



THE IMPACT OF INTERNALLY INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS ON SALES FORCE PERFORMANCE: A RELATIONAL STUDY

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Abstract

Current research investigated, via a sample of 301 UK employees, whether levels of sales force integration into marketing communications were linked to important organisational outcomes. Findings are that sales force integration into marketing communications is beneficial for several outcomes including those of job satisfaction, involvement, commitment, employee motivation and performance. The research makes an empirical, theoretical and practical contribution by providing evidence to support the academic theory that having internally integrated marketing communications is important and therefore that organisations should attempt to ensure that all marketing communications are integrated internally as well as externally if optimal outcomes are desired.

Keywords: IMC, Internally Integrated Marketing Communications, Performance, Sales force

INTRODUCTION

“The sales-person should not be seen as simply an actor in the distribution process, but rather should be integrated into the processes of product (or service) positioning and marketing communications.” (Baumgarth & Binckebanck, 2011, p. 493).

The aim of this paper is to explore whether levels of internally integrated marketing communications (IMC) involving the sales force have an observed effect on sales force performance and related outcomes. The aim is to investigate the issues involved and to discover whether there are communications and other organisational benefits from making



organisational marketing communications integrated internally (Al-Azzam et al., 2024). The focus being on the key customer-organisation communicators; the sales force (Usani & Sampson, 2023). The importance of internal communications has been highlighted in an empirical study of major UK firms which examined the role of internal communications in building and nourishing employee relations, establishing trust, providing timely and reliable information and contributing to motivation (Udonde et al., 2022). Kimani's (2024) study concluded that communication with the internal audience makes a significant contribution to corporate communications. Furthermore, internal communications need to be closely allied with external messages so that employees have relevant, timely and accurate information with which to communicate with external stakeholders (Brown et al, 2024). Current research goes beyond examining whether employees receive communications, to investigate whether key performance outcomes are also related to those communications.

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS

In 2018 a review of the available empirical studies on integrated marketing communications (IMC) discovered that a commonly accepted characterisation of the term was not evident. However it was clear that academics embraced a wider and more inclusive definition of the term than practitioners (Šerić, 2018). In particular academics are of the view that IMC ought to have an internal as well as an external focus (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011). A 1993 definition of IMC by Duncan states that IMC is:

“the process of strategically developing and controlling or influencing all messages used to build and nourish relationships with customers and other stakeholders”
(Hutton, 1996).

This implies that a wide range of communications are included in this including communications from public relations, financial communications and corporate communications in general. Corresponding with this view, the IMC concept is reported to incorporate the idea that marketing communications should speak with ‘one-voice’ across all stakeholders and the entire organisation inclusive of all its internal functions (Porcu et al., 2012; Al-Azzam et al., 2024). Marketing communication, to be counted as being integrated, should supposedly be consistent in its messages (Khizar et al., 2016). Consistent communication builds credibility and trust, as employees see the organisation as reliable. This creates a sense of commitment, leading to higher levels of engagement and performance. Inconsistencies in communication can lead to confusion among the sales force. Therefore, organisations should develop clear and coordinated communication processes and ensure that all communication materials are credible (Kimani, 2024).

The original conceptualisation underlying integrated marketing communications (IMC) was therefore along the lines that all marketing communications material, such as those involved in advertising, direct mail, on-pack labels, and signage should be organised along a common theme or idea and work harmoniously together (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997).

This viewpoint was tacitly understood within early articles on IMC e.g. (Pickton & Hartley, 1998). The idea was that IMC should be unified and consistent in what it communicated, across all marketing communications procedures (Phelps & Johnson, 1996). Commentators maintained that all IMC should be coordinated into a “coherent and cohesive whole” (p.20) emphasising the outward direction of communications towards customers and other external stakeholders (Schultz & Schultz, 1998). Integrated communication is effective when employees perceive consistency and coordination in marketing communications. In addition, organisations that prioritise integrated communication with clarity and consistency are more likely to have motivated employees (Iqbal, 2021). Furthermore, it is essential for organisations to establish consistency in internal messaging across all communication channels to reinforce organisational values and strategic goals (Kimani, 2024).

Hutton points out that few, if any, scholars or practitioners would argue that marketing communications should not be integrated. Further, that using the word “integrated” was an acknowledgement that historically, marketing communications have been less than fully integrated and that in practice a lack of integration is linked to impoverished communications or a deficit of cooperation rather than to philosophical disagreements (Hutton, 1996). Schultz also recognised that inadequate integration stems from the complexities of corporate structure, especially in larger, more complex organisations. When diverse communications specialists work within discrete departments such as sales promotions, advertising, public relations and direct marketing then a lack of integration of marketing communications may originate out of a paucity of cooperation between departments (Schultz, 1992; Al-Azzam et al., 2024).

Brand managers may have no incentive or authority to integrate communications across the whole organisation and departmental specialisations may mean that cross-cooperation and cross collaboration is difficult; simultaneously, outward facing specialists may ignore internal communications integration because they do not see it as their role (Schultz, 1992). Such obstructions to the external and internal integration of marketing communications as identified by Schultz, may be just as relevant today as they were in 1992 when Schultz first published theories about this. Thus, well integrated marketing communications may be achieved in practice via personal relationships and by holding inter-departmental staff meetings, and engaging in everyday communications inside organisations (Shrestha, 2020). In order to accomplish the organisational strategic goals, integrated marketing communications must

generally be a crucial part of the corporation's business strategy (Qasem et al., 2022). Internal communication strategies are essential for promoting effective communication within organisations, enhancing employee engagement, and significantly influencing overall performance (Kimani, 2024).

Hutton argues that, from a practitioner's point of view, the idea that marketing communications should be integrated was part of an attempt by advertising agencies to expand their revenue base by incorporating functions like public relations and corporate communications into their service offerings to clients. It was an appeal to clients that advertising agencies were best placed to manage and coordinate efforts at marketing communications integration. On the other hand from an academic point of view the idea of IMC was to present a purportedly new way to look at, conceptualise and investigate marketing as a discipline (Hutton, 1996).

The main principle involved in achieving integrated marketing communications (IMC), is that each organisation must speak in 'one voice' and that all its communications should be integrated (Nowak & Phelps, 1994, Duncan & Mulhern, 2004). However "some organisational structures isolate communications, data, and even managers from each other; for example the PR department often doesn't report to marketing, the sales-force rarely meets the advertising or sales promotion people, and so on" and because of that isolation the "sales-force doesn't usually get involved in all of the organisational marketing communications because of their isolation from those communications and further, they rarely meet employees from other departments such as advertising or sales promotion" (Smith & Taylor, 2004). This clearly shows a lack of internally integrated marketing communication within the organisation. When employees are kept informed and involved in the marketing communication process, they tend to feel more valued and engaged in their work, which ultimately leads to better performance (Kimani, 2024).

According to Usani and Sampson (2023);

"Internal marketing is the process of making internal products (jobs) available to meet the needs of a key customer (the sales force) while also satisfying the organisation's overall objectives."

Brown et al. (2024) also mentioned that many organisations recognise staff as 'internal customers' to be served and jobs as 'internal products' that provide co-created value.

Although many researchers in the past have emphasised the importance of effective internal communication with its employees, others have described it as an element of corporate communications and explored it in the context of the corporate communications function (Tukiainen, 2001; Dolphin, 2005; Foreman & Argenti, 2005; Welch & Jackson, 2007; Tench &

Yeomans, 2009; Conaway & Wardrope, 2010; Chen et al., 2011; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Munir et al., 2015; Deepa & Baral, 2021; Qasem et al., 2022; Al-Azzam et al., 2024) Nevertheless, very little attention has been paid to internal communications (Yeomans, 2008; Udonde et al., 2022; Usani & Sampson, 2023; Kimani, 2024) and improvement in this area is still desirable (Rogala & Kaniewska-Sęba, 2013; Iqbal, 2021; Brown et al., 2024). For example, in a review of the content of ten essays on integration in 'Campaign' magazine in 2010, it was found that advertising practitioners did not recognise an internal marketing orientation for IMC whereas academics do recognise this (Laurie & Mortimer, 2011).

Until now, the lack of, or poor internal communications has perhaps been the most common problem among organisations because external customers have always been the primary focus of organisations as they aim to enhance public relations and achieve customer loyalty aimed at increasing sales and eventually organisational profitability (Tekin & Erol, 2017). In contrast, internal customers such as the sales force have not been preferred or given as much attention as external customers (Iqbal, 2021). Organisations should theoretically communicate well with their sales people, clearly sharing the organisational vision and values, rather than focusing solely on profit-making (Jaupi & Llaci, 2015). To achieve this, they need to implement effective integrated marketing communication practices that positively influence sales force performance (Udonde et al., 2022).

Marketing managers thus need to consider integration as a holistic concept rather than just as a part of their marketing mix (Kitchen et al., 2004; Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015; Melewar et al., 2017). Therefore, integrated marketing communications should not be just limited to delivering a consistent message to the consumer to achieved organisational goals, but it should also involve all stakeholders to help achieve these organisation's strategic goals (Iqbal, 2021). This should include internal stakeholders such as the sales force because internal communications are expected to have a role in building and nourishing employee relations, establishing trust, providing timely and reliable information to staff, and thereby contributing to general employee motivation, thus making a significant contribution to performance and to a fully developed corporate communications strategy (Ferdous, 2008; Shrestha, 2020).

Ferdous (2008) argues that gains in competitive advantage may be gained when internal communications are integrated, because through this integration, employees are better able to deal with external customers and pass on messages which are consistent with what the firm and its brands stand for. This concept advocates that in order to have satisfied customers, organisations must also ensure that their employees are satisfied, and employee satisfaction can be achieved by focusing on internal marketing communications (Usani & Sampson, 2023). Further, internal communications integration reduces employee confusion and increases their

trust in the organisation, making them better ambassadors for the firm. Recent IMC scholars agree that IMC should be aligned internally within firms as well as externally (Porcua et al., 2020). In addition, internal marketing communications enhances employee's appreciation of their employers, which in turn boosts sales force performance (Iqbal, 2021; Brown et al., 2024). This current research investigates the influence of such alignment on organisational objectives such as performance outcomes.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPED

Commentators on IMC have noted that empirical research needs to demonstrate whether or not relationships between IMC and other key marketing variables exist (Šerić, 2018). Among possible variables, Ferdous speculated that firms which adopted internal IMC practices directed at employees would be able to promote greater satisfaction (Usani & Sampson, 2023) and commitment among those employees (Ferdous, 2008). This led to the first and second hypotheses.

H1: The more integrated the sales-force is with the organisation's marketing communications the higher the level of sales-force job satisfaction.

H2: The more integrated the sales-force is with the organisation's marketing communications the higher the level of sales-force commitment.

Employees who do feel valued by and committed to an organisation may also be expected to work harder on its behalf and to be more productive (Boddy & Taplin, 2016). Ferdous (2008) also states that it is commonly expected that integrated marketing communication should be good for the 'bottom line', profitability and productivity, and thus it can be expected to have an influence on performance (Brown et al., 2024) this led to our third hypothesis.

H3: The more integrated the sales-force is with the organisation's marketing communications the higher the level of sales-force performance.

Greater internal marketing communications integration should foster greater levels of employee 'buy-in', trust and motivation (Ferdous, 2008) as well as engagement (Mishra et al., 2014) and this should be expressed in terms of the sales force being more involved and motivated (Kimani, 2024) as expressed in our fourth and fifth hypotheses, below.

H4: The more integrated the sales-force is with the organisation's marketing communications the higher the level of sales-force job involvement.

H5: The more integrated the sales-force is with the organisation's marketing communications the higher will be sales-force motivation.

Despite the acceptance of the importance of the concept of IMC being recognised and well researched, Kitchen, a leading author on IMC, has called for more evidence to be presented from companies regarding IMC and its utility (Kitchen, 2017). This research answers that call by investigating the link between the internal integration of marketing communications and sales force performance.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Study

This research adopted a quantitative, positivist methodology whereby 340 salespeople from one large retail store in the UK were approached and asked to complete a paper questionnaire concerning various aspects of their jobs. The target population of the study was defined as 'sales force only' (front-line employees) in the organisation who deal with the customers directly. As the current research is based on the sales force, it was thus decided not to add any supervisors or managers in this sample size. At the main stage of the research, permission to conduct the survey was obtained from the store manager to contact all salespeople in the organisation.

The survey pack included an information sheet which described the purpose of the study, a consent form, a demographics form and self-administrated survey questionnaire.

Sampling

The sample selection was based on the participant's eligibility, which stated that participants had to meet the following criteria at the time of taking the survey:

- must currently be employed in the corporate organisation
- is classified as a non-management employee, i.e. a sales force member only
- must be 18 years of age or older
- must be able to write and read English

A sample of 301 people returned the questionnaire and these responses form the basis of this research. Out of 301, the majority 220 (73%) were female. A large minority (41.2%) had worked for 1 to 5 years in the organisation. For many this was their first sales job 139 (46.2%). The ages of respondents indicated that 71 (23.6%) of the respondents were between the ages of 18 to 25 years, 86 (28.6%) were between the ages of 26 to 35 years, 82 (27.2%) were between the ages of 36 to 45 years, 41 (13.6%) were between the ages of 46 to 55 years and 21 (7%) were aged over 55. Most, 276 (91.7%), of the respondents were white.

Demographic data was collected on participant's gender (Nominal data), age (Interval data), level of education (ordinal data), years of employment at current job (Interval/Nominal

data), job experience (Nominal) and ethnicity (Nominal data). Nominal, interval and ordinal levels of measurement for the demographic questions were used.

In the current study, out of a total of 340 questionnaires that were distributed to the sales force, 39 did not respond, making a total of 301 responses received which is considered a good sample size in quantitative research (Mugenda & Mugenda, 2003; Saunders, 2011).

Measures Used

Sales-force level of IMC: This construct was measured by adapting the 'IMC mini-audit scale' (Duncan & Moriarty, 1997). A modified version of was used in order to measure the extent to which the sales-force was integrated into marketing communications. Using Cronbach's α as a measure of internal consistency, the coefficient for the sales force integration construct looked very good at .90 and the inter-item correlations were all positive. A sample item is "Employees are regularly kept informed about what is happening at the company".

Sales-force Job Satisfaction: This construct was assessed by using the 'Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS)' developed by Spector in 1985 (Spector, 1985). JSS was adapted to measure how sales-force integration affects their job satisfaction. Cronbach's alpha for the construct of sales force job satisfaction construct was also strong at .88 and the inter-item correlations were all positive. This is in-line with the findings of the original inventors of the scale, Spector (1996), who reported an average internal consistency (coefficient alpha) of .82 across fifteen studies (Spector & Jex, 1998). A sample item is "I feel a sense of pride in doing my job".

Sales-force Job Performance: This construct was measured by adapting the 'Sales force Performance Scale (SPS)' developed by Behrman and Perreault in 1982 (Behrman & Perreault Jr, 1982) in order to measure how sales-force integration affects their job performance. Cronbach's alpha for the sales force job performance construct was comparatively low relative to other constructs at .70, but still within accepted standards for behavioral research as reported by the original inventors of the scale (Behrman & Perreault Jr, 1982). A sample item is "I know enough about our products to do my job well".

Sales-force Job Involvement: This construct was assessed by using the 'Job Involvement Scale (JIS)' introduced by Lodahl & Kejner in 1965, in order to measure the impact of sales-force integration on the sales-force job involvement (Lodahl & Kejnjar, 1965). Cronbach's alpha for the construct of sales force job involvement was also very strong at .91, and the inter-item correlations were all positive and this is also in-line with the findings of the original inventors of the scale. A sample item is "I am very much involved personally in my work".

Sales-force Job Commitment: This construct was measured by adapting the 'Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)' developed by Mowday, Steers and Porter in 1979 in order to measure how sales-force integration affect their job commitment. Cronbach's alphas for the construct of sales force job commitment also looked very good at .89 and inter-item correlations were again all positive and this is also in-line with the findings of the original inventors of the scale. A sample item is "I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this organisation".

Sales-force Job Motivation: This construct was measured by adapting the 'Job Diagnostic Survey' (JDS) introduced by Hackman and Oldham in 1974, in order to measure the impact of sales-force integration on sales-force job motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1974). Cronbach's alphas for the construct of sales force job motivation looked quite good at .75, and again the inter-item correlations were all positive. A sample item is "I feel a great sense of personal satisfaction when I do this job well".

ANALYSIS

Relationships between the data collected were investigated via correlations, illustrated graphically in scatter plots of which one is included in this paper, and were also analysed via regression analysis as reported below. Firstly, correlations between constructs are shown below.

Table 1: Pearson's Correlation Matrix for all Constructs

Pearson's Correlation Matrix for all constructs	Mean (1-5)	SD	SFIMC	JS	JP	JI	JC	JM
Sales Force Integration into Marketing Communications (SFIMC)	2.99	.88	1					
Job Satisfaction (JS)	2.98	.72	.785**	1				
Job Performance (JP)	3.84	.57	.689**	.573**	1			
Job Involvement (JI)	2.78	.72	.755**	.775**	.583**	1		
Job Commitment (JC)	3.22	.65	.788**	.732**	.651**	.801**	1	
Job Motivation (JM)	3.38	.77	.574**	.688**	.688**	.493**	.493**	1

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

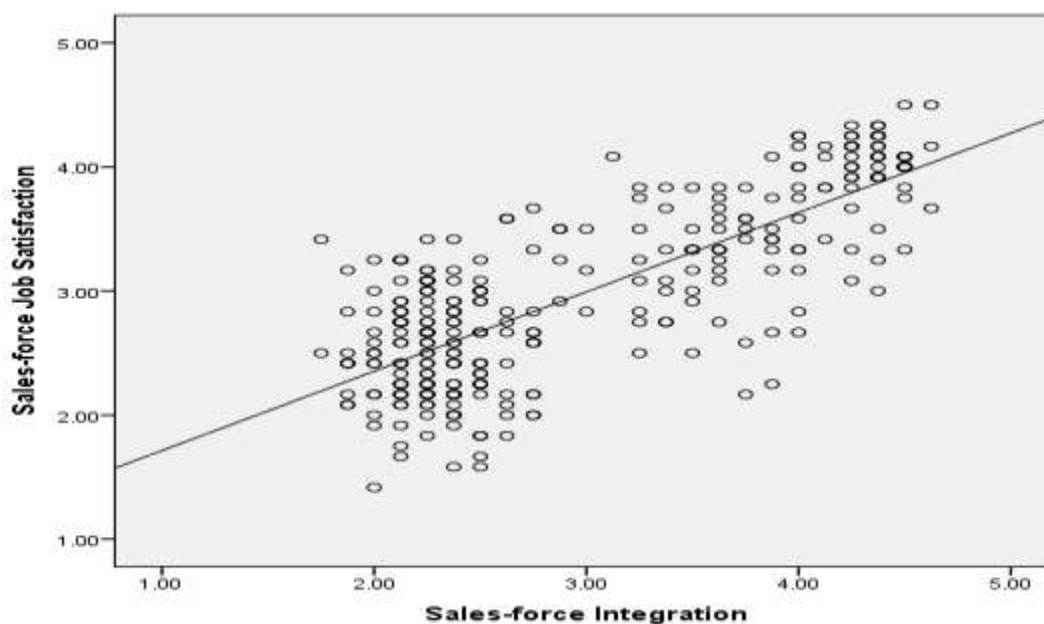
Means are from a 1-5 scale where 5 = strongly agree

Correlations between the constructs are quite strong, indicating that there is a relationship between sales force integration into marketing communications and the outcome variables. It appears that the outcome variables are dependent on the level of integration of the sales force into marketing communications.

To display one of these correlations in more detail a scatter plot for the construct of sales force job satisfaction is shown in Figure 1 (below). While this is a graphic illustration of one of the relationships shown in table 1, we have included it because a visual delineation aids some people's understanding of the relationship. Other scatter plots demonstrate similar relationships between all the dependent variables therefore we include just one of the possible scatter plots in this paper.

This illustrates a strong degree of positive correlation between sales force integration and sales force job satisfaction. This is illustrated graphically by the steepness of the line of regression, with the proximity of the points around the regression line, and also by the high correlation value ($r = .785$) and by the fact that the P-value is highly significant ($P = .000$). In other words, as sales force marketing communications integration increases, so does sales force job satisfaction.

Figure 1: Scatter plot of Sales Force Integration versus Sales Force Job Satisfaction



Person correlation of Sales force integration and Sales force Job Satisfaction Construct;
 $r = 0.785$, P-Value = 0.000

Regression analysis is commonly used to test a hypothesis (Bryman & Cramer, 2012) and goes beyond Pearson's correlation analysis (r), which verifies the strength of any relationship between variables, to make the stronger claim that illustrates the predictive properties of one or more variables on another variable. In this current investigation, a simple regression analysis was undertaken to understand how much the independent variable (sales

force integration) explained the variance in the dependent variables. Regression analysis was thus used for each of the constructs in turn and the dependant variables and sales force integration as the predictor (independent) variable can be seen below in Table 2. A basic objective of performing this regression analysis is to measure how much variation in one variable affects variations in another variable. The P-value (0.000) obtained for each construct in the table below shows that the model as whole is significant as $P < .001$.

Table 2: Regression Model: Independent variable is Sales force Integration

Regression Model	Dependent Variables	R ²	Standard Error	P-Value
1	Sales force Job Satisfaction	.617	0.44	.000
2	Sales force Job Performance	.475	0.41	.000
3	Sales force Job Involvement	.570	0.47	.000
4	Sales force Job Commitment	.620	0.40	.000
5	Sales force Job Motivation	.330	0.63	.000

In the regression analysis in Table 2 above, the finding $R^2 = .617$ suggests that about 62% of the variation in sales force job satisfaction can be accounted for by sales force integration.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The current study found that a positive, strong and significant correlation exists between sales force integration and performance outcomes and the higher the level of integration, the higher the sales force performance. This relationship was confirmed with the help of correlation and regression analysis. For example, the findings from the data analysis confirm that a positive, strong and significant correlation exists between sales force integration and sales force job satisfaction. Findings as they relate to each hypothesis are discussed below.

Sales force integration and sales force job satisfaction

The first hypothesis (H1) posited: *'The more integrated the sales force with corporate marketing communications, the higher the level of sales force job satisfaction.'*

In overall terms, this hypothesis is supported by current research findings. The results in Table 1 show that there was a very high, positive and significant correlation coefficient (.785) between sales force integration and the construct of sales force job satisfaction. As sales force integration increases, so does sales force job satisfaction. In terms of the individual elements in the construct of job satisfaction, all twelve of the items measured were positively influenced by the presence of sales force integration within the organisation in an extremely significant

manner. This is graphically shown in the scatter plot diagram in Figure 1 where the regression line ($R = .785$) started from the bottom left and moved upwards to the right, and showed a highly significant ($P = 0.000$) relationship (Pallant, 2013) between these two constructs.

In the regression analysis in Table 2, the finding, $R^2 = .617$ suggests that approximately 62% of the variation in sales force job satisfaction can be accounted for by sales force integration. The P-value (.000) obtained from the result was highly significant, which suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, the findings from the data analysis confirm that a positive, strong and significant correlation exists between sales force integration and sales force job satisfaction. This means that by increasing sales force integration, sales force job satisfaction may also increase.

Sales force integration and sales force job performance

The second hypothesis (H2) suggested: *'The more integrated the sales force with corporate marketing communications, the higher the level of sales force performance.'*

This hypothesis is also supported by the findings from the research in this current study. In terms of the overall correlation between the presence of sales force integration and the construct of sales force job performance, the results show (Table 1) that there is a high, positive and significant correlation coefficient (.689). As sales force integration increases, so does sales force job performance. In terms of the individual elements in the construct of job performance, all six of the items measured were positively affected by the level of sales force integration in a highly significant manner.

In the regression analysis in Table 2, the finding, $R^2 = .475$ suggests that about 48% of the variations in sales force job performance can be accounted for by sales force integration. The P value (.000) obtained from the result was highly significant ($P < 0.01$), and this supports the hypothesis that the more integrated the sales force with corporate marketing communications, the higher the level of sales force performance. The findings from the data analysis illustrate that a positive, strong and significant correlation exists between sales force integration and sales force job performance. This means that by increasing sales force integration, sales force job performance may also increase.

Sales force integration and sales force job involvement

The third hypothesis (H3) stated: *'The more integrated the sales force with corporate marketing communications, the higher the level of sales force job involvement.'*

This hypothesis is also supported by the findings from the research in this current study. In terms of the overall correlation between the presence of sales force integration and the

construct of sales force job involvement, the results in Table 2 show that there is a very high, positive and significant correlation coefficient (.755, $p < 0.01$). This shows that as sales force integration increases, so does sales force job involvement. In terms of the individual elements in the job involvement construct, all 14 of the items measured were positively affected by the presence of sales force integration within the organisation in a highly significant manner.

In regression analysis (Table 2), the finding, $R^2 = .570$ suggests that 57% of the variation in sales force job involvement can be accounted for by sales force integration. The P-value (.000) obtained from the result was highly significant ($P < 0.01$), and this leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis with the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. This means that by increasing sales force integration, sales force job involvement may also increase.

Sales force integration and sales force job commitment

The fourth hypothesis (H4) posited: *'The more integrated the sales force with corporate marketing communications, the higher the level of sales force commitment.'*

This hypothesis is also supported by the findings from the research in this current study. In terms of the overall correlation between the presence of sales force integration and the construct of sales force job commitment, the results in Table 2 show that there is a very high, positive and significant correlation coefficient (.788, $p < 0.01$). This means that if sales force integration increases, so does sales force job commitment. In terms of the individual elements in the construct of job commitment, all fourteen of the items measured were positively affected by the presence of sales force integration within the organisation in a highly significant manner.

In regression analysis (Table 2) the findings, $R^2 = .620$ suggests that 62% of the variation in sales force job commitment can be accounted for by sales force integration. The P-value (.000) obtained from the result was highly significant ($P < 0.01$), which suggests the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. The findings from data analysis confirm that there is a positive, strong and significant correlation between sales force integration and sales force job commitment. This means that by increasing sales force integration, sales force job commitment may also increase.

Sales force integration and sales force job motivation

The fifth hypothesis (H5) stated: *'The more integrated the sales force is with corporate marketing communications the higher the level will be of sales force motivation.'*

This hypothesis is also supported by findings from the current research. In terms of the overall correlation between the presence of sales force integration and construct of the sales force job motivation, the results in Table 2 show that there is a strong, positive and significant

correlation coefficient (.574, $p < 0.01$). As sales force integration increases, so does sales force job motivation. In terms of the individual elements in the construct of job motivation, all seven of the items that were measured were positively affected by the presence of sales force integration within the organisation in a significant manner.

In regression analysis (Table 2), the finding, $R^2 = .330$ suggests that 33% of the variation in sales force job motivation can be accounted for by sales force integration. The P-value (.000) obtained from the results was highly significant, and this leads to the rejection of the null hypothesis and the acceptance of the alternative hypothesis. The findings from data analysis illustrate that there is a positive, strong and significant correlation between sales force integration and sales force job motivation. This means that by increasing sales force integration, sales force job motivation may also increase.

SUMMARY

Finding of the current research that performance correlates with the level of internal, sales force, integration into marketing communications supports similar findings by Porcu and colleagues in 2019. In an investigation of IMC and market performance in the hospitality industry, conclusions were that there was compelling evidence of a positive link between IMC and market performance (Porcu et al., 2019). Similarly, Wickham and Hall (2006) found that IMC enabled business to business sales force members to better engage with customers in the light shipbuilding industry in Tasmania. IMC armed the shipbuilding sales personnel with the information and confidence needed to market their products to clients and help the industry grow (Wickham & Hall, 2006). Indeed, in a review of 80 empirical studies of IMC, positive influences were reported on sales, market share, financial performance, brand performance, brand equity, brand loyalty, shareholder value, customer attitudes, satisfaction and awareness; social marketing outcomes and communications persuasiveness (Šerić, 2018). In addition, based on empirical findings, Usani & Sampson (2023) concluded that there is a significant and positive relationship between internal marketing communications and sales force performance in beverage manufacturing firms in Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of the current research have confirmed a positive correlation between the independent variable (sales force integration) and dependent variables (sales force performance outcomes). However, it does not necessarily mean that one variable causes the other. There is a possibility of a third variable that influences both observed variables and this should be considered (Pallant, 2013). The empirical findings of this research have supported this view,

where unmeasured variables such as age and tenure appear to have a positive correlation with both observed variables. The results indicated that the levels of integration amongst the sales staff did depend on age and employment length in the company. In this case, employees in higher age groups and longer-serving employees were more integrated, and it was concluded that integrated staff are more likely to perform well.

Although these additional variables (age and tenure) were not part of the research hypotheses, they nevertheless had a positive impact on the study and affected the relationships, and these can therefore be classified as extraneous variables (Bacon-Shone, 2013). Therefore, for any future study, it would be interesting to analyse other demographic variables such as gender, educational qualifications and ethnicity, by using them as extraneous variables.

It would be beneficial to take the same concept of this study to the next level by adding these extraneous variables into the (tested) hypothesised model, in order to identify whether sales force integration and its related performance outcomes is impacted in any way by these demographic variables.

The literature assumes that the attainment of fully integrated marketing communications is desirable e.g. (Hutton, 1996) but is not conclusive in terms of whether it actually corresponds with optimal organisational outcomes in terms of elements such as performance and effectiveness. For example, sales person's intra-organisational relationships and activities have been hypothesised to influence their performance (Bolander et al., 2015; Kimani, 2024) and it follows from this that the level of integration the sales force has with the organisation's marketing communications will therefore be related to performance. Current research supports this viewpoint but it is still worthy of further confirmation.

The rise of marketing conglomerates like WPP plc, the world's largest marketing communications company; means that client companies should have the opportunity to operate their communications in a fully integrated manner. WPP owns a number of advertising, public relations, media and market research companies, including Ogilvy, J. Walter Thompson, Young & Rubicam, Grey, Millward Brown and the TNS Group and reported 2018 revenue of 15.6 billion GBP. They should therefore be able to offer a 'one-stop-shop' (Schultz & Kitchen, 1997, p.13) to their clients and those clients should thus be able to achieve fully integrated communications at least at an external level. This begs the research question: in practice are clients which use marketing conglomerates like WPP for all their marketing, PR and corporate communications needs, more or less likely to have fully integrated marketing communications both internally and externally.

CONCLUSIONS

This research aimed to examine relationships between internally integrated marketing communications and five performance oriented outcomes. Findings support the academic view that IMC should have an internal focus as well as an external one, because internal integration is strongly and significantly related to important outcomes for the organisation.

A practical and theoretical contribution of this research is thus to illustrate the usefulness and applicability of the concept of integrated marketing communications to internal audiences. This current study examined whether the level of sales force integration with marketing communications influences sales force performance outcomes. The research concludes that it does. This suggests that sales force integration can potentially deliver enhanced organisational outcomes such as increased levels of sales force job satisfaction, job involvement, job commitment, job motivation and performance.

IMC is a subject that has been widely studied by many researchers all over the world and the role of the sales force in terms of organisational performance has also been acknowledged a number of times in the past. However, individual communicators in the organisation, which include employees such as salespeople, have been largely ignored in this context. The overall contribution of this research is therefore in the acknowledgement and measurement of the extent to which sales force integration into organisational marketing communications influences key performance outcomes.

Author's Information

Dr. Aumer Iqbal holds a PhD in Integrated Marketing Communications from Cardiff Metropolitan University, UK and possesses over 10 years of extensive research experience in the field, specialising in the Social Science Discipline. Dr. Aumer has achieved both bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration, combining a strong academic background with practical experience to provide a robust blend of business and marketing skills. Dr. Aumer has developed an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of integrated communication strategies in the corporate sector. This extensive background equips Dr. Aumer to contribute valuable insights to the field, drawing on a wealth of work experience that aligns with the research objectives of this paper. Dr. Aumer's thesis is published in the British Library, bridging the gap between theoretical frameworks and real-world applications in marketing practices.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to Mr. Sulman Naeem Mirza for reviewing and editing the research paper.

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