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School of Journalism and Communication

*The Practice and Challenges of Integrated Marketing Communications;
the case of Ethiopian Air Lines*

By
Minwuyelet Denekew

October, 2021

Addis Ababa

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Minwuyelet Denekew

**A Thesis Submitted to the School of Journalism and
Communication Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the
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and Strategic Communication**

Advisor:

Gashaye Belew (PhD)

October, 2021

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THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

*The Practice and Challenges of Integrated Marketing Communications;
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Approved by: - Members of the Examining Committee

Gashaye Belew (PhD)

Advisor

Signature

Date

Abdulaziz Dino (PhD)

Internal Examiner

Signature

Date

Wendimu Tegegn (PhD)

External Examiner

Signature

Date

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Abstract

Today, integrated marketing communications is becoming a necessary condition for the existence of an organization. Many organizations in the world make out its great value, which is why they have been practicing their marketing communication purposes. The purpose of this research is to explore the IMC practice of Ethiopian Airlines. Mixed research methods were adopted to achieve the stated objectives of the study. Questionnaires, in-depth interview, document analysis and observation were used as the main data collection tools. Purposive sampling was used for in-depth interview and questionnaires respondents. The results of this study show that employees have a positive attitude towards the implementation of Ethiopian Airlines integrated marketing communications; they agree that IMC has many benefits in terms of saving resources, establishing a working relationship relaxed and building integrity with various stakeholders. On the other hand according to marketing communication instruments utilization the research finding shows, Ethiopian Airlines uses these marketing communication instruments depending on the company's communication contexts like time and other related issues. Some marketing communication tools are used frequently, while others are also used occasionally. The research result shows that digital marketing is the most widespread and used marketing communication tool by Ethiopian Airlines. Customers are in high demand for the use of social media, they are actively using it and have achieved an amazing development in the use of Ethiopian Airlines. Regarding obstacles to the practice of IMC, bluntly mentioned lack of a marketing communication plan and delivery cycle, the existence of technical terminology, and the lack of technical training. Finally, the study suggested that all integrated marketing communication activities should be carried out on the basis of a comprehensive plan and to improve structural defects. Furthermore, the customer's marketing communication activities need to be evaluated frequently. Moreover, the researcher suggest more research on the effectiveness of marketing communication tools and integrated marketing communication for employee Should be conducted.

Key Words: *Communication, Marketing, Integrated, Instruments, Framework,*

Acronyms

AAAA	American Association of Advertising Agencies
Ads	Advertisements
COVID -19	Corona Virus International Disease 2019
EAE	Ethiopian Airports Enterprise
EAL	Ethiopian Airlines
EASE	European Aviation Safety Agency
E-mail	Electronic Mail
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
Four Ps	Product, Price, Place and Promotion
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
MC	Marketing Communication
MRO	Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul
PRs	Public Relations
TV	Television
TWA	Trans World Airlines
WWW	World Wide Web

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Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

In terms of quality, communication is inescapable, and it affects people, small groups, societies, and other human entities all over the world. In this regard, a group of Californian psychologists postulated at the end of the 1950s that “one cannot communicate” (Watzlawick et al., 1967). As a result, communication is obligatory, regardless of mankind's situation or condition.

Organizations with the aid of using and big and business-orientated ones in particular are labored with the aid of using people at expansive and hence, they are simply prone to the concept and traits of communication. According to Frazier and Summers (1984), Communication is the approach of passing on issues and sharing the meaning and consequences amongst humans or organizations. In any transactions or bargaining of a corporation with its customers, communication plays a marketing role by integrating channels of distribution convey influential information (Jamieson, 2006). As long as communication is concerned, it's a way for creating interactions or interrelationships most so business organizations are obliged to house its various attributions so as to succeed in their desired goal as profoundly as possible. Any company has compelling economic reasons to take a position in communication (Kotler, 2006). Hence, a corporation is obsessed to use the notion of communication soon make a profit likewise as being competent within the market.

Marketing communication is one of the aspects of communication that has been employed by many multinational, national and privately owned organizations across the world. As Kotler and Armstrong (2008) stated, marketing communication is the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind customers - directly or indirectly - about brands, products and services they market. Hence, it is because of the lubricant characteristics of marketing communications that companies interact and reach their existed and prospective customers smoothly. Marketing communication is pervasive and it occurs formally and informally, internally and externally to the organization, at all contact points, wherever and whenever people interact with the organization (Pickton & Broderick, 2004). Therefore, as long as an organization is concerned, marketing communication is inescapable and it is inevitable as well.

Under the umbrella of marketing communications, there are promotional elements of the marketing mix which are a method of making an integration and solidarity between a corporation and its customers. In this regard, the foremost common promotional tools include advertising, sales promotion, publicity, marketing and private selling (Jamieson, 2006). Accordingly, these tools of marketing communications are essential in reaching the varied demands of customers of a particular organization as meritoriously as possible.

Much as marketing promotional instruments are important, integration among them is more important. Having marketing promotional tools might not lead a corporation to achieve success unless they're combined in accordance with their merit and context of applications. Though marketing communication covers a large range of promotional activities, the best marketing communications impact are achieved if all the promotional tools involved are integrated into a unified whole (Camilleri, 2018). Moreover, per Duncan and Everett (1993), although marketing communications are used for several years as an umbrella term to talk to the various communication functions employed by marketing, the requirement for strategic integration of those functional areas results in integrated marketing communications which could be a new approach to reaching consumers and other stakeholders.

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) emerged during the late twentieth century and its importance has been growing ever since (Cornelissen, 2001). Thanks to the impact of knowledge technology, changes materialized within the domains of promotion and marketing communications which led to the emergence of IMC (Kitchen et al., 2004; Duncan and Everett, 1993). The multiplication of media, demystification of consumer markets, and therefore the value of the web in today's society are just three of the areas within which technological innovation has impacted. These successively left marketers during a challenging and competitive environment, trying to fulfill customers wants and wishes while also developing long-term relationships with them.

IMC can help in creating coordinated and consistent messages across various channels of communication. Furthermore, the concept is particularly valuable therein it places great emphasis on the importance of all stakeholder groups and, specifically, on customer

loyalty, which may only be created through strategic relationship building (Cornelissen, 2004; Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is an approach employed by organizations to brand and coordinate their communication efforts. The American Association of Advertising Agencies defines IMC as “a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a spread of communication disciplines and combines these disciplines to produce clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact.” The first idea behind an IMC strategy is to make a seamless experience for consumers across different aspects of the marketing mix. The brand’s core image and messaging are reinforced as each marketing communication works together as parts of a unified whole instead of in isolation.

The Ethiopian Air Lines (EAL), was founded on December 21, 1945, with an initial investment of ETB 2,5 million, divided in 25,000 shares that were entirely held by the govt. The corporate was financed by the Ethiopian government but managed by TWA. At the start, it relied upon American pilots, technicians, administrators and accountants. Even its general managers were from TWA. Minister of Works and Communications Fitawrari Tafasse Habte Mikael became EAL's first president and chairman, whereas H. H. Holloway who was an American and it was appointed by TWA as head. The board held its primary meeting on 26 December 1945, with a key point of the agenda being the deposit of £75,000 in a bank in Cairo for the acquisition of aircraft and spare parts. Shortly afterwards, the airline negotiated for landing rights with Aden, Egypt, French Somaliland, Saudi Arabia and Sudan, and five Douglas C-47s were bought. These aircrafts were flown to the capital of Ethiopia in February 1946 (<https://www.ethiopianairlines.com/ET/EN>).

Ethiopian Airlines (Amharic: የኢትዮጵያ አየር መንገድ (ye-Ityopya ayer menged)), formerly Ethiopian Air Lines (EAL) and infrequently said as simply Ethiopian, is Ethiopia's flag carrier and is wholly owned by the country's government. As stated the above EAL was founded on December 21, 1945 and commenced operations on 8th April 1946, expanding to international flights in 1951. The firm became a share company in 1965 and altered its name from Ethiopian Air Lines to Ethiopian Airlines. The airline has been a member of the International Transport Association since 1959 and of the African Airlines Association

(AFRAA) since 1968. Ethiopian could be a Star Alliance member, having joined in December 2011. The corporate slogan is that the New Spirit of Africa.

Its hub and headquarters are at Bole International Airport in capital of Ethiopia, from where it serves a network of 125 passenger destinations—20 of them domestic—and 44 freighter destinations. The airline has secondary hubs in Togo and Malawi. Ethiopian is Africa's largest airline in terms of passengers carried, destinations served, fleet size, and revenue. Ethiopian is additionally the world's 4th largest airline by the amount of nations served.

The Ethiopian government reorganized the airline as a totally owned aviation holding group in July 2017. The aim was to maximize efficiency, enhance customer service to a worldwide standard, and simple long-term planning. The initial group consisted of the Ethiopian Airports Enterprise (EAE), the Passenger Airline Company, Cargo Airline and Logistics Company, Ethiopian Aviation Academy, Ethiopian In-flight Catering Services, Ethiopian Maintenance, Repair and Overhaul (MRO) Services, and Ethiopian Hotel and Tourism Services. The MRO Services is that the largest such operation serving the continent and therefore the Med-Eastern region; fully accredited by Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA). The Cargo and Logistical division is expanding to extend annual capacity to 1.5 million tons.

In its historical record, Ethiopian airlines has passed various changes regarding the kind of service, product, customer handling and many other aspects. In order to reach its mission and vision marvelously, Ethiopian airlines should go in line with the new trend of global marketing communication i.e. IMC orientations where customer centric approach and integration of marketing communication tools have been given an immense and tremendous concern. So, the intent of this study is to explore the current practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian airlines.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

A study on assessment of the effectiveness of marketing communication mix elements in Ethiopian service sectors depict that marketing communications are not performed in an integrated way to provide consistent and coherent information to their customers (Potluri, 2008). According to the result of a study on the practices and challenges of integrated marketing communication in Ethiopia by Singla and Tilahun (2016), integrated marketing communications in Ethiopia is implemented in a loose sense and there are a lot of bottlenecks and challenges facing the industry and they suggested that further study has to be conducted.

Business companies are being obliged to rethink their marketing communication tactics in order to compete in today's market. As a result, business trends have clearly illustrated that the need for an integrated marketing communication in the commercial sector is unavoidable (Potluri, 2008). Accordingly, it is certain that such trends of marketing communications unavoidably start to cause a fundamental shift in Ethiopian Airlines to operate its entire business activities by giving intensive emphasis to its IMC practices than ever before.

Regarding this, a study on assessment of effectiveness of marketing communication mix elements in Ethiopian service sectors depicted that marketing communications are not performed in an integrated way to provide consistent and coherent information to their customers (Potluri, 2008).

As we know, Ethiopian Airlines is striving tremendously to increase quality services, profit, and customer satisfaction as a result of various forces like tremendous desire from the government, global aviation computation, and the increase in multiple demand from the customers. These and other factors in the business environment causes a need for paying attention to the implementation of integrated marketing communications than ever before. Thus, with all these understandings, the researcher views that it would seem to be the right time to explore the integrated marketing communications practice in Ethiopian Airlines so as to analyze the gaps and provide scientific directions from the perspective of integrated marketing communications philosophies. Moreover, it is also necessary to investigate what the transformation in marketing

communication has brought in Ethiopian airlines as well as the employee reflections towards the implementation.

Hence, this study fill the gap and add knowledge by dealing with the practice of IMC from a scientific framework which shows how marketing communication tools should be utilized and integrated to convey a clear and consistent message. As far as the researcher's knowledge and experience is concerned, there is no earlier study regarding the practice of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines particularly in executing each marketing communication tools as well as its implementation from scientific frameworks particularly from stages of the IMC framework. Therefore, this study would explore the current practice and challenges of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian airlines.

1.2 Research Questions

The study is designed to seek answers for the following major research questions.

- What is the perception of communication division staffs towards the implementation of integrated marketing communications?
- How is different marketing communication instruments utilized in marketing communication?
- How is the practice of integrated marketing communications from the perspectives of stages of integrated marketing communications framework?
- What are the challenges of practicing integrated marketing communications?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study would have the following general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to explore the practice and challenges of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

To achieve the overall objective stated above, the specific objectives of the study have been;

- ✓ To analyze the perception of communication division staff towards the implementation of integrated marketing communications.
- ✓ To explore how the marketing communication instruments are utilized in Ethiopian Airlines.
- ✓ To investigate the level of the practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines based on the four stages of the IMC framework.
- ✓ To investigate the challenges of implementing integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The head quarters of Ethiopian airlines is a giant government organization structured in various divisions having their respective subdivisions at department, section, and directorate levels. The intent of this study is to explore the practice of IMC in the organization. Accordingly, the company's communication division under which the vast majority of marketing communications activities is being conducted is the prominent unit of concern of the issue under study. So, the research is directly engaged with the marketing communication activities of the airline including Public relations department, marketing department, media and communication departments of the organization. The focus of this research is assessing the practice and challenges of IMC in this organization.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Even though integrated marketing communications is being studied immensely across the world, there is lack of empirical study conducted on its practice in Ethiopia in general and Ethiopian Airlines in particular. The objective of the study mentioned earlier is specifically designed to explore IMC practices in Ethiopian Airlines.

The findings in this study benefit especially for the marketing communication experts, specialists, directors as well as managers of Ethiopian airlines to better utilize integrated

marketing communications in any of their marketing programs. On the top of that, exploring the practice of IMC and identifying the potential challenges gives Ethiopian airlines an in depth understanding of its situation and the gaps in the implementation of entire integrated marketing communication strategy. Subsequently, the findings from the study and new perspectives of IMC practices have a contribution to the existing body of knowledge in the organization.

1.6. Limitation of the Study

As far as a certain research work is concerned, it is important to mention the limitations the researcher may encounter. Accordingly, one of the fundamental limitations that can be deemed to this research is regarding frustration of some managers, directors and experts. Fearing to lose their position, they may be frustrated in providing some data. Moreover, some bureaucratic trends in the company under study may be tiresome for the researcher in collecting data. Furthermore, the pandemic disease COVID-19 was a potential threat in the data collection period.

1.7. Organization of the Paper

For the purpose of convenience as well as logical presentation of the study, this paper is organized in to five chapters. Chapter one deals with background of the study, statement of the problem, objective of the study, scope of the study, significance of the study and limitations that the researcher encountered while conducting this paper. In the second chapter, review of related literature is presented. The third chapter incorporates the methodology of the study. It comprises of the research approach and rationale of selecting the organization, the sample selection process, data collection methods, and how the data is analyzed. Moreover, this chapter consists of ethical considerations and validity of the research. The data obtained from the study participants were presented and analyzed in the fourth chapter. The data analysis is made based on the specific objectives of the study. Finally, the fifth chapter encapsulates summary of findings, brief conclusion, and recommendations based on the finding of the study.

Chapter Two

2. Related Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Integrated Marketing Communications

The rationale behind integrated marketing communications (IMC) is to achieve the promotional objectives in reaching target markets and to raise awareness of the companies' products and services. According to scholars IMC may involve the combination of different promotional tools, including; advertising, personal selling, sales promotions, direct marketing, interactive marketing, publicity and public relations. This chapter describes the IMC tools which make up the promotional mix. It explains the characteristics of each marketing communications tool. It also considers the various factors which could influence the successful implementation of an IMC plan, including the measurement of its effectiveness.

The definition of integrated marketing communications is traced back to some decades ago. Regarding this, a task force from the American Association of Advertising Agencies (the "AAAA") developed one of the first definitions of integrated marketing communications in 1989. Based on the study conducted by Christensen, Torp, & Firat, (2005), AAAA defines integrated marketing communications as

"A concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations (PRs) – and combines them to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact through the seamless integration of discrete messages."

The integrated marketing communications approach seeks to have a company's entire marketing and promotional activities project with a consistent, unified image to the marketplace as it calls for a centralized messaging function so that everything a company says and does communicates a common theme and positioning as well (Belch & Michael, 2018).

Furthermore, Porcu, García, and Kitchen (2012) developed a new definition and defined IMC as:

“The interactive and systemic process of cross-functional planning and optimization of messages to stakeholders with the aim of communicating with coherence and transparency to achieve synergies and encourage profitable relationships in the short, medium and long term.”

Accordingly, this definition conveys that IMC is a means to integrate the entire marketing communications processes of an organization to a unified whole aiming at eliciting a coaxial interaction between an organization and its customers.

On the other hand Pickton and Broderick (2001) proposed that integrated marketing communication (IMC) is: a process which involves the management and organization of all ‘agents’ in the analysis, planning, implementation and control of all marketing communications contacts, media, messages and promotional tools focused at selected target audiences in such way as to derive the greatest economy, efficiency, effectiveness, enhancement and coherence of marketing communications effort in achieving predetermined product and corporate marketing communications objectives.

2.2 Development of Integrated Marketing Communications

Before recognizing the essence of integrated marketing communications, it is helpful to understand its origin and development with some comprehensive illustrations. Accordingly, the idea of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) was firstly introduced in the late 1980’s and many companies began taking a broader perspective of marketing communication and recognizing the need for a more strategic integration of their promotional tools. The decade was characterized by the fast growing on areas such as sales promotion, direct marketing, and public relations which began challenging advertising’s role as the dominant form of marketing communication and later on firms began moving towards the process of integrated marketing communications that involves coordinating the various promotional instruments for communicating with their customers (Belch & Michael, 2018).

Correspondingly, Fill (2009), stated that the rapid development of direct marketing initiatives and Internet since the second half of the 1980’s have brought a movement towards what has

become regarded as integrated marketing communications through which a further significant development has been the shift in marketing philosophies from transaction to relationship marketing orientations. Clients have begun to redefine their communications away from mass media orientations to increased levels of interaction with customers because the structural inadequacies of the marketing communication industry obliged them to do so. To this end, integrated marketing communications has emerged partially as a response to this structural inadequacy and the realization by clients that their communication need to be achieved more efficiently and profoundly than the previous time.

As marketers recognized the notion of integrated marketing communications, they began asking their advertising agencies to synchronize the use of a variety of promotional instruments than relying mainly on media advertising. Many agencies responded to the call for synergy among the promotional tools by acquiring public relations, sales promotion, and direct-marketing and companies declaring themselves as IMC agencies that offer a coordinated service their clients' marketing communication desires. Accordingly, the advertising industry soon recognized that

IMC was more than just a fad or fashion and terms such as new advertising, orchestration, and seamless communication were used to describe the concept of integration (Belch & Michael, 2018). Similarly, Duncan and Everett (1993) recall that this new, largely media-oriented approach, has been referred to variously as orchestration, whole egg and seamless communications.

As Belch (2018) further stated, many companies of the world are realizing that communicating effectively with customers and other stakeholders involves more than traditional marketing communications tools. Many marketers as well as advertising agencies are applying the IMC approach to create and sustain relationships between companies and their customers recognizing the fact that the integrated marketing communications approach is proving to be a perpetual change that offers an important value to the rapidly changing communications environment. Regarding this, IMC has been described as one of the new generation marketing communication approaches being used by companies to better emphasis their efforts in acquiring, retaining, and developing pervasive connections with customers and other stakeholders.

2.3 The Four Stages of Integrated Marketing Communications Framework

The four stages of IMC framework was first developed by Schultz and Schultz (1998) and it refers to the general patterns to the implementation of integration in which organizations appear to go through phases or levels of integration in their marketing communication efforts or endeavors. These scholars identified four levels of IMC through which organizations appear to progress. Accordingly, the four levels are identified as, Stage 1: Tactical coordination of marketing communications, Stage 2: Redefining the scope of marketing communications, Stage 3: Application of information technology, and Stage 4: Financial and strategic integration. However, this study employed the framework modified by (Shultz and Shultz, 2004).

2.3.1 Stage One: Tactical Coordination of Marketing Communications

According to Schultz and Schultz (2004), stage one refers to the initial point of implementation of IMC notion in the organization by which the marketing communications activities are coordinated at this tactical level. Moreover, this stage is associated with employment of various marketing communication tools such as sales promotion direct marketing, event marketing, electronic and printed media, internet advertising, and sponsorship in their marketing activities in a coordinated manner in order to establish a one sight and one sound message, and to achieve greater synergy as well. They further explained another prominent aspect of this stage is that the company establishes proper processes for mounting and creating communication messages and practice cross functionality in its efforts to create proficiency at the highest level.

In doing so, the company tries to unify its communication directed from inside the company to outside the company so as to speak one voice, to convey a coherent and consistent message and image about the company for all receivers of communication in all interaction situations.

2.3.2 Stage Two: Redefining the Scope of Marketing Communications

This stage is about redefinition of the scope of marketing communication. At this stage, the company moves its point of view from a corporate operation driven to its customer, consumers

and end users. The company is also considering various points of contact for customers to get in touch with the company's marketing activities. At this stage, the company conducts regular assessment on the marketing communication activities to check the fact that results from assessments allow companies to change their focus from sending messages to customers to learn about what actually received by customers. At this stage company ensures marketing communication activities for both internal or externally audiences in line with company are marketing communication programs. Moreover, this stage is a radical move toward customer oriented communication and its essential goal is to give attention to customers' desires like: what they want to hear or see, where, when, and in which media should be they communicated. In practice, this is executed by gathering information about customers, analyzing gathered information, and finally analyzed information is utilized to support or reinforce the company's marketing decisions (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

2.3.3 Stage Three: Application of Information Technology in Marketing Communications

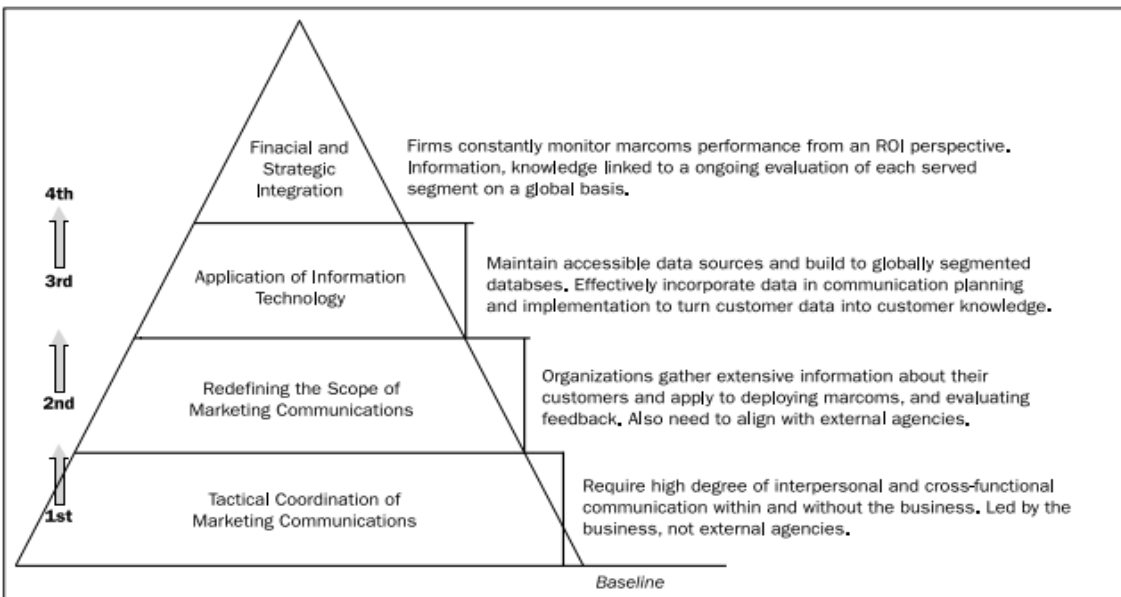
According to Schultz and Schultz (2004), this stage stresses on how a company applies information technology in its business operations in support of its marketing communication efforts. It does not mean that technology is used only for communication's purposes, but also for objectives of customer relationship management and database marketing. The result of successful implementation of this stage is strengthens understanding of customers in which case simple customer information has succeeded to turn into deep understanding of customers. Basically, company at this stage is seen as investing substantial amount of capital on high tech mailing operations system in its attempt to send personalized information about company's product and services offered. Besides, company also distributes information through the internet or intranets.

In addition, the company is also pairing customers' needs and requirements with relevant technology. At the same time the company gives options to its customers and stakeholders on various methods to seek relevant information about company's products or services offered at any times and anywhere at their convenience. Database is profoundly use in processing and storing customers and prospects' personal information.

2.3.4 Stage Four: Financial and Strategic Integration

At this stage, marketing communication is seen as a strategic matter for company and the whole business operation is a coherent entity which is focusing on company's customers. The company examines results of its marketing communication and aspires to measure marketing investments in comparison with profits that are gained by marketing. In addition, company's marketing communication is integrated not only with externally, but also internally between different actors and functions such as sales, research and development, and finance. At this stage, company is said to have the appropriate ways in measuring returns on investment made on customers. At the same time the company is able to relate revenues received from the same customers that the company has invested. On another point, the company is able to allocate investment made on customers in the same analytical footing as any other decision made on financial investment. Ideally, this can be done when company moves away from its operation-driven, inside-out approach to an outside in approach that focuses on value creating for customers and prospects in all dimensions of the brand experience (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

Figure 1: The four stages of IMC framework



Source: Stages of IMC Framework Adapted from (Schultz and Schultz, 2004)

2.4 The Integrated Marketing Communications Mix Instruments

Marketing communication is typically divided into separate communication instruments that are used for different purposes depending on how marketers want to communicate with the target groups and how the target audience wants to be communicated. Each instrument has its own strengths and limitations and marketers usually utilize some sort of mix of instruments to generate as effective influence as possible (De Pelsmacker et al., 2007). Promotional strategy is closely related to the process of communication because as humans, we assign meaning to feelings, ideas, facts, attitudes, and emotions. Communication is the process by which we exchange or share meanings through a common set of symbols. When a company develops a new product or service, changes an old one, or simply tries to increase sales of an existing good or service, it must communicate its selling message to potential customers. In doing so, marketers communicate information about the firm and its products to the target market and various publics through various marketing promotional tools (Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel, 2010). Accordingly, the various integrated marketing communications instruments are discussed concisely as follows.

2.4.1 Advertising

According to Belch, & Belch, (2018) Advertising is an extremely important element of the promotional mix. It is a non-personal communications tool that is paid for by a specific sponsor. Advertising is a mass-marketing communication tool that is designed to inform and persuade a large number of people. Therefore, this medium requires some type of media platform to deliver the message. Advertising messages are required for all promotional elements, which is why the process of creating advertisements could be an essential first step in IMC. The goals of advertising may include: to create awareness of a new product; to describe the attributes and features of the product; to suggest usage situations; to distinguish the product from competitors' products; to direct buyers to the point-of-purchase, and; to creating or enhancing a brand image, among other things. However, advertising may be limited in its ability to actually close the sale and to finalize a transaction.

Advertising objectives must be successful in reaching the businesses' target markets. For instance, airlines may use this medium to inform their customers about new or improved product features, new routes being served and so on. The advertisements may also remind the customers of existing product features, routes served, et cetera. According to Camilleri, (2018) there is several advertising media options, including; print advertising, broadcast advertising, digital or mobile advertising, and outdoor advertising, among others.

- Print Advertising, includes; newspapers, magazines, in-flight magazine, printed flyers, brochures, posters, backs of tickets and supermarket receipts;
- Broadcast Advertising, includes; radio, television and cinema.
- Digital or Mobile Advertising includes; Online streaming channels, online banners, web pop-ups, the opening section of streaming audio and video, et cetera.
- Outdoor Advertising, includes; Wall paintings, billboards, street furniture including infrastructure, sky writing, human billboards, town criers, sides of buses, banners attached to airplanes ("logo jets"), seatback tray tables or overhead storage bins, taxicab doors, roof mounts and passenger screens, musical stage shows, subway platforms and trains, elastic bands on disposable diapers, doors of bathroom stalls, stickers on apples in supermarkets, shopping cart handles, sporting venues, and the like.
- Any place an "identified" sponsor pays to deliver their message through a medium is advertising.

The media that is used to advertise a business and its services must be carefully selected. As Camilleri, (2018) the choice of media depends on a number of factors, including:

- i. The markets which are being targeted;
- ii. The combination of media which will be the most effective (and the media habits of the target markets);
- iii. The amount of money that is dedicated to the advertising budget, which can be affected by the decisions made in (i) and (ii).

2.4.2 Public Relations and Publicity

The public relations (PR) is a management function that helps an organization to establish and maintain communication with the public. According to Camilleri, (2018) PR promotes a favorable opinion of a company, its products, and its services. The traditional perspective of PR is about building mutually-beneficial relationships, and earning public understanding and acceptance from others. Therefore, it is a very useful tool, which, if used effectively can help to improve the businesses' corporate image, boost its reputation, and stimulate demand. PR tools include press releases, speeches by executives and public service activities. Unlike other forms of communication, PR operates through unpaid channels. Consequently, the business may have less control over how the PR efforts will play out.

The primary virtue of PR in marketing communications is to put the company in a favorable image, usually via the use of broadcast, print and digital media. At times, PR efforts may entail certain costs to the firm, but generally, PR is clearly distinguished from advertising as the firm does not pay for space in the media vehicle. According to Lamb et al., (2010) the output of public relations activities is somewhat less controllable than is the case with either advertising or sales promotion. For instance, a TV advertisement guarantees that a business reaches its audiences, as prospective customers are frequently exposed to a particular message. This level of control may not be attainable with PR, as other parties decide whether or not to feature a media release. As a result, publicity is often referred to as public relations; in terms of providing favorable information to media and third-party outlets. Publicity may originate from bloggers, mainstream media, as well as from new media forms, including podcasts. All this is done to provide a message to consumers without having to pay for direct time or space. Therefore, publicity creates awareness and carries out more credibility than other promotional vehicles. After the message has been distributed, the publicist will lose control on how the message will be used and interpreted by others (Camilleri, 2018).

The advantages of publicity are low-cost and credibility (particularly if the publicity is aired in between news stories like evening TV news-casts). New technologies such as blogs, web cameras, web affiliates, and convergence (phone-camera posting of pictures and videos to

websites) are changing the cost-structure of publicity. The use of publicity is also known to be an important strategic element due to its effect of intentional exposure over a prospective consumer. Favorable publicity is also created through reputation management in which organizations strive to control via the web. Furthermore, despite the fact that publicity, both good or bad, can be beneficial for a company, much of it is paid for, despite claims that publicity is free of charge. Despite publicity being an influential benefit within the marketing sector, one disadvantage which highly affects publicity, is the lack of ability in which publicity cannot be repeated. The use of publicity, the acquisition of free space or time in the media, can potentially be extremely beneficial to the businesses. This does not happen by accident, though. It must be well thought-out.

According to Camilleri, (2018) a very important function of public relations and publicity is to promote the corporate image and reputation of a business. The “image” is the total sum of impressions of a company. For instance, a casual act by an employee can appraise or damage the corporate image in the eyes of a single customer, or caller on the phone. However, the major elements of corporate image include; the core business and the financial performance of the company, the reputation and performance of its brands (i.e. brand equity); its reputation for innovation or technological processes; policies toward employees; external relations with customers, shareholders, and the community, at large, and; the perceived trends in the markets in which the business operates.

Public relations and publicity support other marketing tools, and could be seen as the backbone of the promotional mix. The success achieved by the other elements of the mix could easily be damaged or reduced by bad public relations or negative publicity, something which is undesirable to businesses. Very often, the businesses cannot control the favorable or unfavorable messages about products or services that appear in online reviews and referrals. If for some reason, the business receives bad publicity; its role in this area is the limitation of damage. For example, many airlines and large hotel chains may have a section within their PR department to engage with online communities. This section will usually handle publicity issues, including negative reviews.

Recently, we are increasingly witnessing a surge in the businesses' engagement with online communities, including consumers. User-generated ratings and reviews provide relevant information on the businesses' products, and their levels of customer service. For instance, many prospective customers read reviews before choosing which places to visit, to stay or to eat. Very often, the online ratings and reviews will have an effect on consumer behaviors. It is likely that prospective customers will be mainly influenced by negative reviews, rather than by positive ones. Internationally many studies indicate that individuals will read consumer reviews before shopping.

2.4.3 Sales Promotions

According to Camilleri, (2018) sales promotions are marketing activities that provide an incentive to stimulate immediate action. There are two types of sales promotions: consumer-oriented and trade-oriented. Consumer-oriented sales promotions can be considered as a pull strategy that creates demand. Consumer promotions may include; samples, redeemable coupons, special offers, freebies, complementary upgrades, contests, competitions, sweep stakes, et cetera. Retail promotions are used by the trade and may be addressed to the end consumer; for instance, they may include offering; point of purchase pricing, point of purchase displays, like discounted items and loyalty programs. These tactics are usually more effective when used as a short-term inducement to generate purchase behaviors.

Conversely, the trade-oriented sales promotions are aimed at intermediaries. These are used to incentivize an intermediary to promote (and supply) products and services to the intended audience(s). The trade promotions may include; temporary off-invoice price discounts or cooperative advertising allowances et cetera. Trade-oriented applications may also include; trade shows, exhibitions and other public relations events (Grewal, & Levy, 2008).

Sales promotion consists of those promotional activities which supplement other market activities, especially advertising, sponsorships of events, personal selling, et cetera. For example, it is very common for tourism businesses to sponsor, not just the event, but also individual sports people and teams. Very often, the sales promotional activities could support the launching of a new service. Therefore, such promotions are usually of a short-term nature. They are designed to

both stimulate and induce the customer into buying from the business. However, it should be noted that certain sales promotional tactics may not be suitable for all kinds of businesses, particularly those who are offering differentiated services.

2.4.4 Personal Selling

Personal selling is an important marketing communications tool as the organizations' representatives interact and engage in two-way communication with potential customers. Therefore, members of staff can develop a good understanding of their particular customers' perceptions and preferences. This will allow them to adapt their communications message to individual customers. Personal selling is an interactive, conversational method of promotion. One of its advantages is that it targets precise market segments (Grewal, & Levy, 2008). Therefore, it is usually very expensive as it is based on a per-contact basis.

Very often, the other elements of the promotions mix are used to support the personal selling effort. For example, without direct marketing and database support, personal selling efforts cannot be fully-optimized. Without advertising that creates awareness and knowledge about the businesses' products and services, personal selling could not exist. In addition, personal selling is essential for trade-oriented sales promotions to work. Trade shows and conference marketing require strong personal selling skills, as they rely on person-to-person communications. A very useful application of this IMC element is related to lobbying activities. However, a great deal of marketing messages containing relevant content must be created before lobbyist activities become effective.

According to Camilleri, (2018) the sales representatives are expected to generate demand from customers. Therefore, their duty is to convert prospects into customers. Effective sales individuals have the ability to keep existing customers and to encourage new ones. On the other hand, ineffective front line employees can, over time, erode the businesses' customer base. The sales representatives are influential to the businesses as their role is to acquire and retain customers. They are also responsible for the delivery of after-sales services, and they could provide technical support to customers with their queries. They may also need to know how to handle consumer complaints.

Complaints provide a good opportunity to businesses to strengthen relationships with customers. The businesses' front office employees should listen to customers with an open mind. They have to hear what customers have to say without prejudging the situations. Once the front office employees understand the complaint they have to empathize with customers and assure them that something will be done to resolve the matter. The business should follow-up this incident with a report on what went wrong, and steps should be taken to rectify the situation. The goal of this process is to show customers that the business cares about them. Crucially, management must ensure that all of their front office employees will know how to approach complaints and criticism with openness, empathy, and with a sincere desire to help. This way, they could create lasting and satisfying relationships with customers.

Personal selling can be very advantageous in the airline industry, particularly when used in the high-value end of the market. For example, the sale persons can highlight an airline's differentiated services to business travelers. Very often, airlines employ competent individuals whose primary role is to 'service' corporate accounts, leisure groups and intermediaries. In a sense, the main function of personal selling is to fill in the gaps where advertising and other methods of non-personal selling will fall short.

2.4.5 Direct Marketing

Direct marketing tactics allow businesses to communicate directly with customers through a variety of media, including; by electronic newsletters, mobile messaging apps, websites, online adverts, fliers, online and offline catalogues, promotional letters, targeted television, newspaper and magazine advertisements, as well as outdoor advertising, among others. Direct marketing often relies on the proposition, offer, communication, choice of channel and the target customer. While advertising is comprised of non-personal communications, direct marketing seeks to create one-to-one personal relationships with customers. Again, the goal is to generate a response (Grewal, & Levy, 2008).

Direct marketing is attractive to many marketers because it is a communications tool that provides a direct response from customers. Its positive results can be measured directly. For example, if a marketer sends out 1,000 solicitations by mail and 100 respond to the promotion,

the marketer can say with confidence that the campaign led to 10% direct responses. This metric is known as the 'response rate,' and it is one of many clearly quantifiable success metrics that are employed by direct marketers. In contrast, general advertising uses indirect measurements, such as awareness or engagement, since there is no direct response from the consumer. The measurement of results is a fundamental aspect for the successful implementation of direct marketing.

In this day and age, the engine behind direct marketing is usually a sophisticated database. The collection of data is growing at an exponential rate as it is continuously stored, in massive amounts, by search engines, including; Google, Bing and Yahoo. In addition, more information is being gathered by social media giants, like; Face book, Twitter, LinkedIn, Snap Chat, Instagram, etc. The advances in technology are increasingly allowing marketers to know more about their audiences. For instance, marketing are benefiting from the growth of geo-location data services like satellites, near-field communication and global positioning systems that track users' movements that measure traffic and other real-time phenomena. New anonymous cookie-less data capture methods are connecting consumer data with matching geolocation-based data. In the past; businesses did not have these means to capture, store and analyze such data. Now, companies can economically gather and store all data from each and every customer transaction. These methods are increasingly empowering marketers to hyper-target consumers with real-time mobile ad campaigns; before, during and after in-store activity, as they drive conversions. Geolocation capabilities not only enable advertisers to capitalize on a lead, at the right time, but they can also offer valuable insights into shopping habits and consumer behaviors. As a result, customers are continuously being targeted with relevant content (Camilleri, 2018).

Evidently, the internet has made it even easier for marketing managers to measure the results of their direct marketing campaigns. This is often achieved by using a specific website landing page which is directly related to the promotional material. A call to action will ask the customer to visit the landing page, and the effectiveness of the campaign can be measured by taking the number of promotional messages distributed and dividing it into the number of responses. Another way to measure the results is to compare the projected sales or the generation of leads with the actual sales or leads after a direct advertising campaign.

2.4.6 Packaging

Packaging is a marketing communication tool that combines graphic design with marketing concepts to create an identity for the brand. It can be effectively used to influence customer choice at the point of sale in terms of reducing the uncertainty and risk inherent in product choice and it acts as a concrete reminder at the point of sale. Most importantly, its appeal plays an important role in attracting consumers' attention. As a result, packaging can make a major contribution to the success of the brand as a whole. Packaging comprises a number of physical or functional benefits including the storage of the product, the extension of the product's shelf life, the facilitation of physical storage, the protection of the product during distribution, the communication of usage information, and the assurance of consistent quality (De Pelsmacker, et al., 2010).

Moreover, as Pickton, & Broderick, (2004) stated, the emotional and psychological benefits of packaging are to elicit a strong visual impact to stand out, to be eye-catching, to differentiate itself from the other brands, to attract the eyes of the consumers, to communicate what the brand stands for, to act as a reminder for the brand at the point of sale and at home, to provide cues to the consumers to express their loyalty to the brand and to create an emotional link with the right kind of target audience.

2.4.7 Digital or Electronic Marketing

The rapid growth of the Internet and more recently, social media is changing the nature of how companies do business and the ways they communicate and interact with consumers. Every day more consumers around the world are gaining access to the Internet's World Wide Web (WWW) of information available to users. Electronic marketing allow users to perform a variety of activities such as receive, alter, and share information and images, make inquiries, respond to questions, and even make purchases online.

The Internet can also be used as a marketing communication tool in its own right because it is a medium that can be used to execute all of the elements of the promotional mix. In addition to advertising on the Web, marketers offer sales promotion incentives such as coupons, contests,

and sweepstakes online, and they use the Internet to conduct direct marketing, personal selling, and public relations activities more effectively and efficiently (Belch, & Belch, 2018).

2.4.8 Exhibitions and Trade Shows

An exhibition or trade fair is a place where manufacturers and retailers of a certain product category or sector meet each other to talk about trade, to present and demonstrate their products and services, to exchange ideas and network and actually to buy and sell products (De Pelsmacker, et al., 2010). Exhibitions and trade shows create a temporary forum for sellers to exhibit and demonstrate their products to prospective purchasers. Some exhibitions exist as marketplaces where buyers and sellers meet and these are called selling exhibitions on the other hand others exist with no actual buying and selling taking place at the exhibitions called non-selling exhibitions. Some exhibitions are open to the public while others are business-to-business aspects.

Exhibitions and trade shows can take many forms from humble in-store special displays, to conferences, to very large international trade and consumer shows and other circumstances and they are widely regarded as a powerful way for firms to reach a large number of potential customers face-to-face at a cost far below that of calls by salespeople (Pickton, & Broderick, 2004).

2.4.9 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is defined as an investment in cash or kind in an activity in return for access to the exploitable commercial potential associated with this activity. The company promotes its interests and brands by tying them to a specific and meaningfully related event or cause. It is a thematic communications instrument by which the sponsor assists the sponsee in realizing his or her project and in return the sponsee co-operates in realizing the communications objectives of the sponsoring company.

If the latter is not the case, the investment of the sponsor is nothing more than altruism, charity, patronage or benefaction. To sum up, sponsorship shares two of the fundamental objectives of

advertising, i.e. the generation of awareness about the product or company and the promotion of positive messages about the product or company (De Pelsmacker, et al., 2010).

2.5 Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Equity

Brand equity can be defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer reaction to the brand marketing; it occurs when the consumer is close with the brand and contains some favorable positive strong and unique brand associations in the memory. Kitchen et al. (2004) identified that IMC is not only a communication process, but also a process connected with management and brands.

According to Schultz (2004) IMC has been suggested as a strategic business process that could cause to establishing brand value. It is widely accepted that influential communication is important in enabling the creation of brand awareness and brand image, that is, brand equity.

2.6 Effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication

When a strategy is applied then first priority is to check and evaluate the result that how far strategy is successful. After the implementation, every strategy gives the result whether in the form of success or failure. All strategies are developed by focusing the success. IMC is also considered as successive strategy.

Providing information, creating awareness, changing attitude, enforcing brand loyalty and building company image are the effective results of IMC (Potluri, 2008). Brand equity can be enhanced by pursuing a strategy that integrates the various marketing communications tools (Vargas, 2005). Vantamay (2011) indicated the five factors to measure the effectiveness of IMC program; these factors are *customer responses* (is mixture of five indicators; these indicators are brand loyalty, customer satisfaction, brand extension, brand referrals and brand preference), *market performance* (is composed of five indicators; these indicators are sales growth, market share growth, ability to command premium price, profitability and sales income), *brand exposures* (is composed of three indicators; these indicators are personal contacts, mass media exposure and contact points exposure), *communication effect* (are composed of four indicators; brand knowledge, brand attitude, brand awareness, and purchase intention) and *channel support*

(is composed of one indicator: level of channel cooperation) Higher the level of all indicators shows the IMC is more effective.

According to Vargas (2005) an effective IMC process is concerned with the identifications of target audience, determination of the communication objectives, designing of the message content, selecting the means for communication, defining the media mix, budget & priorities and measuring the effectiveness of effort.

2.7 Challenges of Integrated Marketing Communications

Integrated marketing communications is not easily achieved because it is trapped by various factors. There are several of reasons forwarded by different scholars and some of the prominent ones are explained in a vivid way as follows. Financial structures and frameworks organizations fail to fully appreciate the more strategic and longer-term values of marketing communications. Expenditure on them is rarely considered an investment although with the growth in the recognition of the value of brands and this situation is slowly changing. Budgets are often set with the short term in mind rather than the long term and as a cost rather than an investment. The result is that budgets are lower than those needed for the full integration of marketing communications. Furthermore, the attitudes and structure of suppliers and agencies is another challenge of IMC. Advertising agencies have maintained their traditional structures and methods of operating, while their clients have begun to adapt and reform themselves.

The thinking behind this is that for a long time advertising agencies have tried to maintain their dominance of mass advertising as the principal means of brand development. In doing so they seek to retain the largest proportion of agency fee income rather than having these fees diluted as work is allocated below the line (to other organizations). The establishment of IMC threatens the current role of the main advertising agencies. This is not to say that all agencies think and act in this way. While clients have seen the benefits of integrated marketing communications, their attempts to achieve them have often been frustrated by the structures of the agencies they need to work with and by the attitudes of their main agencies communications (Pickton, & Broderick, (2004). As Percy (2008) stated, organizational structure is a trap for IMC practice. Although there is a broad agreement among marketing managers over the need for IMC, the very organizational structure of many marketing companies stands in the way of it being effectively

implemented. At the core of this problem is an organization's ability to manage the interrelationships of information and materials among the various agencies and vendors involved in supplying marketing communication services. Furthermore, Culture of the organization can be a challenge for IMC.

How managers think is conditioned by both their own background and the culture of the company. This potential problem is then compounded in the IMC case when the culture of the marketer must interact with the culture of marketing communication agencies and vendors. Managers from different companies are likely to have different views of what makes effective marketing communication. A great deal of literature on management addresses the idea that an organization will have its own defining culture, and that employees of the firm will absorb that culture. While that culture will not completely determine an individual manager's way of doing things, it will certainly have a significant impact upon its development. In addition, how managers perceive IMC can often impede the implementation of effective IMC. When managers come from different backgrounds or different marketing communication specialties, either within the marketing organization or at marketing communications agencies or vendors, they are likely to have different perceptions of what constitutes IMCs and the roles various people should play in IMC planning and implementation.

2.8 Theoretical Framework of the Study

As far as integrated marketing communication is concerned, there are many theories, and to the best of this study, systems theory is adopted and employed.

2.8.1 Systems Theory

The story of systems theory begins in 1956 by the Canadian biologist Ludwig von Bertalanffy first published his book general system theory which proposed that traits found in biological systems could be applied to any system. Accordingly, the crux or the notion in systems theory is that the parts of the system depend on one another in order to properly function. Therefore, system theory is about being interdependent that the system enjoys the property of holism or of being greater than the sum of its parts. This is to mean that the notion in systems theory is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts that rather than doing things independently, doing

them jointly brings greater effect. Accordingly, this is primarily achieved through combination of two or more activities, processes or businesses to create greater value than they would be able to create independently. Thus, the parts of the system must work together and should be reasonably and strategically intermingled and interconnected to bring a surpassed and remarkable result.

Accordingly, systems theory in the realm of communication elicits the spread information by integrating the parts together to function better (Miller, 2012). This study is about IMC and focuses on the utilization of marketing communication instruments in an integrated manner in order to convey a seamless, consistent and one voice message for audiences. Moreover, IMC is also emphasizes that rather than using marketing communication instruments separately, combining them together the various aspects of marketing communications in a mutually supportive and enhancing way really brings an enormous effect because the whole is more than the simple sum of its parts.

Thus, the prominent benefit resulting from the integrated marketing communications is consistent message delivery which is from the spot of the company's business and other activities. Regarding this, the IMC mix instruments i.e. advertising, sales promotion, public relations, sponsorship, digital marketing, exhibitions and others should be executed in an integrated way for bringing an incredible and massive change in marketing communication processes. This can be seen when, for example, images and messages used in television advertising are carried through poster and magazine advertisements and are also presented at point-of-sale display, on packaging, sales promotion and merchandising and in other promotional activities and this enhances and supports the others in a consistent fashion. Therefore, the lens of this study is system theory in a way that working together than working disjointedly enables to generate greater value. In doing so, utilizing the marketing communication instruments in a meaningful combination results in high efficiency in reaching audiences with all aspects of the company programs, and promotes sharing of skills, knowledge and other assets among staffs. Similarly, conducting activities in solidarity averts unwanted dissipation of energy, resources and many other distractions.

2.8.2 The Guiding Conceptual Framework of the Study

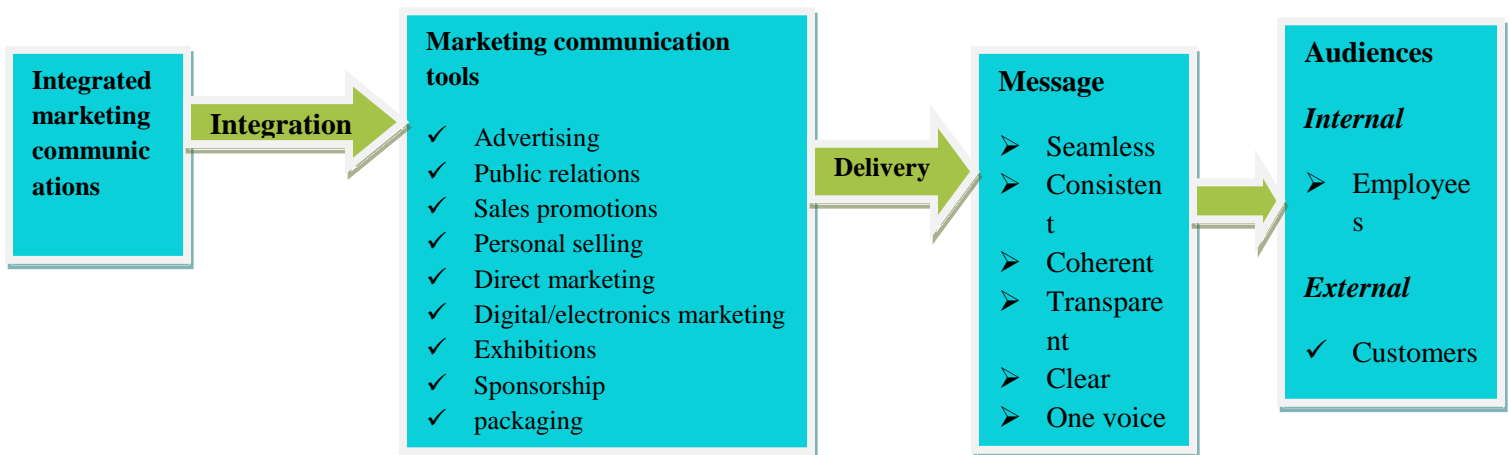
As far as integrated Marketing Communications is concerned, there is something more on marketing communications than a loose set of activities. It is a concept under which a company integrates and coordinates many marketing communications instruments to deliver a clear and consistent message about the organization products, services and programs as well. Accordingly, the greatest marketing communications impact will be achieved if all the elements involved are integrated into a unified whole. When integrating the range of promotional mix tools, they work in harmony and synergy with each other so that opportunities are created to improve the effectiveness of the total marketing communications effort (Pickton, & Broderick, 2004).

According to Grewal, and Levy, (2008), integrated Marketing Communications represents the Promotion P of the four Ps (product, price, place and promotion) and it encompasses a variety of communication disciplines i.e. general advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, and electronic media in combination to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communicative impact. They added that rather than consisting of separated marketing communication instruments with no unified control, IMC program regard each of the firm's marketing communications elements as part of a whole, each of which offers a different means to connect with the target audience. This integration of elements provides the firm with the best means to reach the target audience with the desired message, and it enhances the value story by offering a clear and consistent message. Correspondingly, integrated marketing communications is of the coordination and integration of all marketing communications tools, avenues, and sources in a company into a seamless program designed to maximize the impact on customers and other stakeholders.

The program covers all of a firm's business-to-business, market channel, customer focused, and internally-directed communications. For years, one view was that promotional activities included advertising, sales promotions, and personal selling activities. This approach has expanded to incorporate digital marketing, social media, and alternative methods of communication and it also includes activities such as database marketing, direct response marketing, sponsorships, and public relations programs (Clow, & Baack, 2007).

Integrated marketing communications is more likely to occur when organizations attempt to interact with their various internal and external audiences. The communication mix used in any interaction should be audience-centered and internally consistent with the organization’s objectives and strategies. Effective IMC should certainly encourage strong customer relationships through effective planning in order to develop an integrated communication program that will optimize specific communication objectives that lead to a desired behavior on the part of a target audience (Fill, 2009). In fact Kotler (2003) describes IMC as a way of looking at the whole marketing process from the viewpoint of the customer. Accordingly, the guiding conceptual framework of this study is designed and postulated based on the concepts and detail of IMC as follows.

Figure 2: The Guiding Conceptual Framework of the study



Source: Researcher’s construction based on the review of related literatures (2021).

Chapter Three

3. Research Methodology

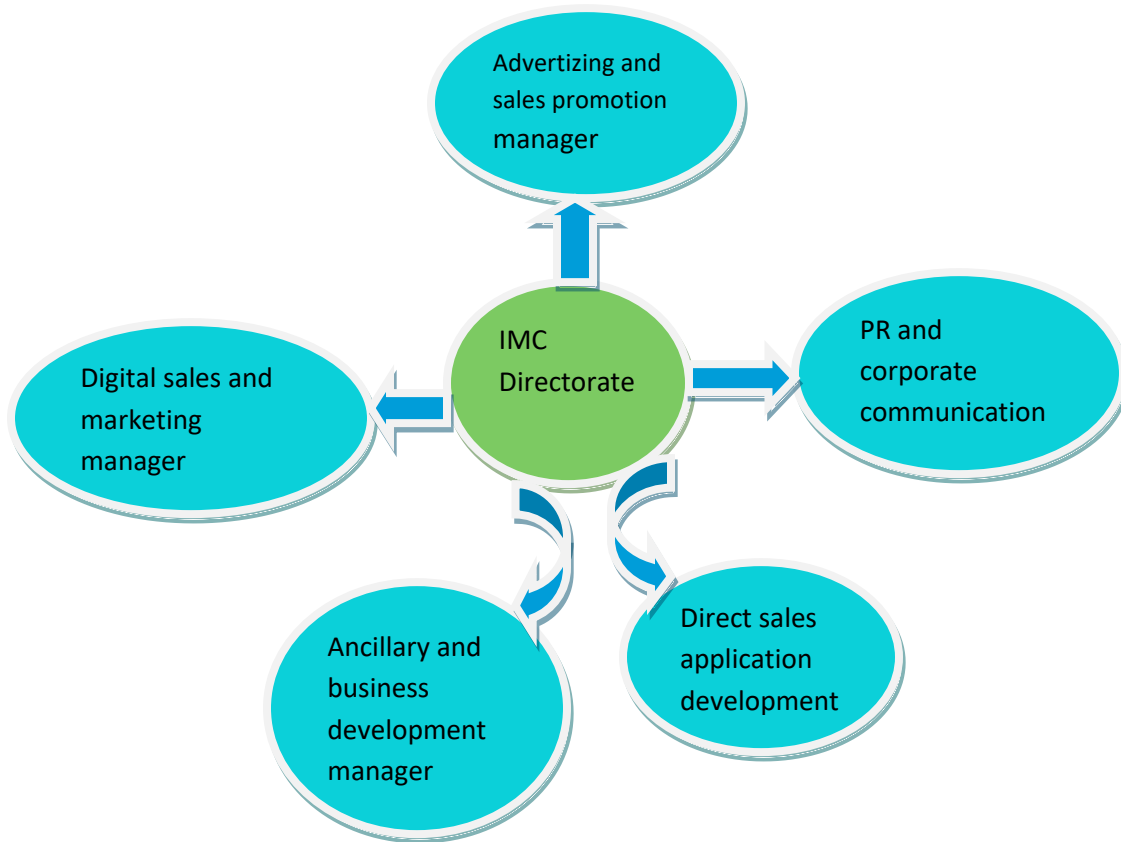
3.1 Reason behind the Selection of the Organization

Ethiopian Airline is the giant and profitable government owned organization in Ethiopia. It has been playing a great role in the development process of the country. This organization has many customers across the national and international level. These customers are the potential source of income for the organization and the country at large. Thus, in order to meet the various desires of such numerous potential and prospective stakeholders, studying the marketing communication activities is very essential as far as everything is marketing oriented activity.

Hence, in order to led the organization to be more effective and let competent than ever before, studies regarding to integrated marketing communications have a tremendous role and consequently, the country at large would be economically benefited. Studying such government owned giant organization from the scientific perspectives and framework can assure in reaching ultimate possibilities that would even escalate the country holistic development. Moreover, the aviations market is currently more competitive and largely affected by COVID-19 pandemic. So doing research on the marketing communication of this giant and profitable organization at this time is important.

And also there is an IMC directorate in Ethiopian Airlines. Under IMC directorate there are 5 managers. These managers are digital sales and marketing manager, advertising and sales promotion manager, ancillary and business development manager, direct sales application development manager and public relations and corporate communication managers. As the researcher get the information from IMC directorate there are teams under each manger. Each team has their own responsibilities and duties.

The structure of IMC directorate in Ethiopian Airlines



3.2 Research Design

Research design is a plan and procedure for the research that span the decision from broad assumption to detail methods of data collection and it's of three types qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2009). As it is indicted earlier, the research focuses on investigating integrated marketing communications practice in Ethiopian Airlines. Therefore, based on the research questions, the research employed both quantitative and qualitative research method as it is best suited to answer research questions. In mixed research, the overall strength of the study is greater than qualitative or quantitative methods.

3.2.1 Mixed Research Approach

Mixed research methods involve the philosophies assumption, the use of qualitative and quantitative approach, and the mixing of both approach in the study. Thus it's more than simply collecting and analyzing of both kind data: it also involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research (Creswell and plano clark, 2007). Therefore, the researcher employed mixed research approach to answer the stated research questions. In mixed research, the overall strength of the study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative methods.

3.2.2 Qualitative Research Approach

In this study, qualitative research approach was employed. The reason behind employing qualitative approach for this study is, it is an appropriate approach for social science researches that seeks to explore, investigate, and understand events, activities and human behaviors (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, it is also an appropriate research approach to answer what, who and why questions (Patton and Cochran, 2002). Accordingly, the intent of this thesis is to explore the practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian airlines and this approach would help the researcher to investigate and analyze details about the actual practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian airlines. Based on the research questions and objectives, the descriptive research design was applied. To be conducted this research qualitative data was used.

3.2.3 Quantitative Research Approach

Quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining relationship among variables and this variables can be measured typically on instrument, so that data can be measured using statistical procedure (Creswell John W. 2009) . In order to get questionnaire responses about the practice of integrated marketing communication on Ethiopian Airlines from the perspective integrated marketing communication directorate officers, team leaders and specialists' the researcher used quantitative method. Quantitative research gives high infuses to descriptive analytical breadth of coverage and produces data in the form of numbers that can be

aggregated and analyzed to describe and predict relationships. It is quiet true that statistics gives an opportunity to generalize. Quantitative technique was used to analyze the data gathered by questioners.

3.3 Source of Data

The data would be collected from both primary and secondary sources.

1. Primary Data

The primary data sources are IMC directorate staffs, professionals, managers and also documents related to integrate marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines. The primary data were collected through questionnaire, interview, observation and document analysis by distributing to respondents to IMC directorate staffs of Ethiopian airlines. The selection of these people as a source of data is based on the experience that they have been better information and actual participation in relation to the study.

2. Secondary Data

The secondary sources of data for this study was obtained from publications of the available documents of the organization's annual report, organizational business profile magazines, past research materials, theories and professional field of studies, books etc.

3.4 Population and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was adapted to this particular study. The rationale for choosing this approach was that the researcher was seeking knowledge about the IMC practices on Ethiopian Airlines. So IMC directorate managers are directly responsible bodies with related to the practices of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines. Because of this the researcher selected purposively these managers for interview. According to Patton (2002), purposive sampling is a technique that is widely used in the qualitative study for the identification and selection of information-rich cases. This involves the selection of individuals or groups that are knowledgeable and sometimes responsible about the subject under study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

For the Interview participants was selected all Managers under Ethiopian Airlines IMC directorate. All managers under IMC directorate are selected for interview purposively to represent for each manger. The researcher based this selection on their leadership position so as to get rich personal and professional thoughts and insights on the interview questions were raised. The researcher believed these participants because they have the stated characteristics that are believed to make them especially good sources of information.

For questionnaires 25 participants were selected from all teams under IMC directorate managers. From each manager the researcher selected participants purposively. Under each manager there are different teams. So the team leaders and specialists are participated on the questionnaire data collection process.

3.5 Tools of Data Collection

To obtain valid and reliable data for the study, the researcher used both primary and secondary data. Primary data is collect by using in depth interview, questionnaires, observation and document analysis. This is because there is a high possibility of restricting respondents' response towards the target variables in the study and information required. As a secondary data the researcher reviewed different related literatures.

3.5.1 In-depth Interview

Integrated Marketing Communication directorate managers at Ethiopian Airlines were interviewed separately; interview questions which focused on the overall communication strategies, IMC practices in the organization, and other related issues of the PR that can highly help get the insights of each individual. The researcher believed that interviewing these IMC directorate managers who are directly lead the marketing communication activities and media relation tasks of the airline was the best method to achieve the intended goal of the research. Under IMC directorate there are five managers. The researcher interviewed all managers under IMC directorate. Participants were contact two days prior to their pre-determined interview date

with a reminder to complete the pre-interview preparations and confirming the time and location of the interview.

3.5.2 Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a research instrument that consists of a set of questions or other types of prompts that aims to collect information from a respondent. Questionnaire method can be used for collecting information. It consists of relevant questions, which the respondents can easily answer. It is the most common and effective way of getting the answers as it means direct contact with the user and gets the replies to the problems baffling the marketer (Mathur, 2008:367). A questionnaire is usually self-administered, allowing respondents to fill them out themselves (Kultar, 2007:69). A research questionnaire is typically a mix of close-ended questions and open-ended questions.

The researcher also administered more of close-ended type of questionnaires and some open ended questionnaires for twenty five IMC directorate officers. The researcher selects five officers from each manager under IMC directorate. As stated on the above for questionnaires 25 participants were selected from all teams under IMC directorate managers. And questionnaires were distributed for those officers and team leaders considering their position and work experience on IMC directorate while the questionnaire was being administered. To get additional and detailed views of each leader and officer, they were allowed to add more if they feel that additional opinion had to be given.

3.5.3 Document Analysis

As far as research work is concerned, document analysis is a technique that is being employed to gather data. As Descombe (2007) stated, there are different kinds of documents that can be served as data sources and documents could be both visual and audio sources. The visual document sources include pictures, artifacts, and the audio like music whereas the written documents comprises of government publications and official statistics, newspapers, and magazines, records from meetings, letters and memos, diaries website page, and the internet.

This study also employed document analysis for triangulation purposes as well as to enhance the validity of the findings. Accordingly, the Ethiopian airlines company profile document were reviewed. To do so, a special and curious focus of analyses was given to the organizational structure part of the company's profile document. Thus, for triangulation and complimentary purpose, the findings from the document analysis were corroborated with data collected through interviews and personal observations.

3.5.4 Observation

Observation is a method of data collection in which researchers observe within a specific research field. In this research, the researcher applied observer as participant type of observation. Participant observation involves the observer being a member. And the researcher would go to the communication division, sales division, and marketing division offices of Ethiopian airlines and observe the existing situation from the spot of integrated marketing communications philosophies. In this direct observation, the researcher would move and observe to the aforementioned offices where they are found. In doing so, the researcher observes without participating or involving in the conduct of the entire integrated marketing communications practices of Ethiopian airlines.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedures

According to Joffe, (2012) the researcher choose thematic analysis because of the fact that thematic analysis is a way of identifying what is common to the way a topic is talked or written about, and of making sense of those commonalities. Accordingly, the researcher employed thematic analysis so as to investigate the practice of each marketing communication instruments, the practice of IMC based on the stages of IMC framework, the perception of employees towards IMC practice and lastly, the challenges of IMC in the organization.

In data analysis part the quantitative data were presented in descriptive statistics and the qualitative data were presented in narrations. The researcher was use descriptive statics and narrations to illustrate the feedback of the respondents. The feedback of the respondents for the variables indicated below were measured on five point Likert scale with measurement value 1=

Strongly disagree; i.e. very much dissatisfied with the case described; 2= Disagree, i.e. not satisfied with the case described; 3= Neutral, i.e., uncertain with the case described; 4= Agree, i.e., feeling all right with the case described and considered as satisfy; and 5 =strongly agree, i.e. very much supporting the case described and considered as highly satisfy. To analyze the collected data in line with the overall objective of the research undertaking, statistical procedures were carried out using SPSS version 23.0 software.

On the other hand the presentation of the data was also structured in a narrative form adding pertinent quotations to illustrate and support the main findings. Specific individual's practices as well as the setting and other uncontested facts have described objectively.

3.7 Ethical Consideration and Validity

Researches should respect the research sites and most importantly the research participants in all processes of the research (Creswell, 2007). Moreover, research must be regulated by ethical norms and values (Yeraswork Admassie, 2010). This research would therefore, give due attention to ethical issues while collecting data, analyzing and interpreting as well as during the reporting phases. This research respects and ensures confidentiality and anonymity of the participants.

Keeping the formality, the researcher took a permission letter from the school of journalism of Addis Ababa University. Accordingly, the researcher clearly discussed with the concerned bodies of Ethiopian Airlines to get permission for collecting data regarding the issue under study.

The researcher contacted the interview participants and questionnaire respondents based on their willingness and explained them how the research would not let them put under risks. Accordingly, in order to keep the anonymity and confidentiality of the research respondents, the researcher refrained from using their names during the interpretation and reporting phase of the study.

Chapter Four

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter a big effort is made to present and analyze the data collected relating to the theories discussed in the review of related literature in connection with research questions and the objective of the research. The discussion with all parts focused on IMC practices and challenges in Ethiopian Airlines.

As clearly stated in chapter one the objective of the study is to explore the Practice and challenges of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines. Regarding the study, four principal themes have been identified based on the research questions and the data was gathered from an in-depth interview, questionnaire, document analysis, and personal observation. Accordingly, the first theme deals with the utilization of marketing communication instruments followed by the second theme which talks about the execution of integrated marketing communications based on the stages of IMC framework. The third theme focuses on staff's perceptions towards the practice of IMC and lastly, the challenges while executing IMC in Ethiopian Airlines are also incorporated. Subsequently, an intensive analysis on the collected data has been made considering to attain and fully respond the identified specific objectives of the study.

4.1.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Interviewees

This part commences with the analysis of the demographic data gathered from the respondents particularly interviewees, using frequencies and percentages. Accordingly, the general respondents' characteristics including: Sex, Age, level of education, year of service on the organization, specialization and positions on the organization are emphasized.

Table 1 Interviewees' Socio-demographic Composition

Parameters	Categories	Frequency	Percent
Sex	Male	4	80%
	Female	1	20%
	Total	5	100%
Age	20-30	1	20%
	31-40	4	80%
	Total	5	100%
Level of education	Diploma	--	--
	Degree	2	40%
	MA degree and above	3	60%
	Total	5	100%
Specialization	Marketing	2	40%
	Computer science	1	20%
	Journalism and communication	1	20%
	Management	1	20%
	Total	5	100%
Year of service	1-5 year	--	--
	6-10 year	2	40%
	Above 10 year	3	60%
	Total	5	100%
Managerial position	Marketing manager	1	20%
	Ancillary and business development manager	1	20%
	Corporate communication manager	1	20%
	Sales promotion and advertizing manager	1	20%
	IT and web development manager	1	20%
	Total	5	100%

Source, Survey result, 2021

As we see on the above table about 80% managers under IMC directorate were male and the least 20% managers were females. The age of majority managers were between 30 and 40 years old that accounts 80%. Employees who were 20-30 years are 20 %. This indicates that there is a potential advantage for working by young and experienced managers especially to achieve future objectives of the company's IMC strategy. As the above table depicts the level of education, 40% of the respondents were BA/BSC holders and 60% were MA and above holders. When we come to specialization 40% of respondents are marketing graduates, 20% of respondents are computer science graduates, 20% of respondents' are journalism and communication graduates and also there are 20% management graduates. A collection of different specializations under IMC directorate implies that it is a good advantage for IMC strategy application and gives the organization a competitive advantage. To end, the highest number of respondents 60% have experienced of above 10 years in the company. 40% of the respondents had 6-10 years experience on the organization. Generally, managers under IMC directorate are knowledgeable about the IMC practices on the organization and over all activities of the organization.

4.1.2 Socio-Demographic characteristics of questionnaire respondents

The socio-demographic characteristics of the questionnaire respondents are diversified in age, sex, educational background, year of service and specialization. This shows that in IMC directorate there are a collective of professionals. The compositions of respondents are shown on the following table.

Table 2 Questionnaire Respondent Socio-Demographic Composition

Parameters	Categories	Frequency	percent
Sex	Male	17	68%
	Female	8	32%
	Total	25	100%
Age	20-30	9	36%
	31-40	16	64%
	Total	25	100%
Level of	Diploma	--	--

education	Degree	13	52%
	MA degree and above	12	48%
	Total	25	100%
Specialization	Marketing	11	44%
	Computer science	5	20%
	Journalism and communication	5	20%
	Management	4	16%
	Total	25	100%
Year of service	1-5 year	3	12%
	6-10 year	15	60%
	Above 10 year	7	28%
	Total	25	100%
Managerial position	Marketing manager officer/team leader	5	20%
	Ancillary and business development manager team leader/officer	5	20%
	Corporate communication manager team leader/officer	5	20%
	Sales promotion and advertizing manager team leader/officer	5	20%
	IT and web development manager specialist/team leader	5	20%
	Total	25	100%

Source, Survey result, 2021

As it is shown in the above table, the socio-demographic composition of the study participants particularly questionnaire respondents are categorized in sex, age, level of education, specialization and the position they have in the organization. So 68% of IMC directorate officers and specialists' questionnaire respondents are male and the rest 32% are females. The age of majority respondents were between 30 and 40 years old that accounts 64%. Employees who were 20-30 years are 36%. This indicates that there is a potential advantage for working by young and experienced officers and specialists, especially to achieve future objectives of the company's IMC strategy. As the above table depicts the level of education, 52% of the respondents were BA/BSC holders and 48% were MA and above holders. When we come to specialization 44% of respondents are marketing graduates, 20% of respondents are computer science graduates, 20%

of respondents' are journalism and communication graduates and also there are 16% management graduates.

A collection of different specializations under IMC directorate implies that it is a good advantage for IMC strategy application and gives the organization a competitive advantage. To end, the highest number of respondents 60% have experienced of 6-10 years in the company. 28% of the respondents had above 10 years experience on the organization and 12% of respondents experience is 12%. Generally, officers, team leaders and specialists under IMC directorate are knowledgeable about the IMC practices on the organization and over all activities of the organization.

4.2. Understanding and Perception of Staffs towards Integrated Marketing Communications Practice in Ethiopian Airlines

As integrated marketing communications is the newly introduced practice in Ethiopian Airlines, the researcher intends to analyze the understanding and perceptions of professionals, specialists, team leaders and managers in IMC directorate because the vast majority of MC activities are being done by these aforementioned staffs. Accordingly, the researcher made an analysis of reflections of interviewees and respondents about their understanding and perceptions on the current IMC practice of Ethiopian Airlines. In doing so, the researcher made analysis about the experience of employees from understanding and perceptions dimensions of integrated marketing communications. Accordingly, the experience of interviewees and respondents towards the current practice of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines is thematically analyzed as follows.

4.2.1 Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate Employees Understanding about Integrated Marketing Communications

According to psychologists understanding is a psychological process related to an abstract or physical object, such as a person, situation, or message whereby one is able to use concepts to model that object. Understanding is a relation between the knower and an object of understanding. Understanding implies abilities and dispositions with respect to an object of knowledge that are sufficient to support intelligent behavior. The IMC directorate employees understanding about integrated marketing communication response are analyzed as follows.

Table 3, IMC directorate employees understanding about IMC implementation

IMC directorate employees are enough understanding about IMC				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	13	52.0	52.0
	Agree	10	40.0	40.0
	Neutral	2	8.0	8.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

Almost all respondents' and interviewees are agree that all employees under IMC directorate are understand what IMC is and the practices in Ethiopian Airlines. As we see on the above table 52% of respondents are strongly agree, 40% respondents also agree and the rest 12% respondents are neutral that they understand what IMC is and its practice in Ethiopian Airlines. The interviewees also explained that IMC Directorate employees understand the immense benefit of IMC implementation on Ethiopian Airlines. They also confirmed that IMC directorate employees has enough understanding about IMC importance in integrating many disintegrated activities and it creates easier work relations among staffs, helps for job clarity, and it also provides effectiveness in work place.

4.2.2 Employees Perception in Integrated Marketing Communications Implementation in terms of Work Conduct

As stated on chapter two IMC is another way of maintaining a good working relationship within the organization. The company employees will get the message clearly, as well as the goals, and work towards achieving them. When the organization syncs all the parties within the company, it will create an impactful campaign. Employee's response about their perception on Integrated Marketing Communications implementation in terms of work conduct also analyzed as follows.

Table 4; Employees perception about IMC practice in the organization with regard to work conduct

Employees are positively perceive the practice of IMC in your organization in terms of work conduct				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	48.0	48.0
	Agree	10	40.0	40.0
	Neutral	3	12.0	12.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

Almost all respondents' and interviewees are agree that the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines has an enormous benefit and it must be reinforced and much has to be done. They have positive opinion for the implementation of IMC in the organization. As we see on the above table 48% of respondents are strongly agree, 40% respondents also agree and the rest 12% respondents are neutral that they perceive positively the practice of IMC in the organization. The result shows the implementations of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines are a lot of benefits.

The interviewees also explained that IMC has immense benefit in providing consistent messages for audiences and it enhances operational efficiency and integration as well. They also confirmed described IMC has an importance in integrating many disintegrated activities and it creates easier work relations among staffs, helps for job clarity, and it also provides effectiveness in work place. Moreover, IMC also integrates the entire marketing communication activities in a profound manner.

4.2.3 Employees Perception in Integrated Marketing Communications Implementation in terms of Cost Optimization and Resource Saving

According to scholars IMC can create competitive advantages, boost sales and profits, while saving money, time, and recourses. IMC wraps communications around customers and helps them move through the various stages of the buying process. Employee's response about their

perception on Integrated Marketing Communications implementation in terms of cost optimization and resource saving also analyzed as follows.

Table 5; Employees perception about IMC practice in the organization with regard to cost optimization and resource saving

IMC is able to optimize the company's costs and save resources in your organization				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	14	56.0	56.0
	Agree	7	28.0	28.0
	Neutral	4	16.0	16.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

According to the gathered data almost all respondents and interviewees perceive IMC implementation in the organization are huge advantages with regard to resource saving and cost optimization. As we see on the above table 56% of respondents are strongly agree, 28% respondents also agree and the rest 16% respondents are neutral that they perceive positively the practice of IMC in the organization are enormous advantage with regard to resource saving and cost optimization. The result shows the implementations of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines are a lot of benefits.

On the other hand, interviewees have a positive insight on the implementation of IMC with regarding to saving resources. According to them, the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines has a merit in averting unnecessary dissipation of human resource. Moreover, they explained that IMC saves money, and unwanted waste of material resources. From the experience of interviewees, we can understand that they the practice of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines has an importance in relation to saving material, human and financial resources. Therefore, recognizing the merit of IMC from these and other dimensions, Ethiopian Airlines should keep on doing much in the head of the time.

4.3 Utilization of Marketing Communication Instruments in Ethiopian airlines

According to results of the study, Ethiopian Airlines is utilizing marketing communication instruments and these marketing communication instruments includes advertising, digital marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, exhibitions and trade shows, direct marketing, sponsorship and packaging. Employee’s response about their perception on the utilization of marketing communication instruments in Ethiopian Airlines also analyzed as follows.

Table 6; utilization of marketing communication instruments in Ethiopian Airlines

IMC utilizes the marketing communication instruments (advertising, digital marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, exhibitions and trade shows, direct marketing, sponsorship and packaging) in Ethiopian Airlines				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	14	56.0	56.0
	Agree	9	36.0	36.0
	Neutral	2	8.0	8.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

Almost all respondents and interviewees are perceived that IMC utilizes the marketing communication instruments in Ethiopian Airlines. As we see on the above table 56% of respondents are strongly agree, 36% respondents also agree and the rest 8% respondents are neutral that they perceive IMC fully utilized IMC marketing communication instruments. However, the utilization of these marketing communication instruments varies depending on the company’s communication contexts like time and other related issues. Some of the marketing communication instruments are utilized frequently and the others are employed occasionally as well.

Digital Marketing is being most widely and frequently exploited marketing communication instrument in Ethiopian airlines. There is a massive demand from customers in using social

media and it is being aggressively utilized and marvelous developments have been noted in its utilization in Ethiopian Airlines.

In relation to the implementation of digital marketing in Ethiopian Airlines, Interviewee one expressed as:

Digital marketing the most busy marketing communication tool and every marketing activity are now being transmitted profoundly via social media more than ever before. We deliver different messages and communicate with many of our customers through social Medias.

Moreover, in regard to the utilization of digital marketing, interviewee two specified that the most common channels while utilizing digital marketing includes, official Face book page, Website, telegram, Instagram, linked In, and you tube. Regarding to the massive utilization of digital marketing in Ethiopian Airlines, there statistical data in users. In this regard for example interviewee two explained as:

“We have more than 2,000,000 Face book, 500,000 for twitter, 20000 for telegram, 27,000 for linked In and 5000 for Instagram followers. Moreover, we have for our premium customers, and we have also our own website and YouTube channels.”

The rapid growth of the Internet and more recently, social media is changing the nature of how companies do business and the ways they communicate and interact with consumers. Every day more consumers around the world are gaining access to the Internet’s World Wide Web (WWW) of information available to users (Belch & Belch, 2018). As the researcher noticed, the utilization of digital marketing in Ethiopian Airlines should be boosted than ever before because it is unquestionable that every marketing activity is becoming internet or digital oriented. Moreover, Ethiopian Airlines should consider digital marketing as enormous opportunity for its marketing communication in the future because many new developments in communication technology are being introduced across the world. But with some limitations, according to the above data, we can understand that there is an enormous advancement in the utilization of digital marketing in Ethiopian Airlines.

4.4 Implementation of Stages of Integrated Marketing Communications Framework in Ethiopian Airlines

The four stages of IMC framework states the over-all patterns to the implementation of integrated marketing communication that an organization appear to go through the phases to vividly understand the magnitude of integration. Stage one state about the tactical coordination of marketing communications followed by stage two which talks about redefining the scope of marketing communications. Stage three is about the application of information technology in the marketing communication followed by the final Stage that discusses about financial and strategic integration (Schultz & Schultz, 2004).

Accordingly, as to the investigation of the implementation of IMC framework in Ethiopian Airlines, an in-depth interview was conducted with purposively selected staffs based on their experience and position they have in the organization. In doing so, professionals, specialists, managers and directors were responded through questionnaire and the data was analyzed. Thus, the practice of IMC of Ethiopian Airlines with reference to the four stages of IMC framework is discussed as follows.

4.4.1 Stage One: Tactical Coordination of Marketing Communication in Ethiopian Airlines

Based on the findings of this study, the manifestations in stage one of IMC framework are implemented almost in a full-fledged manner in Ethiopian Airlines because tools are fully integrated. The integration of marketing communication instruments in delivering consistent message is attained in complete manner. However, after the introduction of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines, there are some limitations in delivering consistent and uniform message to audiences by utilizing the most common marketing communication tools, but now a day's things are changed. Accordingly, informants explained their reflections as follows.

Table 7; Tactical Coordination of Marketing Communication in Ethiopian Airlines

There is a tactical coordination of marketing communication in Ethiopian Airlines				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	16	64.0	64.0
	Agree	6	24.0	24.0
	Neutral	3	12.0	12.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

As we see on the above table 64% of respondents are strongly agree, 24% respondents also agree and the rest 12% respondents are neutral that they answered there is a tactical coordination of marketing communication in Ethiopian air lines.

On the other hand, interviewees have a positive insight on the implementation of IMC with regarding to tactical coordination of marketing communication. According to them, the structure of the organizational Ethiopian Airlines particularly marketing communications in was in a problem. Before the introduction of IMC and marketing communication concerned tasks were not merged in relevant and compatible departments and sections. But now a day as stated on the above IMC directorate is an integrated result of different managers/unites.

The informant further explained that the structural defect was a trap for not to discharge responsibilities regarding to marketing communication activities to the best of our efforts and it was so difficult to call that the marketing communication practice was integrated and synergetic in Ethiopian Airlines.

4.4.2 Stage Two: Redefining the Scope of Marketing Communications in Ethiopian Airlines

Based on the findings of this study, Ethiopian Airlines is currently good moving in achieving scenarios of the second stage of IMC framework which talks that the entire marketing communication must follow customer-centric approach. In the stage, customers must be

emphasized and frequent assessments on customers in relation to the practice of marketing communication activities should be conducted (Shultz & Shultz, 1998). No matter how customer centered marketing communication assessment is very important, its concern in Ethiopian Airlines is fine. According to interviewee tow data there is a regular assessment conducted on customer in regard to the entire integrated marketing communication activities of Ethiopian Airlines. Employee’s response about the redefining of marketing communication in Ethiopian Airlines also analyzed as follows.

Table 8; Redefining the Scope of marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines

Redefining the Scope of marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines (<i>using of costumer centered and tow-way communication model</i>) is effective				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	13	52.0	52.0
	Agree	5	20.0	20.0
	Neutral	4	16.0	16.0
	Disagree	3	12.0	12.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

According to the gathered data most respondents and interviewees are perceive there is a Redefining the Scope of marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines. As we see on the above table 52% of respondents are strongly agree, 20% respondents also agree, 16% respondents are neutral and 12 % respondents are didn’t agree on the idea. The result shows there is a practice in Ethiopian Airlines with regard to redefining the scope of marketing communication and customer satisfaction assessment.

In time of Pre- message delivery and post -message delivery, customer’s feelings should be assessed frequently to delivery sound and coherent message; after the implementation of IMC such trends are common in Ethiopian Airlines. Informant one said,

“After the implementation of IMC there is formal assessment, quarterly and after every new campaign there is an effort of assessing customer insight towards marketing

communication by taking data from comments and suggestions given by our customers on our official social media pages like Facebook, E-mail, twitter and other channels. In doing so, the collected data were analyzed and based on the results, actions are taken.”

The informant further explained that even if the assessment is doing in Ethiopian Airlines IMC directorate but it's not that much comprehensive and frequent and this shows that still there should be more strive in the future regarding conducting marketing communication assessments on customers.

To sum up, Ethiopian Airlines effort in conducting marketing communication activities from the spot of customers' needs to be improved. In doing so, regular assessments on the entire marketing communication activities should be conducted.

4.4.3 Stage Three: Application of Information Technology in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate

In this stage of information technology is utilized to support the integrated marketing communication development (Shultz & Shultz, 1998). The findings show that there is some betterment on the exploitation of information technology for marketing communication activities in Ethiopian Airlines IMC Directorate. As stated on the above in IMC directorate there is the digital marketing manager and in different managers there are IT support, designing, and graphics and web application teams. These teams facilitate the application of information technology in Ethiopian Airlines IMC directorate. The respondents forwarded their reflections regarding to the utilization of ICT (information communication technology) for marketing communication activities in Ethiopian Airlines as follows.

Table 9; Application of Information Technology in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate

Application of Information Technology in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate is very good				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	12	48.0	48.0
	Agree	10	40.0	40.0
	Neutral	2	8.0	8.0
	dis agree	1	4.0	4.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

According to the gathered data most respondents and interviewees are perceive the application of information technology in Ethiopian Airlines is very good. As we see on the above table 48% of respondents are strongly agree, 40% respondents also agree, 8% respondents are neutral and 4 % respondents are didn't agree on the idea. The result shows there is a good practice in Ethiopian Airlines with regard to the application of information technology in Ethiopian Airlines integrated marketing communications directorate.

Regarding the betterment of using ICT for marketing communication purposes interviewee two explained that ICT is primarily connected with Ethiopian Airlines because it provides ICT service. Accordingly, there is digital communication section which manages social media tools and it is found at manager level. Thus, utilization of information communication technology in general and our digital communication in particular seems somehow encouraging.

Apparently, informant three also expressed as:

Because of the development in science and technology, we are now obliged to give emphasis for digital marketing and we are striving accordingly. Regarding to utilizing ICT for MC in Ethiopian Airlines, there are considerable efforts. For example, customers were paying tickets fee in front, but now there are digital platforms of payment like mobile banking. Digital technologies like social media tools, and bulk

SMS are moderately implemented for MC activities, but they are much restricted to domestic customers because of ICT infrastructure in the country and Awareness problem. But international customers mostly used these digital platforms.

In general, no matter how different opinions forwarded from interviewees, Ethiopian Airlines should move on in better utilization of ICT for marketing communication activities so long as everything is becoming digital than ever before.

4.4.4 Stage Four: Financial and Strategic Integration

At this stage, company is said as having the appropriate ways in measuring returns on investment made on customers and examines results of its marketing communication and aspires to measure marketing investments in comparison with profits that are gained by marketing and the company's marketing communication is integrated not only with externally but also internally between different actors and functions such as sales, research and development, and finance (Shultz & Shultz, 1998). As to the findings of the study, Ethiopian Airlines still have to do with many things until it will reach the fourth stage of IMC framework.

According to the interviewee the IMC directorate structure is a recent phenomenon and still there are MC instruments are good structured and this in fact makes difficult to measure MC return on customers and to make whole business operation is a coherent and synergetic. As we see on the above different managers are under IMC directorate. This shows that, Ethiopian Airlines has somewhat good reached at this stage. The respondents and interviewees forwarded their reflections regarding to the financial and strategic integration for marketing communication activities in Ethiopian Airlines as follows.

Table 10; financial and strategic integration in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate

financial and strategic integration in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate is very good				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	13	52.0	52.0
	Agree	8	32.0	32.0
	Neutral	2	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	2	8.0	8.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

According to the gathered data from questionnaire respondents about financial and strategic integration in Ethiopian Airlines, most respondents are perceive financial and strategic integration in Ethiopian Airlines is very good. As we see on the above table 52% of respondents are strongly agree,32% respondents also agree, 8% respondents are neutral and 8 % respondents are didn't agree on the idea. The result shows there is a good practice in Ethiopian Airlines with regard to financial and strategic integration in Ethiopian Airlines integrated marketing communications directorate.

Moreover, the as the researcher found in his observation, managers and teams which are under IMC directorate are not in the same building. Some are found in other area even though they are doing the same thing and they are under IMC directorate. For example, on Ethiopian airports enterprise building IMC directorate, Ancillary and business development manager, digital sales and marketing manager and direct sales application manager are found others like advertizing and sales promotion manager and PR and corporate communication manager are found on the main building of Ethiopian Airlines. The distance between the two buildings is so far this in fact affects the integrated marketing practice of Ethiopian Airlines. Accordingly, dispersed departments and sections should be in the same building.

Generally speaking, based on the findings from an questionnaires, in-depth interview, observation and document analysis on the stages of IMC frameworks developed by Schultz

&Schultz's (2004), Ethiopian Airlines seems to fulfill some attributions of all stages. In stage one, Ethiopian Airlines utilizes almost all marketing communication tools, but regarding to integration for delivering consistent and coherent message to customers much is expected to be done. Similarly, scenarios of stage two of IMC frameworks need to be focused and Ethiopian Airlines has to move on in exerting much effort. Making regular assessments on customers about the marketing communication activities as well as measuring returns on customers is somewhat not being conducted vigorously. Some scenarios of stage three of IMC framework are moderately implemented. Because essentially Ethiopian Airlines (Airlines Business) is a technological oriented company or business, it is moving better no matter how limitations in inclusiveness of all customers are still happening. However, the Hence, the entire integrated marketing communications practice in Ethiopian Airlines from the perspective of stages of IMC framework is good moving and but much strive is expected.

4.5 . Challenges of Integrated Marketing Communications Practice in Ethiopian Airlines

In designing integrated marketing communication (IMC) programs, marketers face many challenges as a result of the fact that consumers, brands, and the media are fundamentally changing in profound ways. According to Court et al. (2009) with the explosion of new media, consumers are dramatically shifting both their media usage patterns and how they utilize different media sources to get the information they seek, which thus influences when, where, and how they choose brands. Perhaps more than ever, their attention is divided, often due to multitasking, and they are seemingly in a perpetual state of partial attention.

No matter how integrated marketing communications has an immense benefit for an organization in its various activities, there are challenges in the application process. As to Ethiopian Airlines, the researcher has found out the following impediments of practicing integrated marketing communications. The respondents and interviewees forwarded their reflections regarding to the challenges of integrated marketing communications practice in Ethiopian Airlines as follows.

Table 11; Challenges of Integrated Marketing Communications practice in Ethiopian Airlines Directorate

There is a challenge on the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines?				
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	strongly agree	6	24.0	24.0
	Agree	7	28.0	28.0
	Neutral	2	8.0	8.0
	Disagree	9	36.0	36.0
	strongly disagree	1	4.0	4.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0

According to the gathered data from questionnaire respondents about the challenges on the practice of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines, most respondents are perceive there is a challenge on the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines. As we see on the above table 24% of respondents are strongly agree,28% respondents also agree, 8% respondents are neutral, 36 % respondents are didn't agree and the rest 4% respondents are strongly disagree. The result shows there are challenges on the practice of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines.

Regarding the challenge towards IMC practice in Ethiopian Airlines, the respondents and interviewees listed that there is no professional freedom and workers are not encourage to be creative and also there is no trust from high level officials. In addition to that, there is no technical trainings and experience sharing given for integrated marketing communication directorate workers. And also Interviewee two added *“as we know the concept of IMC is new for our country so lack or shortage of experienced man power with regard to IMC is one challenge.”*

On the other hand, interviewee one and some respondents said, *“As a country level we are challenged by COVID -19 like other companies faced. Especially for Airlines business the COVID-19 crisis is very high.”* So, the pandemic disease corona virus affects the practice of integrated marketing communication of Ethiopian Airlines. . On the top of that, because of the

company's government owned, sometimes the presence of conservative processual or procedures are an impediment while practicing integrated marketing communications.

Thus, the above mentioned explanations are the traps or challenges of executing integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines. Thus, a lot is to be done at least to minimize the magnitude of the aforementioned challenges. With the challenges presented by new media, shifting media patterns, and divided consumer attention, the optimal integration of marketing communications takes on increasing importance

Chapter Five

5. Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

The purpose of this research is to explore the current integrated marketing communications practices of Ethiopian Airlines. Therefore, this chapter as a whole includes the summary of the research results, the conclusions drawn from the research results, the researcher's recommendations based on the research results, and finally the research implications.

5.1 Summary of Major Findings

The overall findings of this study show that the IMC directorate employees have enough understanding about IMC importance in integrating many disintegrated activities and it creates easier work relations among staff, helps for job clarity, and it also provides effectiveness in the workplace. And also the research finding shows the IMC directorate employees are positive insight for the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines with regard to workplace conduct, cost optimization, and resource-saving for the company.

According to them, the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines has merit in averting unnecessary dissipation of human resources. Moreover, they explained that IMC saves money, and protects the company from the unwanted waste of material resources.

On the other hand according to marketing communication instruments utilization the research finding shows, Ethiopian Airlines uses these marketing communication instruments depending on the company's communication contexts like time and other related issues. Some of the marketing communication instruments are utilized frequently and the others are employed occasionally as well. According to the research finding Digital Marketing is being most widely and frequently exploited marketing communication instrument in Ethiopian airlines. There is a massive demand from customers in using social media and it is being aggressively utilized and marvelous developments have been noted in its utilization in Ethiopian Airlines.

The whole level of practice of IMC from the viewpoint of stages of IMC framework in Ethiopian Airlines is good moving. In stage one, integration of all marketing communication tools in

providing consistent message for audiences is somewhat full-fledged. In stage two, there is a random frequent assessment done on customers about integrated marketing communication practices. As to stage three, there is utilization of ICT for the marketing communication activities. In doing so, social media and Call center service are mostly utilized channels. Stage four is has not that much achieved that there is no clear measuring return on customers about IMC.

Eventually, as to the challenges of practicing integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines, lack of trainings and experience sharing's, sometimes absence of integrated marketing communication plan and lead time, presence of technical jargons, presence of conservative processual trends and lack of technical trainings and absence of integrated marketing communications plan to conduct tasks were baldly mentioned by interview and questionnaire participants.

5.2 Conclusion

This research attempted to explore the practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines focusing on how the marketing communication instruments are being utilized. It also tried to explore the practice of integrated marketing communications from the perspective of stages of IMC framework. Moreover, perception of IMC directorate staffs towards the practice of IMC and the challenges as well were analyzed. In doing so, the researcher has employed qualitative and quantitative (mixed) research approach. In regard to data collection instruments, Questionnaires and In-depth interview was conducted with purposively selected informants. Moreover, company's profile document was intensively reviewed as well as observation was held by the researcher.

The study has revealed that the practice of integrated marketing communications shows some improvements with regard to utilizing of some marketing communication instruments as well as in reaching some scenarios of stages of IMC framework. Moreover, staffs have positive perception towards the current practice of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines no matter how some challenges are still a trap not having a full-fledged integration among marketing communication instruments.

As the findings indicate, with regard to the perception of staffs towards the practice of integrated marketing communications, the findings reveal that IMC strategy has benefits in creating easier work relations, providing consistent message, job clarity, saving material, and financial resources. More over staffs perceive that IMC practice in Ethiopian Airlines has a merit in harmonizing relationships with internal and external stakeholders. Thus, staffs have good perception towards the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines.

On the other hand, there are improvements in utilization of marketing communication instruments like digital or electronic marketing, sales promotion, and packaging. However, the utilization of marketing communication instruments like public relations and trade shows are not exploited well. As a peculiar finding, there is a remarkable growth in the utilization of digital marketing than ever before.

In regard to the level of practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines from the perspective of stages of IMC framework, much effort is expected to be done. Accordingly, most of the practice most scenarios in each stage are still slow but some improvements are there at all stage.

As to stage one of the frame work, Ethiopian Airlines has shown improvements in delivering consistent and coherent message for its customers compared to the previous times. However, the integration of marketing communication instruments is still lethargic and this in fact refrains Ethiopian Airlines from achieving circumstances of stage one in a full-fledged manner.

In regard to stage two of IMC framework, Ethiopian Airlines is somewhat slow moving. The scenario says every act of the marketing communication should be customer oriented that there must be regular assessments. In doing so, conducting regular assessments on customers particularly on the activities of marketing communications has not that much attained even though some customer feedbacks are taken from social media platforms and analysis is being done.

The findings about the level of practice of integrated marketing communications based on stage three scenarios show that there are enormous changes in utilizing information technology for

marketing communication activities. Social media and call center services are the most frequently used outlets in Ethiopian Airlines.

In relation to stage four of IMC, some things have been done other than progresses of fraternity among divisions, departments and sections. There is no measuring return in the activities of marketing communications but financial integrity has somewhat attained in Ethiopian Airlines IMC directorate.

The interviewees explained for the researcher, there are eyes opening activities in improving IMC in Ethiopian Airlines, but the monopoly nature of the company and some structural misplacement are still the traps for not having a full-fledged practice in relation to utilization of marketing communication instruments as well in attaining scenarios of stages of IMC framework.

Regarding the challenges of IMC practice in Ethiopian Airlines, the findings of the study show that the absence of professional freedom, absence of technical trainings given for integrated marketing communication staffs and the presence of conservative processual or procedures and the current pandemic disease COVID -19 are an impediments while practicing integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines.

Generally speaking, the finding suggests that there are tangible efforts in the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines no matter how its practice is slow moving particularly in bringing full integration of synergy. The achievements in IMC practice should be reinforced and much effort is expected in the head of the time so as to prevail remarkable development in the entire business activities.

5.3 Recommendations

The findings of this study show that there are some stimulations on the integrated marketing communications practices in Ethiopian Airlines however, still an enormous amount of effort should be done in the future for attaining better synergy and integration. In connection with this, almost all of the questionnaire respondents and interviewees have good perception towards IMC

so that Ethiopian Airlines should move on in practicing integrated marketing communications thinking in to considerations its mission, vision and values as well.

Accordingly, based on the findings of the study, below are recommendations suggested by the researcher.

- Technical trainings in integrated marketing communication activities shall be given especially for integrated marketing communication directorate workers to escalate their creativity and competency.
- There should be professional freedom for workers to let them to be creative and competent as well.
- Measuring returns on the marketing communication activities shall be made. Accordingly, measuring returns in MC shall be to the extent of single customer.
- Frequent assessments on customers about the practice of integrated marketing communications shall be conducted. Customer's feelings and desires towards the services offered by Ethiopian Airlines shall be frequently assessed.
- The marketing communication division shall reinforce to work together with other divisions knowing the fact that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

5.4. Research Implications

In relation to this study, the researcher has explored the practice of integrated marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines from the company's perspective only. Accordingly, the findings of the research show that integrated marketing communication has a tremendous benefit from multi-dimensional perspectives. Most of the respondents and interviewees explained that IMC has an importance in saving resources, creating solidarity with various stakeholders as well as in harmonizing working environment.

Thus, further research on the effectiveness of marketing communication instruments, effectiveness of the entire marketing communication practices, and integrated marketing communication for employee motivation shall be conducted in Ethiopian Airlines.

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Appendixes

Annex 1 questionnaire

Addis Ababa University

School of journalism and communication

Public Relations and Strategic Communications Department

Data collection tools

I would like to thank you for taking the time to my study. I am currently a graduate student at Addis Ababa University- School of Journalism and Communication. As a partial fulfillment for the Master of Arts in Public Relations and Strategic Communications I am conducting a research study entitled “*The practice of Integrated Marketing Communications in Ethiopian Airlines*”. Accordingly, I would like you to share your experiences regarding the issue under study. In doing so, your participation is anonymous and the shared information will be used only for the research purpose.

Thank you very much for your participation.

General Information’s

Sex----- age----- level of education-----

Work experience----- position-----

PART ONE

Questionnaires’ on the Perception of staffs towards the Practice of Integrated Marketing Communications and other questions

Major Questions

Your answers in this part are to be given by making a tick (v) mark on your choice that is provided in front of each question. Please mark or tick your choice in the table below:

1. **Do you agree that IMC directorate employees are enough understanding about IMC?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

2. **Do you agree that employees positively perceive the practice of IMC in your organization in terms of work conduct?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

3. **Do you agree that IMC is able to optimize the company's costs and save resources in your organization?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

4. **Do you agree that IMC utilizes the marketing communication instruments (advertising, digital marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, exhibitions and trade shows, direct marketing, sponsorship and packaging) in Ethiopian Airlines?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

5. **Is there a tactical coordination of marketing communication in Ethiopian Airlines?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

6. **Redefining the Scope of marketing communications in Ethiopian Airlines (using of costumer centered and tow-way communication model) is effective?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

7. **Application of Information Technology in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate is very good?**

1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

8. Financial and strategic integration in Ethiopian Airlines Integrated Marketing Communications Directorate is very good?

- 1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

9. There is a challenge on the implementation of IMC in Ethiopian Airlines?

- 1, Strongly Agree 2, Agree 3, Neutral
4, Disagree 5, Strongly Disagree

10. If your answer is “strongly agree” and “agree” for number 9 question please list the challenges?

Annex 2 Interview questions

Interview Guiding Questions on the Perception of staffs towards the Practice of Integrated Marketing Communications

1. How do you perceive the practice of IMC in your organization in terms of work conduct?
2. How do you perceive the practice of IMC in your organization in terms of economic aspect?
How do you explain it from the perspective of saving resources?
3. How do you perceive the practice of IMC in your organization in terms of stakeholder’s relation? What is your perception of IMC from the perspective of internal and external stakeholders?
4. What do you think are the challenges of practicing IMC in your organization?
5. What do you think should be done for improving IMC practice in your organization?

Interview Guiding Questions on the Utilization of marketing communication Instruments

1. Would you please explain how the marketing communication instruments, Advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, internet marketing, exhibitions and trade shows, direct marketing?

2. What do you think are the challenges of practicing IMC in your organization?
3. What do you think should be done for improving IMC practice in your organization?

Interview Guiding Questions on Stages of IMC Framework

STAGE ONE: Tactical Coordination

1. How do you explain the practice of IMC in your organization from the perspective of integrating instruments for providing consistent messages for audiences?
2. Could you please explain about the marketing communication action in delivering distinctive messages to specialized segments of audiences?

STAGE TWO: Redefining the scope of marketing communications

1. How do you explain the practice of IMC in your organization from customer centered perspective like assessing their desires, gathering information about customers to support company's marketing decisions and to learn about what actually received by customers?

STAGE THREE: Application of information technology in the marketing communications

1. Would you please explain the application of information technology in the marketing communication tasks in your organization?
2. What are the most frequently used ICT technologies?

STAGE FOUR: Financial and strategic integration

1. How do you explain the measuring return of IMC on customer investment?
2. What do you think should be done for improving IMC practice in your organization?
3. What do you think are the challenges of practicing IMC in your organization?

General questions

1. What do you think are the challenges of practicing IMC in your organization?
2. What do you think should be done for improving IMC practice in your organization?