Utilization Of Integrated Marketing Communication to Create Brand Recognition in Three to Five Star Hotels in Nairobi City County, Kenya

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Abstract

Purpose: This research aims to establish the influence of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) dimensions on brand recognition of three- to five-star hotels. The study is based on Keller's Brand Equity Theory and Resource based theory and employs the descriptive cross-sectional research design.

Material and methods: The population target of this study was the line managers and frontline, 97 from 5-star, 195 from 4-star and 130 from 3-star hotels in Nairobi, Kenya. Primary data was collected through structured self-administered questionnaires given to frontline staff. Data analysis was done through quantitative methods, descriptive statistics, multiple regression and correlation analysis and presentation was done in tables.

Findings: The regression results showed a significant relationship between sales promotions and online marketing, and brand recognition since their sig-values are less than the standard p-value (0.05).

Value: The study emphasizes the importance of implementing sales promotion strategies, such as after-sales services like packaging bags and delivery, to improve brand recognition. Furthermore, it underscores the need for hotels to capitalize on digital platforms, including a customer-friendly website, social media, and Google Maps, to promote their brand and expand their recognition effectively.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Sales Promotions, Online Marketing, Brand Recognition

1. Introduction

The business environment is characterized by stiff competition globally, regionally and even locally. Due to this reason marketing communication therefore prepares organizational messages to effectively and efficiently influence the behaviour of potential customers and in the process enhances sales performance. From 2015, the global economy performance has been declining, low growth and decreasing consumer demand has been a characteristic feature (Unilever annual report and Accounts, 2015).

According to Moro and Moro (2014), a lot of factors go into hotel operations. They are; customer service, branding, sales and venue set-up. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) can simply be referred to as the coordination of a firm's different promotional tools or efforts used in conjunction with one another to produce

greater results or best combined effects of the firm's efforts. The different promotional tools in IMC include media advertising, on-line advertising, sales promotions, store signage and, sponsorships (Karam & Saydam, 2015). Integrated marketing communication involves the gathering of all marketing tools, approaches, and resources within a company which maximizes the impact on the consumer's mind and which leads to maximum profit at minimum cost. Integrated Marketing Communication is also a key source of competitive advantage in many organizations (Saeed, Naeem, Bilal, & Naz, 2013).

Despite the foregoing, most 3-5 star hotels struggle to create and sustain their brands as well as achieve greater sales due to challenges related to marketing. The reason for this is because most catering business owners underestimate the importance of marketing. Additionally, in Kenya most 3-5star hotels largely depend on "word of mouth" to generate brand recognition and sales. The problem with this approach however is that it is only effective if the business is already established a characteristic which 3-5 star hotels do not have.(Reid, Luxton, & Mavondo, 2017).

The general idea of IMC is that there are various means, transmitted communication networks, and channels for communicating with in an organization externally, and that an organization is required to coordinate and centralize all these activities over the long term in order to be effective (Kucher, 2019). The observed trend in the market particularly for consumer products over the last couple of decades is the presence of a clo. They further explain that to cater to this demand presented by the consumers' behaviour, the restaurant players in the market seek to introduce products into the market as brands. This thesis therefore aims to provide3-5star hotels in Nairobi County with optimal methods for creating awareness for their brands and increasing sales using IMC. The study highlights to the national and Nairobi County government; the challenges 3-5star hotels go through in trying to boost their brand recognition.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

In emergent economic atmosphere, hotel businesses are faced with globalization, technological changes and competition which needs to be dealt with for them to remain competitive. for the small number of establishments trying to take advantage of the advancement in technology, they still face the challenge of integrating their communication platforms to channel their brand concepts in a clear and consistent manner. The result is the uncoordinated and ineffective use of various platforms such as company websites as well as social media sites that contain inconsistent communication meant for the prospective consumers of their product.

Furthermore Jiwaji (2015) stresses that most hotel businesses within the Nairobi County still depend on the word of mouth from their existing customers to promote their brands to a very great extent. This approach has only proven effective for established organizations while on the other hand it is a recipe for failure for relatively unknown businesses. According to Njuki (2014), almost 83% of 3-5 star hotel start-ups fail due to marketing communication and brand related challenges. Of those start-ups that make it to their first year in business 66% either fails to register increased business activities and ultimately close shop within the next half year.

Therefore in order to communicate effectively with prospective consumers, the establishments need to coordinate and centralize these activities in order to be effective over the long term (Karam & Saydam, 2015). Therefore, there is need for hotel business be more aware of IMC tools which create brand recognition. Thus, the study hypothesized that:

H_{01}:   *There is no significant relationship between sales promotions and brand recognition in three to five-star hotels.*

H_{01}:   *There is no significant relationship between online marketing and brand recognition in three to five-star hotels.*

1.2 Theoretical Framework

From extant literature, there is no one specific theory that deals with all the aspects of utilizing IMC in creating sales and building brand awareness especially when hospitality establishments are the subject. Therefore, the researcher applied what she considers as the foundations of the 'How's' and 'Why's' of the connection between IMC and brand recognition. This was followed by the author's own model of analysis and comprehension of the problem at hand, that is, the conceptual model.

The study was anchored on Keller's Brand Equity ModelThis model can also be referred to as the Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) theory developed by Kevin Lane Keller, who is a marketing professor in his book 'Strategic Management' (Keller, 2019). He presents a simple concept of the brand equity model by postulating that, to build a strong brand, one must shape how customers think and feel about your product. One has to build the right type of experiences around your brand, so that customers have specific, positive thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions about it (Keller, 2019).

2. Review Of Literature

2.1   Influence of Sales Promotions on Brand Recognition

Compared to other areas of marketing communication, sales promotion has experienced both dramatic change and growth over the years. Due to this reason, sales promotion is progressively gaining relevance within organizational communication programs (Allaham, 2015). These statements are backed by Mendez, Bendixen, Abratt, Yurova, and O'Leary (2015) who argue that one of the preferred methods of marketing communication is sales promotion. Sales promotions refer to those activities that supplement companies' advertising, professional selling efforts and advertising according to (Lascu & Clow, 2012). Mandić (2009) states that sales promotions consist of many different marketing tools used to encourage purchases by providing enticements. According to Lascu and Clow (2012) sales promotions create incentives for customers to make purchases faster and in greater volumes. Kotler and Keller (2012) suggested that sales promotion is a short-term incentive to encourage the sales of goods or services. In other words, sales promotion is a tool to encourage consumers to purchase goods or services

However according to the authors, what seems to be widely accepted is the temporary and usually incremental effect of sales while the profitability of sales promotion remains to be a belligerent issue. Other scholars also argue that consumers most of the time display an intense switching behaviour post the sales promotion phase (Allaham, 2015; Hosseini & Mehrara, 2013). The authors argue that this behaviour sometimes occurs to an extent of cancelling off the sales gained previously.

Karbasi and Rad (2014) investigated the impact of sale promotions on brand awareness and brand equity among customers of ETKA chain. using online questionnaire via mobile phones data was collected from a sample of 500 customers in Tehran. Structural equation modeling was used to analyze the gathered. The findings revealed that both financial and non-monetary marketing can affect brand awareness, perceived quality and brand association.

Salelaw and Amanpreet (2016) studied effects of sales promotion on the establishment of brand awareness using brand equity in Ethiopia, according to structural equation modelling (SEM) findings there is a positive effect of sales promotion on brand equity awareness in the Ethiopian beer.

2.2   Influence of Online Marketing on Brand Recognition

In the case of every business sector, online advertising is becoming a very hot topic as it plays a very critical role in every organization's holistic marketing strategy (Pawar & Gopal, 2014). This has seen the spectacular growth in advertising budgets allocated to online marketing in the past five years. Even Demishkevich (2015) agrees that the way customers make use of information varies with growing internet adoption rates and development in technology. She postulates that in order for small businesses proprietors to reach target audience across different platforms and devises, they need to grasp online marketing concepts.

Yuvaraj and Indumathi (2018) investigated the influence of digital marketing on product branding in Indonesia. The research focused on how digital marketing has helped customers learn more about businesses and how brands have evolved in the market as a result of technological advancements. The study examines the impact of several digital marketing methods, such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO), e-mail marketing, blogging, mobile marketing, affiliate marketing and others, on customer brand creation. This research aids in determining the link between digital marketing and creating brand equity.

Putri (2021) described how digital/online marketing increases brand awareness. The information was gathered through an interview system with 10 participants from companies that met PROPER's gold criteria and had a background in the environmental field. According to the findings, respondents' brand awareness is poor. The respondents recommended online adverts, search engines, LinkedIn social networking and websites as electronic media to leverage for the firm.

Nuseir (2016) investigated the effect of online internet on brand equity and awareness. The goal of this study was to go into the depths of the internet and determine the potential effects and benefits of utilizing the digital and online media as a marketing tool. The study used a primary data in quantitative research approach and was carried

among 200 consumers. results confirmed that the digital marketing is a beneficial platform to promote and assists businesses in targeting targeted and relevant audiences in effort to enhance their brand awareness and customers loyalty. .

Ahmed et al., (2019) investigated the impact of various online media channels, such as email marketing, social media marketing search engine optimization and company websites and mobile phone marketing on brand recognitions through brand sustainability. The study employed adopted quantitative research approaches in collecting data from 910 responses through an adopted and developed questionnaire. statistical analysis such as exploratory and confirmatory factor in fitting structural equation modelling as suggested by Hayes process approach to examine the mediation and moderation among the variables. results showed that all online media marketing platforms have a favorable and significant impact on creating brand awareness and sustainability for Pakistan's fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) . The results of hypothesis about the moderated mediation impacts of various variables have revealed a substantial relationship between dependent and independent variables.

The modern online digital content marketing has given fresh possibilities to traditional advertising strategy by providing a fundamental location for customers to offer their ideas. According to Chitra and Sasikala (2016), online marketing marketers and buyers a company to start in terms of time and space for a faster response. Online marketers use intuitive and innovative features for providing data and organizing clients based on their needs, therefore it is a fantastic and the best medium diverts with a specific end goal to create brand awareness that aids in brand longevity.

Email marketing has evolved into a powerful efficient approach of communicating a message and sustaining a brand (Barnes, 2002). B2B businesses are the most common consumers of email advertising, and the reason for this is that it saves money on printing, is highly interactive, and has a large user base. It aids in the creation of brand awareness, the improvement and building of marker relationships, and the effective introduction of a company's product (Cao, Liu, Cao,2018). In order to improve things, a new style of online marketing dubbed "authorization marketing" is growing in popularity (Saura et al., 2017). Email marketing is used because it has a number of benefits, including: noticeably higher response rates, an enormous number of customers accessible, interestingly cost-effective form of communication, an impressive return on capital when particularly in comparison to any other medium, it impacts customers more effectively, saves time, establish an effective brand reputation, and is long-term (Kolla, et al., 2011).

2.3   Reviewed Literature and Gaps

From the empirical study summary, it is evident that limited study has been done on the link between IMC and brand Recognition. The rest of the researchers are not coming out clearly on the performance indicators. Despite agreeing with them on how significant IMC is in any business and its significant contribution in study areas, the gaps are evident that none of them actually have concentrated in utilizing IMC in 3-5-star hotels in Nairobi Kenya with a keen look on brand recognition. Three to five star-rated hotels need to implement good marketing communication strategies in order to create a good standing within the communities in which they operate. Marketing communication describes the general planning, implementation and appraisal of an

entity's communication with both internal and external stakeholders. Extant literature has indicated that direct marketing for 3-5 star hotels can include business to business direct marketing in addition to the other conventional methods. Non-monetary sales promotions have a positive impact on the brands of hotel businesses through flyers, branded merchandise and in-store displays which draws the attention of consumers to their brands effectively. Online marketing is an evolving frontier especially in the advent of social media. Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram will boost the hospitality industry both in terms of creating awareness of their brands.

3. Material And Methods

3.1 Sampling

The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional research design (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2013) since it helped to explain how 3-5-star hotels can utilize IMC to create brand recognition. The study targeted hotel frontline employees and line managers i.e., 97 from 5 star, 195 from 4-star and 130 from 3-star in the hotels in Nairobi as respondents. From the target population of 44 hotels, a sample of 30% was taken from within each stratum. After which Fisher et al (1983) formula was used to the actual sample size of frontline employees. Based on the formula, the required sample size is 384 respondents. However, considering a 10% non-response, the study sample size was a total of 422 respondents who were selected from 13 hotels (three 5-star hotels, six 4-star hotels, and four 3-star hotels).

3.2 Data collection

This study used questionnaire. The Likert scale for ranking questions was used for the closed-ended questions in order to gauge the degree of opinion among the respondents. The frontline staff was the respondents. In order to ensure validity of the four constructs being measured, the study employed the content validity test as espoused by (Crowther, 2016). There is no easy way to determine content validity aside from expert opinion. (Crowther, 2016). To ensure consistency or reliability of the variables or items, for internal consistency the researcher computed the alpha coefficient of reliability using the Cronbach's alpha test. The study adopted a value of 0.7 to test for reliability.

3.3 Data Analysis and Model Specification

Before processing the responses, data cleaning was done on the completed questionnaires. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 was used to analyse data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyse the collected data. The former comprised of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. The latter, comprised of a multiple regression model to test the study hypotheses.

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

Y = brand recognition,
α= coefficient of the factor,

X1 = Sales Promotions,
X2 = Online Marketing,
ε = Error Term

4. Findings and Discussion

This section presents the analysis of data obtained in relation to the study variables and the model discussed in previous sections. Four hundred and twenty-two (422) questionnaires were distributed to the respondents, only three hundred and fourteen (314) were returned, giving a response rate of 74.4 percent however, out of 314 returned questionnaires, 57 had missing values and others were wrongly filled due to Covid 19 related challenges. in addition, 10 cases had univariate outliers which were checked using Skewness and kurtosis as recommended by Tabachnick & Fidell (2013, hence reducing the final sample from to two hundred and forty-seven 247 and final response rate of 58.5% which was way above the conventionally accepted rate of 30% (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013)

4.1   Sample Characteristics

This section presents the hotel attributes. hotel attributes justify the interpretation of the findings. The questionnaire sought to find out hotel age, hotel star-rating, hotel size, as shown in Table 1. Findings show that most star rated hotels have operated for at least 10 years in Nairobi County. Findings show that most of star-rated hotels in Nairobi County have low star-ratings. Findings show that most star rated hotels in Nairobi County fall in categories of medium and large.

Table 1   Hotels Attributes

		Frequency	**Percent**
Hotel age	Below 10 yrs	36	14.6
	10 - 20 yrs	152	61.5
	Over 20 yrs	59	23.9
	Total	247	100
Hotel rating (stars)	Three star	91	36.8
	Four star	75	30.4
	Five star	81	32.8
	Total	247	100
Number of rooms	Less than 21	18	7.3
	21 - 40	109	44.1
	41 - 50	47	19
	Over 50	73	29.6
	Total	**247**	**100**

4.2   Univariate Analysis

Univariate analysis includes descriptive and correlation analysis. Descriptive statistics, including the mean and Standard deviation, were obtained for all variables measuring online marketing and sales promotions and brand recognition. The findings on sales promotion summed up to a mean of 3.978 and a standard deviation of 0.422, implying that most of the three to five-star hotels engage in sales promotions. the findings on online marketing summed up to a mean of 3.949 and a standard deviation of 0.466. The implication is that the three to five-star hotels engage in online marketing to promote their brand. the findings on brand recognition summed to a mean of 4.014 and a standard deviation of 0.311. The results indicate that the hotels' customers are aware of their brand and suggest that their marketing strategies could have effectively raised this awareness.

The study conducted correlation analysis to test the relationship strength between the research variables. The findings of the correlation analysis presented in table 2 indicated, there was correlation between sales promotion and brand recognition ($r = 0.582$, $p < 0.01$). The output also shows that online marketing is positively related to brand recognition, with a coefficient of $r = 0.581$, significant at $p < 0.01$. Therefore, sales promotion and online marketing are expected to have a positive relationship with brand recognition

Table 2: Univariate Analysis

n=247	Mean	Std. Deviation	Brand Recognition	Sale promotion	Online Marketing
Brand Recognition	4.014	0.311	1		
Sale promotion	3.978	0.422	.582**	1	
Online Marketing	3.949	0.466	.581**	.270**	1

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

4.3   Hypotheses

Table 3 illustrates the model summary of multiple regression model. The results showed that all the four predictors (sales promotion and online marketing) explained 66.3 percent variation of brand recognition (R squared $=0.663$). The regression analysis findings demonstrated a significant positive relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The ANOVA results in Table 3 showed the significant value was 0.000, which is less than 0.05; therefore, the model is statistically significant in predicting how sales promotion and online marketing influence brand recognition. Given that F computed from the ANOVA table was 119.264, it was deduced that the overall model was significant. The model was fit to predict the effect of sales promotion and online marketing on brand recognition.

Hypothesis 1 (H_{o1}) postulated that there is no significant relationship between sales promotions and brand recognition in three to five-star hotels. The regression results showed that sales promotion had significant estimate coefficients based on $\beta_3 = 0.348$

(p-value = 0.000, which is less than 0.05). As a result, the study rejected the hypothesis that sales promotion has no significant effect on brand recognition. The implication is that there is a 0.348-unit increase in brand recognition in three to five-star hotels for each unit increase in sales promotion. Consistently, Mandić (2009) asserted that sales promotions consist of many different marketing tools used to encourage purchases by providing enticements. The study results are supported by Karbasi and Rad (2014) findings that sales promotions using monetary and non-monetary promotions increase brand recognitions through brand association and brand awareness.

Hypothesis 2 (H_{o1}) stated that there is no significant relationship between online marketing and brand recognition in three to five-star hotels. However, the study findings showed that online marketing had coefficients of the estimate, which was significant basing on β_4= 0.255 (p-value = 0.000 which is less than α = 0.05) implying that we reject the null hypothesis stating there is no significant effect between online marketing and brand recognition. The implication is that there is up to 0.255-unit increase in brand recognition for each unit increase in online marketing. The findings implies that use of online marketing strategies such as customer-friendly websites for consumers to easily locate and book travel-related products, social media platforms that prompt responses to customers problems, suggestions, and complaints and displaying videos clips on YouTube in advertising product and the using E-mails for sending updates for bookings, invoice and receipts enhances brand recognitions. The findings agrees with Pawar & Gopal (2014) and Zickuhr& Smith, (2012) that use online marketing has enhanced brand awareness and recognitions through customized different platforms and devises which covers wider target audience. Supporting this study findings, Yuvaraj & Indumathi, (2018) results showed that digital marketing through digital devices such as search engines, e-mail and website create long lasting memory of the brand and communicate a brand's positioning. Similarly, Putri, (2021) and Nuseir (2016) indicated that online marketing such digital media for example search engines, social media and websites facilitates the companies and brands to increase their popularity and make loyal customers.

Table 2: Hypothesis Testing

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.438	0.170		2.579	0.010		
Sale promotion	0.256	0.030	0.348	8.614	0.000	0.853	1.172
Online marketing	0.170	0.029	0.255	5.801	0.000	0.720	1.390
Model Summary Statistics							
R Square	0.663						
Adjusted R Square	0.658						
Std. Error of the Estimate	0.182						
Durbin-Watson	1.764						
ANOVA results							
F	119.264						
Sig.	0.000						

a Dependent Variable: Brand Recognition

5. Conclusion

sales promotion significantly influenced brand recognition in three to five-star hotels in Nairobi County. Through sales promotion strategies such as quantity price discounts and offering services and products on credit, the hotels can enhance customer loyalty and improve their brand recognition to existing and potential customers. Despite this, it appears that the hotels are yet to capitalize on the various sales promotion strategies since there is limited utilization of after-sales services, products with free gifts, and coupons. There is a possibility of higher brand recognition with the implementation of these sales' promotion strategies.

Finally, online marketing positively influences the brand recognition of three to five-star hotels in Nairobi County. Notably, online marketing makes it possible for hotels to advertise their services to customers from different geographical locations. Customers can access information about the hotels' location, images, and payment details through this advertising before visiting it. Thus, through the hotels' website, the hotels use it as a means to enhance convenience in hotel bookings and payment as well as a marketing channel. In so doing, they also promote their brand recognition.

6. Recommendations

Since sales promotion enhances the brand recognition of three to five-star hotels, hotels need to offer quantity price discounts. Besides, the hotels could offer their services and products on credit to known and regular customers. Moreover, after-sales services such as packaging bags and delivery could improve brand recognition. Additionally, hotels need to participate in exhibitions done by hoteliers locally, regionally and globally to enhance their brand recognition within and outside Kenya.

Finally, online marketing is of the essence in increasing the brand recognition of the three to five-star hotels in Nairobi County. Therefore, it is important for hotels to have customer friendly websites for consumers to easily locate and book travel-related products. Besides, they should have social media platforms that promptly respond to customers problems, suggestions, and complaints. Also, the hotels' directions and photos should be easily accessible on google maps. Other than that, the hotel website should facilitate booking/payment. With this in place, the hotels will be able to enhance their brand recognition.

7. Further Research Recommendations

The study sought to evaluate the influence of integrated marketing and communication tools on brand recognition. There are gaps in the study that offer great prospects for further studies. the study has only relied on questionnaires to gather information on the influence of integrated marketing and communication tools on brand recognition, future scholar could also utilize secondary data. Moreover, future scholars could increase the scope to include firms such as travel and tours in the hospitality industry.

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