

**THE INFLUENCE OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ON THE
GROWTH OF SMEs IN THE RURAL AREAS OF KWAZULU-NATAL.**

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DECLARATION

I, Nkululeko Mkhize, hereby declare that this dissertation is original and that all materials used have been acknowledged and clearly referenced. A bibliography is included in this dissertation.

This work has not been submitted to any other institution, or to obtain any other degree.

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Date: 30/09/2020

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ABSTRACT

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) activities assumed by entrepreneurs and business owners is a study field with vast prospects for academics, practitioners, and small business planners to explore, especially the understanding and use of IMC by entrepreneurs and small business owners.

This study investigated the views and use of IMC by small business owners in a mid-sized metropolitan area in a largely rural region for their business ventures. The aim was to establish understanding of the influence of IMC in business as well as assessing the various methods of message development utilized by entrepreneurs and small business owners and the extent of their knowledge about target audiences. The rationale of the study was to promote research in new ways and strategies to communicate a company's offerings to customers as they have become very sophisticated and stringent when it comes to their decision-making when buying goods and services. The aim of the study was to analyze the influence of IMC on the growth of the SMEs in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN).

A quantitative research method within a descriptive research approach was adopted for the present research study. Structured questionnaires were distributed to SME owners in four rural areas of KZN: Eshowe, Mbazwana, Nkandla, and Ulundi. The research population was various SMEs owners in the aforementioned areas. The sample size of 250 was the number of questionnaires distributed to the SME owners that were available to the researcher as well as the research assistants. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 24.0 software was used to analyze the results of the study. Pre-testing of the questionnaire was done to ascertain the validity of the study. The main objective of pre-testing is ensuring that the questions being asked accurately reflect the information that the researcher desires.

Findings of the presented study indicated that IMC are of paramount importance in the growth of SMEs and are just not an optional extra. SMEs that do not use or fail to implement IMCs to increase efficiency and growth are always bound to fail within the industry. The efficiency and guaranteed results in implementing IMCs compared to traditional communication methods prompted this study to conclude that IMCs are one of the most important tools in the growth of SMEs.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Summary of the study

Before the advent of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in the early 1990s, mass communication was the most efficient way of transmitting information to major sections of the population through radio, television, and other forms of media. The SMEs sector has evolved in the last decade and many entrepreneurs have entered the industry competing for the same customers. Moreover, consumers have become very sophisticated and stringent when it comes to making their decisions about buying goods and services. The aim of this study was to establish the impact of integrated marketing communications in the growth of SMEs in the rural areas of South Africa. The focus of the study was to determine the impact of IMCs in the growth of SMEs in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). This study will assist businesses in reaching a broader target audience through developing new strategies to communicate with the market.

The sample size of this study was 250 respondents from four rural areas in KZN: Eshowe, Mbazwana, Nkandla, and Ulundi. The study was qualitative with a questionnaire as the data collection instrument.

1.2 Context of the research

There is agreement among policy makers that SMEs contribute significantly to a country's economic growth. Keeping SMEs running smoothly ensures a healthy nation for its citizens. By creating employment opportunities for citizens, SMEs contribute to the increase of exports, and help to keep cash/money within the country. The continued survival of SMEs in South Africa depends on the efficient use of the various IMC tools (Lekhanya 2015: 139-144).

Regardless of their significance and input to a nation's economic growth, SMEs across the globe, South Africa included, still face many problems that hinder their growth. Besides funding and access to finance, SMEs also suffer from poor integration or use of

IMC tools that include advertising, sales promotions, direct marketing, and public relations (Tsikirayi, Muchenje and Katsidzira 2015: 69).

Prior to the advent of the field of IMC during the 1990s, mass communication was a popular and efficient practice for transmitting information to major sectors of the population through television, radio, and other media. This type of communication is also known as traditional communication and only allowed one-way type of marketing where no feedback could be attained. Advertisement is carried out with minimal consideration for the diverse needs, tastes, and values of customers. The initial four elements or 4Ps of the marketing mix were: product, price, promotion (marketing communication), and place (Jagdish and Rajendra, 2016). The lack of tools for the determination of results in terms of sales frequently made this “one size fits all” tactic expensive and vague.

The inception of IMC has inadvertently demanded for new marketing and business practices. There is a need for companies to adopt new operation and competing techniques in this environment. An all-inclusive approach is necessary and, in this respect, a full encompassing marketing concept with a comprehensive integrated perspective has been proposed. Incorporation of diverse marketing activities for maximum joint effects is part of integrated marketing. An IMC strategy (as a component of integrated marketing) incorporates the selection of marketing communication options capable of strengthening and complementing each another (Kotler and Keller, 2016: 19)

Advancement in the consumer data collection and analysis methods through single-source technology like scanners increased the marketers’ abilities to relate promotional activities with the purchasing patterns of consumers (Fill, 2013: 56). Furthermore, there was downsizing of operations and expansion of marketing tasks within company organizations. It was also imperative that, in addition to advertising, advertising agencies comprehend and deliver all marketing functions to their clients.

Presently, trade promotions, branding, public relations, advertising, and consumer corporate promotions are all incorporated in corporate marketing budgets (Pride and Ferrell, 2017: 112). The significance of efficient marketing has been shown in the provision of communication budgets that are not inclusive of mass media and traditional

advertising. Marketing is now regarded as a two-way conversation between marketers and consumers. Through IMC, SMEs can now offer their products in a manner that allows each customer's needs to be individually satisfied as IMC has the capabilities of relaying information back to the production line.

1.3 Research problem and aims

1.3.1 Problem statement

The SME sector has evolved in the last decade and many entrepreneurs have entered the industry competing for the same customers. Moreover, consumers have become sophisticated and stringent when it comes to their decision-making when buying goods and services. Due to this, there is a need for constant research in new ways and strategies to communicate a company's offerings to customers. According to Luck and Moffatt (2010: 311-325), traditional communication alone is no longer enough, thus competitors that have adopted IMC automatically gain competitive advantage over those companies in the same industry that are making use of traditional communication channels alone.

Most SMEs are not using IMC to grow and sustain their market share. This leads to failure of many of the SMEs in KZN (Gabrielli and Balboni, 2010). The new-found wealth and uniqueness of individuals or potential customers has created an opportunity for how SMEs can effectively communicate their packages. Realising that traditional ways of communication are no longer as effective as before, SMEs should come up with innovative and unique marketing communications that better communicate their offerings to customers. In this imperative, it is important for SMEs to adopt IMC as a strategy since it can be used effectively to reach targeted audiences in a unique manner that yields results, putting companies that have implemented it in a better position compared to companies that are still using traditional communication channels. Since consumers have become sophisticated and careful when it comes to making their decisions regarding buying of goods and services, there is a need for constant research on new ways and strategies for a company to communicate their offerings to their customers.

1.3.2 Aims of the study

The aim of the study was to analyse the influence of the IMC on the growth of the SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the internal IMC environment that may be affecting the success of SMEs.
2. To identify the most efficient tools of IMCs that can be utilised to enhance the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.
3. To ascertain the role of digital/online marketing communication tools in the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

1.5 Literature review

IMC is a recent innovation as a result of the amalgamation of two fields, namely, marketing and mass communication. Apart from its historical lineage in the marketing discipline, IMC resides in a niche environment that has striven to develop its own special body of literature (Duncan and Mulhern 2014).

Kanibira, Saydnab and Nartc (2014) suggest that marketing communications require the development of communication opportunities and conveying messages to and getting messages from clients in order to produce the anticipated response in the target audience. Gabrielli and Balboni (2010) argue that marketing communications is the process of methodical coordination of a businesses' numerous messages and communication actions, incorporating these into an unchanging marketing mix in order to clearly convey a message to the relevant target market. Porcu (2012) explains that IMC is a perspective that puts emphasis on combining all the marketing mix variables as well as their plans and actions. According to Kanibira, Saydnab and Nartc (2014), the aims of IMC are to support revenue, develop a product and develop brand awareness, create a corporate image, and figure out the attitudes of the target market.

IMC activities carried out by entrepreneurs and business owners is a study field that provides investigative prospects for small business planners, consultants, and academics. Regardless of the chances for knowledge development in the field, there still exists a paucity of information regarding the views and utilization of IMC by entrepreneurs and small business owners. This study sought to address how small business owners in four medium-sized metropolitan areas, that is areas with population between 25 000 and 250 000, in largely rural areas view and use IMC in their ventures, to gain more insight on small business owners and entrepreneurs' perceptions of the impact of IMC in their business, how they relate to target audiences and various ways they relay messages (Isaac, Visser, Friedrich and Brijlal, 2016).

1.5.1 Marketing communications

Marketing communications are defined as a management procedure through which a business interacts with its various audiences (Fill, 2013:12). Currently most research has focused on transmitting data, conveying a message and hierarchical structural models such as Attention, Interest, Desire and Action (AIDA) model (Finne and Gronroos, 2009). Ballantyne and Varey (2014) sees this as concentrating on the "how to" whilst being silent on the "why", although there a serious need for such understanding. Varey (2014) realised that the marketing communication aspect concentrates mainly on the tactical and applied level. This consequently puts importance on theory research over applied or practical research in marketing communications. The present research study thus investigated promotions from a complexity theory perspective.

1.5.2 Advertising

Any priced system of report or promotion of ideas, goods and services can be de referred to as advertising (Danik and Kowalik, 2015). Compared to the IMC model, advertising has a more recognised position than the rest of the marketing components, because customers are informed about new products through advertising (Mraovic, 2008). Additionally, advertising has minimal barriers between an enterprise and customers (Danik and Kowalik, 2015).

1.5.3 Media advertising

Vohra (2015) established that in advanced (and thus stable) industrial markets, advertising has moderately little importance, but this is only for those companies with many clients and a low threat of product failure. Viljoen, Terblanche-Smit and Terblanche (2010), further indicate that even the advanced markets also need high levels of advertising to continue being competitive. In addition, they state that a “persistent firm” (meaning roughly, stable, conservative and relatively unchanging) improves its situation by following a defensive and continuous advertising strategy. This points out that advertising can improve the operations of any market if it is well implemented.

1.5.4 Personal selling

In a smaller enterprise which cannot afford very expensive forms of media advertising, emphasis on relationship building and personal selling can act as an alleviating factor for it helps in making the enterprise gain popularity. Through comprehensive salesperson-buyer relationships, the clients can be stimulated to stay loyal to the supplier (Hutter and Hoffman, 2014). Since personal selling is a personal dialogue, it can produce a dominant position in the thoughts of a client and as a result might influence a market. Thorough marketing know-how is required by the sales team, particularly in stable and mature markets, to accomplish this (Parrott, Roomi, and Holliman 2010). This emphasises the necessity of personal selling in simple and stable market conditions.

1.5.5 Public relations

A lot of discussion on personal selling is consistent with public relations, as public relations also emphasise relationship building. Kohrt and Hruschka (2010) state that public relations are a more alleviating component in making the products known on the market and this is an effective method of publicising data and creating loyalty. Naumovska and Blazeska perceive complexity systems as suitable frameworks for public relations.

1.5.6 Sales promotions

Sales promotion can be defined as a set of different and regularly short period motive tools that are used in convincing customers to purchase more products (Oumar and

Mbonigaba, 2014). Sales promotion tools comprise of rewards, discounts, advertising goods, coupons, and free samples. According to Hofstedt (2016), sales promotion activities associated with price promotions, cause uncertainty in the market place and therefore are destabilising. A chaotic market state produces an unpredictable outcome, whilst an organized and themed promotion strategy like promotions and cross promotions are more likely to result market (Hutter and Hoffmann, 2014). The same stabilising effect in advertising is consistent in the promotions that promote relationship building.

Direct marketing through a database which builds a relationship with clients by means of personalised communications can also make the enterprise more popular. It is very hard for a competitor to interrupt this communications method. Bhadra (2013) suggests diverse strategies for diverse markets, namely reducing sales promotion in a low order chaos market and weakening sales promotions in the high order chaos market. This indicates that assertive sales promotional strategies are pertinent in a chaotic market.

1.5.7 Word-of-mouth

Crutzen, de Nooijer, Brouwer, Oenema, Brug, and de Vries (2016) note an association between word-of-mouth advertising and disorder, which leads to word-of-mouth being ideal for establishing a good relationship with consumers, and Mason (2008) discovered it to be effective in unsettled environments. This means that positive word-of-mouth promotional activities should be used to encourage conversations about the product and the company. Every action, even if it is not very important or small, can escalate via word-of-mouth to build robust and positive, or negative, brand beliefs and images. The values of delicate reliance on original conditions or the “nudge” effect are at work here. Hutter and Hoffmann (2014) stress that word-of-mouth has a powerful non-linear effect and is impossible to control. De Bruyn and Lilien (2016) suggest that viral marketing must be used as way of implementing the word-of-mouth type of promotional activity. Word-of-mouth is an efficient approach to use in an unstable environment. IMC thus delivers information, creates brand awareness, educates the market and creates a positive image of the company (Dissanyake 2012).

1.5.8 Key challenges facing the IMC

All over the world, there is a rise of modified segmentation of consumer preferences and taste, so IMC must cater for all the internal and external challenges. Although certain companies do not use the traditional media, they still come across some communication clutter. Some of the IMC challenges are: the shift in the channel power from manufacturer to wholesaler; moving away from an advertising focused approach; an increase in the marketing database; and, a shift in traditional promotions (Pridmore and Zwick, 2011).

1.5.9 Managerial implications

IMC is an improvement of marketing mix elements, combining direct marketing, advertising, sales promotion, interactive marketing, public relations or personal selling to deliver clear and consistent communication for maximum impact (Dahl, Eagle, and Low, 2015). Promotion is defined as the organisation of all seller-initiated efforts to create channels of information and persuasive methods to sell products and render services or promote an idea (Kotler and Armstrong 2010: 65). Promotion is an attempt to carry forward projections from a state of unawareness to awareness step by step from liking and knowledge to conviction and preference, and lastly to action (buying) or a behavioural response. Promotion communication accomplishes its goals in a series of psychological stages as the audience or receiver moves from unawareness to an actual deal. The aim of IMC should always be to maximise the value of the product delivered to the customer (Dahl, Eagle, and Low, 2015). Ras and Pretorius (2016) suggest that governments all over the world must make provision for training programmes so that they can meet the demand of SMEs. The managing of the shortcomings of SMEs include ineffective planning, unsatisfactory financial management, lack of managerial information, and insufficient control. In South Africa, a high number of the small black builders, for instance, have very minimal managerial skills (De Oliveira, 2013)

1.5.10 SMEs access to finance and IMC

A study that was conducted by Ladzani and Netswera (2018) in the Limpopo Province suggested that finance is not easily accessible, if at all, by rural SMEs. A shortage of funding/money results in the lack of progress of SMEs. IMC requires a lot of finance to

boost the marketing of an enterprise. If an organisation cannot fund its own marketing, then it is unlikely that the business will survive (Edwin, Okpara, Aigbiremolen, and Francis, 2014). The current gap that exists within SMEs is that most of these enterprises do not use IMCs to grow and sustain their market share. This leads to failure of many of the SMEs in KZN (Gabriel and Balboni, 2010). Additionally, the new- found wealth and uniqueness of the individuals or potential customers has created an opportunity for SMEs to effectively communicate their packages. Realising that traditional ways of communication are no longer as effective as before, SMEs should come up with innovative and unique IMCs that better communicate their offerings to customers.

1.6 Research methodology

This section will focus on the research methodology, that is, the techniques and methods that will be employed in carrying out the study.

1.6.1 Research design

Research design refers to an inclusive approach that is chosen to incorporate diverse elements of a study in a comprehensive and rational way to address the research problem. Data collection, measurement and analysis are constituents of this approach. This study will use quantitative research methodology. This methodology is suitable for this study because it is very reliable and objective for the purpose of the study and can test theories or hypotheses. According to Labaree (2009), "Quantitative research is appropriate because it focuses on gathering numerical data and generalizing it across groups of people or to explain a particular phenomenon." However, many other authors emphasise the significance of metaphors in theory formulation, seeing new networks and for generalising across frameworks (Research population 2016).

1.6.2 Target population

The population constitutes all the elements, individuals, or units that fall under a selection criterion for a group under observation, and it is a representation sample selected for further study. The focus of the present study was on 250 SMEs operating in four rural areas of KZN. This study engaged only with enterprises that were registered with the

Small Enterprise Development Agency. The number of SMEs that this study focused was based on the estimate of 500 SMEs that exist in the KZN YouthBiz Database (Funding available for small businesses, 2015).

1.6.3 Sampling method

The type of sampling that was used was non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling methods are founded on the personal appraisal of the investigator, unlike random selection which is the foundation of probability sampling techniques (Baker, 2013). Convenience sampling is a form of a non-probability sampling utilized for the present study. Due to time constraints, the convenience sampling method was suitable for this study because it is fast and easy to conduct. This made it the most suitable sampling method for the present research study.

1.6.4 Sample size

Sample size is an important feature of a study where the objective is to make interpretations about a population from a sample (Schronbrodt and Perugini, 2013). This study utilised a sample size of 250 respondents. According to Ardjouman and Asma (2015: 146), studies on SMEs have utilised an average of 250 respondents that is why this study also had 250 respondents. Having a large sample size is crucial when carrying out research because there exists a positive linear relationship between the sample size and the confidence in the outcomes, which consequently minimizes uncertainty and promote greater precision.

1.6.5 Data collection

The investigator with the help of a team of assistants administered questionnaires in four rural areas of Kwa-Zulu Natal. Primary data was collected from 250 SME managers/owners operating in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Tutors from the local primary schools in the selected areas were hired and trained as fieldworkers.

1.6.6 Measuring instrument

The measuring instrument was a structured questionnaire. The simple definition of a questionnaire is a set of questions to be asked of respondents and is designed to gather specific data (Dolnicar, 2013). The questionnaire was self-administered, completed by respondents in their respective business premises. Questionnaires were distributed to SME owners and managers to solicit or determine the influence IMCs have on the growth of SMEs in the rural areas of KZN.

1.6.7 Data analysis

Inferential and descriptive statistics were used for data analysis for the present study. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was to be used to analyse the data gathered from the study.

1.6.8 Pretesting

The reason for pretesting is to check whether there are any errors in the questionnaire design. This allows the researcher some valuable time and opportunity to discover and reflect any possible errors that may have come up to reduce the costs of those errors. Pre-testing the survey will be very important in reducing errors that might be as a result of poor measurement, and also to determine where respondents might have answered wrongly as a result of misinterpreting the survey questions (Ardjouman and Asma, 2015). A total number of 20 questionnaires were used for pre-testing to check if the researcher made any mistakes in designing of the questionnaire.

Pre-testing is conducted to measure the degree of accuracy of a survey instrument and data collection procedures before commencement of collection of data. It is a vital way to source problem areas, determining if respondents are interpreting and answering questions correctly and also ensuring the structure of the questions is not influencing the way respondents answer questions (Dahl, Eagle, and Low, 2015).

1.6.9 Limitations

Convenience, time constraints, and the budget limited the study to a few rural areas of KZN. The findings of this study only describe this population and therefore cannot be generalised to all the rural areas of South Africa.

1.6.10 Delimitations

The survey was confined to specific areas in KZN. It did not cover all the rural areas in the country.

1.6.11 Validity

Validity refers to how well a test measures what it is supposed to measure (Postmes, Haslam, and Jans, 2013). In order to assess content validity of the study, a comparison between questionnaire design and the literature was undertaken and a pretest with a small representative sample of the SMEs in a rural area in KZN was conducted. Face validity is when an assessment or test appears to do what it claims to do (Postmes, Haslam, and Jans, 2013). Face validity was achieved by using of experts in the field.

1.6.12 Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent of stability and consistency achieved in results generated by an assessment tool. Reliability means that the study must fulfill its predicted aims and hypotheses so that the results are due to the study and not any possible extraneous variables (Drost, 2011). Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used for testing internal consistency of the items in the questionnaire.

1.6.13 Anonymity and confidentiality

It was essential that honest and accurate answers were gathered during the present research study. To achieve this, anonymity and confidentiality on information provided by the respondents was guaranteed. The participants were assured that their identity would

be kept anonymous and no participant was expected to provide any personal information that could reveal their identity. Sealed boxes were used to collect questionnaires and data was aggregated.

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The introduction to the study, rationale and objectives of the study were introduced in the previous chapter. A detailed theoretical framework concerning the SMEs in KZN South Africa, the influence of IMCs in the growth of SMEs in the rural areas of KZN, various marketing communications used by SMEs and the challenges faced by SMEs in the industry in rural areas will be explained in this chapter.

2.2 What is the IMC concept and how does it function?

The model of IMCs, established in the 20th century, is made up of techniques and tools of direct and mass communication with the main objective of building, with the integration and assistance of promotional tools, an influential image and support shoppers in the buying of services and goods. Additionally, the model of IMC serves as an influential tool for diversity as compared to competition (Dobrijevic, 2011).

Enterprises use digital marketing content to assist in the execution of several business ideas (Rakić and Rakić, 2014). Fundamentally, the IMC concept is not independent and must be correlated to the marketing mix concept which defines the singular strategies related to product, promotion, price, or distribution.

A problem may arise in searching for a commonality among strategic options which may often be conflicting, if not always. Not a single strategy of the marketing mix strategies can be defined separately and independently from the others, but can only be unified with them (Tariq, 2013). SMEs can increase their market share through price policy in two totally differing ways. One approach takes the route of decreasing the price (price competition), whereas the other takes the route of diversity through defining a price which will be higher than the market's average price along with communicating the detailed benefits which shoppers will value and is unique (Omri, 2015).

There is no specific resolution when it comes to choosing an option without first analyzing the product as a component of the marketing mix. If the customer positions the product

as more successful than the competitor and more valuable, then the strategy of price competition must not be chosen as it can reduce the positive acuity of the brand in the consumers' minds and compromise its value (Hassan, Husic-Mehmedovic, and Duverger, 2015). Usually, products which are branded cost more than regular products and the relevant pricing tactic would then take the route of diversity (Hilletoft, 2011).

Distribution is one of the various components of the marketing mix. Distribution is all about making the product available at the appropriate place and at a time it is needed (Kotler and Armstrong 2010: 44). A branded product generally costs more than a regular product, subject to the character and nature of the product. It is, therefore, likely that an exclusive strategy of distribution will be selected (Gavinelli, Morra, and Di Gregorio, 2016).

The other component of the marketing mix, promotion, is influenced by the earlier mentioned tools of advertising but also a chain of additional issues that must be considered. Explicitly, in addition to choices concerning distribution, price and product, when choosing the techniques and tools which will allow communication of the appropriate message (promotional mix), one must consider the following: the sum of financial resources at one's disposal, the competition's activities, and the shoppers' need for data (Pomeroy and Johnson, 2016).

Subject to the targeted recipients' of the information, techniques and tools that create the concept of IMC are separated into two main groups, namely, techniques and tools of mass communication planned for the market as a whole such as propaganda, publicity, advertisements, sponsorship, the internet, and sales promotion (Porcu, del Barrio-García, and Kitchen 2012), and techniques and tools of direct communication for individual shoppers or a targeted market segment. The techniques and tools the latter are: direct marketing, the internet, and personal sales. Any mixture of techniques and tools of direct and mass communication can be used. In order to avoid any misperception by shoppers, the message that is to be transmitted must be centred on the same values (Joshi, 2013).

2.3 Characteristics of Integrated Marketing Communications

1) The brand identifies different customers wherever they do business or interact.

- 2) The brand attends to a variety of different consumers and satisfy them in a manner appealing to them.
- 3) Consumers remain pleased with the brand know-how.
- 4) Consumers trust the brand aptitudes.
- 5) Consumers get to understand that their brand proficiencies come from the same identity.
- 6) Aligned obligation, across the business, encouraged by the service-oriented model.
- 7) Everybody supports what the means to loyal consumers.
- 8) Future visualization is consistent with fundamental truths of the brand.
- 9) The values contained in the brand is supported the ethics we experience in the organizational culture.
- 10) The brand association does an exceptional job at realizing high value plans from conceptualization to implementation.

2.4 Needs for Integrated Marketing Communications

O'Donohoe (2015), mentioned that integrated marketing communication is when the organization carefully mixes and manages its many communication channels to convey a persuasive, consistent, and clear message about the organization and its products. IMC constructs a strong brand identity in the market by combining and reinforcing all your messages and images.

- a. Contradictory messages from diverse sources or promotional approaches can complicate company or brand images.
- b. A widespread problem can occur when functional experts deal with separate forms of marketing communications.
- c. Internet usage is not enough to build brands. There are limitations regarding brand awareness.

d. The best option is to join the traditional branding efforts with the service capabilities and the interactivity of online communication.

2.5 Benefits of using IMC to brand corporations

Recently, the idea of applying marketing systems to the business has become more extensive with related notions of stakeholder relationship. Promoting the corporate brand to entice employees is seen as, particularly, significant by managers, with the well-reported scarcity of skilled workers. The necessity for businesses to distinguish themselves in the employer fraternity is becoming critical. Although mainstream marketers have long championed the integrated marketing communications cause, a possibly more “eccentric” approach to integration has risen lately, which recognizes the necessity for the handling of a variety and difference within the framework of an integrated communications project. It should be noted that beyond a general call for horizontal coordination, the nature of such processes is rarely specified in the literature (Zachary and Narayanan, 2015).

2.6 Dimensions of integrated marketing

According to Zullo, (2013), from the purchaser’s point of view, every marketing tool is aimed at delivering a customer benefit. A balancing breakdown of marketing events has been recommended that centers on customers. The four dimensions and corresponding questions that it’s intended to answer are:

1. Solution: How can I solve my problem?
2. Information: where can I learn more about it?
3. Value: What is my total sacrifice to get this solution?
4. Access: Where can I find it?

Winning businesses satisfy consumer needs and exceed their expectations economically and appropriately and with effective communication. There are two key themes of integrated marketing are that (1) a large number of diverse marketing activities communicate and deliver value and (2) when coordinated, these marketing activities

make the most of their joint effects. In other words, the marketers must create and execute any one marketing activity whilst bearing all the other marketing activities in mind.

2.7 Why do traditional IMC tools not give enough results?

Marketing and advertising as paid methods of communication have restricted influence for two reasons. In the first instance, communication channels are too heaved with the frequency and amount of submissions of promotional and advertising mail as all opponents try to be present and noticeable. Secondly, advertisements and publicising forms of communication that is verbal, non-verbal, written or visuals, are less trusted due to the facts mentioned above (Zullo, 2013).

The foremost disadvantage of sales promotion is an inadequate focus. Due to its form of execution, sales promotion fits in with the collection of techniques and tools of mass communication, but it does not give an indication whether it is connected to new or existing clients. The problem with providing free quantities relative to the usual packages or gift products for price sensitive customers who buy this product only on one occasion is that it sends a message to loyal customers that they were unfairly overcharged (Okyere, Agypong, & Nyarku, 2011).

Sponsorship is a tool of mass communication with the goal of transmitting messages regarding the ways in which a company shares standards with its clients whether it is individual sponsorship (sports) or communal sponsorship (i.e. events, exhibitions, and concerts). Additionally, it conveys a message about how an SME is socially responsible, and how part of the earnings is assigned to what the shoppers' value and gives confidence to the shopper that they, to a degree, can take part in these activities if they purchase their products (Mihalcea, and Savulescu 2013).

The focus of sponsorship as a method of mass communication is on relaying a message of the similar principles shared between companies and their customers and this may be either by sponsorship of a community event like a concert or an exhibition, or sponsorship of individuals (scientific and sporting achievements). Furthermore, social responsibility of a company is exhibited this way. This provides an opportunity for the customer to participate in this action by purchasing the company's products. The difficulty with

sponsorship arises mainly in deciding who to sponsor and what criteria will be followed in the selection of the recipients to avoid splintering the audience due to splintering of their interests (Lee and Park, 2016).

The internet, which can serve as a method of mass and direct communication, although widespread, affordable and fast, its efficiency is limited in that it focuses more on online ordering than on promotion. Effectiveness is increased if the internet is treated as a way of direct communication between companies and their potential customers and as a channel to gain interaction with them (Mihalcea and Savulescu 2013).

Direct marketing is defined as a tool of establishing, directly addressing, and maintaining interaction with each customer via pamphlets, emails, etc., but it has lost its significance and has now been affiliated with customised marketing, a new trend, where the primary goal is to have specific offers directed to an individual buyer or a group of specific buyers. Previous literature has referred to this as targeted marketing (Kotler & Armstrong, 2010).

2.8 The factors that lead to the need for implementation of innovative concepts

Recent business conditions are characterised by high instability. There are unpredictable and frequent changes arising in uneven intervals and these may be different because of the original cause. Changes that arise in certain economic segments and environment leads to changes in the entities of the community, which results to the development of the market (Resetar, Tolusic, and Tolusic, 2016).

In comparison to the earlier described tendencies centred on the market approach, which occur in the enterprise's efforts to improve the way they satisfy consumers' requirements and become more successful than the competitor, recent changes in the business environment entail the anticipation of future events and application of a proactive approach. In this context, the objective of branding is to generate an aspiration and need within the shopper rather than saturation with unwanted information (Dietrich and Haider, 2015). In both cases, the issue stays the same: SMEs must ask themselves how do they inform the shopper about what they do, what are their core values which guide them, what makes them better than their competition, and how will they benefit from this? (Resetar, Tolusic, and Tolusic, 2016).

There are many reasons for the necessity of the execution of advanced techniques of communication with a specific target market and this begins with noting the differences on conducts and preferences which often from consumers' culture. When SMEs determine the way in which they are going to approach a market, they must pay attention to the growth and the size of the population, the education level, ethnic composition and age structure, regional and household models etc., i.e. to the demographics of the target market. These factors focus on the external environment where an organisation may or may not have an influence.

2.9 Barriers to implementing IMC

Despite the known significance of implementing IMC processes, the administrative structure of various companies stops or limits its efficient application. The truth is that IMC does not blend well with the administrative organization accepted by most organizations. Percy (2007) contends that the model of IMC, whilst supposedly practical, is sometimes unsuccessful due to organizational blockades to execution. The common obstacles in an organisation to implementing the IMC concept are: fear of change, business culture, absence of database technology, absence of funds/budget, absence of IMC development and skills, decentralisation, efficient specialisation, and absence of horizontal communication.

These obstacles should be evaluated and properly understood to be able to coordinate the execution of IMC in an organisation. Individually, a business has its own promotional structures that are already in use and has a unique administrative philosophy which is personified in each administrative strategy. As a result, it is difficult to design an execution model which is can be used in all organisations. Detailed examination of an individual organisation will reveal a specific sequence of obstacles and probable interactions which must be accounted for when developing and executing the IMC concept.

More research is required at a practical and theoretical level to improve the modification and explanation of IMCs and to detect the best means of incorporating marketing communication operations in certain business environments (Gould, 2014; Kitchen, Kim and Schultz, 2008).

2.10 The impact of internet technology on marketing communication

Typical communication procedures have shifted with the escalating growth of the internet over the past decade (Blattberg and Deighton, 2011; Holtz, 2009). Three co-existent and specific factors distinguish this from other communication channels, namely:

- Interactivity.

The internet offers numerous opportunities for cooperative communication which in addition to acting as a communication agent (enabling direct relations among software applications and individuals), it also serves as an interface.

- Transparency.

The data circulated online is retrievable and is visible to anyone with access to the internet, except if this data is encrypted.

- Memory.

A website is a channel for storing and conveying information. The information circulated on a website stays in the memory of the system till its deletion.

These factors are changing the behaviour and profile of virtual audiences. It is thus imperative that marketing communication adjust to the innovative ways of information acquisition and utilisation by the audience (Gould, 2014; Schultz and Kitchen, 2008).

2.10.1 The audience is connected to the organisation

The old-style communication channels were uni-directional – the organisation transferred and the audience accepted and used the information. With messaging as a bi-directional way, organisations had the means to transmit data to audiences over an extensive pipeline, and audiences only had access to a tiny pipeline to transmit the data back to the organisation (Ihator, 2011). Nowadays, the passage of communication is not a pipeline, but rather a network. This system has bridged the difference between the audience and the organisation. The staff that are part of the communication process, in terms of transmitting the message to the target audience, are the CEO, the external communication agency, and the communication manager – they are just a click away from the targeted audience. Essentially, organisations have relished this innovative proximity, proven by the huge number of websites which display “Contact Us” links and

push buttons (Blattberg and Deighton, 2011). Nevertheless, in many instances, there is underusage and/or misuse of these new facilities. The gradual and positive upsurge of incoming messages has been attributed to simplified communication, however, there has not been any upgrade in resources to handle these messages by various organisations. The new model requires one-to-one interactions between organisations and participants of the audience (Holtz, 2009).

2.10.2 The audience is connected to one another

Bearing in mind the network type of communication channels, when the target audience is just a click away from the organisation, they are also just a click away from additional affiliates of the target audience. At present, an enterprise's action can be thoroughly deliberated and argued over the internet without any knowledge or engagement of that enterprise. Everybody is a correspondent in the new environment, and the organisation is a portion of the network (Shankar and Malthouse, 2007).

2.10.3 The audience has access to other information

Previously, as a result of the sluggishness and difficulty associated with acquiring information, the organisation had the power to provide a statement with judicious confidence that it would be practically impossible for a regular member of the audience to challenge. Nowadays, acquiring information from diverse sources is very easy. Interested individuals can analyse, dissect, discuss, and contest any statement within hours of it being made.

2.10.4 Audiences pull information

The world of interaction has, exponentially, improved the total sum of accessible communication channels (Holtz, 2009). Currently, the public receives messages from numerous media channels: faxes, pagers, overnight courier packages, emails, radio, television, internet radio, voicemail, memos, cellphones etc. Consequently, audiences have trained themselves to filter out the media that was once the most effective communication channel for practitioners.

Conversely, an environment with networks provides the public with a new model that does not accept each message emanating from a communicator but pulls the data which is suitable for their needs and interests. “In the networked environment, information has to be available where audiences can find it, and must be customized or customizable” (Rowley, 2011).

Thus, comparing with the old client, the internet user possesses more control when it comes to the communication process, and can embrace a more practical approach, with the capacity to effortlessly explore, choose and retrieve information (using intelligent agents, search and meta-search engines). It is easy for them to contact individuals and online businesses via email, discussion forums etc. and express their thoughts in an observable and lasting manner (storing and creating online content).

Maximising diverse online resources available entails tactical thinking which recognises the coexistence of all the facets of the networked world. They need to be carefully synchronized to attain measurable and precise objectives consistent that go along with the objectives of any marketing communication endeavor.

2.11 The meaning/s of integrated online marketing communication

Numerous investigations have highlighted the absence of an overall meaning of IMC. One probable account of this hypothetical predicament is the piling up of probable co-existent implications of the IMC concept (Lee and Park, 2007). The postulation could be accurate when it comes to internet communication. To be able to classify the values of integrated online marketing communication, interviewees were asked for the unrestricted expression of their concerns connected with this idea in their real endeavor. The replies were appropriately assessed, and various types' definitions were established (summarised in Table I). Integrated online marketing communications embodies a multi-faceted sensation which includes concerns connected with the message, information management, the communication function, and the specific mixture of networks used for corporate communication.

2.12 Evolution of IMC

Over the previous ten years, IMC as an experimental sector has created a lot of argument, stimulated intellectual dialogue, and generally, has added to the development of IMC as a tactical instrument to assist SMEs to be more proficient in recognising their brand communication goals. Factors that have stimulated the evolution of IMC include:

1. The fast-changing advertising environment (Gould, 2014);
2. The haste, speed, and extent of electronic communication, enabling SMEs to gain a global perspective (Kitchen and Burgmann 2010);
3. The unpredictable progression of the electronic media (Bezjian-Avery, Calder, and Lacobucci, 1998), and
4. The huge variety of communication options (Keller, 2013).

2.12.1 Conceptual development

IMC has improved from being conceptualised as simply the bringing together of instruments for communication for a brand (Krugman, Reid, Dunn, and Barban, 2008) to a tactical and planned theory (Percy, Rossiter, and Elliot, 2001; Schultz, 2011). As Carlson, Grove, and Dorsch (2013) realised, the first conceptualisation of IMC was very distorted and resulted in the implementation of diverse methods of constructing messages. There is still variation in the researchers' perceptions of the conceptualisation of IMC, despite over ten years having passed since its inception. For example, Cornelissen and Lock (2010) claim that IMC is a "management style" instead of a theoretical conception. Schultz and Kitchen (2010), in reply, contend that IMC is a developing model whose evolution as an idea and discipline is totally proper and in accord with technical theory. More recently, Gould (2014) discovered that IMC is becoming an influential theoretical tool when observed from a post-structural classic viewpoint on theory. Thus, it is safe to conclude from the prior debate on the path that IMC is embarking on, as a theoretical concept, and is attracting and creating a considered and logical discourse among concerned and involved researchers.

Table 2.1: The evolution of IMC

From:	To:	Reference:
1) Local	Global	Schultz, Patti & Kitchen (2013)
2) Emerging development	Major communication development	Schultz, Patti & Kitchen (2013)
3) Tactical orientation	Strategic orientation	Schultz (2013)
4) Emerging paradigm	Representing a paradigm shift	Gould (2014)
5) Managerial fashion	New management paradigm	Kitchen and Burgmann (2010)
6) "What is it?"	"How can we do it?"	Schultz and Kitchen (2010)
7) "Inside-out"	"Outside-in" customer orientated	Schultz, Patti & Kitchen (2013)
8) Representing an emic-etic gap	Representing a post structural set of discourses and practices	Gould (2014)
9) Just a communication process	A communication process which is associated with management and brands	Kitchen, Brignell, Li, and Jones (2014)
10) Most basic notion of coordinating all corporate communications	A multi-stage mode incorporating a focus on all contacts	Swain (2014)

Source: Porcu, del Barrio-García and Kitchen (2012)

2.12.2 Strategy role of IMC in brand equity

Kitchen, Brignell, Li and Jones (2014) declare that IMC cannot be just a communication approach, but needs to be allied to brands and management. The authors also state that IMC includes managing marketing communications in an all-inclusive way to attain strategic goals. McArthur and Griffin (2016) make the observation that the obligation of marketing communications is undoubtedly becoming an internal, upper management concern, suggesting that IMC is progressing to be strategically orientated instead of tactically orientated.

2.12.3 Importance of IMC

"Does integrating all marketing communications actually matter? Why is IMC being hailed as a major communications development of the 21st century?" A small number of recent studies (e.g. Carlson, Grove, and Dorsch, 2013; Naik and Raman, 2013; Reid, 2013) support the idea that IMC provides numerous benefits for SMEs. Naik and Raman (2013) point out that IMCs assists SMEs in building the brand equity of their services and products through synergy. Equally, Reid (2013) argues that integration of marketing

communications is connected positively to an SMEs brand-related performance. In the services context, Carlson, Grove, and Dorsch (2013), show that successful IMCs can cause desirable consumer answers that is more demand by the consumers. Therefore, IMCs can make SMEs become more proficient in communicating with their envisioned target market, which, in turn, can assist SMEs to attain superior fiscal performance via higher brand equity.

The next section will review the IMC strategy and brand identity strategy as serious components of an SME's general brand equity strategy.

2.13 Brand's Communication Mix

According to Keller (2013), coordinated administration of all the mechanisms and channels of market communications is a condition of achieving the straightforward communication goal of every business and brand. The general activity of the business must be available freely to the public to create a picture of brands in the eyes of consumers and the broader environment. As part of the four basic marketing methods, promotions must speak about all forms of promotion and drive the sales of products in the long term. Promotion means "the method of communication between the potential buyer and seller with the aim of persuading his behavior and attitudes".

1) Promotional activity of the business is accomplished through a method of communication that embodies its essence. Fulfilling communication is the main process of promotion and has been in existence for many years. In simpler terms, "Communication means understanding someone with some other"

2) Communication characterizes the establishment of essential contacts of interested parties over certain resources. "Marketing Communications" is a group of communication aspects of the marketing mix tools, which strives to influence the behavior and consciousness (awareness) of current and potential consumers, consumer and/or users and in the way of their motivation to buy and to enter in long-term relationships with a specific business, based on mutual loyalty and trust.

3) In essence, the whole promotional activity is based on the effective communication process.

4) Continuous information of current and potential customers about services, the actual product, and the terms of sale;

Various examples from business practice have revealed that it is incorrect to create a brand only by advertising activities that in the past were often the case

2.14 The development of integrated marketing communications as a function of branding

Aaker (2015), states that integration is very crucial where marketing communications is concerned. From the viewpoint of brand building, all communication choices must be estimated as per the potential impact they have on brand value. Each communication options must be assessed according to its efficiency and effectiveness to influence the brand awareness and with which it constructs, strengthen and maintains the brand. Brand awareness is the customers' ability to recognize the brand in different environments, as specified by their results in terms of identifying the brand and its remembering.

Brand image, as mentioned before, represents consumers' beliefs and perceptions, which reflect associations in customers' memory. The choice of tools of the integrated marketing brand communication is dependent on several criteria:

- Analysis of the target audience;
- Contribution to the formation of the preferred response or reaction of the target audience;
- Compatibility with the brand image, in terms of sending a unique message and the level to which a particular tool contributes to the introduction of distinctive associations of the brand.
- The complementarity of individual instruments of communication;
- The efficiency level for diverse groups of consumers (those who do not know of a brand or product and those who already know.
- Expenditures of using certain tools of communication.

It is imperative to apply a mix of various communication options, whereby every one of these options has a distinct role in maintain and building the brand value. "Company

“Michelin” can invest in research and development, “get into” advertising, promotion and other communication to strengthen the association regarding the “security” of their tires, but they can also decide to sponsor events so they could be seen as modern and actual”. The program of marketing communications must be structured in that way so its union is greater than the sum of its parts. In other words, there must be harmony between certain options of communication in order for the effects of other options of communication could be highlighted by the existence of the other option. Effects of each option individually would be highlighted by the presence of the other option (Hassan, Husic-Mehmedovic, and Duverger, 2015).

2.15 Brand equity strategy

The construction and correct management of brand equity is very important for many SMEs (Keller, 2011). Keller (2013) states that constructing brand equity requires 1) interior brand identity determinations, and then 2) incorporation of brand identities into the SME’s overall marketing programmes, such as price, promotion, product, distribution, and advertising decisions.

Additionally, Keller (2013) suggests that the power of an SME’s brand equity from communications rests on how well the brand identities are incorporated into the supporting marketing programmes. Furthermore, Keller (2011) calls for effective strategies for IMCs in constructing and sustaining brand equity. Although all marketing programmes such as product, price, advertising, promotion, and distribution can potentially create and maintain brand equity, the current study focused on the role of SMEs’ marketing communication efforts in a brand equity strategy. Explicitly, as presented in the brand equity diagram in Figure 2.1, this study examined brand identity strategy and IMC strategy as critical constituents of a complete brand equity strategy.

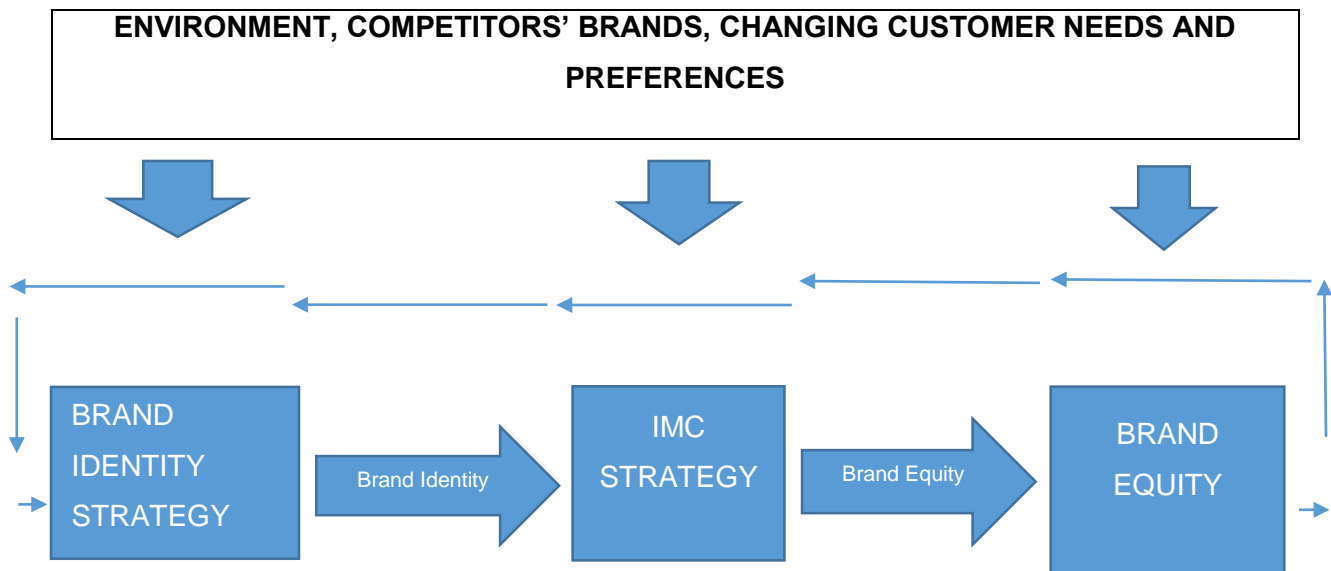


Figure 2.1: Brand equity strategy

How does IMC contribute to a firm's brand equity? Schultz, Tannebaum and Lauterborn (2013) propose that the effects of IMCs can be measured in relation to contacts. A contact is any information-bearing involvement that a prospect or consumer has with the brand as well as word-of-mouth and the experience of consuming the product (Schultz, Tannebaum, and Lauterborn, 2013). As Keller (2012) states, prospects or consumers could also have contact with the brand through marketer-controlled communication including:

1. Personal selling
2. Consumer promotion
3. Direct response and interactive advertising
4. Place advertising
5. Point-of-purchase advertising
6. Media advertising
7. Event marketing and sponsorship
8. Trade promotions, and
9. Publicity and public relations

There is sufficient evidence in the literature that suggests that several forms of marketing communication have an impact on brand equity, together with advertising (Aaker and Biel,

1993), sponsorship (Cornwell, Ray, and Steinard, 2001), and several alternative communication choices (Joachimsthaler and Aaker, 2007). Therefore, in this study, following (1) Keller (2012), who states that a crucial drive of all marketing communications is to contribute to brand equity and (2) Schultz, Tannebaum, and Lauterborn's (2011) notion of marketing communications through "contacts", the researcher contends that SMEs can use IMC to accomplish higher brand equity by using marketer-controlled brand contacts.

The theories of brand equity contacts and brand identity contacts are now presented. Brand equity contacts are interactions that carry messages which concern the brand between the brand stewards and the brand strategists.

Brand identity involves all external and internal entities (groups and individuals) that have responsibility for communicating the brand to prospects, the public, and customers (de Chernatony, 2009). Brand stewards can comprise salespeople, direct marketers, public relations and advertising agencies. Brand equity contacts involve all interactions between customers and brand stewards, prospects, and the public that are sponsored by the marketer and concern the brand, and that are intended to generate or sustain a highly favorable and strong association. As shown in Figure 2.1, SMEs who are impacted by IMC in a better manner through brand identity contacts, have the capability to influence their brand equity contacts.

Internal brand identity actions are the first step towards SMEs constructing their brand equity (Keller, 2011). Thus, the only two interfaces that need to fall in the purview of the SME's overall brand equity strategy are: (1) the interface between the firm's brand identity strategy and the IMC strategy, and (2) the interface between the firm's IMC strategy and brand equity.

2.15.1 IMC and brand equity

Zachary and Narayanan (2015) note that the traditional communication process, which shows the stream of messages from senders to receivers through elements such as media, encoding, and decoding, has been used. Nevertheless, the traditional structure is still used as a guideline for improving the modern forms of advertising through noticeable

changes and has advanced them into a more dynamic and interactive process (Kotler, 2013). Under the developing interaction-focused view of brand communications, there is a widespread focus on brand contacts. It is now widely accepted that:

- 1) Communication is a crucial driver of brand equity;
- 2) Brand communication is conveyed not only by broadcast, but also via amalgamation of vehicles;
- 3) Brand communication may be methodically planned or accidental and
- 4) Some important brand (equity and/or identity) contacts cannot be controlled by the brand strategist (Duncan and Moriarty, 2013; Schultz, 2013).

IMC is a strategic business method which can assist in building brand value (Schultz, 2013). Whilst systematic research on numerous tactical and strategic aspects of IMC has been gaining momentum, it is widely acknowledged that effective communication is effective in allowing the development of brand image and brand awareness, that is, brand equity. Brand equity has been recognized as a valuable source of competitive advantage for many SMEs (Aaker, 2008). As a result of brand equity's importance, SMEs should dedicate significant amounts of resources to develop strategies which will enable them to sustain/or build strong brands (Schultz and Barnes, 2009). Based on their empirical study, Naik and Raman (2013) conclude that marketers can connect synergy across various communication vehicles by assuming an IMC angle, thereby developing brand equity across services and products.

2.15.2 Brand identity strategy and IMC

Generating and sustaining a brand identity is considered the first step to building strong brands (Aaker, 2015; Keller, 2013). More than a decade ago Shocker, Srivasta, and Ruekert (1994) claimed that research on the importance and improvement of brand identity is needed to retain the significance of scholarly brand management research to the practice of marketing.

While brand identity assists in forming a relationship between the customer and the brand by creating a value proposition including self-expressive, emotional, and functional benefits (Aaker, 2008), it is very difficult for brand image to be equal to brand identity due

to the multifaceted nature of the communications system. According to Aaker's (2015) conceptualization, brand image is one of the inputs, and must be an integral part of strategic brand analysis in which brand strategists analyze competitor brand images and their own existing brand image to assist them to define their own brand identity. This is embodied by the feedback loop from brand equity to brand identity strategy as presented in Figure 2.1. The response loop refers to the influence of the SME's own brand equity and the environment in terms of competitors' brand equity and varying customer needs and preferences. Operational brand identity strategy guides, helps create, informs, implements and nurtures an SME's overall IMC strategy through many brand identity contacts.

In the next section, a conceptual framework will be presented which points out how brand identity contacts and brand equity contacts could possibly influence an SME's brand equity. For this reason, an SME's IMC strategy and brand identity strategy are critical in sustaining effective brand equity contacts and brand identity contacts that, in turn, contribute to brand equity.

2.16 A conceptual framework

The brand equity strategy diagram in Figure 2.2 illustrates a conceptual framework and empirically testable research suggestions. This conceptual framework is grounded on two fundamental theses:

- 1) Effective management of brand equity contacts leads to high brand equity, and
- 2) Effective management of brand identity contacts leads to highly integrated marketing communication.

Drawing from IMC research, brand equity research, and brand identity research, the researcher suggest specific relationships between brand identity factors, IMC factors, and brand equity (Delgado-Ballester, Navarro, and Sicilia, 2012). Explicitly the researcher argues that 1) brand identity contacts can be managed effectively by brand identity factors, as well as top management assistance, an internal market orientation, and a brand identity-orientated culture, and 2) brand equity contacts can be managed better by brand equity contact factors, such as IMC effectiveness and IMC synergy.

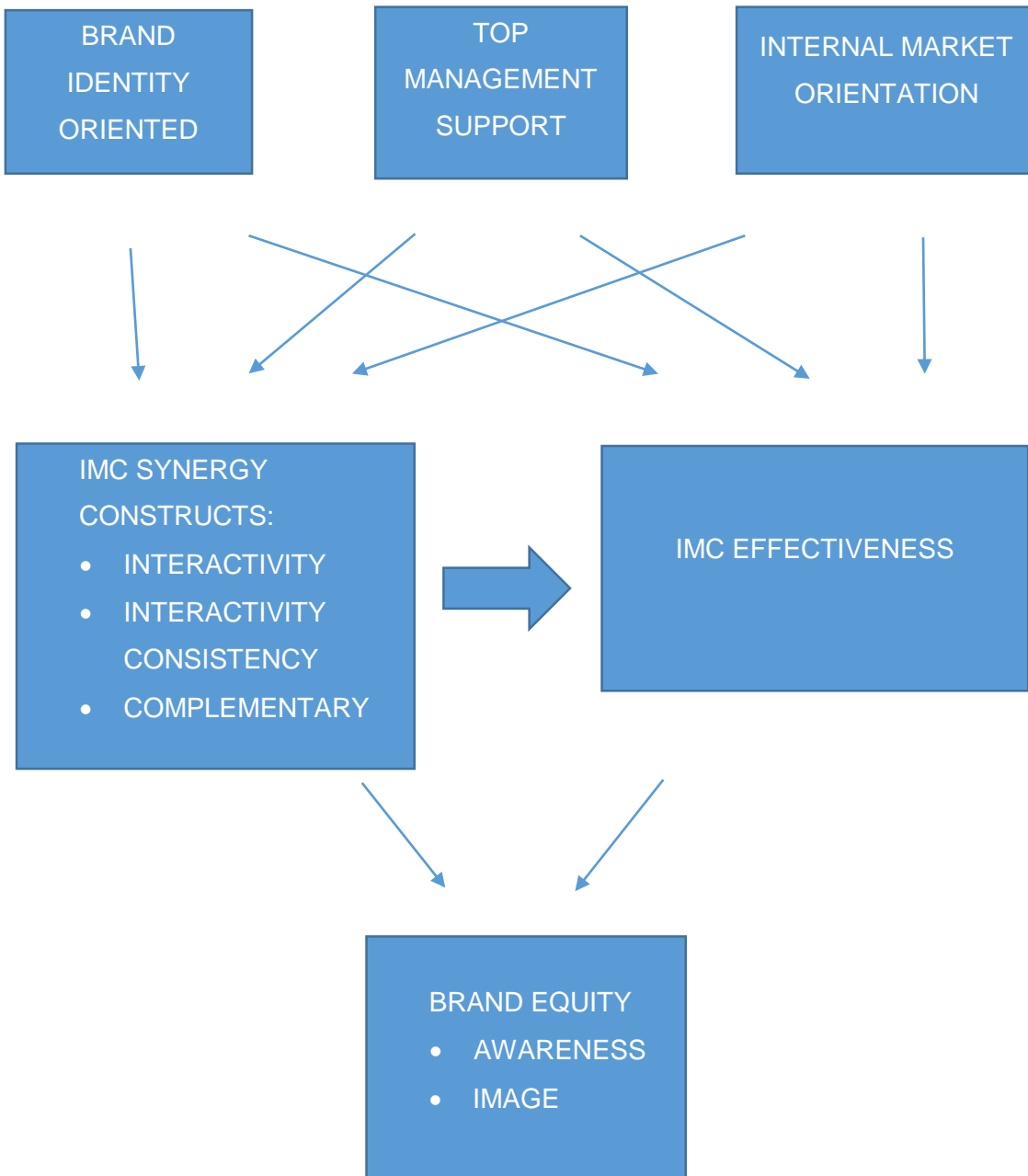


Figure 2.2: Conceptual framework

Source: Delgado-Ballester, Navarro and Sicilia (2012)

2.17 Marketing communications and SMEs: conceptual framework

Many contemporary authors have defined the conception of marketing communications and SMEs. Marketing communications has been defined as the manner of presenting a combined set of stimuli to a target market with the objective of stimulating a desired set

of reactions within that particular target market and setting up channels to interpret, act on, and receive messages from the market to transform existing company messages and find new communication opportunities (Lancaster & Massingham, 2009). Observably, because it is a sender and a receiver of market orientated messages, a company can use marketing communications to influence consumers to purchase its brands to be able to make a profit while keeping in touch with its marketplace in order to adjust to constantly changing market situations and gain new communication opportunities.

Harris and Katz (2011) state that marketing communications' role in a marketing framework is generally known as the promotional component of the marketing mix (promotion, place, product, and price). The authors add that the supreme objectives of marketing communication are to:

- Construct relationships with prospective consumers and other important stakeholders;
- Sustain a brand's current customer base by enhancing their buying behaviour through the provision of additional information regarding a brands' benefits;
- Obtain new customers for brands by creating awareness and encouraging trials; and
- Reach a well-defined market to be able to affect its behaviour by notifying, persuading and reminding it.

2.18 Components of marketing communication as this relates to SMEs

Okyere, Agypong and Nyarku, (2011) state that to meet their publicity goals under the marketing mix, SMEs must use various communication tools to promote what they have to offer.

Donelly and Peter (2008) have identified three marketing communications components viz: personal selling, sales promotion, and advertising. Etzel, Walker and Stanton (2011) also noted sales promotion, personal selling, and advertising, then added public relations. Kotler and Armstrong (2008) added a fifth component which is direct marketing. Sponsorship was added as the sixth component of the marketing communication mix by Fill (2015).

Every component of the promotional mix has its own primary function, use, and benefits. The current difficulty is to combine them effectively so that an SME is able to attain its communication goals and eventually achieve long-term and lucrative relationships with the targeted audience (Papasolomou and Yioula 2012).

2.18.1 Advertising

Advertising forms part of the promotional mix and is a prominent component in the overall marketing mix. Advertising is visible and pervasive among all the other marketing communication elements (Okyere, Agypong & Nyarku, 2011). Advertising as a main social event results in key changes in behaviours, values, beliefs, and buying patterns of people, because it impacts their lifestyle (Okyere, Agypong & Nyarku, 2011).

Advertising includes making decisions on the five Ms- measurement, money, message, media, and mission (Kotler, 2011). An advertising programme may be measurable in terms of both sales and communication effects. Measuring communication effects can be done before or after the advertisement is broadcast or printed. Gauging the effect of advertising after broadcast assesses how the advertisement affected preferences and knowledge, product awareness or consumer recall. In the same way, salespeople's performances can also be evaluated by collecting information from different sources. These sources include customer surveys, personal observations, sales reports, and conversations with other salespeople (Kotler & Armstrong, 2015). Norris (2014) found that the importance of advertising as an information supplier leads to an increased market share and an optimistic image in the market as customers are better able to measure their wants and needs against the product offering.

The information about a product provided via advertisements plays an important role in changing the behaviour or attitude of the consumer (Polly & Mittal, 2013) through meeting their need for information (O'Donohoe, 2015). Advertising provides assistance in the development of customer self-image (Richins, 2011; Usman, Ilyas, Hussain, and Quresh, 2010), and product meaning (Friedman & Zimmer, 2008). Finally, advertisements can function as a source of pleasure or entertainment (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 2012; Polly & Mittal, 2013).

Advertising has the ability to inform consumers and the public (both prospective and present consumers) about the products and services of an SME and to persuade them to visit the company's distribution and manufacturing centers for further information and to make advantageous buying decisions. Therefore, advertisements for services must provide tangible cues or symbols as concrete indications of the service's abstract characteristics (Lacobucci, 2011).

Advertising is a major element of the marketing communications mix and has been in existence for over a century. Over time advertising has employed diverse advertising approaches. According to Clow and Donald (2010), there are seven key styles of advertising appeal: scarcity, emotions, rationality, music, sex, humor, and fear. These authors state that advertising objectives can be listed as: constructing a brand image, supplying information, convincing and helping marketing efforts. Additionally, they state that advertising has three main purposes: reminding, informing, and persuading. To be able to conduct these roles advertising makes use of mass media, including: out of home media, print, TV, radio, and the internet, directing the message from the sender to the receiver (Descotes and Delassus 2015).

There are three parties in the advertising procedure: the sender, the message and the receiver. "The sender is the sponsor of the marketing communication and the receiver is the mass target. This breaking down of the advertising basics emphasizes its limited functionalities regarding feedback and interactions and gradually arouses doubts about its worthiness and efficiency" (Pozzi, 2012).

2.18.2 Sales promotion

Sales promotion is a short-term incentive to boost the selling or buying of a product (Okyere, Agypong, & Nyarku, 2011). Blythe (2016) defines sales promotion as any action envisioned to produce a temporary boost in sales. This includes many communication activities pursued to try to provide incentives or added value to retailers, wholesalers, customers, or other organizational customers to arouse instant sales. Such efforts are generally geared in the direction of encouraging product purchases, trials, or interest.

Sales promotions are explicitly designed to increase quick sales and ultimately build loyalty.

Sales promotions contain various sales incentives offered to channel members and consumers to boost the purchases of products or services. Sales promotions can be broken down into two forms: consumer promotions – focusing on current or potential buyers, and trade promotions – focusing on the sales and distribution channel, encouraging them to make more sales of the products/services (Clow and Donald, 2010). The literature reviewed indicates strong disagreements between authors concerning the influence of sales promotions due to their instant results orientation. The sales promotion goal is not just about selling, but to also sell immediately. The influence of the sales promotion component of the promotional mix is heavily criticized by specialists when the long-term branding strategy is considered.

2.18.3 Publicity and public relations

Publicity is the spreading of information through either personal or non-personal means, which may not be directly paid for by an SME, nor is the SME necessarily the source. Grasby, Crossan, Frost, Haywood-Farmer, Pearce, and Purdy (2010) define publicity as usage of media to gain free coverage connected to their product. Unlike advertising which relies on buying power to send a message, publicity relies exclusively on the quality of content to convince people to send or spread the message.

Public relations (PR) is the overall term for marketing activities which raise the public's awareness about an issue, individual, or product (Okyere, Agypong & Nyarku, 2011). Bruning and Ledingham (2010) explain PR as managing the relationships between SMEs and their stakeholders. Fill (2015) specifies that there are three key roles that public relations play in the communications programme of an SME. Firstly, it plays the traditional role of producing goodwill and arousing interest between the SME and its different vital stakeholders; secondly, it supports the marketing of the SME's products and to assimilate this with the other components of the promotional mix; and thirdly, it is to provide the means whereby relationships can be established.

The goals of public relations tend to be more extensive than the goals of other components of the promotional strategy. It is concerned with the image and status of an SME as a whole among groups whose behavior and attitude can influence the aims and performance of the SME (Lancaster & Massingham, 2009). Therefore, it is an indirect method of promoting an SME's products and services.

According to Onyango (2014), the goal of public relations includes the interpretation of the public to the business and of the business to its public. This is echoed by Ries and Ries (2014) who highlight this intermediation role of public relations. The public relation component of the marketing communication mix can only be functional when successfully integrated with other components – none of the aforementioned components on their own can contribute to a business's strategic marketing communication. The efforts to describe public relations by public relations authors (Ries and Ries, 2014) can be summarized by saying that public relations is:

- A two-way communication;
- A management function;
- A long lasting process; and
- Relevant for various corporate activities, for protecting the business's reputation, for product or brand launching, all the way to the development of corporate social responsibility.

Even though there are several models for arranging the public relations process into distinctly defined steps, the definitive goal of public relations is to complement internal and external relationships so that the business can enjoy goodwill from the public, long life and constancy (Pozzi, 2012). The author further points out that public relations is a 20th century phenomenon because of the following determinants: media sophistication, public opinion, democracy, increased conflicts and incidence, internet, the growth of big institutions, and the growing power of media.

Public relations plays a very important role in positioning the business's image and how it should be perceived in the public's eye. This means that public relations communications include efforts to describe reality for the targeted people on whom the business depends. Therefore, public relations plays a role in building social reality as it

helps form the perceptions by which the public see the world, so occupies a unique position in the promotional mix. Thus, public relations has the capability of interacting with and talking to the public on a very explicit and intimate level, thereby building trust and credibility.

2.18.4 Personal selling

Personal selling is defined as an interpersonal influence procedure, promotional demonstration, or presentation, conducted on a person-to-person basis with the potential buyer (Reid, 2011). Kotler (2016) describes personal selling as face-to-face communication with one or more potential buyers for the purpose of creating presentations, procuring orders and answering questions. Jobber (2007) also defines personal selling as a marketing mission that includes face-to-face interaction with a shopper. Compared to the other components in the communication mix, personal selling enables a direct communication between buyers and sellers. Okyere, Agypong & Nyarku (2011) states that this cooperative communication means that the seller can identify the precise needs and difficulties of the purchasers and modify the sales presentation into a style better understood by the purchaser.

Communicating and persuading customers to purchase service products is more challenging compared to selling manufactured products. Personal selling has the opportunity and potential to convince people who have background knowledge about the service from business advertisements to visit the business and have their questions and suspicions answered about the service. Personal selling contains three basic sales responsibilities: (i) getting the order, (ii) taking the order, and (iii) supporting or providing after sale services (Perreault & McCarthy, 2012). The cooperative nature of personal selling means that it is the most effective promotional technique for relationship building with customers. This means that personal selling is the most suitable communication tool for some phases of the purchasing process, predominantly in building the purchaser's first choices and confidence. This is most vital especially for companies that render services particularly in developing and underdeveloped countries (Steven & Keane, 2011).

Personal selling arises when a company representative works together and directly with a consumer or potential consumer to talk about goods or services (Solomon, 2010). For that reason, personal selling is the most direct method of all in the integrated promotional mix. Personal selling is a crucial and major tool when a business is performing a push promotional strategy which involves marketing efforts focused towards sales and the distribution channel. Another suitable business situation for performing personal selling is when the product is tailored or custom made or personalized service (Malthouse, Edward, Oakley, Calder, and Lacobucci, 2004). However, the limitations of direct sales are that it is extremely dependent on the salesperson's selling skills, it works with a small number of individual orders and a small volume of customers (Descotes and Delassus, 2015).

2.18.5 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is regarded by marketers as a worthwhile alternative because traditional media is so expensive (Lee and Park, 2007). According to Arens (2009), sponsorship is a monetary or in-kind fee paid to a property (e.g. non-profit event, entertainment, or a sport) in return for the commercial potential of consumers related to the property. Palmer (2015) defines sponsorship as participating in events in order that an SME can attain goals such as enhanced reputation, increased awareness levels and therefore build the enterprise's brand image. Osoka (2012) observes that sponsorship showcases a business as a good corporate citizen, and provides an opportunity for increasing consumers' understanding of the business's role. The author adds that for sponsorship to be significant it has to be supported by satisfactory planning which includes selecting what must be sponsored, cost, duration, time, and publicity for the sponsorship.

Sponsorship programmes typically comprise sponsorship of festivals, donations to charitable institutions, and sporting activities e.g. sponsoring of specific radio programmes. However, very few SMEs are involved in sponsorship programmes.

2.18.6 Direct marketing

Direct marketing has been described as a cooperative structure of marketing that uses various advertising media to obtain an assessable response and/or transaction at any location. Direct marketing uses the internet, e-mail, fax, or mail to communicate directly

with or solicit responses or dialogue from particular prospects and customers (Kotler & Keller, 2006; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). It is intended to produce and exploit a direct relationship between manufacturers and their clients (Okyere, Agypong & Nyarku, 2011).

The internet and e-commerce are gradually becoming some of the most significant drivers of strategic transformation for national governments and business, and research shows that its adoption is positively related to increases in productivity (Harris & Katz, 2011). However, commerce has lagged behind other financial institutions in embracing this change (Arora, 2013).

Direct marketing is presently the fastest growing element of the promotional mix (Solomon, 2010). This element includes ecommerce, direct response advertising, and e-mail. Bearing in mind the evolution of the consumer, it makes complete sense that while mass orientated marketing communication models are declining, niche orientated marketing models are growing. When the world entered into a period of turmoil following the economic crisis of 2008, all that was defined as normal did not function as normal (Lewes, 2010). The values for normality and abnormality are altering. Mass media models are gradually starting to lose their ability to connect with the over advertised, highly educated and spoiled consumer and the more intimate and personal models such as public relations and direct marketing are taking their place instead.

To deliver a much more refined perception of the communication opportunities directly available to marketers, Table 2.3 shows eight categories of marketing communication tools and their application.

Figure 2.3: Main specifications and applications of MC tools

MC Tool		MAIN SPECIFICATION	MAIN APPLICATION
Advertising	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One way Paid Non-personal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage a response Brand image Brand awareness
Sales Promotion	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage an immediate response Short-term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate the buying decision
Public Relations	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No media spending The most credible MC Control and create brand news 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce and modify brand image. Formal channel of communication with

			society specially in crisis management
Personal Selling	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most effective and expensive MC • Face-to-face communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand message personalization • Dominant tool for B2B and special products in B2C
Events and Sponsorship	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create, sponsor or participate in trade fairs, celebrations, and contests 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brand public announcement and reinforcement • Active involvement of customers
Direct Marketing	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses wide range of media • Direct and two way • Data based 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Products and services customization • Enabling dialogue with customer
Packaging	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free medium • Containing product information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivering the last brand message • Brand identity reinforcement
Customer Service	•	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company's behavior and attitude towards customer • Managing brand-customer interactive relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer satisfaction • Customer retention

Source: Chen, Tsaih and Chen (2010)

2.19 Restructuring the marketing communication mix

As a result of internal and external factors, the business environment is altering. Accordingly, businesses are modifying their business models and hence adjusting their IMC strategies. Consumers are more research orientated and educated. The need for changing of the principal role of the communication mix from advertising to public relations is underscored by the following points:

- Globalization.
- The evolved customer.
- Advertising clutter.
- Clutter effects are much stronger when customers are not very emotionally connected and acquainted with the brand.
- Media environments that are cluttered make it difficult for the customers to utilise the information they are presented with. For example, the standard usage of a newspaper is to convey news. “Editorials as a Public Relation form of releasing

news for new product are therefore more likely to gain attention than the advertisements surrounding them” (Ries and Ries, 2014).

- Digital media, social platforms, and the global economic crisis have changed consumer’s sensitivity to communication messages. Consumers are now more focused on research and show resistance to humor and fear in communication messages. What they are looking for is facts, research, and an individualized and personal approach based on simplicity (Lewes 2010).
- “The world economic crisis has dictated finding ways for survival in the most pessimistic scenarios or just cutting costs in the best situations. The advertising sectors of the global companies are showing lower marketing budgets, but importantly they have not been cut completely” (Pozzi, 2012).

The proliferation of media and the resulting audience disintegration characterizes the 21st century marketplace (Shultz, Patti and Kitchen 2013). Old-style media power is rapidly declining due to the rapid development of the electronic media social network power. The latest media forms are a significant portion of the promotional re-mix process.

2.20 Conclusion

The development of IMC has become an important illustration of development in the business sector. It has influenced the thinking and programmes of action of all types of organizations and businesses which face the realities of competition in the current open economy. The proficient and cautious use of IMC-related product promotional tools provides a clear, effective, and universal bilateral channel of communication. IMC is more than just the coordination of a business's outgoing messaging via different media and the constancy of the message, it also helps to determine the effectiveness of the total marketing effort. It is an aggressive promotion plan that uses and retains a widespread amount of consumer information in tracking and setting marketing strategy.

IMC tactics ought to be based on a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) and situation analysis, and reviewed periodically. The IMC process should be audited regularly to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of the strategies employed.

Strategies and goals must be elastic enough to adapt accordingly. In order to achieve a better result, marketers must create marketing integration on diverse levels and degrees of function. The most fundamental and significant level must be vertical integration of activities and goals. Inside their own establishments, marketers must recognize the importance of developing vital positions which have pure responsibility at various levels in the organization focusing on efficiency and performance.

In conclusion, it is evident that restructuring of the communication mix is already being practiced by the business segment and discussed in theory as such. The restructuring of the communication mix refers to shift away from advertising as the leading role player; public relations is now a more trustworthy and more efficient marketing communication element than advertising. Therefore, the modern communication marketing mix that companies should practice today and in future is composed of the same five elements as before, but the leading role needs to be changed from advertising to public relations in order to achieve better marketing and business results.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

According to Kumar (2013: 56), research methodology is the way in which data is collected for a particular study. This chapter reviews the research methods that were used to gather first-hand information from SME owners and managers selected for the research study. The chapter covers the research design, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations, sampling methods as well as validity and reliability of the research instruments. The importance of the study which is directed by the study objectives is also discussed in this chapter. A thorough discussion of the various procedures used to collect data is detailed thereafter.

3.2 Research objectives

The research objectives provide the basis for the research method used for this study. The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To analyse the internal IMC environment that may be affecting the success of SMEs.
- To identify the most efficient tools of IMCs that can be utilised to enhance the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.
- To ascertain the role of digital/online marketing communication tools in the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

3.3 Research design

Burns and Bush (2010: 93) state that a research design is how the research data is to be gathered, the type of measuring instrument/s to be used to collect the data, how those measuring instruments will be employed, and how the data will be analysed. A research design is normally explained as a plan or course of action on how to answer research questions. It relates to a framework for implementing a research project and provides the procedures that must be followed when gathering all the necessary information required to achieve the research objectives.

The three main forms of research design are descriptive research design, casual research design and conclusive research designs. This study followed the descriptive research design in order to identify the key variables that influence IMCs in the growth of SMEs in the four selected rural areas of KZN. According to Williams (2016: 32), descriptive research helps in describing what exists and may also help in uncovering new facts and meaning. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2013: 132) states that the main purpose of a descriptive research design is to document, observe and describe different aspects of a particular situation as it occurs naturally.

The research design for studies can be either quantitative or qualitative or both (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2016: 145). This particular study is a cross-sectional one and adopted the quantitative research approach. Labaree (2013: 78) describes the quantitative research as being an excellent way of concluding results of a study and either proving or disproving a hypothesis. This approach is also useful in testing results gathered by qualitative experiments, leading to one final answer and narrowing potential directions for further research to follow. However, the use of a quantitative research approach has its own pitfalls. This approach can be very costly and difficult to carry out and also requires a lot of time and effort to conduct. Moreover, a quantitative research approach tends to produce only proven or unproven results. There is little or no room for uncertainty and grey areas. For fields such as social sciences and psychology, a simple yes or no response is overshadowed by the complexity of human nature in those fields.

3.4 Target population

Population refers to all the elements, individuals, or units that meet the selection criteria for a group to be studied, and from which a representative sample is taken for detailed examination. The population is a well-defined set of objects or a group of people with similar or identical characteristics (Labaree 2013). For this study, the population consisted of SME business owners in four rural areas of KZN. This study only included enterprises that were registered. The population for this study was 500 which is an estimate of the number of SMEs that exist in the KZN YouthBiz Database (Funding available for small businesses 2015).

3.5 Sample selection and size

Hall (2015: 52) defines sample size as the total number of units that will be selected for a particular research study. The sample size is an important feature of a study where the objective is to make interpretations about a population from a sample (Schonbrodt and Perugini, 2013). There are a number of factors that affect the sample size such as heterogeneity of the respondents and also the precision of data collection instruments. This study utilized a sample size of 250 respondents. Having a large sample size is crucial when carrying out a research study because as the sample size increases, the confidence of the estimate increases, uncertainty decreases and there is greater precision (Faber 2014: 7).

3.6 Measuring instrument

The aim of the study was to identify the key variables that influence IMCs in the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN. According to Babbie (2013: 63), the research instruments that can be used in the collection of primary data are as follows: questionnaires, observations, interviews, archival records and documentations. For this study, a questionnaire was chosen as the instrument used to collect the primary data.

A questionnaire is a list of questions for respondents to answer and is designed to gather specific data (Dolnicar, 2013). The questionnaire was considered to be the most suitable instrument for data collection of this study for the following reasons:

- A questionnaire would be easy to administer to the SME owners and managers who would be the respondents in this study.
- It could provide a considerable amount of information for the purposes of this study.
- It reduces study bias by exposing the respondents to the same set of questions.
- Attitudes, perceptions and opinions of individuals can be elicited with the use of questionnaires.
- It is very cost effective to use questionnaires as a measuring instrument.

3.7 Questionnaire development

According to Kelly, Clark, Brown and Sitzia (2003: 14), developing a questionnaire requires extensive thought on wording, ordering of questions, selections, wording of response options for respondents, and the mode of administration of the questions. Kelly, Clark, Brown and Sitzia (2003: 14), adds that the questionnaire should be properly developed and administered in order for it to be authentic and be a vital data collection instrument. The questions on the questionnaire were linked to the research questions and objectives as well as the literature of the study. This was done to ensure that the objectives of the study would be met and to also make sure the outcome of the research would be valid.

The validity of the study was improved through a pilot study that was conducted in the rural areas of Ulundi where 20 questionnaires were distributed to SME owners and managers. Precautions and great care was taken to avoid bias, ambiguity and misunderstanding of the questionnaires so that the SME owners and managers would understand how to answer the questions on the questionnaire as well as ensuring that the questionnaire measured what it was intended to measure. Appropriate questions were selected with regards to the nature of the study to get honest and truthful responses from the SME owners and managers. An assistant was hired by the researcher to engage with the respondents and to help dispense the 200 questionnaires for this study in the four rural areas in KZN.

The questionnaire consisted of 32 questions which were divided into sections for easy understanding by the respondents. Naser (2012: 117) states that closed ended questions should have a variety of answers to choose from so that the respondents can have a wide range of possible answers to questions. This was observed when designing the questionnaire. The basis for the use of closed-ended questions was that they are easier for the respondents to understand and they require minimal effort for the respondents to complete. Closed-ended questions also minimize the risks of getting irrelevant responses and makes it easier when coding data for analysis.

The questionnaire comprised Likert-scale type of scoring which ranged from Strongly Disagree (SD) to Strongly Agree (SA). A clear set of instructions was provided for respondents to carefully tick where applicable for all the questions. The questions were designed to allow rapid computation, graphical presentation, and statistical analysis of data as suggested by Malhotra (2008: 290).

3.8 Sampling method

According to Lance and Hattori (2016: 99), sampling is a process in which variables or units from a particular population of interest are selected so that by studying the sample one can apply the results to the population from which they were chosen. Latham (2010: 45) argues that it is more reliable to use the whole population because data obtained from the whole population is much more reliable than data acquired from a sample. However, this study used a sample due to time and budget constraints.

The study adopted a non-probability sampling method in choosing participants for this study. Alvi (2016: 115) defines a non-probability sampling method as a method that does not follow any probability concepts in selecting units from a population. Kumar (2013: 206) states that with non-probability sampling methods the researcher's own opinion and judgement to play a role in selecting the sample. A non-probability sampling technique in the form of convenience sampling was utilized in sample selection for this study. According to (Jager 2017), the relative cost and time required to carry out a convenience sample are small in comparison to probability sampling techniques, it is very easy to carry out with few rules governing how the sample should be collected and its ease of use made it the preferred choice for a significant proportion of this post-grad research. This made it the most suitable sampling method for the present research study. Convenience sampling refers to the ease with which the researcher is able to obtain respondents (Saunders *et al.* 2013).

3.9 Pilot study

Pilot study refers to a mini, small scale or initial research that is carried out to gain insight into how the researcher will go about carrying out the study without the costs and effort required to carry out the full study (Crossman 2013: 90). Twenty questionnaires were

distributed to SME owners and managers for pre-testing before the full-scale research was conducted. This was done to assess the correct use of words, sentence lengths, layout of the questionnaire as well as clarity of the instructions and questions.

3.10 Data collection

A self-administered questionnaire was utilized and the researcher hired a research assistant for help in dispensing as well as collecting of the questionnaires after completion. The questionnaires were dispensed to SME owners and managers in four rural areas in KZN, namely: Ulundi, Eshowe, Mbazwana and Inkandla. SME owners and managers were approached at their respective store locations and asked to participate in the survey.

The questionnaires were dispensed accompanied by a letter of information and a letter of consent which the respondents signed giving their permission to take part in the survey. There was a clear set of instructions on the questionnaires that facilitated respondents answering the questions without the presence of the researcher or the research assistant although the researcher did provide clarity on any of the questions that the respondents did not quite understand.

3.11 Validity

According to Kumar (2013: 177), validity is centered on the suitability, eminence and precision of the methods which are adopted in coming up with answers to research questions. Validity is related to how true the study results are and the extent to which the researcher measured what was intended to be measured (Miller 2017: 223). An effort was made to ensure that all the questions in the questionnaire were in line with the research aim and objectives and research literature about the role of IMCs in the growth of SMEs in rural areas. In this regard, precautions and preventive measures were adopted to reduce any potential errors. Validity was addressed using a pilot study.

3.12 Reliability

Kumar (2013: 181) defines reliability of a test as the degree to which recurring measurements conducted will produce similar outcomes under normal conditions. Phelan

and Wren (2009: 117) define reliability as the ability of data collection methods to gather consistent and accurate results. Face-to-face mini interviews were conducted with respondents to help them understand the questions in order to reduce errors and research bias. The following measures were put in place to improve the reliability of the questionnaire:

- A pilot study was conducted which provided the platform to ensure that the measuring instrument, that is, questionnaire was reliable.
- A large sample size of 250 was used to provide more accurate and consistent results than if a small sample size was used.
- Each question on the questionnaire was checked to make sure it was answering or fulfilling an objective.
- To suit the different levels of intellectual capacities of the respondents, all of the questions were drawn up to be precise, short and straightforward.
- The questionnaire was pre-tested to ensure that any errors on questionnaire design were rectified

3.13 Anonymity and confidentiality

According to Crow and Wiles (2014: 1), anonymity and confidentiality is defined as the ability of a research study to protect the identities and personal information of the respondents. Anonymity and confidentiality was ensured by making sure that questionnaires were not disclosed to the public and that respondents did not provide their names.

3.14 Ethical considerations

The researcher informed the respondents of the reasons for carrying out the study and for requesting their participation. The SME owners and managers were shown the research aim and objectives and were informed that the results of the study will be made available to any interested parties. None of the respondents were forced into participating in the study and ethical standards for research were maintained during the entire duration of the study.

After completion the respondents dropped their questionnaires into sealed boxes so that their right to privacy was respected. Respondents were advised that they had the right to withdraw at any given time from the study for whatever reason that they deemed necessary and that all of their responses would remain confidential Creswell (2015: 89).

3.15 Conclusion

The research methodology followed for this study was presented in the chapter. The research design, survey method, sampling, measuring instrument, ethical considerations, validity and reliability as well as data analysis were all discussed. The study adopted a survey strategy which was carried out using a self-administered structured questionnaire with predetermined response options. Ethical considerations were taken into account when conducting this study. Respondents were guaranteed their privacy by being asked to drop their completed questionnaires into a sealed box.

The next chapter will present the survey findings and analysis of the results.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 presents and discusses the results that were obtained from the questionnaires returned from the participants of the study. The questionnaire was the primary tool that was used to collect data and was distributed to SMEs business owners in four rural areas of KZN. This study only looked at enterprises that were registered in the KZN YouthBiz database. The number that this study focused on was based on the estimate of 500 SMEs in the KZN YouthBiz Database (Funding available for small businesses 2015). The data collected from the responses was analysed using SPSS version 24.0. The results are presented using descriptive statistics in the form of graphs, cross tabulations and other figures for the quantitative data that was collected. Inferential techniques using correlations and chi square test values are interpreted using p-values.

4.2 The sample

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to respondents by the researcher with the help of a professional research assistant. Of the 250 questionnaires distributed, 210 were completed and returned which constitutes an 84% response rate which is favourable for this study. Having a large sample is crucial when carrying out research because as the sample increases in size, the confidence in the estimate increases, uncertainty decreases and there is greater precision (Faber 2014: 7).

4.3 The questionnaire

The questionnaire which was the study research instrument consisted of 32 items, with measurement at a nominal level. The questionnaire comprised closed-ended questions and Likert scales. The questionnaire was divided into three sections which measured various themes: biographical data, SMEs' use of marketing communications and IMC, and management's perception of IMC.

4.3.1 Section A: Biographical data

This section summarises the biographical characteristics of the respondents.

4.3.1.1 Age and gender of respondents

Table 4.1 describes the overall gender distribution by age. Overall, the ratio of males to females was approximately 3:2 (59.6%: 40.4%). Within the age category of 36 to 45 years, 58.6% were male. Within the category of males 13.1% were between the ages of 36 to 45 years, which formed 7.8% of the total sample. Among all age categories, most respondents were between the ages of 26 to 35 years constituting 33.5% of the total respondents followed by a tie between the age categories of between 18 to 25 years and above 45 years old. This trend is of interest in that it shows that there are a lot of young people who are starting SMEs which can increase the country's economic growth (Leboa 2017: 45).

Table 4.1: Age and gender of respondents

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
Age	18 - 25	Count	37	21	58
		% within Age	63.8%	36.2%	100.0%
		% within Gender	28.5%	23.9%	26.6%
		% of Total	17.0%	9.6%	26.6%
	26 - 35	Count	40	33	73
		% within Age	54.8%	45.2%	100.0%
		% within Gender	30.8%	37.5%	33.5%
		% of Total	18.3%	15.1%	33.5%
	36 - 45	Count	17	12	29
		% within Age	58.6%	41.4%	100.0%
		% within Gender	13.1%	13.6%	13.3%
		% of Total	7.8%	5.5%	13.3%
	45+	Count	36	22	58
		% within Age	62.1%	37.9%	100.0%
		% within Gender	27.7%	25.0%	26.6%
		% of Total	16.5%	10.1%	26.6%
Total	Count		130	88	218
	% within Age		59.6%	40.4%	100.0%
	% within Gender		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% of Total		59.6%	40.4%	100.0%

4.3.1.2 Racial composition of respondents

The largest percentage of respondents as illustrated in Figure 4.1 was the African race (39.9%). This is largely because most of the residents in areas where the research was carried out such as Inkandla and Eshowe are Africans. Africans are the dominant race in South Africa in terms of population size. Representation of Indians and Coloureds were 21.1% and 22% respectively. The least number of respondents were White (17%). This might be because there are few White people residing in those rural areas.

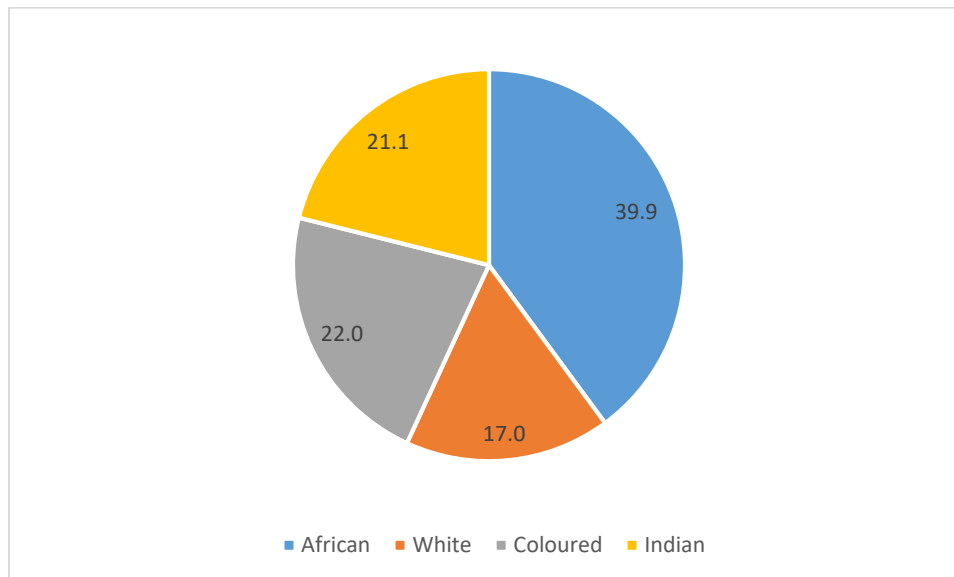


Figure 4.1: Racial composition of sample

4.3.1.3 Age of businesses

Figure 4.2 reflects the age of businesses in four categories which are: 1-2 years, 3-4 years, 5-6 years and 7+ years. Most of the respondents fell into the category of their businesses having been in existence for between 1-2 years (35.3%), followed the category of having been in existence for between 3-4 years (32.6%). The least number of respondents fell into the category of business that have been in existence for between 5-6 years (13.8%). According to Clamps (2017), many SMEs are being held back by poor management and leadership skills. Clamps (2017) also argues that under-developed leadership and management skills and a widespread failure to adopt management best practices are constraining the performance and growth of many SMEs. This means that

SMEs are being started but fail after a few years and shut down. That is why only a few SMEs have managed to stay in business for over 5 years.

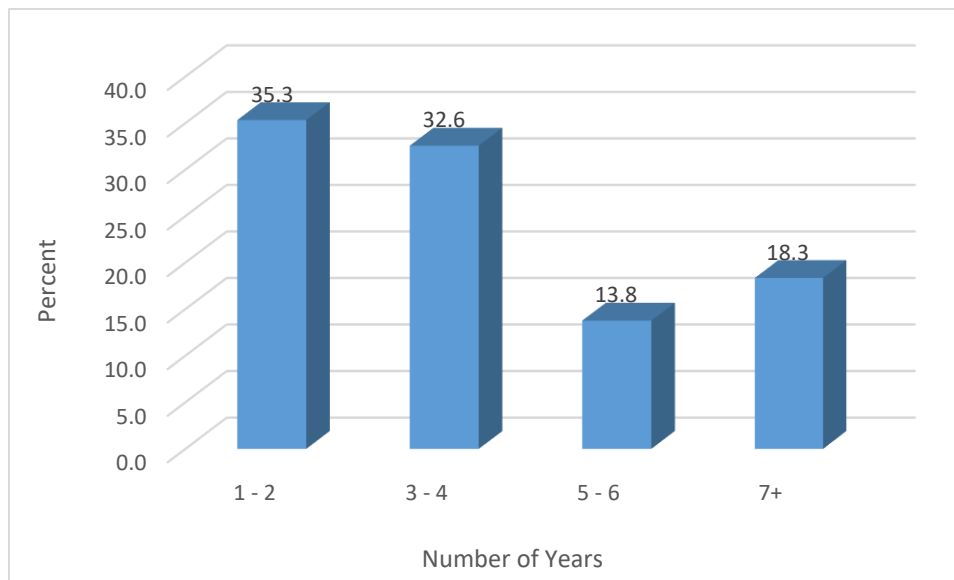


Figure 4.2: Age of businesses

4.3.1.4 Monthly turnover and marketing cost

Figure 4.3 shows the marketing costs and turnover of the SMEs that formed part of this study. Many respondents indicated that they had a monthly turnover of between R75 000 and R150 000, followed by 27.5% of respondents with a net a monthly turnover of under R75 000. The least number of respondents were those business owners with over R225 000 monthly turnover. Regarding marketing costs, the largest number of respondents (35.8%) was in the category that spent less than R75 000 per month on marketing costs. This is possibly because most SME business owners adopt cheaper marketing strategies such as the use of social media and in-store sales promotions which do not require much capital to implement. The least number of respondents (14.7%) spent more than R225 000 on monthly marketing costs. There was no significant difference between the two amounts per category ($p = 0.370$). There were approximately twice as many respondents in the < R150 000 range as for the larger amount, for both variables.

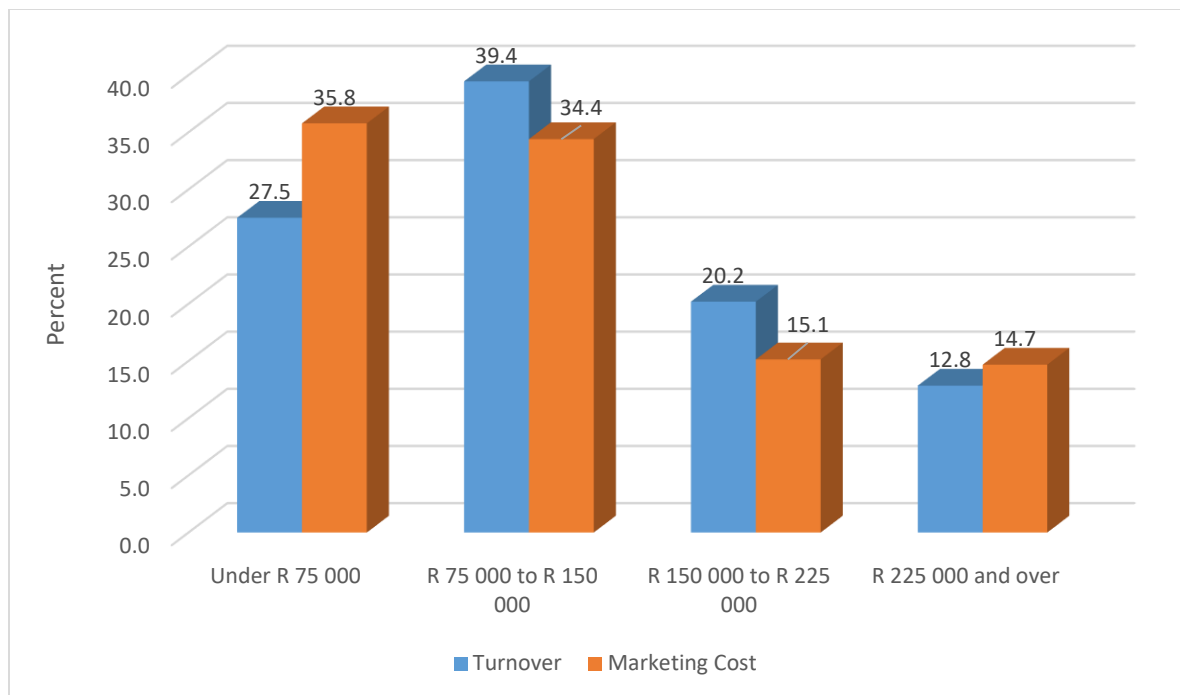


Figure 4.3: Monthly turnover and marketing cost

4.3.1.5 Section analysis

The section that follows analyses the scoring patterns of the respondents per variable per section. The results are first presented using summarised percentages for the variables that constitute each section. Results are then further analysed according to the importance of the statements.

4.3.2 SECTION B: SMEs' use of marketing communications and IMCs

This section deals with descriptions and analysis of questions with regards to the SMEs' use of marketing communications and IMCs.

4.3.2.1 Previous marketing communications

In terms of the scoring patterns for marketing communications that SME business owners had used before, the largest number of respondents (34%) answered that they had used social media. According to Ozrtamur and Karakadilar (2016), social media is not only a communication tool for amusement, but is also a very affordable and cheap and important part of marketing strategies in business life. This is why most respondents stated that

they have used social media before. The other marketing communications strategies that respondents indicated having used before were tradeshow, newsletters and direct mail (28.9%, 14.7% and 10.1% respectively). 12.8% of respondents indicated that they had used advertising such as radio and commuter advertising before. This low percentage may have been because of the costs associated with buying these advertisements.

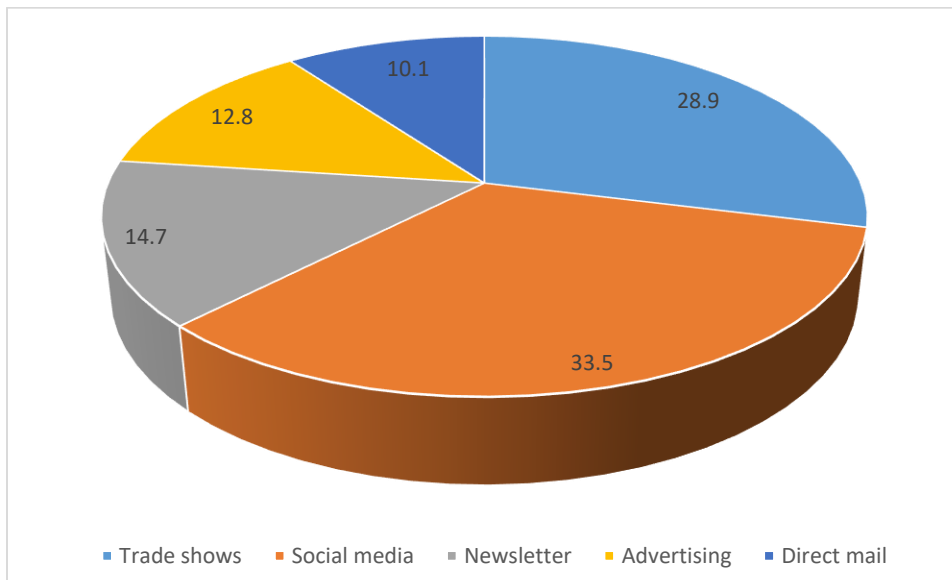


Figure 4.4: Summary of scoring patterns for previous marketing communication

4.3.2.2 Desire to reach a broader audience

This section explains the respondents responses regarding whether they would like to reach a broader audience or not.

Table 4.2: Respondents desire to reach a broader audience

	Frequency	Percent
Yes	151	69.3
No	67	30.7
Total	218	100.0

Among the SME business owners surveyed, 151 of the 218 agreed that they would like to reach a broader audience. This is because reaching a broader audience will increase the potential for growth of their businesses since more consumers will then be aware of the existence of their businesses. A minority of respondents (67) answered that they do not want to reach a broader audience. This might be because of the total costs associated with reaching out to broader market segments. Such costs including advertising costs, among others. Most respondents (69.3%) would prefer to reach a broader audience.

4.3.2.3 Scoring patterns of SMEs' use of marketing communications and IMC

B7.1: Door-to-door selling

As presented in Figure 4.5, 56% of the respondents have used door-to-door selling and 44% have never used it. According to Harrison (2014), a door knocker covers about 35 to 40 houses in an hour and this method helps to boost sales. Therefore, this is a good way of improving the sales of a business.

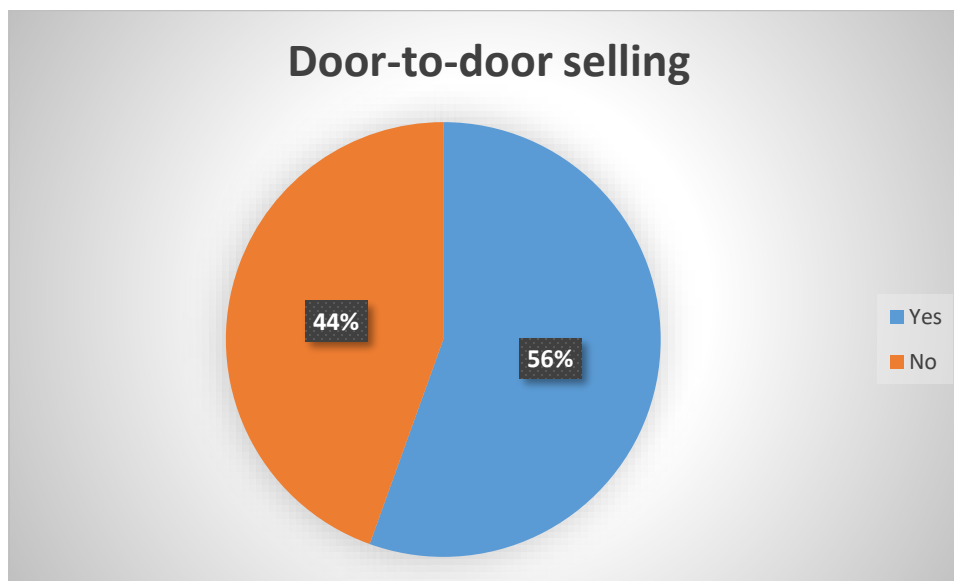


Figure 4.5: Door-to-door selling by respondents

B7.2: Conducting of in-store promotions

Figure 4.6 shows that 54.4% of respondents had not conducted instore promotions before while 45.6% had conducted instore promotions. Nowadays most of the shopping decisions are made in-store as the shop floor lures customers to take decisions in real

time on purchases (Kotler and Keller 2016:124). Therefore, businesses have to put more effort in coming up with in-store promotions thus attracting clientele.

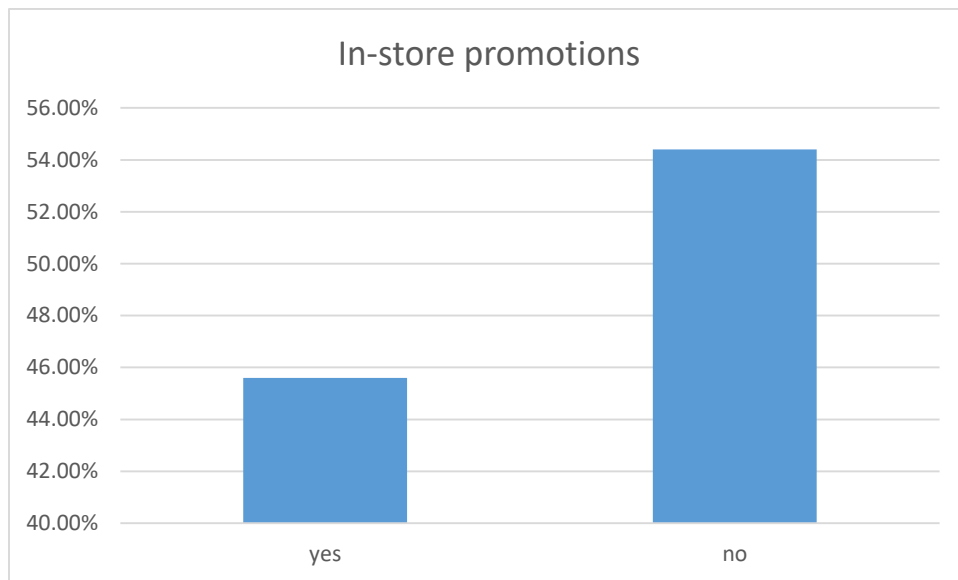


Figure 4.6: Conducted in-store promotions

B7.3: Use of social media in advertising

Figure 4.7 illustrates that 46% of the respondents have used social media in advertising whereas 54% have never used social to advertise. Social media provides businesses with the environment to target advertising based on specific consumer profiles (Ahmed and Raziq 2018). Social media is the modern way of improving a company's sales, hence, all businesses should make endeavours to use it to their advantage.

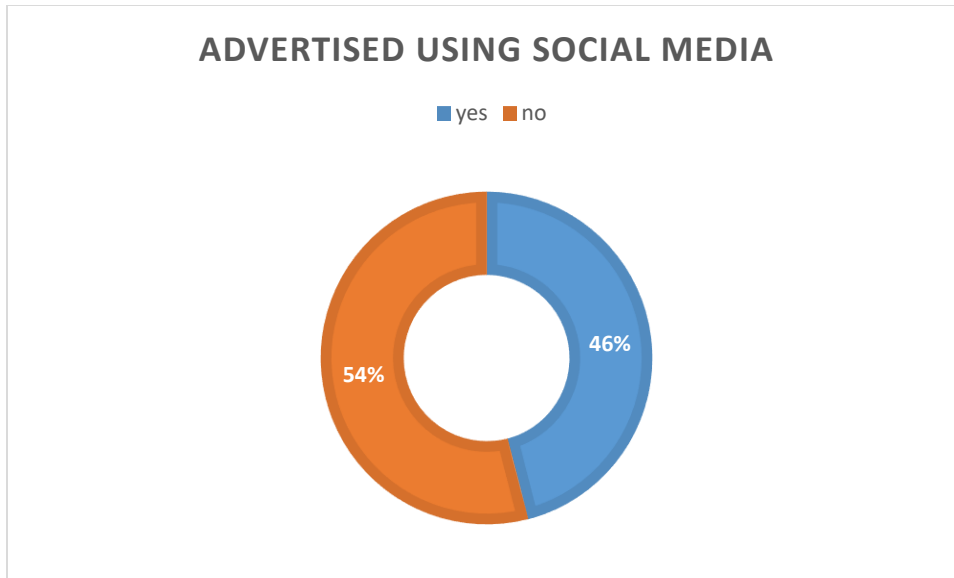


Figure 4.7: Advertised via social media

B7.4: Word-of-mouth advertising

Figure 4.8 shows that 49% of the respondents once employed a team to conduct word-of-mouth advertising whereas 51% of the respondents had never done so.



Figure 4.8: Conducted word-of-mouth advertising

4.3.3 SECTION C: Management's perception of IMC

Section C comprised questions regarding SME management perception of IMC. Their perceptions were gauged using the five service quality dimensions of reliability,

assurance, tangibles, responsiveness and empathy. These questions used the Likert scale for scoring.

4.3.3.1 Use of IMC

C10.1: Advertising will create awareness of products and services

As shown in Figure 4.9, the largest group of respondents (47.2%) strongly agreed that advertising creates awareness of an SME product portfolio, 28.8% of the respondents agreed, 16.1% were neutral and 2.8% disagreed that advertising created awareness for their products. The least percentage was those who disagreed, perhaps because those respondents were uneducated and were just running small family business entities. Advertising has the ability to inform consumers and the public (both prospective and present consumers) about the products and services of an SME, and to persuade them to visit the company's distribution and manufacturing centres for further information and to make advantageous buying decisions. Therefore, advertisements for services must provide tangible cues or symbols as concrete indications of the service's abstract characteristics (Lacobucci, 2011).

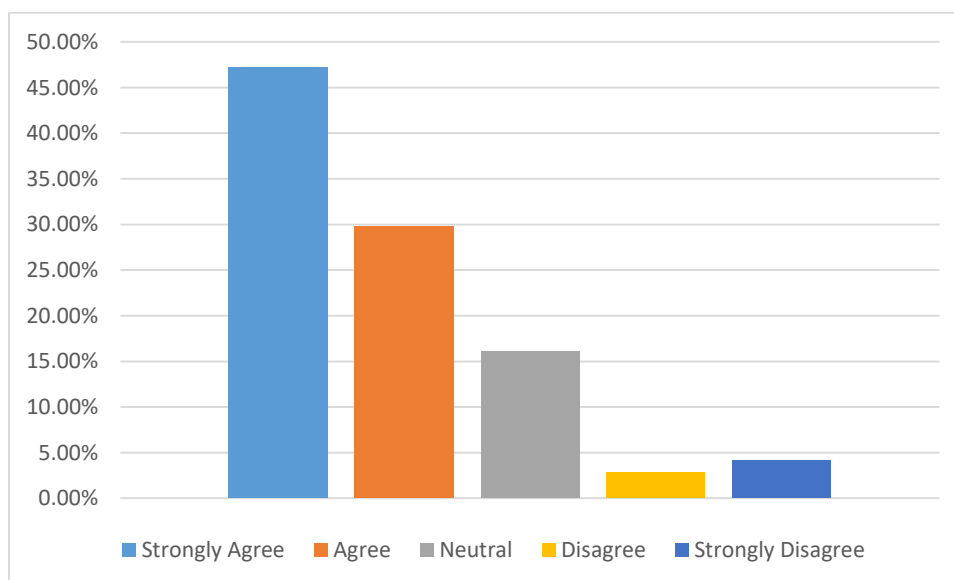


Figure 4.9: Advertising creates awareness of one's products and services

C10.2: Sales promotion assists on high volume and fast purchases

As Figure 4.10 shows, there was a similar percentage of respondents (40.8%) who strongly agreed and agreed that conducting regular sales promotions greatly assists on high volume and fast purchases by consumers. Smith and Sinha (2000: 8) concurs that sales promotions create incentives for customers to buy products more quickly and make larger purchases. Moreover, 5.5% of the respondents were neutral on whether sales promotions assisted in encouraging consumers to make large purchases and the least number of respondents (3.2%) strongly disagreed that sales promotions help consumers to make larger purchases. This might be because they think other intergrated marketing communications besides sales promotions greatly influence consumers in making fast, quick and large purchases.

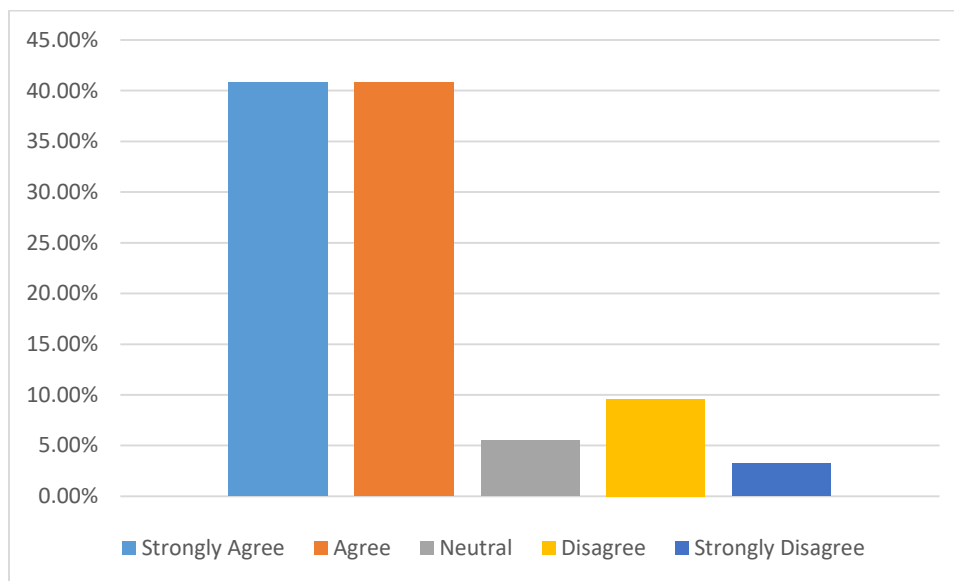


Figure 4.10: Sales promotion assists on high volume and fast purchases

C10.3: Direct marketing contributes to high volume selling of products and services

As shown in Figure 4.11, the majority of respondents strongly agreed and agreed (45.4% and 43.6% respectively) that direct marketing contributed to high volume selling of products and services. 2.3% of the respondents strongly disagreed that direct marketing contribute to high volume selling of products and services. Direct marketing has been described as a cooperative structure of marketing that uses various advertising media to

obtain an assessable response and/or transaction at any location (Okyere, Agypong and Nyarku, 2011).

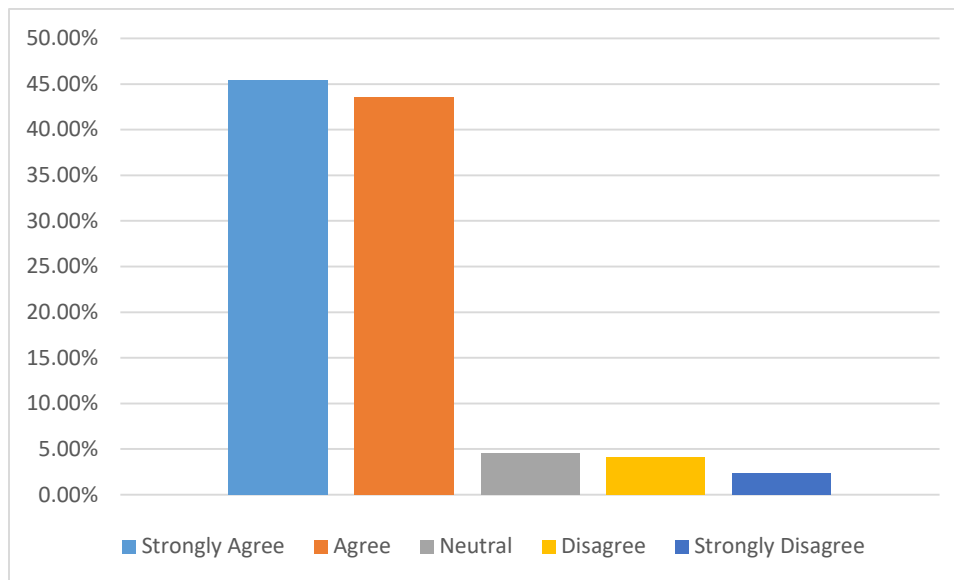


Figure 4.11: Direct marketing contributes in selling one's products

C10.4: Public relations help a business in building relationships with stakeholders

As shown in Figure 4.12, 33% of the respondents strongly agreed while 34.4% agreed with the fact that public relations help businesses to build relationships. The significance of the differences were statistically tested. According to Naumovska and Blazeska (2016) the goal of the public relations includes the interpretation of the public to the business and of the business to the public.

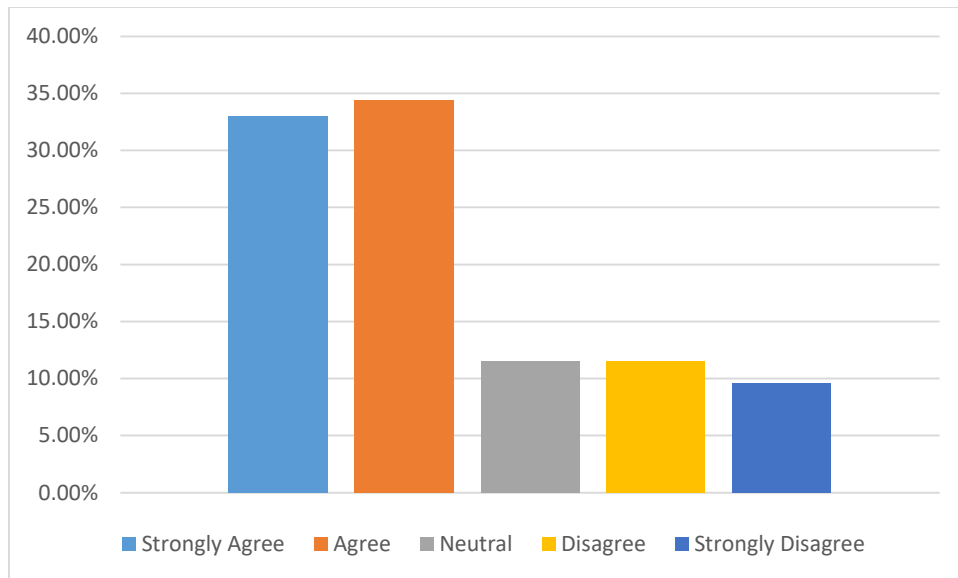


Figure 4.12: Public relations help the business in building relationships

C10.5: Personal selling helps in saving advertising costs and builds relationships

Figure 4.13 illustrates that 28% of the respondents strongly agreed and 39.4% agreed that at a declining stage of a business, personal selling helps to save advertising costs and build relationships. This is because personal selling is a cheap way of advertising and moving door-to-door to consumers can help bridge the differences of consumer perceptions that consumers probably have of the failing SME.

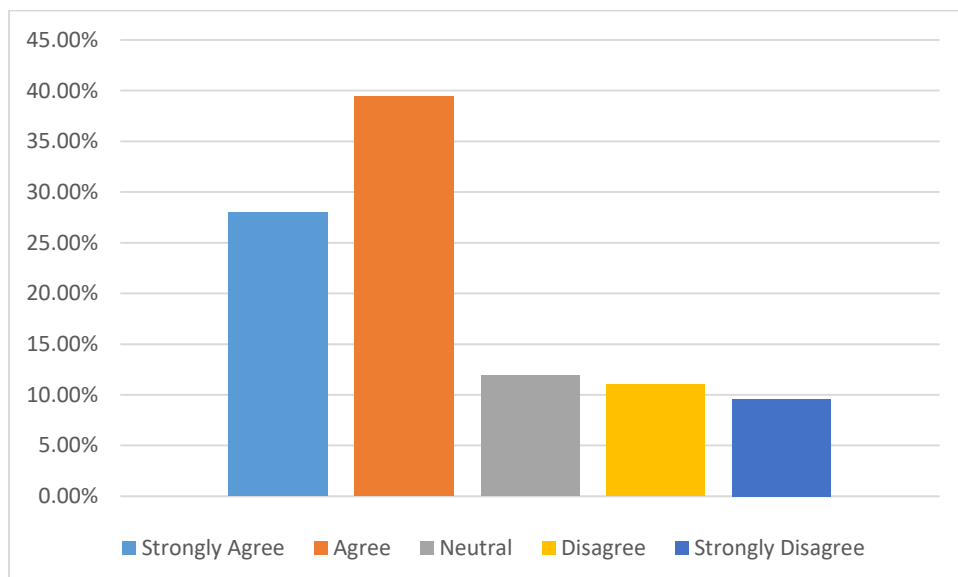


Figure 4.13: Personal selling saves advertising costs and builds relationships

4.3.3.2 Tangible as a service quality dimension

C11.1: Company's use of IMC

As shown in Figure 4.14, 43.6% of respondents agreed that their companies practice IMC in their business operations, 40.4% strongly agreed, 4.6% strongly disagreed and 4.1% disagreed. Reid (2013) provides support for his argument that integration of marketing communications is connected positively to an SME's brand-related performance.

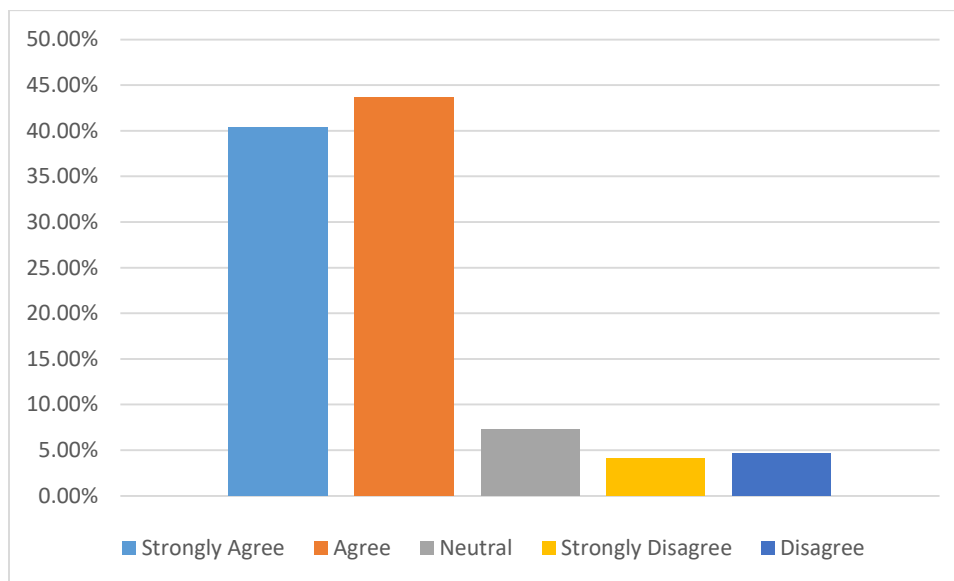


Figure 4.14: Use of IMC

C11.2: Employees being competent

Figure 4.15 shows that the majority of respondents agreed (88.1%) that their employees were competent only 0.5% of the total respondents regarded their employees as incompetent.

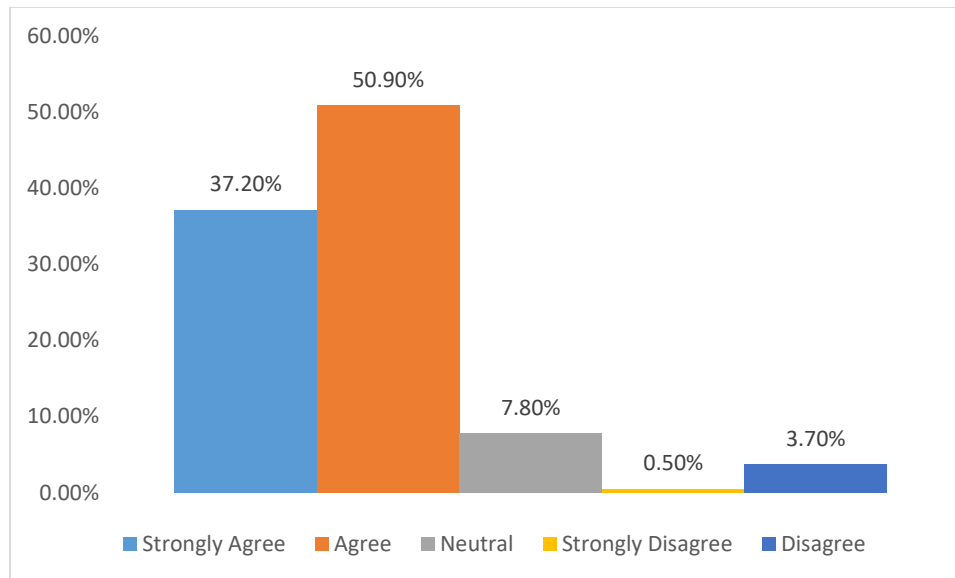


Figure 4.15: Employees' competency

C11.3: Visible In-store advertising

Figure 4.16 illustrates that 33.5% of the respondents strongly agreed and 42% of the respondents agreed that their in-store advertising was clearly visible. Customers need to be lured by in-store advertising so as to attract more sales therefore in-store advertising has to be visible so as to serve its intended purpose.

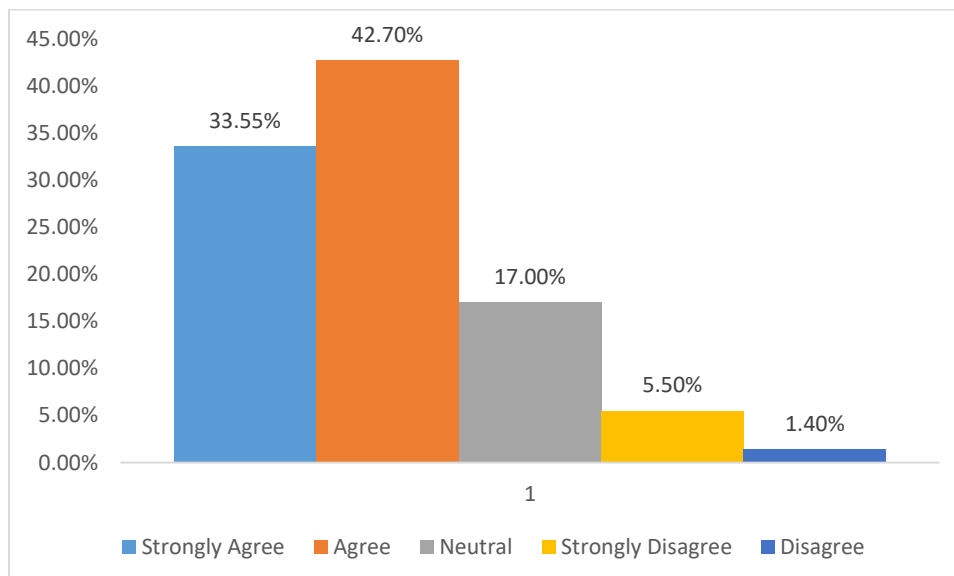


Figure 4.16: Visible in-store advertising

4.3.3.3 Reliability as a service quality dimension

C12.1: Products or services being easily accessible

As presented in Figure 4.17, the majority of respondents agreed (55%) and strongly agreed (35.8%) that their products were easily accessible to consumers, while 8.3% were neutral, and 0.9% disagreed. Figure 4.17 also shows that no respondent strongly disagreed that their products were easily accessible.

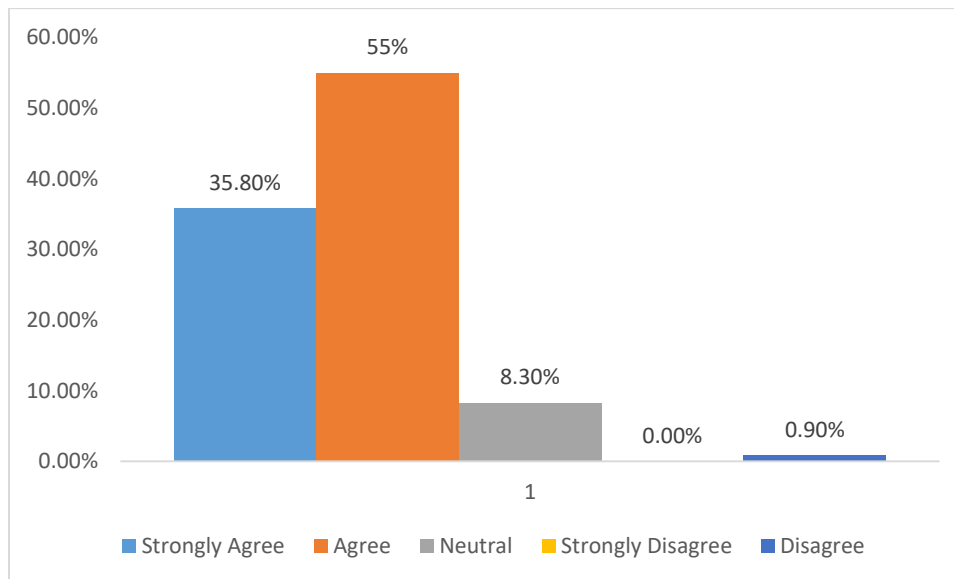


Figure 4.17: Accessibility of products or services

C12.2: Employees promptly respond to customer complaints

Figure 4.18 shows that the majority of respondents of strongly agreed (45%) and agreed (36.2%) that employees promptly responded to customer complaints. Only 6.4% of the total number of respondents were neutral on this finding. The least number of respondents of 5.5% strongly disagreed that their employees were prompt to respond to customer complaints.

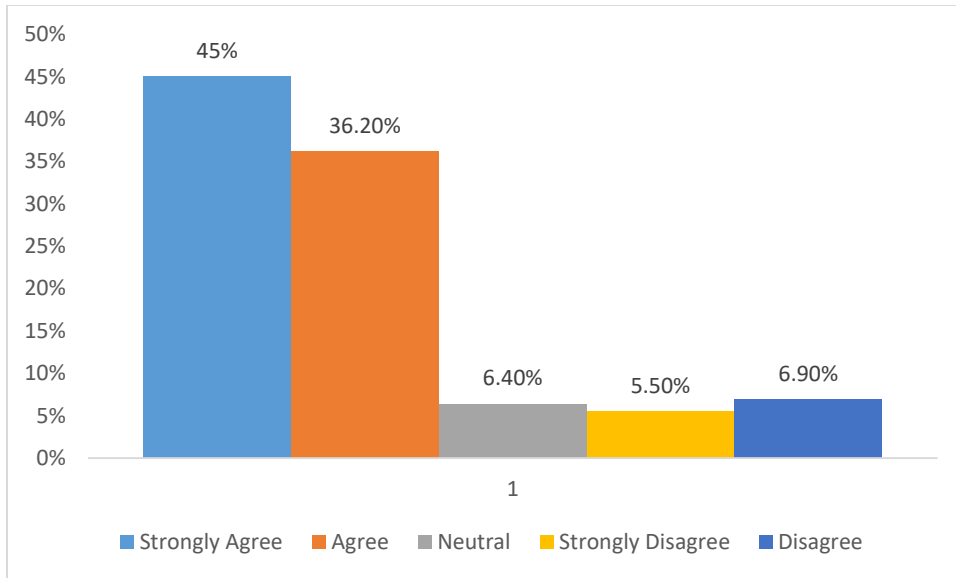


Figure 4.18: Employees' responsiveness to customer complaints

C12.3: Employees are always prepared for emergencies

As illustrated in Figure 4.19, 33% of the respondents strongly agreed and 46.8% agreed that their employees were prepared for emergencies. This implies that the majority was agreeing that they were always on the lookout for emergencies in their businesses. A total of 9.1% disagreed and strongly disagreed with this view and 11% were neutral.

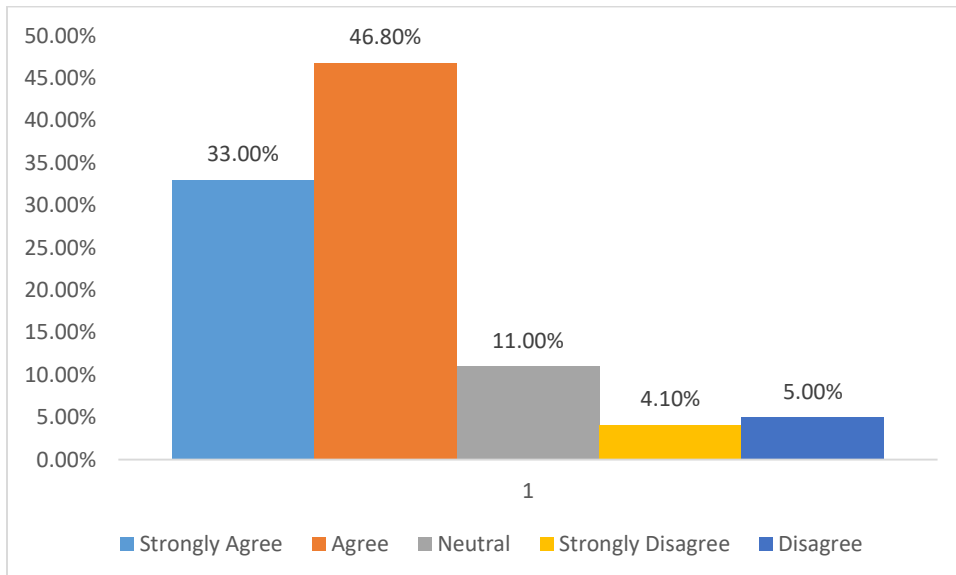


Figure 4.19: Employees' prepared for emergencies

4.3.3.4 Responsiveness as a service quality dimension

C13.1: Employees willingness to assist/help customers

As presented in Figure 4.20, many respondents agreed (44.5%) and strongly agreed (29.8%) that employees are willing to help customers, while 12.4% were neutral, 7.6% disagreed and 6% strongly disagreed that employees are willing to help customers.

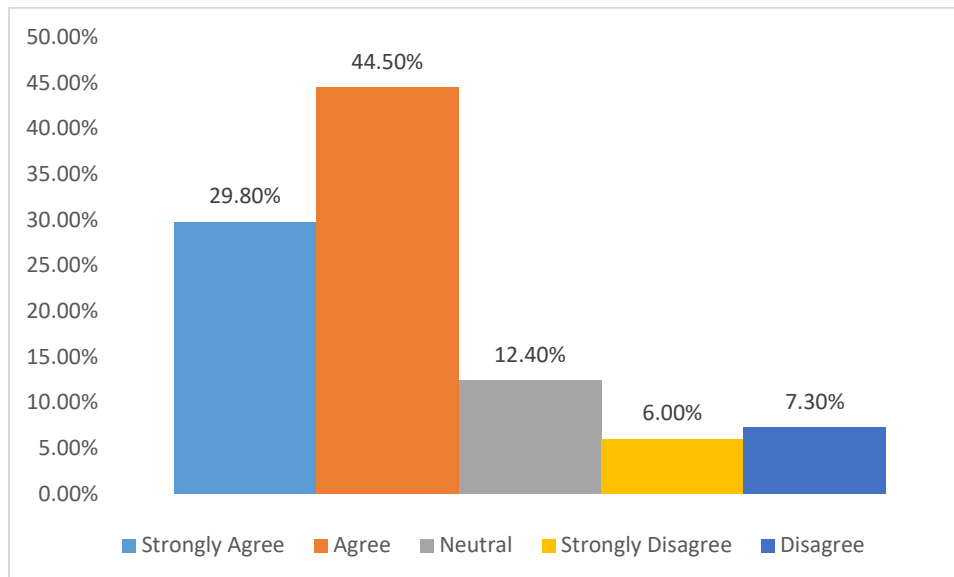


Figure 4.20: Employees' willingness to help customers

C13.2: Floor managers being professional in executing sales

As figure 4.21 shows, the majority of respondents agreed (46.3%) and strongly agreed (37.6%) that floor managers were professional in executing perfect sales, while the least number of respondents strongly disagreed (4.1%) that floor managers were professional in executing perfect sales.

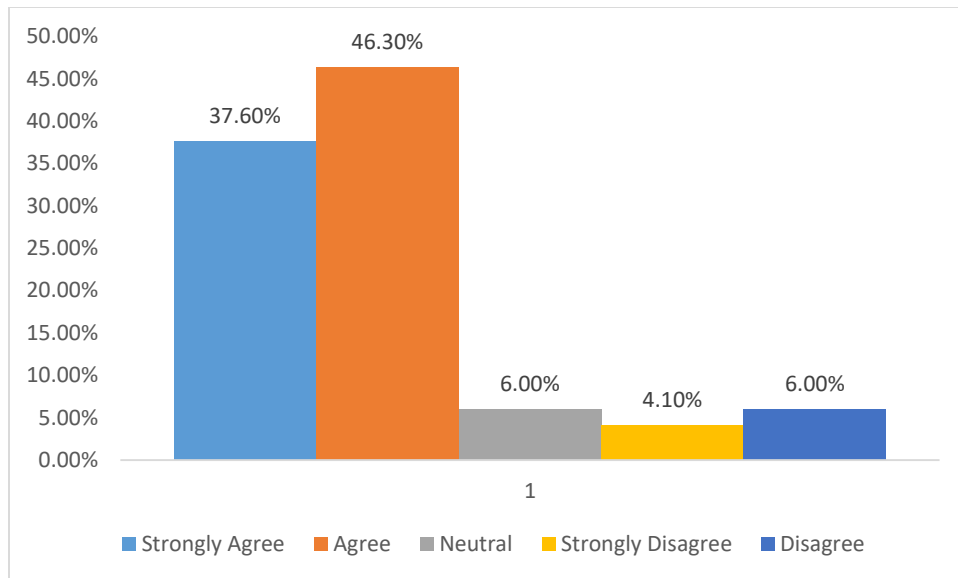


Figure 4.21: Floor managers' professionalism in execution of perfect sales

4.3.3.5 Assurance as a service quality dimension

C14.1: Employees instill confidence in customers

As shown in Figure 4.22, the majority of respondents of 44% and 43.1% respectively agreed and strongly agreed that their employees instilled confidence in customers, while 4.6% of respondents remained neutral on this dimension. The least number of respondents of 4% each disagreed and strongly disagreed that their employees instilled confidence in their customers.

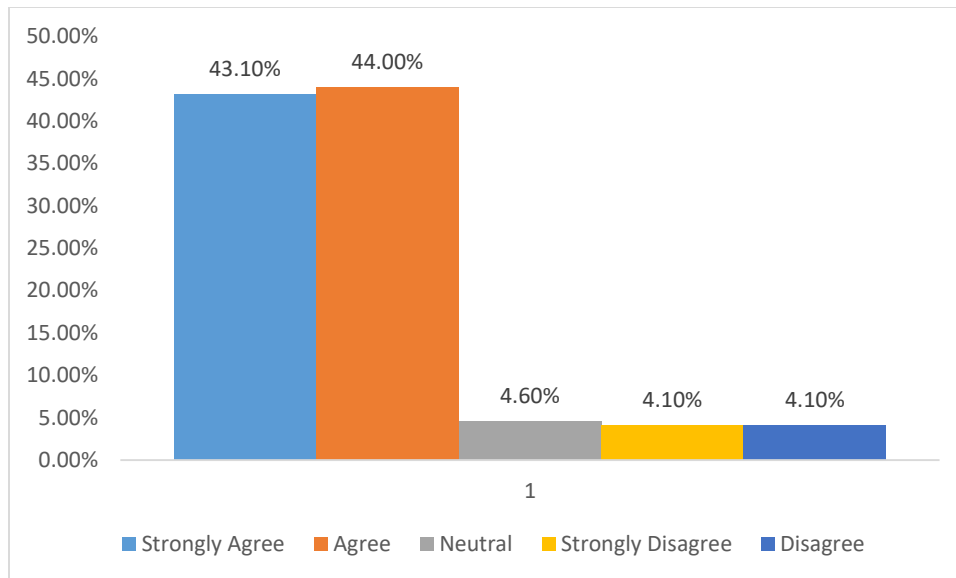


Figure 4.22: Employees instill confidence in customers

C14.2: The business provides a clean, safe, and secure facility for all kind of customers

As Figure 4.23 illustrates, the majority of respondents agreed (44%) and strongly agreed (39.9%) that their place of business provides clean, safe and secure facilities for all of their kind of customers. This may indicate that most of the entrepreneurs' owners have waste bins around the shop both inside and outside as well as some having CCTV cameras inside the shop and outside in the car park. 6.4% of the respondents were neutral on this dimension and the least number of respondents strongly disagreed (2.8%) that their place of business provides a clean, safe and secure facility for all kind of customers.

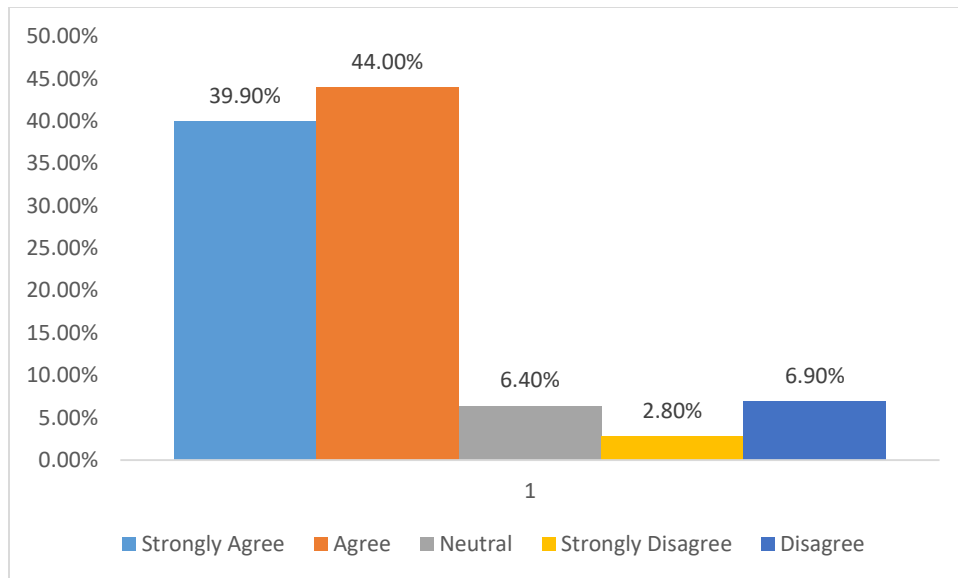


Figure 4.23: Provision of a clean, safe and secure facility for all customers

C14.3: Employees have professional knowledge

As shown in Figure 4.24, most respondents agreed (43.6%) and strongly agreed (35.8%) that their employees had professional knowledge when dealing with their customers, while the least number of respondents strongly disagreed (6.4%) that their employees had professional knowledge when dealing with their customers.

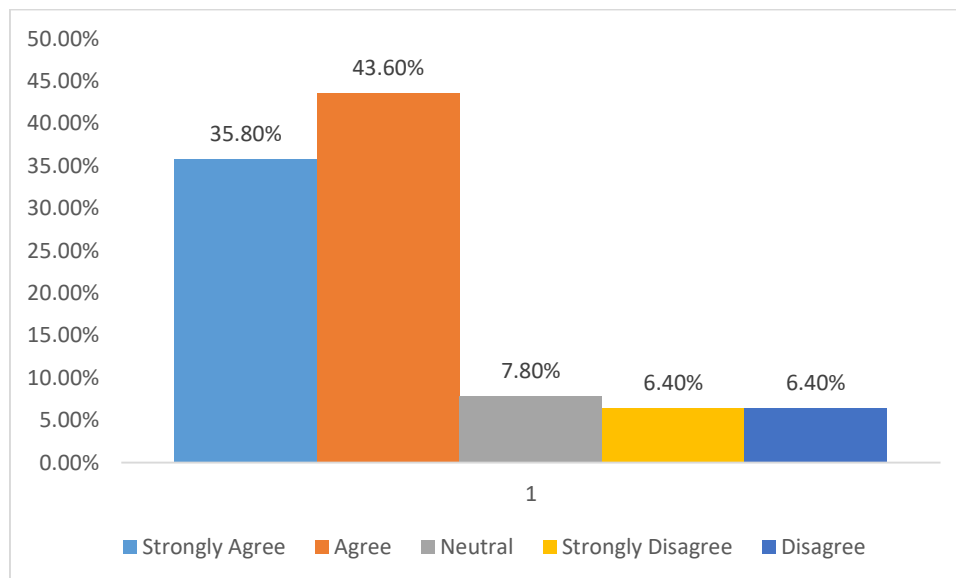


Figure 4.24: Employees have professional knowledge

4.4 Statistical analysis

4.4.1 Correlations

Bivariate correlations were also performed on the (ordinal) data. The results can be found in a table in Appendix F. Positive values indicate a directly proportional relationship between the variables and a negative value indicates an inverse relationship. All significant relationships are indicated by a * or **.

The results show that there was a weak positive correlation value between sales promotions and SME practicing the IMC ($r=0.213$; $p=0.000$). This indicates that the more the SME practices IMC, the more sales promotions will assist on volume and purchases, and vice versa.

The correlation between in-store advertising being clearly visible and employees being competent enough in providing the best customer service experience was ($r=0.135$; $p=0.000$), which is a positive correlation. This result implies that competent employees are likely to provide the best customer service experience.

The correlation between employees having professional knowledge of the business and employees instilling confidence in customers was ($r=0.231$; $p=0.000$). This shows a weak positive correlation. This result implies that if employees have professional business knowledge this is likely to instill confidence in consumers.

The correlation between employees showing genuine interest in solving customer problems and the SME practicing IMCs was ($r=0.016$; $p=0.000$). This shows that there was no relationship between the two variables. They are not related at all. This implies that employees showing genuine interest in solving customer problems is not related to whether the company practices IMC.

4.4.2 Chi-square

Chi square tests were performed to determine whether there were statistically significant relationships between the variables (rows vs columns). The null hypothesis states that

there is no association between the two. The alternate hypothesis indicates that there is an association.

There was no significant relationship between “please indicate how old your business is” and “advertising will create awareness of my products and services” ($p=0.685$). This indicates that the age of the business does not influence advertising to create awareness of the product.

There was no significant relationship between “please indicate how old your business is” and “sales promotion will assist on high volume and fast purchase” ($p=0.280$). This shows that the age of the business has no impact on the sales promotion and the pace of purchases.

However, there was a significant relationship between “have you done in-store promotions” and “my employees are competent” ($p=0.008$). This indicates that the competence of employees have an impact on the type of instore promotion done by the SME.

4.5 Conclusion

The results of the empirical study were presented and analysed in this chapter. The chapter presented several different methods of quantitative analysis applied to obtain descriptive statistics. The results were presented in the form of charts and tables which helped to provide a detailed analysis.

Respondent demographics were presented and analysed as well as SMEs’ use of IMC and business owners’ perception of the use of various IMC strategies. The next chapter will present conclusions and make recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is to present the conclusions based on the findings of this study and provide viable and relevant recommendations for future research on the influence of IMCs on the growth of the SMEs in the rural areas of KZN. Secondary data sources as well as the primary study data were used to draw conclusions and recommendations for this study. All the limitations of this study were noted and suggestions were made for those areas that need further research. Moreover, the discussion of these findings is based on the aim and objectives set forth in the first chapter. As part of satisfying objective two, relevant and thorough recommendations will be provided to identify the most efficient IMC tools that can be utilised to enhance the growth of the SMEs in the rural areas of KZN.

5.2 Summary/Overview of the Study.

The aim of the study was to analyse the influence of the IMC on the growth of the SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

Chapter one reviewed the problem statement and the objectives of the study. The aim of the study was to analyze the influence of the IMC on the growth of the SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

Chapter two provided an overview on integrated marketing communications (IMC), barriers in implementing the integrated marketing communications, evolution of the IMC, components of the marketing communications and also the conceptual framework.

Chapter three gave a description of the research method implemented for the study. This chapter also identified the research instrument and the sampling method used for the study. A research instrument was designed to collect data from the rural areas in KZN: Eshowe, Mbazwana, Nkandla, and Ulundi.

Chapter four presented the data analysis of the collected data. The impact that the respondents identified from the implementation of the IMC towards their SMEs was also discussed.

5.3 Achievements and Findings from the study

The findings of this study will be discussed in accordance with each of the objectives which guided this study.

5.3.1 Objective one

- To analyse the internal IMC environment that may be affecting the success of SMEs.

Mapheto, Oni and Matiza (2014: 116) conducted a comprehensive review of relevant literature about the influence of the integrated marketing communications on the growth of the SMEs in the rural areas of KZN, and found that IMCs are strategically important in the growth of the IMCs in the rural areas of KZN. For SME owners, the IMCs represent a very important weapon to use for the growth of SMEs in rural areas.

IMCs have improved from being theorised as the bringing together of communication tools for a brand to a tactical and planned conceptualisation (Waters 2014: 332). As noted by Shaw (2013), the first conceptualisation of IMC was very distorted and resulted in the adoption of diverse methods to construct messages. Despite the known significance of implementing IMC processes, the administrative structure of various companies stops or limits its effective implementation. In fact, IMC does not blend well into the organisational structure of most firms. Gabrielli and Balboni (2010) contends that the model of IMC, whilst supposedly practical, ultimately does not succeed because of the existing structural barriers to implementation. The common obstacles in an organisation to implementing IMC are fear of change, business culture, and absence of database technology, absence of funds/budget, absence of IMC development and skills, decentralisation, efficient specialisation, and absence of horizontal communication.

The findings of the primary study concur with the above theoretical review in revealing the various factors in SMEs that act as obstacles to them implementing the IMCs. The

majority of the SME owners and managers surveyed articulated the absence of IMC development and skills and lack of funds/budget as the key factors that are affecting the growth of SMEs in rural areas as the presented results show. This reveals how influential the knowledge of IMC implementation and availability of funds/budget is for the growth of SMEs in rural areas.

5.3.2 Objective two

- To identify the most efficient tools of IMCs that can be utilised to enhance the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

The study revealed that IMCs play a major role in disrupting traditional communication methods which allows SME owners to connect directly with their target audience. Kalane (2015: 67) warns that those SMEs that do not use IMCs to increase their growth and market share will not survive a very long time. The study also highlighted that IMCs is not an optional extra in SMEs as its implementation is at the heart of their survival. It has become more effective and reliable than conventional traditional methods as it allows a wider reach into the target market.

The study's results revealed that the use of the IMCs by SMEs in the rural areas of KZN tend to guarantee their success as compared to the old traditional communication methods. This prompted the majority of respondents to state that SMEs, like any other businesses, must always adopt the IMCs in today's business environment to guarantee survival despite stiff competition (Dissanayake 2012). Further, the study highlighted that the SMEs must always utilize the various IMCs methods as these provide an opportunity for SMEs to interact with their existing and potential clients, creating meaningful and long-lasting relationships with customers. This encourages a very much-improved sense of intimacy between SME owners and their customers (Wiese, 2014).

5.3.3 Objective three

- To ascertain the role of digital/online marketing communication tools on the growth of SMEs in four rural areas of KZN.

The primary study findings revealed that IMCs, if implemented correctly, influence the final decision-making of both existing and potential customers of SMEs. This is in accordance with socialisation theory that predicts that two-way communication affects consumer behavioural, affective and cognitive attitudes.

According to Hanaysha (2018) IMCs can influence SMEs' potential clients to move from the need recognition stage to actual purchase in SME stores. Hudson and Thal (2013: 156) state that IMCs have caused a fundamental change to the consumer decision-making process and this has resulted in the emerging of a more sophisticated view about the engagement of consumers with various SMEs. The extent and implications of the changes brought by IMCs calls for the re-evaluation of the consumer decision journey in SMEs.

In support of the finding of this study that IMCs influence the final decision of SME customers to a considerable extent, Ardjouman and Asma (2015) states that the “buy” stage is most likely to occur through proper implementation of viable and effective IMC techniques.

5.4 Conclusions

The conclusions derived from the findings are:

- IMCs are of paramount importance in the growth of the SMEs and are not just an optional extra. SMEs that do not use or fail to implement IMCs to increase efficiency and growth are always bound to fail within the industry.
- The efficiency and results guaranteed in implementing IMCs compared to traditional communication methods prompted this study to conclude that IMCs are one of the most important tools in the growth of SMEs.
- SMEs' existing and potential clients are influenced by IMCs in their decision making when they are choosing which SME to conduct business with. Predominantly, customers identify their needs, as well as decide which SME to conduct their purchases/business with, using IMC tools.
- SMEs in the rural areas are significantly using IMCs to improve their performance.

5.5 Limitations

The major limitation of the study was that the instrument used was newly developed and had not been extensively tested which imposes a limitation on the applicability of the results obtained. After identifying some shortcomings during the analysis of the collected data, there was some manipulation of the results to allow a better interpretation of the findings. The “Effectiveness of integrated marketing communications” and “Existing and potential clients are influenced by IMCs” sections produced unacceptable Cronbach’s alpha scorings of 0.458 and 0.432 respectively. However, the overall reliability score of 0.857 exceeded the recommended value of 0.700, indicating an acceptable, consistent scoring for the overall research effort. The study covered a specific geographical area of KZN and not all the rural areas of KZN due to lack of resources. The following paragraphs discuss the general implications and recommendations.

5.6 General recommendations

The study has yielded many implications for both practice and the literature on the growth of SMEs. The study explored the influence of IMCs in the growth of the SMEs. Following the results of this research effort, it is recommended that SME marketing bodies and SMEs must break down communication barriers and increase their efficiency in the growth of the SME activities by increasing the utilization and implementation of various IMCs.

Based on the literature reviewed for this study, as well as the results of the survey and analysis thereof, the following recommendations may prove useful in the growth of SMEs in the rural areas of KZN.

- Results indicate that SME owners attach importance to all aspects of service quality (i.e. tangibles, reliability and empathy). Results of this study indicate that a great level of importance is placed on tangibles and reliability as part of service quality. Tangibles and reliability are strong predictors of high quality service. Management of SMEs should focus on tangibles and reliability aspects of service. Efforts to foster a pleasant and modern store layout/environment should be implemented and maintained.

- SME owners should consider investing more in the most viable and preferred IMCs which, according to the study, are commuter advertising, sales promotions, the internet as well as use of proper signage just to mention a few. These IMC tools result in a greater coverage of the target market. SME owners should also consider improving and giving further attention to event sponsorship, printed media and the use of radio slots if the budget permits. On event sponsorship, marketers should also look for opportunities to sponsor events where the whole target market is involved for example, clean up campaigns in the rural areas. During sponsored events more branded gifts should be given away, as they will remind and inform many potential customers about the SMEs. All promotional tools should be implemented strategically reaching a greater coverage to create an effective promotional mix.
- IMC tools should always be tailored to the nature of the target market. For instance, the majority of people living in rural areas survive with a low budget, therefore they are very price sensitive which means that SME owners should always try to arrange sales promotions on prices of their products or services.
- The findings of this study lead to a recommendation that SME owners should utilize social media as it is a powerful tool in the growth of SMEs and it reaches out to potential customers and helps gain valuable insight for the SME through 'social listening'. Through social listening, SME owners can find out what customers are saying about them, gain insight into their behaviour, identify keywords and trends that appeal to their target market, and, as a result, improve their customer service. Social media can help to build their business profile and attract new customers.
- SME owners need to embark on a continuous process of ensuring that quality products and services are available to consumers. Fair pricing that matches the quality of products offered by a SME should be the norm. Based on results, the importance of policy as an indicator of service should be recognized.

- The role of SMEs has been recognised as a key aspect in the development of peoples' economic and social well-being. Apart from difficulties in getting finances, SMEs in rural areas also face barriers such as lack of entrepreneurship knowledge on running the SME enterprises as well as marketing skills to run their businesses. The literature of this study highlights that in order to increase SME effectiveness, support is needed in various areas such as finance, infrastructure, enterprise development, support from government agencies involved in planning and promoting the growth of SMEs. In this regard, the government needs to come up with policies and structures that encourage the growth of SMEs in rural areas.

- There is a need for financial support for South African rural SMEs. The government should try to formulate a rural development programme that caters for all small businesses in the rural areas and the programme should be closely supervised and monitored by various stakeholders including community leaders. Government needs to form a rural development fund in rural areas that will be supervised by all stakeholders including community leaders. Therefore, a recommendation is to create financial schemes where entrepreneurs can have at least equal, if not concessional, access to finance.

- The need for increased government support for rural business development, education and training strategies. The study recommends that the government should increase the human resource base in rural areas of KZN. The study also recommends that the government re-visit the current policy structures in rural areas designed to improve small business skills, knowledge and expertise. South African rural demographics are different from South African urban geographic profiles. In this regard, the effectiveness of rural development programmes are limited due to a lack of coordination and appropriate targeting in policy development and programme delivery. The study recommends that the relevant government agencies and programmes produce action plans and increase cooperation and coordination to eliminate needless policy duplication and

inconsistencies as well as ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of development programmes in rural communities.

- In addition, public-private consultations on SME-related policies could also be strengthened to strike the right balance among the needs of all relevant stakeholders. Building on the positive experience of the Working Group for the SME Strategy, representatives of the private sector (e.g. South African Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the South African Small and Medium Enterprises Association) should be involved on a regular basis in the SME policy-making process. This would ensure that private sector perspectives are considered when developing business-related regulations, thus improving stability and predictability of regulations over time.
- South African policy makers could introduce a formal regulatory impact assessment (RIA) mechanism for business-related legislation affecting SMEs. In particular, the RIA system could formally recognize the importance of the SME sector by developing a simple “SME test” to assess the likely costs and benefits of new primary legislation for SMEs. A focus on secondary legislation could evolve over time.
- South Africa could broaden and deepen the production of SME statistics to build a more accurate picture of the sector’s performance and further base policy making on quantitative evidence. This would entail expanding the current basic structural business statistics by sector and size class (i.e. number, employment and value-added) to include more refined data on business demographics (e.g. birth rate, death rate, survival rate, high-growth enterprises), export performance (e.g. SMEs’ share of export) and innovation (e.g. expenditure on R&D, technology absorption). Since the collection of data demands time on the part of entrepreneurs, requests to SMEs should be streamlined to minimize the effort involved to provide the relevant information.

5.7 Directions for future research

The study presents some opportunities for further research. This study focused only on the rural areas of the northern parts of KZN. Further research can be conducted in all the rural areas in KZN. This will help to reduce population bias. The research was conducted using a quantitative research design and non-probability sampling for convenience. Further research can be conducted using a mixed methods approach which can generate more data rich responses on how best SME owners can implement IMCs for their ultimate growth. This study set out to establish a basis for knowledge and professionalism within the SMEs in four rural KZN areas. Further studies on the benefits of proper marketing strategies in rural areas should be encouraged as this has the potential of greatly increasing profits and ensuring the long-term sustainability of SMEs. This research project will hopefully provide information for SME owners/managers that are operating in rural areas with specific reference to KZN areas.

5.8 Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that SMEs should exploit the advantage of implementing IMCs as a technique to grow their businesses. IMCs which attain greater audience coverage are essential for the healthy growth of SMEs. SMEs should experiment with different IMC techniques for their growth since customers will react differently to different methods. Fully understanding the target audience and nature of the product is vital when SMEs are choosing which IMCs methods to adopt.

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ANNEXURES

Appendix A: Letter of Information



Dear Respondent

I am a registered student at the Durban University of Technology in the Department of Marketing and Retail Business Management. I humbly request your assistance in completing the attached questionnaire for the M. Tech: Degree in Marketing. My topic is entitled: The Influence of Integrated Marketing Communications on the Growth of Small-To-Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Rural Areas of KwaZulu-Natal

I have been granted permission by my institution to conduct an in-house investigation and administration of questionnaires relating to the research topic. To successfully complete my Master's degree, the latter part of the empirical framework involves the administration of a structured closed ended questionnaire. You have been randomly selected as one of the respondents comprising the sampling frame of this organisation.

I will be grateful if you kindly complete the attached questionnaire. The questionnaire should take 10 minutes at most to complete and only requires you to mark with an **X** next to the relevant pre-coded response. Please kindly complete all questions. You are assured that your responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will not be divulged to any other party. Your name should not be mentioned on the questionnaire and will remain anonymous. Your participation is merely voluntary and there is no coercion or undue influence in completing this questionnaire. In addition, the responses to the questionnaire, once collated, will be used for statistical purposes only. I will make the research report available at the DUT library.

Your co-operation in assisting me with this important component of my study is highly appreciated. If there are any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me at the above cell number. Once again I thank you in advance for enabling me to complete this research project.

Thanking you

Appendix B: Consent letter

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, (Nkululeko Mkhize), about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance Number: _____,
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerised system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant	Date	Time	Signature/Right Thumbprint

I, Nkululeko Mkhize (name of researcher) herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Nkululeko Mkhize

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Researcher	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Witness (If applicable)	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable)	Date	Signature

Appendix C: Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions:

- i. Please tick (✓) one response only for each pre-coded question.
- ii. Please answer all questions.
- iii. Please do not write your personal details on the questionnaire.

SECTION A: Demographic Profile

1. Please specify your gender.

1.1	Suburb (area)				
1.2	Age	18-25	26-35	36-45	45 and over
1.3	Sex	Male		Female	
1.4	Race				

2. Please indicate how old your business is.

	Age Category	Tick
2.1	1 year to 3 years	
2.2	3 years to 5 years	
2.3	5 years to 7 years	
2.4	7 years and over	

3. What is your monthly turnover?

	Income level	Tick
3.1	Under R 75 000	
3.2	R 75 000 to R 150 000	
3.3	R 150 000 to R 225 000	
3.4	R 225 000 and over	

4. What is your marketing cost per month?

	Average Spend	Tick
4.1	Under R 75 000	
4.2	R 75 000 to R 150 000	
4.3	R 150 000 to R 225 000	
4.4	R 225 000 and over	

SECTION B: Enterprise's use of Marketing Communications and IMC

5. What marketing communication have you done before?

5.1	Trade shows	
5.2	Social media	
5.3	Newsletter	
5.4	Advertising	
5.5	Direct mail	

6. Would you like to reach a broader audience?

6.1	Yes	
6.2	No	

7.

No.	QUESTION	YES	NO
7.1	Have you applied door-to-door selling?		
7.2	Have you done in-store promotions?		
7.3	Have you ever advertised through social media?		
7.4	Do you a team employed to do word of mouth advertising?		

SECTION C: Management's perception of the IMC

8. In relation to the use of integrated marketing communication, which of the following statements best describes your response?

Statement		Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.1	Advertising will create aware of my products and services.	1	2	3	4	5
8.2	Sales promotion will assist on high volume and fast purchases.	1	2	3	4	5
8.3	Direct marketing will contribute in selling of my products and services.	1	2	3	4	5
8.4	Public relations will help my business in building relationships.	1	2	3	4	5
8.5	At a declining stage of my business, Personal Selling will help in saving advertising costs and build relationships.	1	2	3	4	5

TANGIBLES**YES****NO**

9. Does your company practice the IMC?		
10. Does your make use of the relevant IMC?		
11. Are your employees competent?		
12. Is the in-store advertising clearly visible?		

RELIABILITY**YES****NO**

13. Are your products or services easily accessible?		
14. Are your employees prompt to respond to customer complaints?		
15. Are your employees prepared for emergencies?		
16. Do your employees provide prompt service?		

RESPONSIVENESS**YES****NO**

17. Are your employees willing to assist/help customers?		
18. Are the floor managers professional in executing a perfect sales?		

ASSURANCE**YES NO**

19. Do your employees instill confidence in customers?		
20. Does your business provide a clean, safe, and secure facilities for all kind of customers?		
21. Does your business offer competitive prices?		
22. Do your employees have professional knowledge?		

EMPATHY**YES NO**

23. Do your customer show interest in customers?		
24. Do customers receive individual attention?		
25. Do customers have an opportunity for social interaction?		
26. Do employees understand the needs of their customers?		
27. Does your business provide convenient trading hours?		

Appendix D: Ethical Clearance Certificate



MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: FACULTY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (FREC)

26 July 2018

Student No: 20609261

FREC REF: 130/16FREC

Dear Mr N Mkhize

MASTERS IN MANAGEMENT SCIENCES: MARKETING

TITLE: THE INFLUENCE OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS IN THE GROWTH OF SMALL-TO-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN THE RURAL AREAS

Please be advised that the FREC Committee has reviewed your proposal and the following decision was made: **Ethical Level 2**

Date of FRC Approval: 13 October 2016

Approval has been granted for a period of two years from the above FRC date, after which you are required to apply for safety monitoring and annual recertification. Please use the form located at the Faculty. This form must be submitted to the FREC at least 3 months before the ethics approval for the study expires.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the FREC according to the FREC SOP's.

Please note that ANY amendments in the approved proposal require the approval of the FREC as outlined in the FREC SOP's.

Yours Sincerely

Prof JP Govender

Chairperson: FREC

Appendix E: Editing Certificate

DR RICHARD STEELE

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EDITING CERTIFICATE

Re: Nkululeko Mkhize

**Master's dissertation: THE INFLUENCE OF INTEGRATED
MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ON THE GROWTH OF SMALL-
TO-MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (SMEs) IN THE RURAL AREAS OF
KWAZULU-NATAL**

I confirm that I have edited this dissertation and the references for clarity, language and layout. I returned the document to the author with track changes so correct implementation of the changes and clarifications requested in the text and references is the responsibility of the author. I have not edited the references because that was not part of my brief. I am a freelance editor specialising in proofreading and editing academic documents. My original tertiary degree which I obtained at the University of Cape Town was a B.A. with English as a major and I went on to complete an H.D.E. (P.G.) Sec. with English as my teaching subject. I obtained a distinction for my M.Tech. dissertation in the Department of Homeopathy at Technikon Natal in 1999 (now the Durban University of Technology). During my 13 years as a part-time lecturer in the Department of Homoeopathy at the Durban University of Technology I supervised numerous Master's degree dissertations.

Dr Richard Steele

28 May 2019

per email

Appendix F: Chi-Square Test Results

	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.		
Gender	8.092	1	0.004		A1
Age	18.661	3	0.000		A2
Race	27.101	3	0.000		A3
Please indicate how old your business is	29.156	3	0.000		A4
What is your monthly turnover?	33.67	3	0.000		A5
What is your marketing cost per month?	35.615	3	0.000		A6
What marketing communication have you done before?	47.826	4	0.000		B7
Would you like to reach a broader audience?	32.367	1	0.000		B8
Have you applied door-to-door selling?	2.642	1	0.104		B9.1
Have you done in-store promotions?	1.664	1	0.197		B9.2
Have you ever advertised through social media?	1.174	1	0.279		B9.3
Do you a team employed to do word of mouth advertising?	0.073	1	0.786		B9.4
Advertising will create aware of my products and services	153.009	4	0.000		C10.1
Sales promotion will assist on high volume and fast purchases	159.89	4	0.000		C10.2
Direct marketing will contribute in selling of my products and services	218.514	4	0.000		C10.3
Public relations will help my business in building relationships	68.697	4	0.000		C10.4
At a declining stage of my business, Personal Selling will help in saving adve	75.807	4	0.000		C10.5
My company practice the IMC	176.633	4	0.000		C11.1
My employees are competent	223.193	4	0.000		C11.2
In-store advertising clearly visible	137.505	4	0.000		C11.3
My products or services easily accessible	163.872	3	0.000		C12.1
Employees are prompt to respond to customer complaints	158.376	4	0.000		C12.2
Employees are always attentive for emergencies	157.367	4	0.000		C12.3
Employees are willing to assist/help customers	121.174	4	0.000		Q13.1
Floor managers are professional in executing perfect sales	179.798	4	0.000		Q13.2
Employees instil confidence in customers	202.046	4	0.000		C14.1
The business provide a clean, safe, and secure facilities for all kind of custor	177.459	4	0.000		C14.2
Employees have professional knowledge	144.156	4	0.000		C14.3
Employees show genuine interest in customers	142.092	4	0.000		C15.1
Customers receive individual attention	196.587	4	0.000		C15.2
The business provide convenient trading hours	90.119	4	0.000		C15.3

Appendix G: Correlations

		Advertising will create awareness of my products and services	Sales promotion will assist on high volume and fast purchases	Direct marketing will contribute in selling of my products and services	Public relations will help my business in building relationships	At a declining stage of my business, Personal Selling will help in saving advertising costs and build relationships	My company practice the IMC	My employees are competent	In-store advertising clearly visible	My products or services easily accessible	Employees are prompt to respond to customer complaints	Employees are always attentive for emergencies	Employees are willing to assist/help customers	Floor managers are professional in executing perfect sales	Employees instill confidence in customers	The business provide a clean, safe, and secure facilities for all kind of customers	Employees have professional knowledge	Employees show genuine interest in customers	Customers receive individual attention	The business provide convenient trading hours
Pearman's	Advertising will create awareness of my products and services	Correlation C = 1.000 Sig. (2-tailed) = .218 N = 218																		
	Sales promotion will assist on high volume and fast purchases	Correlation C = 0.056 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.412 N = 218	1.000																	
	Direct marketing will contribute in selling of my products and services	Correlation C = 0.029 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.668 N = 218	0.112	1.000																
	Public relations will help my business in building relationships	Correlation C = 0.078 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.254 N = 218	-0.104	-0.070	1.000															
	At a declining stage of my business, Personal Selling will help in saving advertising costs and build relationships	Correlation C = -0.061 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.372 N = 218	0.054	-0.007	0.068	1.000														
	My company practice the IMC	Correlation C = 0.031 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.645 N = 218	.213**	0.071	-0.019	0.065	1.000													
	My employees are competent	Correlation C = -0.022 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.752 N = 218	-0.008	-0.040	0.081	-0.029	0.048	1.000												
	In-store advertising clearly visible	Correlation C = .135** Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.046 N = 218	0.083	-0.076	0.040	0.027	0.039	-0.017	1.000											
	My products or services easily accessible	Correlation C = -0.028 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.680 N = 218	-0.077	-0.038	0.059	-0.008	-0.057	-0.132	0.076	1.000										
	Employees are prompt to respond to customer complaints	Correlation C = -0.028 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.682 N = 218	.193**	-0.034	0.104	0.114	-0.095	0.027	-0.004	-0.064	1.000									
	Employees are always attentive for emergencies	Correlation C = 0.021 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.754 N = 218	-0.038	0.033	.195**	0.004	0.022	0.012	0.063	-0.053	-0.001	1.000								
	Employees are willing to assist/help customers	Correlation C = -0.119 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.080 N = 218	0.111	0.036	0.024	0.098	0.074	-0.085	-0.021	-0.039	0.132	0.064	1.000							
	Floor managers are professional in executing perfect sales	Correlation C = -0.037 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.592 N = 218	0.047	0.061	-0.008	-0.001	0.062	-0.086	0.057	0.085	-0.063	0.029	.149*	1.000						
	Employees instill confidence in customers	Correlation C = -0.028 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.681 N = 218	0.044	.199**	0.070	0.083	0.090	0.013	-0.072	-0.060	-0.014	-0.009	0.069	0.047	1.000					
	The business provide a clean, safe, and secure facilities for all kind of customers	Correlation C = -0.014 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.832 N = 218	.142*	-0.117	-0.040	0.029	0.010	0.040	0.085	0.083	0.070	-0.084	0.067	-0.049	0.051	1.000				
	Employees have professional knowledge	Correlation C = -0.047 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.486 N = 218	0.007	-0.071	0.011	-0.007	-.144*	0.031	-0.012	0.002	-0.053	-0.070	-.196**	0.004	-0.043	-0.018	1.000			
	Employees show genuine interest in customers	Correlation C = -0.002 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.981 N = 218	.142*	0.109	.143*	0.119	-0.016	0.031	-0.043	0.056	0.075	-0.124	-0.023	-0.007	.198**	0.101	0.030	1.000		
	Customers receive individual attention	Correlation C = -0.037 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.590 N = 218	-0.039	.178**	-0.063	0.005	0.068	-0.046	0.012	0.056	.155*	-0.020	0.120	-0.027	0.037	0.021	-0.035	-0.111	1.000	
	The business provide convenient trading hours	Correlation C = 0.030 Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.657 N = 218	0.090	0.052	0.034	0.000	-0.006	0.091	-0.058	0.064	-0.017	0.049	0.085	-0.065	0.058	0.079	-0.030	0.097	0.000	1.000

*, Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**, Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

