



Integrated Marketing Communication and Performance of Nigeria Hospitality Sector

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The dramatic change in the business environment due to advances in technology and variations in consumer demands have led organizations to come up with more effective ways to communicate, persuade and remind the target market about its products and services. Today, integrated marketing communication (IMC) has been widely acknowledged as a remarkable marketing tool by researchers. Despite the numerous types of research on integrated marketing communication, its effect on performance continues to be somewhat neglected within the hospitality sector. The study examined the effect of integrated marketing communication on the performance of hotels in Nigeria. It sought to find out the extent to which integrated marketing communication tools influence the performance of hotels. A descriptive survey research design was employed for the study. The study findings revealed that advertising, public relations, sales promotion, and social media marketing as integrated marketing communication tools are positively correlated and significantly affect hotels' performance. The study further provided reliable empirical evidence to confirm that the use of integrated marketing communication tools such as advertising, sales promotion, social media, and public relations could potentially enable hotels to improve their overall performance.

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: *Integrated; Marketing Communication; Performance; Nigeria Hospitality Sector*

Introduction

The business world today has changed significantly due to advances in information and communication technology, particularly in the area of marketing which has shifted its focus away from mass marketing (the product-centered theories of marketing) to targeted marketing (a more customer-driven and focused marketing environment) Usani, Etuk & Ekpenyoung, (2021); Peltier, Schibrowsky & Schultz, (2003). For an organization to pursue and achieve its marketing and business objectives, it has to engage with a variety of audiences using marketing communications. Marketing Communications is defined as the means through which the organization tries to inform, persuade and remind customers either directly or indirectly about its products (Alshare, 2018). Marketing communications are simply used to promote a brand, enterprise, project, or trademark. They include public relations, internet communications (digital), advertising, sales promotion, personal sales, event marketing, direct marketing, media, social networks, etc.

The need for an organization to appropriately coordinate its marketing communication strategies to deliver a comprehensible, consistent, and compelling message about its products and services has become a challenge today for every result-driven organization. Successful marketing strategies require successful communication strategies and this in turn, necessitates the integration of many communication elements in a creative manner. For this reason, the concept of integrated marketing communication was introduced (Kehinde, 2011; Proctor & Kitchen, 2002). Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a process that involves a dynamic series of progressive and interdependent steps, such as database building and management of consumer information, developing and planning messages to be delivered using a variety of channels, and evaluating synergistic brand communications programs (Egwuenu & Aliku, 2018).

Due to the rapidly changing technological capabilities, as well as the growing significance of customer participation in marketing decisions, the use of the IMC concept could be a recipe for greater performance. This is because IMC provides a cost-effective way to maximize the impact of communication by improving marketing decisions, making messages more efficient, making easy availability and access of goods and services, and reducing product-related risks in the mind of consumers/customers (Daszkiewicz & Pukas, 2016; Rashid et al., 2013; Seric & Gil-Saura, 2011). The emphasis had been on the impact of IMC on sales, marketing, and brand performance in the telecommunication, banking, and insurance sectors. To date, academic research that reflects the synergy between integrated marketing communication and the performance of service organizations, particularly the hospitality sector is limited. Hence, the study was conducted to determine the effects of integrated marketing communication tools (advertising, sales promotion, and social media) on the performance (customer patronage) of the hospitality industry in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In the situation of high competition in the business environment as seen in the hospitality industry, the attainment of high organizational performance must recognize the need to inspire and motivate the customers via the design, establishment, and implementation of robust integrated marketing communication that calls out the best in the customers in terms of their patronage to the organization. In the last two decades, the marketing environment has continued to change as a result of various behavioral, technological, and managerial forces.

To survive in this competitive marketing environment and reach business expectations related to marketing, organizations should adopt integrated marketing communication (IMC) to improve performance (Muhanji & Ngari, 2015; Reid et al., 2001). In the hospitality field, integrated marketing communication plays a considerable part in gaining customers, but the wrong choice and usage of non-professionals in the planning, organizing, execution, control, and evaluation of integrated marketing communications in marketing activities of most hospitality firms is a big challenge. Sequel to the above, it has become relevant to evaluate the effect of integrated marketing communication on hospitality firms' performance.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to evaluate the effects of integrated marketing communication tools (advertising, sales promotion, social media, and public relations) on the performance proxy (customer patronage) of the hospitality industry in Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

- I. Determine the effect of advertising on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria.
- II. Determine the influence of sales promotion on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria.
- III. Evaluate the impact of social media marketing on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were asked and answered to guide the study.

- I. What are the effects of advertising on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria?
- II. To what extent does sales promotion affect customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria?
- III. To what extent has social media marketing affected customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria?

Statement of Hypotheses

The under-listed hypotheses stated in the alternative form were designed to further guide the study:

- I. There is no positive effect of advertising on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria.
- II. There is no positive effect of sales promotion on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria.
- III. There is no positive effect of social media marketing on the customer patronage of hospitality firms in Nigeria.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptual Review

Integrated Marketing Communication

According to Kitchen *et al.* (2004), integrated marketing communication is the process of developing and implementing various forms of persuasive communications programs with customers and prospects over time. Guyo (2021) defined integrated marketing communication as an approach that endeavors to coordinate, solidify and bring together all the communications messages, software engineers, and vehicles that influence customers or benefit an organization's brands. The American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) defines IMC as "A comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication channels and combines these channels to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact" (Bhati & Bhadu, 2017; Sethi, Goriya & Singh, 2014). Kliatchko (2005) goes further, positing that integrated marketing communication is the strategic management of audiences, channels, persuasive content, business outcomes, and behavioral outcomes over time.

The primary role of integrated marketing communication is to examine the communication needs of customers and from the information obtained, design a communication strategy that will (i) provide answers to the target audience's primary questions, (ii) assist the customer's ability to make the best decision possible and (iii) increase the probability that the choice they make often will be the brand of the organizations. Any organizations that fulfill this role tend to establish a lasting relationship with the customers which will in turn enhance their marketing performance (Usani *et al.*, 2021).

Components of Integrated Marketing Communication

An effective integrated marketing communication strategy consists of three main components (Emoh, Anyaogu & Kalu, 2018).

- I. **Target audience:** Target audience is the group of people whom the marketing message is meant for and they should be placed at the core process of developing the IMC strategy to effectively capture and meet their needs. It is a combination of an internal audience (employees and shareholders) and an external audience (customers, suppliers, government, etc).

- II. **Communication Channels:** All the channels of communication (that is the marketing communication tools) should be properly managed and synergistically coordinated in a manner that will yield optimal results.
- III. **Results:** The integrated marketing communications strategy should be result-driven and measurable.

Tools of Integrated Marketing Communication

The integrated marketing communication tools otherwise called marketing communication mix are the specific mix of advertising, sales promotion, social media marketing, and public relations that an organization uses to pursue its marketing objectives. The IMC tools used for this study are outlined below:

- I. **Advertising:** Advertising is a non-personal paid form of communication about an organization and its product to a target audience through various types of print, outdoor, broadcasting, and interactive media to create brand awareness and brand image and persuade a customer to respond (Ebitu, 2015; Ekhlassi, Maghsoodi & Mehrmanesh, 2012).
- II. **Sale Promotion:** Sales promotion is a short-term incentive directed at the target audience to stimulate consumer purchases and product trials. Sales promotion provides a “bargain chance” for customers and overusing this tool can damage brand image and lead to insecure customers, wondering whether the services are reliable or reasonably priced (Ailawadi *et al.*, 2009; Brassington & Pettitt, 2000).
- III. **Social Media Marketing:** Social media marketing is a low-cost promotional method of promoting business through social media channels. Since social media is very available to everyone with an internet connection, it should be used by organizations to increase their brand awareness and facilitate direct feedback from their customers (Al-Qeeda, 2019; Alhaddad, 2015).
- IV. **Public Relations:** Public relation is the management of the relationships and communications between an organization and its public (Etim *et al.*, 2021). Public relations strategies are as follows, charitable involvement such as sponsorship and community initiatives; the creation and maintenance of corporate identity and image; and media relation for the spreading of good news as well as for crisis management such as damage limitation (Muhanji & Ngari, 2015). Public relations strategies are being used by companies to create and maintain a positive corporate image and to obtain the goodwill of the public.

Benefits of Integrated Marketing Communication

Picton & Broderick (2005) highlighted the benefits of using integrated marketing communication as follows:

- I. IMC promotes unified marketing solutions
- II. It brings unbiased marketing commendations
- III. It is cost-effective
- IV. Increases operational efficiencies
- V. Allows access to a greater number of audiences

Performance of Hospitality Firms

The performance of an organization is the measurement of the degree to which a firm’s established objectives and goals are achieved by its marketing and managerial strategies over some time (Zawadi & Makena, 2019). The indicators of performance in an organization include the following: brand recognition, customer patronage, customer satisfaction, customer preference, customer retention, brand advocacy, corporate image, sales volume, market share, sales revenue, new product success rates, and profitability (Bruni, Cassia & Magno, 2017; Richard *et al.*, 2009). Thus, performance measurement is extremely vital in determining organizational successes or failures.

Theoretical Review

The AIDA Theory

The AIDA is an acronym that stands for attention, interest, desire, and action. The AIDA theory states that a consumer goes through four different stages during the service or product purchasing process (Muhanji & Ngari, 2015). The model produces a detailed illustration of the entire procedure of how advertising affects consumer behavior and purchase decisions. The attention of the consumer must be drawn through any marketing communication mix before a purchase decision is made. When organizations create attention, interest, desire, and attraction to their products using appropriate communication channels to reach the mass market, the demand for existing and new products in the market is stimulated. Therefore, the adoption of the theory by hospitality firms promotes tremendous growth of the firms in terms of client base and revenue (Jiangyu & Haibo, 2013; Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000).

DAGMAR Theory

DAGMAR is an acronym in marketing that stands for Defining Advertising Goals for Measured Advertising Results. The theory states that effective advertising seeks to communicate rather than to sell. DAGMAR focuses on the level of understanding that a customer must fulfill for the organization and on how to measure the result of an advertising campaign (Jemutai & Wambua, 2016). Research has shown that the DAGMAR theory has a great influence on how to set objectives in the advertising planning process and many marketers use this model as their base. DAGMAR theory is relevant to this study because it deals with creating awareness, communicating the usage of the product/services, conviction to purchase the product and services, and finally purchasing the product (Usani *et al.*, 2021).

Empirical Review

Usani *et al.*, (2021) surveyed the effect of integrated marketing communication tools (sales promotions, advertisement, personal selling, and direct marketing) on the performance of five hotels in Calabar, Cross River State. The study comprised a sample size of 148 respondents and the data obtained were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The results of the study established that the IMC tools jointly have a significant influence on the marketing performance of hotels in Calabar. The study also revealed that advertisement was found to have the most significant influence on the marketing performance of the hotels.

Odongo & Ronald (2021) investigated the effect of integrated marketing communication tools on the organizational performance of insurance companies in Mombasa County, Kenya. A survey research design was used and the target population consisted of 49 respondents. The collected data were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics and a regression model was applied to determine the relationship of the variables under study. From the result, it was observed that all the five IMC tools; advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, sales promotion, and public relations have a significant positive influence on organization performance.

Aransyah *et al.*, (2020) tested the impact of promotion on room occupancy rate in Mesra Business and Resort Hotel in Samarinda. The study employed primary data obtained from 70 questionnaires and secondary data collected from field observation. Data were analyzed using a simple linear regression method. The result showed that the promotion variables consisting of direct sales, advertising, sales promotion, word of mouth, and publicity simultaneously had a significant effect on room occupancy rates.

Shamsan & Otieno (2015) investigated the effects of strategic public relations on the organizational performance of the Kenya Red Cross Society using a primary source of data obtained through questionnaires. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings indicated that there is a significant effect of strategic public relations on organizational performance.

Abimbola, Oluwole & Kolawole, (2020) examined the effect of integrated marketing communications on the institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey

research design. The population of the study consisted of 473 respondents. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.832 to 0.701. The data collected was analyzed using multiple regression analysis. The result shows an overall statistical significance with $p < 0.05$ which implies that integrated marketing communications dimensions, advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, online marketing, and public relations are important determinants of institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommended that universities, especially private universities should invest in integrated marketing communications to improve their institutional performance.

Emeh *et al.*, (2018) examined the effect of integrated marketing communications on the sales volume of firms in Nigeria's Food and Beverage industry. The data obtained from 200 respondents were analyzed using a linear regression model with the aid of a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 20. It was observed that there is a positive and significant relationship between IMC variables and sales volume except for public relations which showed a positive but insignificant effect on sales volume. The researchers recommended that more emphasis be placed on direct marketing and sales promotion to yield desired results.

Pembi, Fudamu & Adamu (2017) examined the impact of sales promotional strategies on organizational performance concerning Flour Mills, Nigeria. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of data collection. Questionnaires were administered to 20 staff using random sampling techniques. The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentage analysis and regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. The result shows that sales promotional strategies have positive and significant effects on organizational performance at ($F=15.984$, $P < 0.01$) significance level.

Musibau, Choi & Oluyinka (2014) investigated the impact of sales promotion and product branding on the company performance of AIICO Insurance Plc. A total of 60 field survey questionnaires were distributed while 14 were refined. The data was collected and analyzed using the chi-square (χ^2) method. From the findings, product branding and sales promotion affect organizational growth.

Haule & Swallehe (2021) examined the effects of social media marketing on the business performance of supermarkets. The study employed primary data obtained from questionnaires and secondary data collected using documentary review. The data were analyzed using descriptive and multiple regression techniques aided by SPSS. The results of the research shows that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media marketing and the business performance of supermarkets (beta value 0.919, $t = 8.055$, $p = 0.000$).

Al-Qeeda (2019) studied the impact of integrated marketing communications on a hotel's marketing performance. The study adopted a survey research method and data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17 and multiple regression analysis. The findings of the research revealed that public relations, advertising, and social media marketing as integrated marketing tools are positively correlated and significantly impact hotels' marketing performance.

Tajvidi & Karami, (2018) investigated the influence of social media on firm performance with mediating role of marketing capabilities in the UK, hotel industry. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to analyze the data collected from a sample of 384 hotels. The results showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media use and firm performance.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and aimed to assess the impact of integrated marketing communication on the performance of hotels in Calabar Metropolis. The descriptive survey method was preferred because it ensures a complete description of the situation with minimum bias. The study was conducted in 15 hotels in Calabar Metropolis. The area was chosen because it is one of the places with the highest number of hotels. The study used a judgmental sampling technique to obtain a sample size of 226 respondents. This study was based on secondary sources of data. The data were obtained from hotels' annual financial reports. The data obtained in the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics whereas the study hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression with the aid of IBM SPSS 23. Two major variables are involved in this study. The independent variable is

integrated marketing communication (IMC) while the dependent variable is performance. The independent variables are measured along the dimensions of advertising, public relations, sales promotion and social media marketing.

Model Specification

Mathematically, $Y = f(X)$

Where Y = Dependent Variable (Performance)

X = Independent Variables (Integrated Marketing Communications)

The multiple linear regression model is specified implicitly as follows:

$$Y = f(X_1, X_2, X_3)$$

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where: Y = Performance (P)

β = Constant Term

β_1 to β_3 = Regression Coefficients

X_1 = Advertising and Public Relations

X_2 = Sales Promotion

X_3 = Social Media Marketing

ε = Error Term

Decision rule: Reject H_0 , where χ^2 calculated is greater than χ^2 tabulated, otherwise, accept H_A .

Data Presentation and Analysis

Data Presentation

The results obtained from analyzing the data using multiple linear regression are presented in Tables 1–3 below.

Table 1: Model Summary of the Effect of Integrated Marketing Communication on Customer Patronage of Hotels

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.880 ^a	.774	.769	.19324

a. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, Sales Promotion, and Social Media Marketing

Source: SPSS Version 23.0

Table 2: ANOVA of the Effect of Integrated Marketing Communication on Customer Patronage of Hotels

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	28.189	4	7.047	188.715	.000 ^b
Residual	8.253	221	.037		
Total	36.441	225			

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of hotels

b. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, Sales Promotion, and Social Media Marketing

Source: SPSS Version 23.0

Table 3: Coefficients of the Effect of Integrated Marketing Communication on Customer Patronage of Hotels

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.302	.090		14.476	.000
Advertising	.125	.028	.181	4.426	.000
Sales Promotion	.154	.036	.403	4.341	.000
Social Media Marketing	.116	.046	.247	2.522	.012

a. Dependent Variable: Performance of hotels

Source: SPSS Version 23.0

Data Analysis

The results in the Tables 1, 2, and 3 are multiple linear regression results of the effect of integrated marketing communication on the performance of hotels. From table 4.1, the correlation coefficient (R) of 0.88 indicates that the relationship between integrated marketing communication tools and the performance of hotels is 88.0 %, signifying a very high degree of relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.774 in Table 2 suggests that up to 77.4 % of the variability in the performance of hotels can be explained by integrated marketing communication tools. From table 4.2, the F-test (188.715, $P < 0.05$) statistic indicates that the regression model is statistically significant, that is, integrated marketing communications significantly influence the performance (customer patronage) of hotels.

Test of Hypotheses

The multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the hypotheses. Hypotheses testing is a structured way of testing claims or ideas about any given parameter in a population using data measured in a sample. The probability values reported in the regression coefficient table (Table 4.3) were used for testing the study hypotheses. The p-value is the lowest significance level at which a null hypothesis can be rejected (Gujarati and Porter, 2009). If the p-value calculated is greater than the critical level of significance, then the null hypotheses will be accepted while the alternate hypotheses are rejected and vice versa.

Table 3 shows that the p-values of all independent variables tested are below the error margin of 0.05 [advertising (p-value = 0.000), sales promotion (p-value = 0.000)] and social media (p-value = 0.012)]. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that integrated marketing communications tools have no significant effect on the performance of hotels in Nigeria was rejected. Thus, the study accepted all alternative hypotheses and concluded that advertising, sales promotion, and social media had significant positive effects on the performance (customer patronage) of hotels in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

The test of hypothesis one revealed that advertising and public relations have a significant positive effect on the performance (customer patronage) of hotels.

This finding is backed by the study of Al-Qeeda (2019), which revealed that advertising and public relations had a significant positive effect on the performance of hotels in Addis Ababa. Similarly, the finding is substantiated by the study of Aransyah *et al.* (2020), which revealed that advertising and publicity had a significant effect on room occupancy rates in Mesra Business and Resort Hotel, Samarinda, Indonesia. This signifies that advertising and public relations as popular integrated marketing communication tools through substantive empirical evidence have been confirmed to significantly improve the performance (customer patronage) of hotels.

From the test of hypothesis two, it was revealed that sales promotion has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of hotels. The finding is substantiated by the study of Pembri *et al.* (2017) which revealed that sales promotion had a significant positive effect on the organizational performance of Flour Mills, Nigeria. This implies that sales promotion enhances the performance of hotels.

Finally, the test of hypothesis three revealed that social media marketing has a significant positive effect on customer patronage of hotels. This finding is backed by the study of Al-Qeeda (2019) which revealed that social media marketing was positively correlated, and significantly impacted hotels' marketing performance. This finding implies that social media marketing significantly influences the performance (customer patronage) of hotels.

Summary of Findings

The major findings of the study include the following:

- I. The extent to which advertising affected customer patronage of hotels was high (p -value = 0.000; $p < 0.05$).
- II. The extent of effect of sales promotion on customer patronage of hotels was high (p -value = 0.000; $p < 0.05$).
- III. The extent to which social media marketing affected customer patronage of hotels was high (p -value = 0.012; $p < 0.05$).

Conclusion

In the emerging dynamism of the business environment, no organization can afford to overlook the growing importance of integrated marketing communications (IMC). The deficiency of marketing communications focuses tends to be the reason for the poor performance of several hotels in Nigeria. Through effective implementation of integrated marketing communication, hotels can improve their performance as well as meet the needs of guests and their satisfaction. The general purpose of the study was to examine the effect of integrated marketing communications on the performance of hotels in Nigeria. The results of the study showed that advertising, sales promotion, and social media marketing correlate with each other and significantly impact customer patronage of hotels. The most influential tool on hotel performance (customer patronage) was advertising, followed by sales promotion and finally social media marketing.

Recommendations

In line with the findings and the conclusion of the study, the following recommendations were made.

- I. Hospitality firms should employ effective advertising media such as television, billboards, posters, and radio commercials to advertise products and services, aiming to create awareness, persuade customers and encourage customer patronage. Hospitality firms should implement advertisement programs such as company-sponsored events, community engagement, and customer relations so as to improve their corporate image and maintain affable relations with stakeholders.
- II. Sales promotions such as discounts, price reductions, and bonus packs should be offered to customers as incentives to encourage customer patronage.
- III. Social media should be increasingly utilized alongside other communication media by hospitality firms to promote their offerings and improve customer patronage and retention.

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