale or partial adoption of the IMC concept by different sectors" (Kitchen and Schultz, 2009).

Over the past two decades, integrated marketing communication (IMC) has been the topic of a considerable volume of scientific publications in the field of marketing management (Kitchen and Schultz, 2009; Kliatchko, 2008; Munoz-Leiva et al., 2015; Schultz, Kerr, Kim, and Patti, 2007; Schultz, Kim, and Kang, 2014). However, empirical research on IMC has tended to focus on business entities (Kliatchko, 2008; Lee and Park, 2007; Luxton, Reid, and Mavondo, 2015; Munoz-Leiva et al., 2015; Schultz et al., 2014; Šerić, 2018). Although some studies on IMC have focused on the non-commercial sector (Edmiston-Strasser, 2009; Foroudi, Dinnie, Kitchen, Melewar, and Foroudi, 2017; Kerr and Kelly, 2017; Šerić 2018), a neglected area is city communication. Previous research findings have indicated the feasibility of integrating city marketing communication (Anonymous, 2019). The limitations resulting from the specifics of public sector management have not excluded undertaking work on adapting the IMC concept to cities.

Whilst conducting a literature review, the authors identified inadequate conceptualisation and adaptation of the IMC concept for cities (an exploratory gap), and a lack of research guidelines for the identification and evaluation of city integrated marketing communication (a methodological gap). This study sought to fill these gaps by adapting the IMC concept for cities and developing a measurement framework and scale for assessing the integration of city marketing communication.

The research objectives addressed two areas that currently present fundamental challenges for managing city marketing communication. The first objective (theoretical objective) was to conceptualise and identify specific constructs of city integrated marketing communication (CIMC). To achieve this, adaptive work was required due to the differences between business management and public sector management. The second objective (methodological objective) was to propose a framework for the measurement of CIMC. This was achieved through the development of a research tool that required the construction of a novel measurement scale – which is linked to the need to adapt and operationalise variables – tailored to the specifics of cities.

The research design employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The authors first conducted a review of the literature identified through a search in the Scopus and Web of Science databases. The selection of literature was restricted to publications over the past two decades (since 2000) that have been crucial for developing knowledge on integrated marketing communication, city marketing,

place marketing. city branding, and place branding. Key to inferences made regarding the state of knowledge and research on IMC were reviews of theoretical and empirical studies by Kliatchko (2008), Schultz, Kim and Kang (2014), Munoz-Leiva, Porcu and Del Barrio-Garcıa (2015), Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017), and Šerić (2018).

The literature review was supported by an analysis of the content of strategic documents derived from Polish cities and the results of studies on city marketing communication conducted by the authors in previous years. The qualitative study provided the basis for conceptualising CIMC and the construction of a proposed measurement tool (CIMC scale). Empirical validation of the measurement scale was performed on data collected from a survey conducted with representatives of municipal offices responsible for marketing communication in 279 Polish cities.

The value and originality of the paper derive from the development of integrated marketing communication theory and its adaptation in the area of city management, as well as the proposed measurement framework and new scale for the assessment of CIMC.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. The rationale for adapting the IMC concept to cities

According to Kerr and Patti (2015), IMC gained worldwide acceptance as a result of "evolving in its understanding and definition, with the exploration of key constructs, and some initial work on measurement". The literature on IMC indicates that since its inception as a field of study, theoretical foundations, definitional issues, and the development of the concept have been foremost concerns among scholars (Kliatchko, 2008; Schultz, Kim and Kang, 2014; Munoz-Leiva, Porcu and Del Barrio-Garcıa, 2015; Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017; Šerić, 2018). As part of the ongoing academic debate, doubts have been voiced as to the merits and possibilities of the full practical implementation of the concept (Pettegrew, 2001; McGrath, 2005). As early as 2009, Kitchen and Schultz, among other challenges involved in developing the IMC concept, indicated the need for "evidence of wholesale or partial adoption by different sectors". This inspired the subsequent discussion of the rationale of applying the IMC concept to cities.

The literature review demonstrated that the IMC concept has evolved from simplified communication system management (Duncan and Everett, 1993; Duncan and Caywood, 1996) to a stakeholder-centred, interactive, and cross-functional process (Duncan and Mulhern, 2004; Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017). Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017), based on a comprehensive review of conceptualisations and theoretical models, defined IMC as "the stakeholder-centred interactive process of cross-functional planning and alignment of organisational, analytical and communication processes that allows for the possibility of continuous

dialogue by conveying consistent and transparent messages via all media to foster long-term profitable relationships that create value" (Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017, p. 694). This definition of IMC is broad enough to be applied to companies and other entities, including cities.

The basic premise underpinning the implementation of the IMC concept for cities is the development of city marketing and city branding (Lucarelli and Olof Berg, 2011; Acharya and Rahman, 2016; Vuignier, 2017). Previous research findings, supported by numerous studies demonstrating the links between city branding and corporate branding, have indicated the feasibility of IMC implementation in cities (Anonymous, 2019). The adaptation of the IMC concept for cities can therefore be based on scientific achievements in the field of city branding and city brand communication (Parkerson and Saunders, 2005; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2006; Hankinson, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2009; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013; Zenker, 2011; Merrilees et al., 2012), citizen engagement and participation (Braun, Kavaratzis, and Zenker, 2013; Hereźniak, 2017; Kavaratzis and Kalandides, 2015; Molinillo, Anaya-Sánchez, Morrison, and Coca-Stefaniak, 2019; Rehmet and Dinnie, 2013), city brand partnerships, relationships, networks, and co-branding (Hankinson, 2004; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2007; Harrison-Walker, 2013; Merrilees, Miller and Halliday, 2016; Lucarelli, 2018), and interactive city branding (Florek, 2011; van Gelder, 2011; Merrilees, Miller and Halliday, 2016).

Previous research has also identified multiple limitations associated with the direct implementation of IMC solutions in cities. These result from the collective character of cities (various stakeholders, numerous organisational units, diverse objectives and needs); limited control over communication processes; insufficient resources and marketing communication capabilities; and lack of flexibility and limited possibilities for the long-term implementation of strategic assumptions (Anholt, 2004; Skinner, 2005; Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009a; Moilanen, 2015; Anonymous, 2019). However, these limitations do not exclude undertaking work on the adaptation of the IMC approach to cities.

Although the research identified a few studies on the IMC of places, these referred only to tourist destinations. Skinner (2005) focused on the problems with integrating place marketing communication and stated that true integration might be impossible to achieve. Pike (2008) identified the opportunities and challenges related to the integration of marketing communication. His considerations covered five areas: customer relationships, stakeholder relationships, cross-functional processes, stimulation of dialogue with customers, and message synergy. Wang, Wu and Yuan (2009) explored the role of IMC in visitors' destination choices. However, their study was limited to measuring the declared impact of specific communication tools on destination decisions. Šerić and Vernuccio (2019) empirically tested a model capturing the relationships between consistency and interactivity (two dimensions of IMC), and city reputation and consumer brand engagement. Their study focused on cities, but only in the tourism sector. Castañeda-García et al. (2020) examined the

role of consistent messaging via various communication tools in forming consumer-based destination brand equity. This notable study was limited to one dimension of IMC in the context of tourism.

Cities represent multi-level organisms with diverse stakeholders, different objectives, and communication needs. Therefore, the theoretical challenges associated with the conceptualisation of city integrated marketing communication (CIMC) necessitate the adoption of a full organisational perspective. The study proposes to define CIMC as an interactive process involving planning and conducting strategically consistent communication activities and ongoing dialogue via various media to maintain long-term relations that support city branding and create value for city stakeholders. Scientific achievements in the field of city marketing and city branding facilitate the development of measuring instruments for their application in cities. Notwithstanding the necessary adaptation work, developing a measurement scale for CIMC is essential for evaluating and demonstrating the implementation value of IMC.

2.2. IMC measurement frameworks

Over the years, scientists have increasingly come to recognise that the key to a more widespread adoption of IMC is a clear definition of constructs, operationalisation and effective empirical measurement and evaluation (Eagle, Kitchen and Bulmer, 2007; Kitchen, Kim and Schultz, 2008; Kitchen and Schultz, 2009; Schultz and Patti, 2009; Kerr and Patti, 2015; Kitchen and Burgmann, 2015b; Luxton, Reid and Mavondo, 2017). Although measurement has often been considered a fundamental weakness of IMC (Kitchen, Kim and Schultz, 2008, Šerić, 2018), several proposed measurement frameworks for integrated marketing communications have emerged. Table 1 provides an overview of the IMC construct dimensions and scales used in prior research over the past two decades.

Low (2000) proposed a three-item scale to measure IMC in a cross-sectional sample of companies. The IMC construct consisted of integration (1), strategic consistency (2), and message consistency (3). By integration, the author intended the extent to which the same manager plans all marketing communication tools. The second dimension determined the extent of strategic coherence of various elements of the marketing communications programmes. The message consistency dimension reflected the focus of various marketing communications tools on a shared message.

Based on the previous measurement proposition presented by Phelps and Johnson (1996), Ewing, De Bussy and Caruana (2000) developed a four-dimensional construct: one voice (1), direct marketing (2), increased responsibility (3), and response goals (4). One voice appealed to the central themes in previous theoretical approaches: consistency, integration, and synergy. Direct marketing reflected the role of one-to-one, direct response, and database marketing (expressed as interactivity in conceptualisations of IMC proposed by other authors). The distinction of the

increased responsibility dimension resulted from the recognition of the shift in communication focus from traditional to below-the-line advertising. By defining the dimension of the response goals, the authors related their research to the pragmatic and retail-related aspects.

Table 1

IMC construct dimensions and measurement scales (since 2000)

Author/s (year)	IMC Construct Dimensions	Measurement scales (items, type of scale)
Low (2000)	1. Integration (integrated planning) 2. Strategic consistency 3. Message consistency	• 3 items • 9-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (9)
Ewing, De Bussy and Caruana (2000)	1. One voice 2. Direct marketing 3. Increased responsibility (for below-the--line functions) 4. Response goals	• 14 items • 7-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree' (7)
Reid (2005)	1. Interactivity 2. Mission marketing 3. Cross-functional strategic planning	• 15 items • 7-point Likert scale from "not at all" (1) to "to a great extent" (7)
Hočevar, Žabkar and Mumel (2007)	1. Interactivity 2. Strategic organisation 3. Mission communications 4. Planning	• 15 items • 7-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7)
Lee and Park (2007)	1. Unified communications for consistent message and image 2. Differentiated communications to multiple customer groups 3. Database-centred communications for tangible results 4. Relationship fostering communications with existing customers	• 18 items • 5-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5)
Wang, Wu and Yuan (2009)	1. Public relations 2. Advertising 3. Direct sales and promotion	• 21 items • 5-point Likert scale from "no influence" (1) to "high influence" (5)
Luxton, Reid and Mavondo (2015, 2017)	1. IMC capability	• 12 items • 7-point Likert scale from "not at all" (1) to "to a great extent" (7)
Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017) Porcu, del Barrio--García, Kitchen, et al. (2019)	1. Message consistency 2. Interactivity 3. Stakeholder-centred strategic focus 4. Organisational alignment	• 25 items • 7-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7)

Source: own elaboration.

Several researchers have tested or adapted the scale proposed by Duncan and Moriarty (1997), which is composed of five dimensions: interactivity, mission marketing, strategic consistency, organisational infrastructure, and planning and evaluation. Reid (2005) then reduced this to three dimensions: interactivity (1), mission marketing (2), and cross-functional strategic planning (3). The interactivity measure addresses whether the customer's voice is the basis of brand-communication planning. The mission marketing measure determines the extent to which brand communication planning focus derives from the organisation's mission. The cross--functional strategic planning construct derives from three primary dimensions: organisational infrastructure, strategic consistency, and planning and evaluation. This dimension incorporates involvement from various functions and departments, the level of managerial skills and capabilities in brand communications, an understanding of customer contact points, the consistency of brand communication with brand positioning, and applying SWOT analysis in planning and strategy development.

Hočevar, Žabkar and Mumel (2007) proposed limiting the IMC measurement to four dimensions: interactivity (1), strategic organisation (2), mission communications (3) and planning (4). The interactivity dimension refers to collecting and using information gained through dialogue with customers via various brand contact points. The second dimension addresses the use of a long-term and common strategy to coordinate marketing communications. The third dimension refers to communicating the mission to consumers and its consistency with the company's messages. The IMC planning dimension concerns setting measurable goals for the entire marketing communication process and its tools.

In 2007, Lee and Park proposed the IMC measurement tool based on a four--dimensional conceptualisation of integrated marketing communication: unified communications for a consistent message and image (1), differentiated communications to multiple customer groups (2), database-centred communications for tangible results (3), and relationships fostering communications with existing customers (4). The first dimension refers to delivering a consistent message to create a single brand identity via various channels. The second dimension addresses the importance of developing different marketing communications campaigns for customers in different phases of the purchasing process. The third dimension represents the communicational role of databases in achieving tangible results. The fourth dimension underlines the importance of marketing communications in building long-lasting relationships with customers.

As the concept of IMC has evolved, there has been an increasing shift away from measurements based solely on tool-based approaches. However, some researchers have still based the measurement on marketing communication tools. An example is the research of Wang, Wu and Yuan (2009), who used three dimensions: public relations, advertising, and direct sale and promotion. The proposed scale was quite simple and the items represented marketing communication tools and channels.

Over the past two decades, a considerable part of the research on IMC has adopted a broader organisational perspective. Measures used in previous research by Duncan and Moriarty (1997) and by Low (2000) and Reid (2005) became the basis for the IMC capability construct proposed by Luxton, Reid and Mavondo (2015, 2017). The construct was reflected in a 12-item scale examining organisations' ability to undertake marketing communication activities that affect their brands. In their measurement, they referred to the use of a set of communication tools to achieve overall brand goals, the capacity of a creative theme to use in campaigns aimed at different stakeholders, linking the strategy and its objectives to building relationships with key stakeholders, planning based on target market insights and SWOT analysis, understanding all brand touchpoints, evaluation of all campaigns, maintaining highly skilled personnel, and devoting adequate time to manage brand communications.

Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017) developed a conceptual framework and operationalisation of IMC by elaborating and validating the new IMC scale. The authors introduced a four-dimensional IMC construct: message consistency (1), interactivity (2), stakeholder-centred strategic focus (3), and organisational alignment (4). Their proposition responds to the need for a broad organisational approach and provides the basis for the adaptation of the measurement framework to entities representing various sectors.

The message consistency (1) dimension refers to strategic and coherent positioning, consistency in visual communication, and the coordination of all messages originated by all departments and functions (Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017). Such coordination is intended to lead to communication efficiency based on synergy (Kitchen, Brignell, Li and Jones, 2004; Lee and Park, 2007; Moriarty and Schultz, 2012). The value of message consistency is challenging to test in the marketplace (Moriarty and Schultz, 2012). Therefore, measurements within this dimension focus primarily on the coordination and coherence of various communication tools and channels.

Interactivity (2) involves collecting stakeholders' information, monitoring stakeholder-generated messages, and adapting throughout the organisation a responsive attitude towards establishing a trust-based and ongoing dialogue (Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017). The rise of interactivity in integrated marketing communication is strongly linked to the development of digital technology and media (Peltier, Schibrowsky and Schultz, 2003; Peltier et al., 2006; Manser Payne, Peltier and Barger, 2017). The use of ICTs enhances the ability to obtain consumer data and monitor consumer insight (Mulhern, 2009), increasing the chance of achieving a better mutual understanding and strengthening relations.

The stakeholder-centred strategic focus dimension (3) concerns working towards the strategic goals of creating value for stakeholders. Since its inception, numerous researchers have viewed ongoing relations between organisations and various stakeholder groups as the foundation of IMC (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Reid, 2005; Finne and Grönroos, 2009; Mulhern, 2009; Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017).

Measuring IMC should therefore address the strategic use of stakeholder insight in providing and achieving high-value stakeholder-centred solutions. Stakeholders should be knowledgeable about the organisation's strategic direction, which requires raising their awareness of its mission (Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017).

The organisational alignment dimension (4) refers to the horizontal and vertical communication processes, Developing and deploying IMC capability requires the sharing of corporate values and goals, and firm-wide commitment and cooperation across various functional areas (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012; Zahay et al., 2014; Luxton, Reid and Mavondo, 2017). The horizontal and vertical cooperation and coordination of communicational activities are crucial because all organisational units and partners affect the corporate reputation (Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2017).

3. Methodology

This study was conducted to develop a framework and new measurement scale for CIMC. The research design employed both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The literature review was supported by an analysis of the content of strategic documents obtained from Polish cities and previous studies on city marketing communication conducted by the authors in the period 2015-2017[1]. The qualitative study formed the basis for the conceptualisation of CIMC and the construction of a measurement tool proposal (CIMC scale). Questionnaire items were translated and adapted in Polish. The scale items were discussed with experts (scholars and practitioners) with experience in city marketing communication and research on city marketing and branding. The purpose of this stage was to review the adapted constructs and items and ensure they were appropriate for research regarding cities. The study also addressed concerns regarding the respondents' ability to understand questionnaire items and provide relevant answers.This stage resulted in revisions to several items and the questionnaire layout.

To empirically validate the proposed measurement scale, the authors conducted a survey on a representative sample of Polish cities[2]. According to Statistics Poland (Polish National Statistical Office), there are 398 Polish territorial units with city rights that have more than 10,000 inhabitants (as of December 2020). The respondents were representatives of municipal offices responsible for decisions in the field of city

[1] These studies include a case study of the city of Wrocław, based on an analysis of the content of strategic documents of the city published in 1998-2017, research reports and materials related to communication activities of the city, and in-depth interviews with representatives of Wrocław City Council and municipal companies responsible for communication activities, city promotion, the implementation of large city events, and coordination of CRM projects. In previous research, the authors also conducted a comparative analysis of the communication activities of selected large European cities (Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Berlin, Edinburgh) and three Polish cities (Wrocław, Szczecin, Poznań).

[2] The definition of a city varies from country to country and is based on various criteria (population size, population density, functional and historical criteria).

marketing communication. Due to the respondents' availability, it was impossible to survey representatives of all municipal offices in 398 cities. The initial sample consisted of 361 cities, but the analysis only included responses from cities with a unit responsible for marketing communication. The respondents were representatives for whom marketing communication was a core competency[3]. Thus, the final sample consisted of 279 cities.

Table 2

The sample and population by number of inhabitants

Polish territorial units with city rights	**Sample**		**Population**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**
Number of inhabitants				
10,000 to 19,999	131	47	180	45
20,000 to 99,999	118	42	180	45
100,000 and more	30	11	38	10
Total	279	100	398	100

Source: Statistics Poland, 2020.

The sample was selected from three categories of territorial units with city rights defined by the number of inhabitants (based on the Statistics Poland classification system). To a large extent, the sample structure reflects the population structure (Table 2). A description of the sample, including other characteristics, is presented in Appendix 1.

The study used triangulation of research techniques (CATI, CAWI), which resulted from the different preferences of the respondents regarding the form of contact and interviewing, and the need to ensure an appropriate response rate. The survey was administered by a research agency with experience in research on public entities. A preliminary pilot study on representatives of 10 cities was conducted to ascertain the clarity and acceptability of the questions. After ensuring that the respondents had no problems answering the questions, the survey was conducted on a larger sample.

The data gathered via the survey enabled validation of the proposed CIMC scale through the application of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The sample size is crucial for EFA and CFA methods, although researchers represent different approaches in this regard. Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) suggested a sample with at least 300 cases, Cattell (1966) – 250, Hair et al. (1998) – 100, Sapnas and Zeller (2002) – even 50 objects. MacCallum et al.

[3] The study excluded the responses of persons performing various administrative functions, or whose scope of duties included tasks related to marketing communication but did not constitute their primary scope of responsibilities.

(1999) proved that the necessary sample size depends on several specific aspects of a given study, most notably the level of commonality. When commonalities are over 0.6, the factors are well determined, and computations converge to a proper solution, even for the smaller sample size.

Luxton, Reid and Mavondo (2017), defining directions for research on IMC, suggested that future studies should adopt a specific lens, such as examining different organisation sizes. Based on this, the authors assumed it would be reasonable to conduct research and analyses for subgroups according to city size. Therefore, it was decided to validate the scale regarding separate categories of territorial units.

4. CIMC measurement framework and scale development

4.1. CIMC measurement framework

Based on the literature review, supported by an analysis of the content of strategic documents obtained from Polish cities and the results of previous studies on city branding and city marketing communication, the authors assumed that the construct dimensions proposed by Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017) would form the basis for developing a measurement framework for the assessment of CIMC. However, the development of constructs and measurement scales required adaptive work due to differences between business management and public sector management. On the basis of qualitative studies, the study proposed a measurement framework and operationalisation of the CIMC construct based on three dimensions: strategic consistency (SC), interactivity (IN), and stakeholder-centred focus (SF).

Strategic consistency. The two constructs, "message consistency" and "organisational alignment" proposed by Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017), were linked into one overarching definition as "strategic consistency". This is a logical connection grounded in IMC theory. The notion that messages and their multiple sources must be strategically coordinated ('one sight, one sound', 'one view') has its roots in the origins of the IMC concept (Duncan and Everett, 1993; Moriarty, 1996; Thorson and Moore, 1996; Caywood et al., 1991). By "strategic consistency", Duncan and Moriarty (1998) referred to the consistent presentation of organisational values and the coherent brand positioning.

Therefore, strategic consistency refers to sharing common brand meaning and content among multiple communication channels and tools (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Navarro, Delgado and Sicilia, 2010; Šerić and Vernuccio, 2019). This highlights the need for consistent marketing communication between various sources and media (online and offline) and achieving intra-channel and cross-channel synergy (Batra and Keller, 2016; Pauwels et al., 2016). From a strategic point of view, consistency involves sharing values and goals within all organisational units and requires the alignment of horizontal and vertical communication processes.

To ensure consistent positioning, it is essential to coordinate messages reaching diverse audiences through various channels. Hence, it is helpful to establish a clear key message as this will facilitate communication with different stakeholders from a long-term perspective and establish coherent communication programmes. Hankinson (2007) suggested that one of the fundamental shortcomings of place marketing is the failure to communicate a consistent message across the various target groups. However, as previous case study-based research shows, there are numerous examples of cities conducting communication activities based on a consistent message derived from the city brand strategy (Anonymous, 2016). Strategic consistency allows the continuation of the adopted path of marketing communication activities, even in the face of problems that stem from the terms of office of the city authorities.

Consistency also refers to coherency in the use of brand identity elements. As Govers (2013) observed, city marketing communication efforts often focus on spending time and money on slogans and logos. While these identity elements are essential in the marketing communications of commercial brands, multiple authors have repeatedly claimed their relative insignificance in place branding (Govers, 2013). Conversely, place marketing researchers indicate the importance of symbols in forming local identity and place image (Mueller and Schade, 2012). The consistent use of city identity elements is also facilitated by fostering commitment, engagement, and a sense of belonging among stakeholders and internal audiences (Mueller and Schade, 2012; Govers, 2013).

An important aspect related to strategic consistency is organisational alignment. This includes solutions and mechanisms for the communication and cooperation of various city units in ways that are consistent with the city's values and support its long-term goals. In city marketing, maintaining consistency is difficult if communication programmes are run independently by multiple entities with differing objectives, resources, and capabilities (Skinner, 2005; Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009a). To address the problems with multi-organisational coordination, the municipal office should create opportunities to increase the strategic consistency of city communication and initiate long-term cooperation programmes for various entities operating in the city (Moilanen and Rainisto, 2009b; van Gelder, 2011; Anonymous, 2016).

Interactivity. Interactivity is an essential dimension in contemporary constructs of IMC (Reid, 2005; Moriarty and Schultz, 2012; Luxton, Reid and Mavondo, 2015; Porcu et al., 2017; Porcu, del Barrio-García, Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2019). This refers to ongoing dialogue involving various stakeholders in which the key is reciprocity, speed of response and responsiveness (Johnson, Bruner and Kumar, 2006; Moriarty and Schultz, 2012; Porcu, del Barrio-García, Alcántara-Pilar et al., 2019). Interactivity relies on exchanging messages and co-creating shared meaning by marketers and audiences (Kliatchko, 2008; Finne and Grönroos, 2009; Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017). By encouraging mutually beneficial dialogue, interactivity is considered crucial for initiating, maintaining, and nurturing stakeholder relations (Reid, 2005; Lucia Porcu, del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2012; Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017).

Recently, researchers involved in marketing and place branding have exhibited an increased interest in interactive communication. Several researchers reported the role of interactive tools and channels of marketing communication in place brand co-creation (Florek, 2011; Kavaratzis, 2012; Hanna and Rowley, 2015; Merrilees, Miller and Halliday, 2016) and building place reputation (Šerić and Vernuccio, 2019).

In the context of cities, interactivity is about finding and providing different ways to conduct and stimulate dialogue with city stakeholders, respond to their inquiries and comments, and collect and monitor information generated by stakeholders. Interactivity is now linked strongly to the use of digital media, which enhance the capability to engage in dialogue, acquire stakeholder data, and monitor stakeholder-generated messages. According to Kavaratzis (2012), user-generated content is the critical change in modern communication. Therefore, it is important to systematically monitor the information generated by city stakeholders in their online word-of-mouth communications. Moreover, an increasing number of cities are engaged in the intensive development and use of interactive tools (platforms, applications, etc.), allowing for dialogue between various stakeholders.

Stakeholder-centred focus. Putting stakeholders at the centre of marketing communication processes to create shared value and build long-term and profitable relations is seen by many researchers as crucial to the implementation of IMC (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998; Reid, 2005; Kliatchko, 2008; Finne and Grönroos, 2009; Mulhern, 2009; Tafesse and Kitchen, 2017).

City marketing communication requires thinking about the complex system of diverse stakeholders, where the actions of some have an impact on others (Jamal and Getz, 1995; Moilanen, 2015). In addition, the city's brand depends not only on the actions of the authorities but also (and in particular) on the activities and communication of the city's stakeholders (Braun et al., 2018). According to Moilanen (2015), modern cities face problems such as conflicting stakeholders' interests, lack of leadership and insufficiently effective communication within loosely structured networks. This implies the need to disseminate knowledge about the strategic directions of city development among stakeholders and involving them in the planning and evaluation processes.

The basis for creating value for the city and its stakeholders is the identification of multiple recipients and understanding their needs and preferences. Stakeholder insights are used to plan marketing communication and other city activities. Stakeholders should be knowledgeable about the city's strategic direction (vision, mission) and may be included in the planning and evaluating of its activities through systematic surveys. Furthermore, the engagement of city staff and an efficient information flow between city units are essential in developing and implementing stakeholder-focused solutions.

The proposed three dimensions (strategic consistency, interactivity, stakeholder-centred focus) were the conceptual basis for the development of a scale for the measurement of CIMC.

4.2. Proposed CIMC measurement scale

The authors proposed a CIMC measurement tool consisting of 20 items: eight items for "strategic consistency", six items for "interactivity", and other six for "stakeholder-centred focus" (Table 3).

Table 3

City Integrated Marketing Communication Scale (CIMC scale)

The CIMC scale
Strategic consistency (SC)
SC_1. We coordinate the messages of the city marketing communication to maintain consistency of city positioning and image.
SC_2. We maintain consistency in all visual components of city communication.
SC_3. We care for the consistency of marketing communication in traditional and modern media.
SC_4. Communication with various recipient groups share a key message.
SC_5. We periodically analyse our city communication messages to assess their consistency level.
SC_6. Due to internal communication, employees of various organisational city units are aware of the values and goals resulting from the city's strategy.
SC_7. Well-developed mechanisms of cooperation and teamwork within various organisational units that serve the implementation of strategic goals exist in the city.
SC_8. The municipal office is the initiator of long-term cooperation programmes for various entities operating in the city.
Interactivity (IN)
IN_1. Our city offers various ways to facilitate dialogue with city stakeholders (obtaining information, submitting comments etc.).
IN_2. In our city, we systematically collect information from stakeholders in a database used by various organisational units.
IN_3. Our city uses information and communication technologies intensively to respond quickly to inquiries and comments submitted by stakeholders.
IN_4. Our city proactively uses social media to engage in dialogue with stakeholders.
IN_5. Our city is intensely developing interactive tools that allow for dialogue between various stakeholders (platforms, applications, etc.).
IN_6. In our city, we systematically monitor the information generated by stakeholders through their online word-of-mouth communications.
Stakeholder-centred focus (SF)
SF_1. The city vision/mission is actively promoted among stakeholders, particularly among residents and entities operating in the city.
SF_2. The insights of marketing research and analysis of stakeholders' needs are the basis for planning city marketing communication.
SF_3. The choice of city communication tools and channels is based on an analysis of the needs and preferences of our stakeholders.
SF_4. The staff of all city organisational units actively pursue stakeholder-centred solutions.
SF_5. In our city, we systematically conduct stakeholder surveys to evaluate and plan the city's activities.
SF_6. The adopted organisational solutions affect the efficient flow of information between various organisational units of the city.

Note: The respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

Source: developed based on the firm-wide IMC scale proposed by Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017).

With regard to specifying the number of points on the Likert scale, the study considered that each respondent must have a relatively precise and stable understanding of the meaning of each point (Krosnick and Presser, 2010). Thus, it was decided to use a 5-point Likert scale (from "1, strongly disagree" to "5, strongly agree") to make it easier for the respondents to read and understand the options and facilitate completion of the questionnaire. The authors also acknowledged that it was quite simple to read out the list of scale descriptors when using the CATI technique. In a study comparing data obtained from using 5-point, 7-point and 10-point scales, Dawes (2008) found that the three options are comparable for analytical tools such as CFA or structural equation models. Furthermore, both 5- and 7-point scales can be easily rescaled, and the resulting data will be reasonably comparable.

5. Empirical CIMC scale validation

The CIMC scale composed of 20 items was then subjected to empirical validation. EFA was used to verify the latent factors of the set of items using the STATISTICA 13.0 statistical programme (StatSoft Power Solutions. Inc.). CFA was applied to verify the underlying factor structure derived from the EFA. Descriptive statistics and a correlation analysis of the different items and Cronbach's alpha were then calculated. Composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE) were estimated to ensure reliability of the CFA results following the suggestion of Hair et al. (2014). To ensure the feasibility of the factor analysis, the correlation matrix was evaluated. Bartlett's sphericity test ($\chi^2 = 441.24$; $df = 190$; $p < 0.001$) affirmed that the matrix was not an identity matrix, while the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy measure (KMO = 0.765) yielded a value of almost 0.8. Both results indicate that it is possible to extract factors from the matrix of observed correlations.

The statistical analysis was then conducted for cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants. EFA was applied to the data to determine the dimensionality of the IMC scale. It revealed three factors explaining 71.4% of the total variance. Four questions with values lower than 0.6 were excluded from the analysis (SC_3; IN_2; SF_1, SF_3). To test the dimensionality of the scale, CFA was applied. Following Porcu, Del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2017), three diagnostic measures were implemented to estimate construct reliability and assess the degree of consistency between multiple measurements of a variable. The item-to-total correlation and the inter-item correlation of each dimension were analysed and both exceeded the suggested cut-off values (0.5 and 0.3, respectively).

Internal consistency coefficients were then assessed to check the reliability of the three factors. Cronbach's scores were 0.91 for SC; 0.90 for IN; and 0.87 for SF. All these values exceeded the most conservative threshold of 0.8 (Table 4) recommended for purified scales. In addition, the computed average variance extracted (AVE) and the composite reliability (CR) exceeded the recommended thresholds of 0.5 and 0.7,

respectively (Fornell and Larcker, 1981a; Hu and Bentler, 1999). As indicated in Table 4, the composite reliability of every factor ranged from 0.87 to 0.91, whereas the statistical value of AVE for every loaded construct extended from 0.6 to 0.64.

Table 4

Results of the confirmatory factor analysis for cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants

Cities with 100,000 and more inhabitants									
Items	Standardised coefficients	t-value	p-value	R^2	M	SD	α	AVE	CR
Construct I (SC)									
SC_1	0.78	9.65	0.000	0.61	4.37	0.61	0.91	0.60	0.91
SC_3	0.76	8.89	0.000	0.58	4.23	0.77			
SC_4	0.68	6.37	0.000	0.47	4.20	0.76			
SC_5	0.74	7.91	0.000	0.54	4.20	0.61			
SC_6	0.77	9.21	0.000	0.60	4.23	0.68			
SC_7	0.83	11.99	0.000	0.68	3.87	0.68			
SC_8	0.84	12.75	0.000	0.70	4.20	0.71			
Construct II (IN)									
IN_1	0.87	15.20	0.000	0.76	4.30	0.70	0.90	0.64	0.90
IN_3	0.71	6.96	0.000	0.50	4.10	0.66			
IN_4	0.73	7.52	0.000	0.53	4.27	0.69			
IN_5	0.83	11.89	0.000	0.68	4.23	0.63			
IN_6	0.86	14.78	0.000	0.75	4.07	0.74			
Construct III (SF)									
SF_2	0.83	11.21	0.000	0.69	3.97	0.76	0.87	0.64	0.87
SF_4	0.77	8.40	0.000	0.59	4.07	0.74			
SF_5	0.75	7.97	0.000	0.57	4.10	0.66			
SF_6	0.84	11.49	0.000	0.70	4.13	0.63			
Estimation model									
CIMC→SC	0.84	1.98	0.048	0.70				0.65	0.85
CIMC→IN	0.82	2.14	0.032	0.67					
CIMC→SF	0.76	2.68	0.007	0.58					

Notes: M – mean, SD – standard deviation, α – Cronbach's alpha, AVE – average variance extracted, CR – composite reliability.

Source: own elaboration.

Three widely applied model-fit indices are used in this article, all of which are based on a fit function given a specific estimation method, such as: the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA; Steiger and Lind, 1984; Steiger, 1990), comparative fit index (CFI; Bentler, 1990), and Tucker–Lewis index (TLI; Tucker

and Lewis, 1973; Bentler and Bonett, 1980). The results provided evidence for the adequate dimensionality of the IMC scale and thus the 16 items could be considered appropriate. The results indicated that the model ($\frac{\chi^2}{df} = 1.30$; RMSEA = 0.04; TLI = 0.87; CFI = 0.90) provided an acceptable overall goodness-of-fit. Standardised parameter estimates are provided in Table 4 and all are statistically significant at the alpha level of 0.001. The R^2 values indicate the amount of variance of the items explained by the respective constructs.

To assess discriminant validity, the criterion suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981b) was applied by calculating the square root of the AVE. The authors suggested that the AVE of each factor should be greater than the squared correlation between that factor and any other. This means that the square root of the AVE should be greater than the correlation shared among the constructs. The results (Table 5) indicated that the correlation coefficients (off-diagonal) between each pair of constructs were less than the square root of each AVE in the diagonal; hence, this measurement model supports discriminant validity between the constructs.

Table 5

Square root of AVE and correlations between constructs for cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants

CONSTRUCT	SC	IN	SF
SC	**0.77**		
IN	0.75	**0.80**	
SF	0.69	0.73	**0.80**

Notes: Values in bold are square roots of AVE showing discriminant validity.

Source: own elaboration.

Based on these findings, the proposed measurement scale demonstrated adequate reliability for cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants. Therefore, a useful tool for assessing CIMC had been obtained.

An analogous analysis was then performed for cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants. The results are presented in Table 6, which contains all the measures described earlier. Bartlett's sphericity test for cities with 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants ($\chi^2 = 979.11$; $df = 190$; $p < 0.000$), and the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin sampling adequacy measure (KMO = 0.87) for cities with 10,000 to 19,999 inhabitants: ($\chi^2 = 1189.70$; $df = 190$; $p < 0.000$); KMO = 0.92, indicated that it was possible to extract factors from the matrix of observed correlations. The EFA indicated two factors, which were then validated by confirmatory analysis.

Finally, the constructs included items for which the item-to-total correlation and the inter-item correlation of each dimension exceeded the values of 0.5 and 0.3, respectively. Based on Hair et al. (2010), all standardised coefficients were statistically significant ($p < 0.0001$) and greater than 0.7. The results indicated that the model for

cities with 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants ($\frac{\chi^2}{df} = 1.19$; RMSEA = 0.04; TLI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99) and for cities with 10,000 to 19,999 inhabitants ($\frac{\chi^2}{df} = 1.10$; RMSEA = 0.02; TLI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99) provided an acceptable overall goodness-of-fit.

Table 6

Confirmatory factor analysis for cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants

Cities with population of 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants									
Items	Standardised coefficient	t-value	p-value	R^2	M	SD	*α*	AVE	CR
Construct II (IN)									
IN_1	0.77	14.41	0.000	0.59	3.80	0.75	0.79	0.55	0.79
IN_2	0.74	13.23	0.000	0.55	3.68	0.75			
IN_5	0.72	12.30	0.000	0.52	3.80	0.79			
Construct III (SF)									
SF_1	0.703	11.68	0.000	0.49	3.81	0.65	0.78	0.54	0.78
SF_2	0.721	12.32	0.000	0.52	3.67	0.83			
SF_5	0.782	14.74	0.000	0.61	3.67	0.80			
Estimation model									
CIMC→IN	0.71	12.33	0.000	0.51				0.65	0.76
CIMC→SF	0.86	10.52	0.000	0.74					
Cities with population of 10,000 to 19,999 inhabitants									
Items	Standardised coefficient	t-value	p-value	R^2	M	SD	α	AVE	CR
Construct II (IN)									
IN_1	0.66	8.91	0.000	0.43	3.85	0.74	0.72	0.46	0.71
IN_2	0.68	9.39	0.000	0.47	3.73	0.65			
IN_3	0.69	9.45	0.000	0.47	3.66	0.72			
Construct III (SF)									
SF_3	0.70	10.52	0.000	0.49	3.534	0.70	0.75	0.50	0.75
SF_4	0.69	10.20	0.000	0.47	3.649	0.74			
SF_5	0.72	10.89	0.000	0.52	3.618	0.72			
Estimation model									
CIMC→IN	0.81	4.58	0.000					0.65	0.73
CIMC→SF	0.71	15.00	0.000						

Notes: M – mean, SD – standard deviation, α – Cronbach's alpha. AVE – average variance extracted, CR – composite reliability.

Source: own elaboration.

An EFA made it possible to hypothesise the existence of up to three dimensions representing CMIC:

- strategic consistency (SC),
- interactivity (IN),
- stakeholder-centred focus (SF).

According to an assumption related to the possibility of measurement differences for subgroups of cities, the number of dimensions depends on the size of the city. The three dimensions listed above comprise the CIMC for cities with 100,000 and more inhabitants. For cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, CIMC is described by two unobserved factors: interactivity (IN) and stakeholder-centred focus (SF).

CFA was performed to corroborate the factor structure obtained following EFA of the scale. The results indicated the existence of adequate values higher than 0.87 in the CFI and TLI indices, as well as values between 0.02 and 0.04 in RMSEA and RMR. Concerning the $\frac{\chi^2}{df}$ ratio, a value of 1.30 for cities with 100,000 and more inhabitants (1.19 for cities with 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants and 1.10 for cities with 10,000 to 19,999 inhabitants) was obtained, which is considered good as it was lower than three (values below 2.0 are deemed to be indicators of a very good model fit). The scale's internal consistency was excellent, with Cronbach's values between 0.72 and 0.91. To reaffirm the internal consistency, the CR of all the factors was higher than 0.8 (see Tables 4 and 6), exceeding the minimum values stipulated by Hair et al. (2014), who set the value of the statistic at 0.7. For the AVE, all the values exceeded the minimum requirement of 0.5.

The statistical analysis also identified differences in the composition of CIMC scale items for sub-categories of cities. For cities with the largest population (100,000 and more inhabitants), after validation the measurement scale included 16 items encompassing three constructs: seven items for "strategic consistency" (SC), five items for "interactivity" (IN) and four items for "stakeholder-centred focus" (SF) (Table 4). Initially, the proposed scale consisted of 20 items (Table 3), four of which were eliminated after the validation process. All items except one regarding the consistency of visual identity (SC_2) formed the strategic consistency construct. This aligns with the views of authors who have already raised their relatively low importance in place branding (Govers, 2013). The interactivity construct lacked one item of the initial scale related to the collective usage of stakeholder information collected systematically in the database (IN_2). In the stakeholder-centred focus construct, two items were eliminated after the validation process. These concerned city vision/mission promotion among stakeholders (SF_1) and the choice of city communication tools and channels based on an analysis of the needs and preferences of our stakeholders (SF_3).

For cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, CIMC was based on two constructs: interactivity (IN) and stakeholder-centred focus (SF). The surprising aspect of the statistical analysis was that the strategic consistency construct was not distinguished

for the two sub-categories of smaller cities. After validation, CIMC was based on six items: three items for "interactivity" (IN) and other three for "stakeholder-centred focus" (SF). Notably, there were also differences in the composition of items forming the distinct constructs (Table 5).

For the two sub-categories of cities, the interactivity construct includes items concerning various ways to facilitate dialogue with stakeholders (IN_1) and related to the collective usage of stakeholder information collected systematically in the database(IN_2). Within interactivity, the set of scale items differed by one item. Regarding cities with 20,000 to 99,999 inhabitants, the third item concerned the development of interactive tools (platforms, applications) to enable dialogue with stakeholders (IN_5). In the context of cities with fewer than 20,000 inhabitants, there is an item relating to the intensive use of ICTs to respond to stakeholders' inquiries and comments (IN_3). More considerable differences relate to the composition of scale items for "stakeholder-centred focus", because the scale positions in the two categories of smaller cities did not coincide.

Discussion and conclusions

This article addressed the challenges of developing the IMC concept for cities and responds to the call for the "wholesale or partial adoption of the IMC concept by different sectors" (Kitchen and Schultz, 2009). The study adapted the IMC concept for cities based on the company-wide conceptualisation of IMC (Porcu, Del Barrio--García and Kitchen, 2017) and by considering the differences between business and public sector management. This study provided a conceptualisation and measurement framework of CIMC.

The value and uniqueness of this article lies in the development of a conceptual and measurement framework to assess the integration of city marketing communication. The authors proposed a new measurement framework and operationalisation of the CIMC construct based on three dimensions: strategic consistency (SC), interactivity (IN), and stakeholder-centred focus (SF).

Strategic consistency (SC) refers to sharing brand meaning and content among different communication channels and tools used by cities to achieve intra-channel and cross-channel synergy. It requires the alignment of horizontal and vertical communication processes and the existence of mechanisms to facilitate the communication and cooperation of various city units in ways that are consistent with the city's values and support its long-term goals. Strategic consistency also refers to the multi-organisational coordination and long-term cooperation programmes for various entities operating in the city.

Interactivity (IN) concerns the ongoing dialogue that is crucial for building mutually beneficial relations with and between city stakeholders. It is about providing different methods of contact, responding to inquiries and comments, and collecting and monitoring information generated by stakeholders. The ability to engage in

dialogue, obtain stakeholder data, and monitor stakeholder-generated messages is enhanced by the use of ICTs and digital media.

Stakeholder-centred focus (SF) places city stakeholders at the centre of marketing communication processes to create shared value and build long-term and profitable relations. This dimension implies the need to disseminate knowledge about the strategic directions of city development among stakeholders and involving them in the planning and evaluation processes. It also requires the engagement of city staff and efficient information flow between city units in developing and implementing stakeholder-focused solutions.

Initially, the authors proposed a CIMC measurement tool consisting of 20 items: eight items for "strategic consistency", six items for "interactivity", and other six for "stakeholder-centred focus". The scale was validated according to the adopted assumptions for subcategories of cities of different sizes (measured by the number of inhabitants).

The statistical analysis for cities with 100,000 or more inhabitants provided evidence for the adequate dimensionality of the IMC scale and enabled to classify the 16 items as appropriate. Based on the findings, the proposed measurement scale demonstrated adequate reliability. Hence, a useful tool for assessing CIMC has been developed. For cities with the largest populations (100,000 and more inhabitants) after validation, the measurement scale included 16 items spanning three constructs: seven items for "strategic consistency" (SC), five items for "interactivity" (IN), and four items for "stakeholder-centred focus" (SF).

For cities with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants, CIMC is described by two dimensions: interactivity (IN) and stakeholder-centred focus (SF). Isolating these two dimensions for all cities has a strong theoretical basis, because IMC is increasingly seen as the stakeholder-centred interactive process of brand communication that leads to mutual profitable relations (Duncan and Mulhern, 2004; L. Porcu, del Barrio-García and Kitchen, 2012; Porcu et al., 2017).

The surprising aspect of the statistical analysis is that the strategic consistency (SC) construct was not distinguished for the two subcategories of smaller cities. The reasons for this may be found in the scale of the activities or competencies within marketing communications. However, empirical research is needed to move beyond mere speculation. Notably, this study identified differences in the composition of items forming the distinct constructs of IMC for various city subcategories, the explanation of which may pose a topic for further research.

The utilitarian aspect of the achievement of constructing an innovative measurement scale can also be pointed out. It forms the basis for the development of model solutions that are relevant to the further implementation of the concept of integrated marketing communications in the field of city marketing. The CIMC scale can also assist city practitioners in their decision-making processes and enable them to detect areas that require support or adjustments. The proposed measurement tool also provides subscales that can be employed in research on CIMC and specific

dimensions of marketing communications. Managers can use the subscales to assess the degree of implementation of each of the three CIMC dimensions. The new measurement scale may also facilitate comparisons of cities in a local and international context.

There are, nevertheless, some limitations to this study, and these offer scope for future research. For instance, the research was conducted exclusively in Poland, thus further studies are necessary to test the proposed scale in other geographical contexts to enhance its generalisability and strengthen the theoretical basis of CIMC research.

The proposed CIMC scale resulted from adapting a measurement framework suitable for business entities to cities; however, researchers may wish to work on expanding dimensions and modifying scale items for cities or their subcategories. The research focused on the marketing communications of municipal offices and did not take into account the point of view of other city entities. Hence, a particular direction for developing CIMC research may be a broader consideration of co-creation processes and stakeholder engagement.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the present research makes a significant contribution to IMC knowledge by developing a measurement framework essential for evaluating and demonstrating the implementation value of CIMC. This study focused on developing and testing a new CIMC measurement scale. The next challenge is to link such a measure to the antecedents supporting CIMC implementation and its effects.The proposed measurement framework also provides a basis for further research, development, and empirical verification of conceptual model solutions in the area of CIMC.

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Appendix 1

Table A1.

Characteristics of the sample and the population

Polish territorial units with city rights	Sample		Population	
	n	%	n	%
Number of inhabitants				
10,000 to 19,999	131	47	180	45
20,000 to 99,999	118	42	180	45
100,000 and more	30	11	38	10
Total	279	100	398	100
Key city functions(each city has an administrative function) Respondents could select 1-3 options				
Tourist	142	51	n.a.	n.a.
Business	33	12		
Industrial	96	34		
Cultural	111	40		
Academic	8	3		
Sport	4	1		
Trade and service	86	31		
Total	279	100		
Organisational unit responsible for city marketing communication				
Marketing communication/promotion department	260	93	n.a.	n.a.
Marketing department	19	7		
Total	279	100		
Document containing guidelines for city marketing communication				
Separate document on marketing communication/ brand strategy/promotion	84	30	n.a.	n.a.
Part of the city development strategy	156	56		
No document in this regard	39	14		
Total	100	100		

Note: n.a. = not available

Source: own elaboration.