

Effect of Integrated Marketing Communications on Institutional Performance of Selected Private Universities in South-West, Nigeria

¹Adegbola Eunice Abimbola, ²Binuyo Adekunle Oluwole & ³Afolabi Gabriel Kolawole

^{1,2&3}*Department of Business Administration and Marketing,
Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State, Nigeria*

Abstract

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is used to plan, execute and evaluate coordinated, measurable, persuasive brand communications programmes over time with consumers, prospects, employees, associates and other targeted relevant external and internal audiences. Private universities in Nigeria are facing several challenges brought about by the vast and complex processes of globalization and liberalization. Some Nigerian universities struggle meet NUC's minimum academic standard due to shortage of academic staff and inadequate teaching facilities and learning of skilled-based courses which have led to poor institutional performance. The study examined the effect of integrated marketing communications on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The study adopted the survey research design. The population of the study consisted of 554 employees that were involved in the student enrolment of the 2019/2020 academic session of the 20 selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. Total enumeration was used to sample all the 554 employees at the selected private universities that were involved in the 2019/2020 academic session. Questionnaire was used as the instrument for primary data collection. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients for the constructs ranged from 0.832 to 0.701. The response rate was 85%. The data gathered was analysed using multiple regression analysis. The results of the analysis revealed that advertising, service promotion, direct marketing, online marketing and public relations all have individual positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommended that universities, especially private universities should invest in integrated marketing communications to improve their institutional performance.

Keywords: *Advertising, Direct marketing, Integrated marketing communications, Institutional performance, Online marketing, Public relations, Service promotion*

Corresponding Author: **Adegbola Eunice Abimbola**

Background to the Study

Private universities need to transform themselves in order to meet the challenges posed by the unfavourable perception by realigning their institutions with the environment, redesigning themselves to achieve new goals, redefining roles and responsibilities, and reengineering their marketing processes and strategies. The negative perception as a result of the university ranking system has played significant role in negatively affecting the performance of several private universities. Adetunji (2015) expressed that there has been decline in quality and performance of higher institutions brought about by a number of factors, which include demography, poor states of economy, weak internal capacity, poor governance, poor research activities, brain drain, political interference, incessant industrial actions, unruly and destructive conduct of undergraduates, poor preparation of entering students, unsuitable policy environment, poor funding, shortages in instructional materials, laboratory equipment and poor library facilities (Adeniyi, Adediran, and Opeyemi, 2016).

Rapid expansion of university education has led to a number of challenges. According to UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (2015), low funding from the exchequer, increased enrolment without commensurate improvement in available facilities, gender inequality, equity and efficiency, political interference and low research capacity, are some of the problems facing universities in the East African region (Pang, 2016). Many African countries have really struggled towards embracing the importance of education (Paul, 2014). Unfortunately, the efforts to create an education system that is promoting such philosophies have been curtailed by the bad economic conditions, poor governance, political instabilities, corruption, and leadership wrinkles in many countries (Paul, 2014).

The lack of a marketing communication focus tends to be the result of how IHEs have evolved over time which has hindered optimal performance of several higher institutions (Yilmaz, 2017). As institutions have grown their enrolment and program offerings, they have also become increasingly fragmented internally (Schultz, 2015). Typically, this has resulted in functions becoming compartmentalized and departments operating without any knowledge of the other parts of the institution thereby resulting into poor institutional performance (Henry, Marcella, and Nigigi, 2017). Individuals within IHEs tend to view themselves as part of a distinct department competing for limited organizational resources rather than as part of a comprehensive system working toward common objectives, thereby contributing to the sub-optimal level of performance witnessed in some of the institutions (Rosengren and Dahlén, 2015). IMC can be generally understood as a concept which provides the idea of how organisations could sustain in the highly competitive global market through a business process that can be evaluated and measured, whereby the communication and behaviour of both internal and external stakeholder groups are being put into emphasis to form a coordinated and consistent brand communications (that is, brand messages, brand image, brand relationships) (Gelard, Boroumand and Ali, 2014).

In the complex global marketplace where intense competition is evident, the traditional marketing tactics which focus on the Four Ps (i.e. price, promotion, place, and product) and the supply-chain approach are unsustainable for an organisation's long-term survival

(Nazanin, 2015). Furthermore, higher institutions of learning are urged to adopt a marketing-oriented approach in order to survive (Amanchukwu, Stanley, and Ololube, 2015); improving their market communications programmes by getting familiar with the principles of service marketing and encouraging communicative interchange among internal and external stakeholder groups (Schüller and Rašticová, 2011). Several studies have investigated the effect of integrated marketing communications (IMC) on organizational performance (Sajuyigbe, Amusat and Oloyede, 2013; Srinivasan, Bajaj and Bhanot, 2016; Syeda and Sadia, 2011; Tackx, Rothenberger and Verdin, 2015; Weerathunga and Pathmini, 2016; Shafayet and Panuel, 2012; Yi-Chih, Wei-Li, Yang-Chu and Chia-Ko, 2014). These studies focused on other sectors leaving a gap on the impact of IMC on institutional performance. It is in lieu of the foregoing that this study intends to examine the effect of integrated marketing communications on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria.

In a perpetually changing society characterized by technological advancement and web instruments, the role of marketing becomes crucial (Vázquez-Casielles, Iglesias & Varela-Neira, 2013). Regardless of the importance of marketing in their daily activities, some private universities still lag behind in the effective use of marketing communications especially emphasizing the basic marketing mix (service, affordability, promotion, and placement) (Dan, Adelina, Elisabeta & Andreas, 2016). Failure to effectively communicate their service offering through the holistic approach of IMC has left several private universities struggling with performance in terms of student enrolment, market share and global best practices. Furthermore, some universities eventually lose some of their enrolled students to other universities highly rated above them as a result of poor marketing communications.

Theoretical Framework

Integrated Marketing Communications Theory

This study was anchored on the integrated marketing communications theory. The origin of the IMC concept can be traced back to the 1990s when Don Schultz first introduced it at Northwestern University (Kitchen & Schultz 1998). The theory was coined in early 1990s by American Advertising Agencies Association (AAAA) as a comprehensive plan to further evaluate the strategic roles of a range of different communication disciplines. Contribution by Nowak and Phelps (1994) and Kitchen (2000) brought out the concept of IMC as a coordinated marketing communication as the sum of all tools involved such as direct marketing, public relations and advertising, the goal of which to achieve the synergy of increasing brand image and influences behavior response from the targeted customers. This study considered this theory because the implementation of integrated marketing communications enables an institution to increase its level of performance by combining elements such as promotion, advertising, online marketing, public relations and direct marketing affect performance through the communication of messages to the environment while taking cognisance of the culture and norms of the environment and receiving feedback from the environment which will be employed to serve students and potential students efficiently thereby positively enhancing the institution's performance.

A constant brand message must be conveyed and tailored to how the customer interacts with specific media. The various communications mix elements are mutually reinforcing (Kotler and Keller, 2005), creating synergies in uplifting the service of the institution. However, for these synergies to be realized, the communications mix must run through the most effective communication media. Marketing communications mix thus plays a critical role in creating awareness and arousing interest and desire of trial and ultimately purchase of the product/service. It can contribute to the performance of the institution by crafting and embedding the brand/institution in the consumer's memory (Kotler, 2005). Therefore, IMC is the result of aligning activities, procedures, messages, and goals in order to communicate with consistency and continuity within and across formal organisational boundaries, (Christen et al., 2007). Message consistency is the crux of IMC (Nowak and Phelps, 1994).

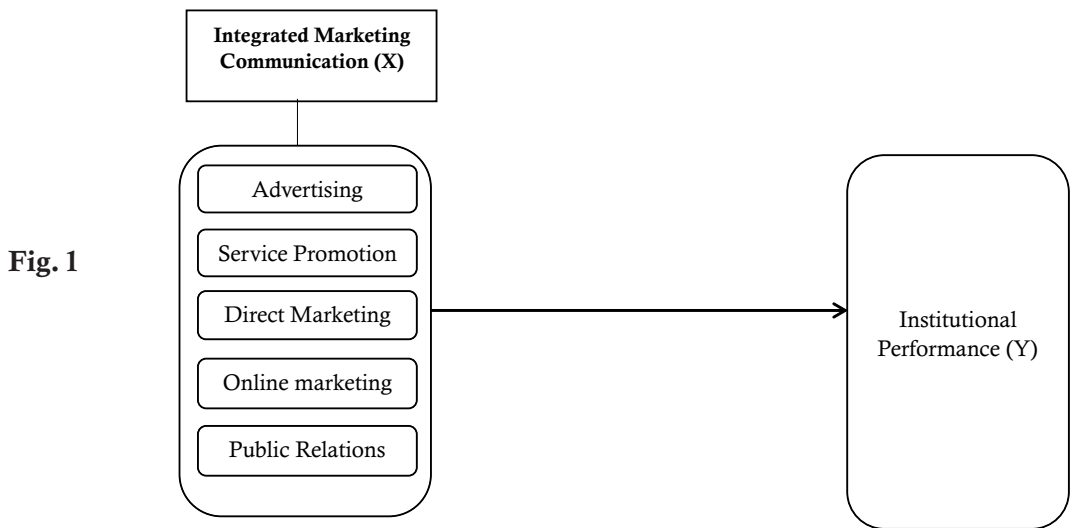


Fig. 1

Source: Researcher's Model (2020)

Regressionally, the econometric model for this study using regression was;

$$IP = \beta_0 + \beta_1AD + \beta_2SP + \beta_3DM + \beta_4OM + \beta_5PR + e_i \dots \dots \dots \text{eq. (i)}$$

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC)

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is an approach to achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign through a well co-ordinated use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other (Ellison, 2010). Integrated marketing communications recognizes the value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines that combines them to provide clarity consistency and maximum communication impact. Several scholars and marketing bodies have offered diverse definitions to the concept of integrated marketing communications. According to Kurtz and Boone (2011), IMC is the bringing together of promotional mixes to arrive at a unified, customer-based sales message. Chartered Institute of Marketing (CIM, 2012) defines IMC as a strategic approach to the management of an organisation's marketing communication

activities. Lamb and Low (2012) are of the opinion that IMC is the systematic coordination of all sales programs mainly: media, advertisement, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and other forms types of communication to have a consistent, unified message which is a customer focused message (Lamb and Low, 2012).

Effective strategies focus on the successful development of integration of marketing communications tools (advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, and personnel selling) to optimize the communications impact on target consumers (Binod, 2012; Kotler, 2006). Publicity and advertising can therefore combine to effect hearing on the cost effectiveness. However, marketers do not take cognizance of this capability when planning promotional strategies, thus failing to put together communication programs from an element to another (Schultz, 2012).

Advertising

Akanbi and Adeyeye, (2011) define advertising as the aim to persuade people to buy. Advertising as the dissemination of information concerning an idea, service or product to compel action in accordance with the intent of the advertiser. Advertisement in such a media as print (newspaper, magazines, billboards, flyers) or broadcast (radio, television) typically consist of pictures, headlines, information about the product and occasionally a response coupon. Broadcast advertisement on the other hand consists of an audio or video narrative that can range from 15seconds spots to longer segments known as infomercials, which generally last 30 to 60 minutes (Akanbi and Adeyeye, 2011).

Advertising as a marketing tool is used by business organisations to inform consumer that the right product is available at the right place, right price and to convince the consumer to purchase them. Advertising comprises all messages that are paid for in the media owned and controlled by people other than the company making the advertisement (Osogbo, 2014). Abiodun (2011) also defines advertising as a non-personal paid form of communication about an organisation or its product to a target audience through a mass broadcast medium by an identified sponsor. Advertising as a promotional tool also tends to remind, reassure, and influence the decisions of the consumers because an advertisement itself enlightens, and persuades consumers on their acceptability of the product offering. For any promotional activity to be called advertisement, it must be paid for (Abiodun, 2011).

Service Promotion

Promotion is an activity that is designed to help boost the marketing of a product or service (Jin-Woo, Yu-Jin & Woo-Choon, 2013; Mahmoud, 2014; Shamout, 2016; Pileliene, 2010). It is very important as it not only helps to boost patronage but it also helps a business to draw new customers while at the same time retaining older ones (Fernando, Claudio, Marcelo and Valter, 2015; Sakara & Alhassan, 2014; Ripon, Mosharraf, Farhad and Jakirul, 2013; Rashid, Fareeha, Rab, Moeed and Hafiz, 2013). It can be done through an advertising campaign, public relation activities, a free sampling campaign and offering additional benefits for the use of a product or service. Promotion influences people to buy and consume the products of a marketer (Oyebamiji, Kareem and Ayeni, 2013). Promotion is defined as marketing activities

usually specific to a period, place or customer group, which encourage a direct response from consumer or marketing intermediaries, through the offer of additional benefits (Peattie & Peattie, 1994). Promotion is the process of persuading the potential customers; company's communication strategy to promote an increase in patronage (Schultz and Block, 2014).

Direct Marketing

According to Nadeem, Naveed, Muhammad, and Komal (2013), direct marketing is an interactive system of marketing, using one or more advertising media to achieve measurable response anywhere, forming a basis for creating and further developing an on-going direct relationship between an organisation and its customers, to be able to create and sustain quality relationship with sometimes hundreds or even thousands of individual customers, an organisation needs to have as much information as possible about each one, and needs to be able to access, manipulate and analyze that information, thus, the database is crucial to the process of building the relationship.

Online Marketing

Online marketing implies packages of measures, which should lead internet users to certain web pages to buy or order certain products or services (French, and Rusell-Bannett, 2015). So web presence is the main object of online marketing. In addition, arrangements outside the internet are included in online marketing, e.g.: a banner on a plane which shows a uniform resource locator (URL) (Lammenett, 2014). Online marketing encompasses any promotional activities undertaken through websites, social networking sites (SNS), emails, mobile phone texts, applications (apps) and online games (Kelly, Vandevijvere, Freeman and Jenkin, 2015). This form of marketing is well-regarded in the literature within marketing and advertising research fields for its ubiquity, interactivity and 24/7 availability (Gupta, Pettigrew, Lam & Tait, 2016). There is a suggestion that online marketing is even more impactful than traditional marketing due to its characteristic of peer endorsement and lack of explicit advertising cues presented in some forms of digital media, for instance, 'seeding' a message on SNS and transmitting this through online communities (Kelly, Vandevijvere, Freeman and Jenkin, 2015).

Public Relations

Public relations are a distinctive management function which helps to establish and maintain mutual lines of communications, understanding, acceptance and cooperation between the organisation and its publicist involves the management of problems or issues which helps management to keep informed on public opinion and respond effectively (Kayode, 2014). According to Watson (2012), the British Institute of public relation defines public relation as a deliberate, planned, and sustained effort to establish and maintain mutual understanding between an organisation and its publics. Similarly, Aikins and Akua (2015) define public relations as the management process whose goal is to attain and maintain accord and positive behaviours among social groupings on which an organisation depends to achieve its mission. Its fundamental responsibility is to build and maintain a hospitable environment for an organisation. Dornyo and Aduku (2015) also define public relations as the management of communication between an organisation and its publics. In the same vein, Rosenberg (2013)

defines public relations as a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success or failure depends. Seitel (2011) indicated that public relations as practiced today is a twentieth century American phenomenon and its fundamental elements of informing people, persuading people and integrating people were basic to earliest society just as they are today. The authors further emphasize that the effective tool to monitor and manage opinion of the general public is through extensive use of public relations practices. Watson (2012) opine that public relations is a management function practiced by a wide range of organisations, companies, governments, non-profit organisations, the educational system, labor unions, politicians, organized sports, and the media.

Institutional Performance

According to Rao (2012), performance is what is expected to be delivered by an individual or set of individuals within a time frame. Here the term “expected” refers to results achieved, quality of work, meeting specifications, generating required quantity of output. Performance of an employee in organisation can be stated as the output delivered in relation to the role of individual and in defined timeline. Likewise, Škerlavaj and Dimovski (2006) explain in their research that business environment is characterized with customers, employees and society mostly, so for performance assessment one should not overlook these stakeholders.

Performance is a multidimensional construct and an extremely vital criterion that determines organisational successes or failures. Prasetya and Kato (2011) define performance as the attained outcomes of actions with skills of employees who perform in some situation. According to Richard (2009) organisational performance encompasses three specific areas of a firm outcomes; financial performance, product market performance and shareholder return. Performance is something which all education institutions strive for, regardless of their size. Small institutions want to get big, big institutions want to get bigger. Indeed, institutions have to grow every year at least, in order to accommodate the increased educational needs that have emerged over time. Smart and Hamm (2003) state that measuring performance in education is very important. If an academic institution wants to deliver quality results, then it should evaluate its performance. Performance is a broader indicator that can include productivity, quality, consistency and so forth. On the other hand, performance measures can include results, behaviors and relative measures, education and training concepts, management development, and leadership training for building necessary skills and attitudes of performance management (Richard, 2009). Thus, organisational performance, however, means different things to different institutions (Richard, 2009).

Integrated Marketing Communications and Institutional Performance

Esposito (2013) elucidated that IMC components significantly affects the performance of a company. Likewise, Sellahvarzi, Mirabi, and Parizi (2014) found that the customer loyalty boosts up along with the business productivity when the corporate uses the perfect blend of IMC components. In the same vein, Ashraf (2014) empirically scrutinizes in his study and articulated a significant relationship between the consumer buying patterns with the sales/service promotion. Similarly, Ercis (2011) found that IMC components when applied

properly in the market significantly effects the market share, customer satisfaction level, brand awareness, brand profitability, customer loyalty, total sales revenue and the overall performance of an organisation. On the contrary, the studies of Chu and Keh (2006), and Netemeyer, et al., (2004) indicated that the individual influence of marketing activities like promotion on the creation/building of brand equity through market performance is unclear as these studies found an insignificant effect of marketing communication on brand equity and market share.

A study conducted by Alphonse, Victor, Fredrick, Patrick, Beatrice, and Odhiambo, (2012); Mohd and Wannur (2012); Ismail, Hussain, Shah and Hussain (2012) focused on the effect of marketing communication strategies on performance of higher institutions. Findings concluded that there was a positive/significant relationship connecting marketing communication strategies and institutional performance. In light of the findings of these studies, marketing communication strategies can be used to reach target potential students and persuade them to enrol. Furthermore, the studies of Agbeja, Adelokun and Akinyemi (2015), Aliata *et al.* (2012) and Manuere, Gwangwava and Kudakwashe (2012) found a statistically significant relationship between sales promotion and performance. They established that sales promotion enhanced brand preference, which then enhanced brand performance hence high profits/performance. Similarly, Asiya (2015) and Ercis (2011) found that IMC components when applied properly in the market significantly effects the market share, customer satisfaction level, brand awareness, brand profitability, customer loyalty, total sales revenue and the overall performance of an organisation. Similarly, Omboi and Mutali (2019) found no significant relationship between social media as a form of advertising on student enrolment of private universities. Likewise, Vázquez-Casielles, Iglesias and Varela-Neira (2013), the study found out a negative relationship between online marketing and customer retention and brand loyalty. Based on the foregoing, this study hypothesizes as follows:

H₀: Integrated marketing communications dimensions have no significant combined effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in Southwest, Nigeria.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed cross-sectional survey research design to examine the effect of integrated marketing communications on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. This design was appropriate for this study because a survey obtains stronger data representation and better approximation with the reality experienced. It encompasses measurement procedures used to measure different relationships and hypothesis with clearly defined information (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). Questionnaire was administered to view the opinion of employees at the selected private universities on the effect of integrated marketing communications on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria.

Population of the Study

In this study, the target population for this study were employees of twenty (20) selected private universities who were involved in the enrolment process for the 2019/2020 academic session at the selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The population of the study was five hundred and fifty-four (554) staff that were involved in the 2019/2020 academic session enrolment.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This study considered the total enumeration of the five hundred and fifty-four (554) staff that were involved in the 2019/2020 academic session enrolment.

Method of Data collection

For the purpose of this study, primary source of data collection was adopted. The primary source of data collection is appropriate because it allows the researcher to generate an accurate understanding of behaviours, events or situations in their present state (Wright & Stigliani, 2013). The primary data was sourced using a well-structured questionnaire adapted by the researcher. In addition, the services of research assistants was employed for the distribution of questionnaire for data collection and adequate training was given to them in manner of approach, ethical consideration and questionnaire coding and entry in order to make them fit for the task.

Methods of Data Analysis

Data collected was analyzed using inferential statistics. Inferential statistics was used to measure the aspects of the effect between integrated marketing communications and customer satisfaction. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to test the hypothesis since this study sought to establish the effect of several independent variables on one dependent variable. This method was suitable because it found the target variables by finding a best suitable fit line between the independent sub-variables and the dependent variable. Regression analysis makes the assumption that the changes in the dependent variable can be modelled as a monotonic linear function of the independent variables i.e a change in the independent variable will result in a change in the dependent variable. Analysis was carried out using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 software.

Mathematically, $Y = f(X)$

Where: Y = Dependent Variable (Customer Satisfaction)

X = Independent Variables (Integrated Marketing Communications)

Functionally,

$$Y = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5) \text{----- eq (ii)}$$

Y = Customer Satisfaction (CS)

x_1 = Advertising (AD)

x_2 = Service Promotion (SP)

x_3 = Direct Marketing (DM)

x_4 = Online marketing (OM)

x_5 = Public Relations (PR)

The Regression Model is as follows:

$$IP = f(AD, SP, DM, OM, PR)$$

$$IP = \beta_0 + \beta_1AD + \beta_2SP + \beta_3DM + \beta_4OM + \beta_5PR + e_i \dots \dots \dots \text{eq. (iii)}$$

Result and Discussion

The researcher distributed 554 copies of questionnaire to the respondents. A total of 473 copies of questionnaire were properly filled and returned. This represented an overall response rate of 85.4%.

Restatement of Hypothesis One

H₀₁: Integrated marketing communications dimensions have no significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria.

Multiple regression analysis was performed to test the hypothesis with institutional performance as the dependent variable, and integrated marketing communications dimensions as the independent variable. The data for integrated marketing communication dimensions were generated by adding all the responses of all items for advertising, service promotion, direct marketing, online marketing and public relations, while that of institutional performance was generated by adding all the responses of all items for market share, student enrolment, customer loyalty, students' brand loyalty and global best practices. Data from four hundred and seventy-three (473) respondents were analyzed. The results of the multiple regression analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of multiple regression analysis for effects of integrated marketing communications dimensions combined on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria

N	Model	B	Sig.	T	ANOVA (Sig.)	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F (df)
473	(Constant)	1.220	0.479	0.709	0.000 ^b	0.909	0.908	936.246 (5,467)
	Advertising	0.985	0.000	6.762				
	Service promotion	0.510	0.000	3.526				
	Direct marketing	0.875	0.000	5.022				
	Online marketing	1.081	0.000	7.164				
	Public relations	1.435	0.000	8.433				
Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, Service promotion, Direct marketing, Online marketing, Public relations								
Dependent Variable: Institutional Performance								

Source: Field Survey, 2019

Interpretation

Table 1 shows the multiple regression analysis results for the effect of integrated marketing communications dimensions (advertising, service promotion, direct marketing, online marketing and public relations) on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The results revealed that all the dimensions of integrated marketing communications have a positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The results indicated that advertising ($\beta = 0.985$, $t = 6.762$, $p < 0.05$), service promotion ($\beta = 0.510$, $t = 3.526$, $p < 0.05$), direct marketing ($\beta = 0.875$, $t = 5.022$, $p < 0.05$), online marketing ($\beta = 1.081$, $t = 7.164$, $p < 0.05$) and public relations ($\beta = 1.435$, $t = 8.433$, $p < 0.05$) all have individual positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. This implies that private universities in South-West, Nigeria should consider integrated marketing communications in to improve their institutional performance.

The coefficient of determination, R^2 is 0.909 which indicates that integrated marketing communications dimensions have a strong positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The coefficient of multiple determination, adjusted R^2 is 0.908 ($F_{(5,467)} = 936.246$, $p = 0.000$) which indicates that integrated marketing communications dimensions explained 90.8% of the changes in institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. Also, the F-statistics ($df = 5, 467$) = 936.246 at $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the overall model is significant in predicting the effect of integrated marketing communications dimensions on institutional performance which implies that integrated marketing communications dimensions have a significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The multiple regression model is expressed as thus:

$$IP = 1.220 + 0.985AD + 0.510SP + 0.875DM + 1.081OM + 1.435PR \dots \dots \dots \text{eq. (iv)}$$

Where:

- IP = Institutional Performance
- AD = Advertising
- SP = Service Promotion
- DM = Direct Marketing
- OM = Online Marketing
- PR = Public Relations

The regression model shows that holding integrated marketing communications dimensions to a constant zero, institutional performance would be 1.220 implying that without integrated marketing communications dimensions, institutional performance of the selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria would be 1.220 which is positive showing an improvement. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that when advertising, service promotion, direct marketing, online marketing and public relations are improved by one unit, institutional performance would be positively affected with an increase of 0.985, 0.510, 0.875, 1.081 and 1.435 respectively. The result shows an overall statistical significance

with $p < 0.05$ which implies that integrated marketing communications dimensions are important determinants of institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The result suggests that for private universities in South-West, Nigeria to improve their performance, they must invest heavily on advertising, service promotion, direct marketing, online marketing and public relations. Therefore, the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that integrated marketing communications dimensions have no significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria, Nigeria was rejected.

Discussion

Hypothesis one set out to investigate the effect of integrated marketing communications dimensions on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The results revealed that all the dimensions of integrated marketing communications have a positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. The results indicated that advertising ($\beta = 0.985$, $t = 6.762$, $p < 0.05$), service promotion ($\beta = 0.510$, $t = 3.526$, $p < 0.05$), direct marketing ($\beta = 0.875$, $t = 5.022$, $p < 0.05$), online marketing ($\beta = 1.081$, $t = 7.164$, $p < 0.05$) and public relations ($\beta = 1.435$, $t = 8.433$, $p < 0.05$) all have individual positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. On the overall, the result revealed that integrated marketing communications have positive and significant effect on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. This implies that private universities in South-West, Nigeria should consider integrated marketing communications in to improve their institutional performance. On the overall, the result revealed that integrated marketing communications have positive and significant effect on institutional of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria.

This finding is in congruence with Ellison (2010) who assert that integrated marketing communications is an approach to achieving the objectives of a marketing campaign through a well co-ordinated use of different promotional methods that are intended to reinforce each other. Similarly, Kurtz and Boone (2011) opine that integrated marketing communications is the bringing together of promotional mixes to arrive at a unified, customer-based sales message. In the same vein, Lamb and Low (2012) are of the opinion that IMC is the systematic coordination of all sales programs mainly: media, advertisement, sales promotion, personal selling, public relation and other forms types of communication to have a consistent, unified message which is a customer focused message. Likewise, Binod (2012) argue that effective strategies focus on the successful development of integration of marketing communications tools (advertising, public relations, direct marketing, online marketing, promotion, and personnel selling) to optimize the communications impact on target consumers. Furthermore, Zimuto (2013) observes that IMC is not just meant to bring together the promotional tools but is a brand strategic process. These tools can be combined with diverse grades of intensity applied in order to converse with consumers. Similarly, Onditi, Njuki, Okoth, Mwangi, Kinyanjui, Wanjiru and Mwirigi (2014) affirm that this can be achieved using marketing communication tools as the key influential element to communicate certain insights of the business and its products to consumers and stakeholders.

In congruence with the finding of this study, Patricia, Ondoro and Aila (2017) opine that advertising is intended to promote products by means of propagating them into using different media kinds for instance print and electronic. Similarly, Charity (2015) and Nnenanya, Chinedu and Onuoha (2016) state that advertising messages are capable to reaching large numbers of target group and is therefore able to create awareness, convince and remind them about the company's products. Likewise, Apoghiran (2016) opine that direct interaction with the target consumers is an effective way of creating awareness and a means through which the business agents carry along element of public relations hence portraying credibility for the company and products.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The general purpose of this study was to examine effect of integrated marketing communications dimensions on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria. From the data collected, the respondents reported that the result of the hypothesis showed that all the dimensions of integrated marketing communications have positive and significant effect on institutional performance. Based on the findings of this study, the study recommended that universities, especially private universities should invest in integrated marketing communications in order to improve their performance.

Limitation and Suggestion for Further Studies

Although the finding of this study provides new insights into the effect of integrated marketing communications dimensions on institutional performance of selected private universities in South-West, Nigeria, it is not without some limitation. While this study focused on the educational sector, this might have affected generalizability of the research findings to other sectors such as manufacturing and service sectors and other geo-political zones in Nigeria. Arising from the study, the following suggestion for future research in integrated marketing communications and customer satisfaction are recommended. The study concentrated only on private universities in South-West, future research should include other private universities in other regions across the federation to ascertain how integrated marketing communications affects institutional performance. Also, this study focused mainly on private universities. Further studies should include federal and state-owned universities to evaluate the effect of integrated marketing communications on institutional performance.

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