Implementing changes in integrated marketing communication strategies in South Africa.

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

The marketing landscape has changed due to rapid advancement in technology, globalisation and the internet. Marketing has become a relationship consisting of two-way communication. Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is more of a holistic imperative. The marketing professional needs to adapt their IMC strategies to incorporate these new developments.

The report examines the impact that the changes in communication are having on IMC strategies. It also examines the challenges that the marketing professional faces, as a result of these changes, in the implementation of an IMC strategy.

The research was conducted using qualitative methodology, utilising a semi-structured interview schedule. In-depth interviews were conducted with 11 marketing professionals, the data was content analysed, and themes were established.

The research into changes in IMC strategies elicited five themes which are: communication is more interactive and instantaneous; the advances in information technology (IT) enhance data gathering and predictive analytics; alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing; IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience; and compliance to legislation and reputation management.

The research also uncovered four challenges that marketers face which contribute to the ineffective implementation of IMC strategies. These challenges are: corporate silos; budget constraints; un-coordinated internal and external resources; the lack of utilisation of suitable marketing metrics; and new skills for marketing professionals.

DECLARATION

I, Myrna Brauns, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Myrna Brauns

Signed at …………………………………………………

On the …………………………….. day of ………………………… 2012

DEDICATION

This research report is dedicated to my beautiful, amazing daughters Taylor and Carryn and my wonderful parents Hilary and Lorna for their inspiration, support, patience and belief in me.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this research is to investigate the challenges in implementing integrated marketing communications (IMC) strategies in South African organisations.

1.2 Context of the study

The manner in which marketers communicate to their customers has advanced in recent years and become more of a collaborative conversation instead of one-way communication (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). There are new communication channels which enable communications to be more interactive and personal and as a result a closer relationship has developed between company and customer (Hongcharu & Eimkanchanalai, 2009). Marketing, like the business landscape, has evolved and transformed after decades of top down messaging. Consumers are more informed and request recognition and relevance through experiences that are personal, pertinent, and meaningful. According to Fisk (2006), marketing has become more challenging due to the intensely challenging nature of the markets, coupled with a more challenging, empowered consumer.

Schmitt (1999) highlights that customers today require an experience that they can emotionally connect to, in order for the brand to be significant in their minds. Hahn (2006) believes that there are many brands competing for attention from the consumer. Ensuring that your brand is relevant in the mind of the consumer by employing strong brand building techniques will create a competitive advantage.

Instead of adopting a one size fits all approach, research and a solid understanding of the customer and the new channels of communication is imperative for success (Gorry & Westbrook, 2011). Constant communication and more transparent interactions are necessary and marketers need to adapt their IMC strategies to incorporate these changes. According to Hongcharu and Eimkanchanalai (2009), a close relationship with consumers in an interactive manner is required and will be the predominant method of future communication with consumers.

The marketing professional today is faced with the challenge of formulation and implementation, of an IMC strategy in a constantly evolving environment.

1.3 Problem statement

1.3.1 Main problem

To investigate the challenges in implementing changes in integrated marketing communications strategies in South African organisations.

1.3.2 Sub-problems

The first sub-problem is – To identify the changes in integrated marketing communication strategies.

The second sub-problem is – To identify the challenges in implementing an integrated marketing communications strategy in corporate South Africa.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study may provide guidance to marketing professionals and leaders within business organisations in South Africa who are instrumental in formulating marketing communications strategies and also responsible for the implementation of the marketing strategy.

According to Kliatchko (2008), consumers today require an interactive marketing communication platform as they themselves are very involved and actually take part in the communication efforts of brands. Consumers are the foundation and focus of an IMC strategy and thus companies must understand

and research the customer in order to communicate effectively with them. Consumers today are informed and assume control of the messages they receive and respond back on all the media platforms at their disposal such as text, pictures and videos. Marketers must be cognisant of the new consumer who is highly engaged and empowered and be able to deliver content that is applicable and impactful to this consumer.

This research is significant to the South African marketing professional as it seeks to inform them on current marketing communication methods and channels employed by some of the marketing professionals in South Africa. It also seeks to inform the marketing professional on the manner in which the new consumer prefers to be engaged and what channels of communication they prefer to be engaged on. The research gives insight into challenges facing the marketing professional in implementation of an integrated marketing communications strategy.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

Dependant on the industry and products offered, organisations have a different understanding and method of implementation of an integrated marketing communications strategy, thus practical implications can be varied. The research is also based on current perceptions rather than a longitudinal study.

1.6 Definition of terms

Integrated Marketing Communications Strategy is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan. Such a plan evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum impact through the seamless integration of messages. (Kotler & Keller, 2009: 531)

1.7 Assumptions

The following assumption has been made regarding the study:

a) The respondents have the required information and were willing to share it.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The literature review focuses on two themes, firstly it identifies what has changed in IMC strategies and then it discusses the challenges in implementation of IMC strategies in South African organisations.

According to Pearson (2011), the internet and predominantly the search engine Google, changed the way we search for information, it made information more accessible and the ability to go onto Google at any time of the day on any device able to connect to the internet, is convenient. The hardware and software evolution resulted in greater productivity. He mentions that the ease of use and the ability to access information almost anywhere, from any device is what grew the awareness of the brand and increased usage among consumers. Google was instrumental in adjusting behaviour as consumers got accustomed to real time results and convenience (Pearson, 2011). As consumers went online and onto Google, they came across websites and other products which became a benchmark upon which they could build their own brands. Facebook, invented by a scholar at Harvard, was also a game changer as it made the world more connected where globalisation made the world more fragmented. Facebook gave consumers the ability to stay in touch and connect with people all over the world which became more relevant as people travelled more and even relocated in other regions nationally and internationally.

According to Ofek (2002) this collaborative marketing approach requires marketers to adopt new communication methods, as one-on-one communication is very different to mass media communication and requires an entirely different skill. Advancements and innovation in social media is firstly an enabler for the marketing professional, another channel to communicate the brand message. It is also a channel for consumers to complain about or compliment brands which means that marketing professionals need to be part of the conversation, steering the ship and maximising or reducing the exposure each conversation yields.

The role of marketing has changed, it is becoming known for the attraction, retention and growth of profitable customers (Kotler & Armstrong, 2001).

According to Mulhern (2009) media consumption and the changing media landscape have added more complexity to the manner in which IMC is formulated and executed. Significant research into the manner in which consumers participate and communicate on these devices and channels indicated that these challenges can be overcome and value will be added to the IMC formulation and implementation process. These advancements in information technology must be embraced as they add value to the manner in which engagement occurs with consumers. Systems and processes must be adapted to incorporate these changes as they do add significant value to the manner in which IMC strategies are developed to engage consumers.

The current challenge in adopting an IMC strategy lies in the implementation thereof, due to the rapid changes occuring in communication methods and channels and marketing professionals' inability to keep abreast of these changes. According to Berthon, Hulbert and Pitt (1999), these technological changes have the potential to change people's insights, outlooks and inclinations. They have the ability to create an entirely new way of life for individuals and societies (Berthon et al., 1999).

2.2 IMC strategies

2.2.1 Definition of IMC

"Integrated marketing communications is a concept of marketing communications planning that recognises the added value of a comprehensive plan. Such a plan evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum impact through the seamless integration of messages" (Kotler & Keller, 2009:531). Thus IMC is responsible for a stronger brand message through the consistency of the message. According to Raman and Naik (2004), IMC brings about greater interaction within the organisation. They state that an IMC strategy is a holistic approach focussing on all touch points of the brand, to strengthen and provide coherence in the brand message.

An alternate definition is provided by Kliatchko (2008), who believes that IMC is a business process which manages internal and external customers, the brand information, the channels of communication utilised and the results that arise from the campaigns or brand communication. IMC includes the integration of the whole organisation, and he refers to IMC as a business process (Kliatchko, 2008). An integrated marketing communications strategy runs through the entire organisation. IMC strategies must be incorporated into the company in all forms.

This is supported by Nieman (2005) who believes that an IMC strategy is a very relevant part of the management of the business and unlike perceptions; it is not just a portion or task of it. The incorporation of this IMC strategy into the business strategy should be managed and the goal of the whole company and not utilised as a short term solution to communication issues (Nieman, 2005). An IMC strategy comprises of vertical integration, horizontal integration, forward integration, backward integration and data integration in an organisation.

Kliatchko (2008) remarks that an IMC strategy begins with the knowledge of the consumer, derived from the data collected. He highlights the fact that we are living in a customer focused environment and that the customer information gathered is instrumental in the formulation of the strategy. The author then goes on to say that an integrated marketing communications strategy provides guidance to the demand side of the business, and the whole business. The aim of customer satisfaction is achieved because of a well-researched customer offering which results in an appropriate and impactful customer experience. Kliatchko (2008) discusses that the employment of an IMC strategy encompasses both the corporate and operational level of the organisation, and that each level focuses on strategic and management matters. Kotler and Keller (2009) realise the importance of the brand positioning, when all the communication occurs and what this means to the overall strategy. As the communications are streamlined by one person in the organisation this enables them to present a unified brand image and message.

2.2.2 Changes in IMC Strategies

“Through increased access to consumer data and the ability to directly interact with consumers, digital media influences the ability to gain customer insights, allows for the development of data-driven planning, can simplify cross-media integration, and facilitate communication to multiple stakeholders” (Schultz, Block & Labrecque, 2012:7). According to the authors, embracing the changes and advancement in technology do have a substantial consequence on the effectiveness of marketing communications and thus an IMC strategy.

According to Schultz and Patti (2009) communications have evolved significantly with the advances in digital technology that have occured. This has had an impact on IMC and the manner in which it is implemented today. New technology such as the internet and the World Wide Web which came about as a result of technological advancement had a significant influence on the evolution of communications. Schultz and Patti (2009) mention changes that occurred as a result of these evolutions in technology and the subsequent tools that came about which influence communication. Ofek (2002), Kliatchko (2008), Mulhern (2009), Dolak (2003) and Keller (2009) also support this view and agree with these changes and the benefits they have in the evolution of marketing communications. Through these literature reviews, four changes stand out as being the most impactful in altering the manner in which marketing communications have changed.The literature review will elaborate on these four changes identified by the authors which are:

I. Communication is more interactive and instantaneous
II. Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing
III. Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics
IV. IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience

I. Communication is more interactive and instantaneous.

“Consumers were no longer passive receivers of messages sent by marketing organizations through traditional media forms: the former receivers suddenly became active communication generators. They could ‘talk back’ to marketers” (Schultz & Patti, 2009:76). According to Ofek (2002), marketing activity is moving towards a more collaborative and appealing approach. This means that consumers are looking for a more intimate relationship with the brands they support. It is a two-way communication and not one sided as was the norm in marketing. According to Kliatchko (2008), consumers today require an interactive marketing communication platform as they themselves are very involved and actually take part in the communication efforts of brands.

Communication has become more interactive and engaging. Rapid improvements in technology and the consequent depth and breadth of information that is immediately available to consumers which influences their decision making process, is a challenge to most marketers (Berthon, Pitt, Plangger & Shapiro, 2012). This instantaneous information gives them a voice in real time to similarly influence their peers which is what the challenge is all about. “While these new media platforms show much promise and continue to offer real-time content due to interactivity, response and conversation among very targeted audiences in a community of users…” (Kliatchko, 2008:149) This could result in word of mouth becoming a larger contributor in the brands marketing. If brands are not part of the conversation, they will not have the chance to defend their brand in some instances where an issue has occurred. This could lead to negative messages about the brand, which results in bad brand sentiment, which could have been avoided.

According to Gitomer (2011), the new social networks are an opportunity to connect with your consumers. Social media gives brands and customers the ability to connect, and builds awareness for you and your brand. He also mentions that it involves finding out where your customers are online and engaging with them on their terms.

Figure 1 below illustrates the new paradigm shift that has occurred within communication. Prior to social media, marketers were the creators of content and consumers were recipients of this content. With the adoption of social media, both consumers and marketers are the creators of content which creates an interactive channel where both good and bad brand experiences are discussed. This involves a different marketing skill to manage this as it involves a conversation that is direct and instantaneous. (Kliatchko, 2008)

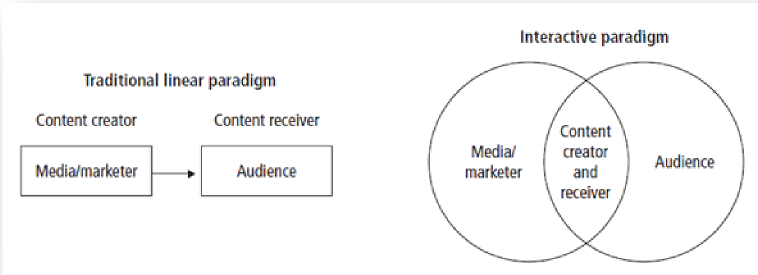

Figure 1: Content creation model

(Kliatchko, 2008)

II. Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing

“First, we saw fax machines and computers, then cell phones, then iPods and Blackberries and now social networks such as YouTube, Facebook, MySpace and the like. These new tools essentially offer consumers new ways to communicate with each other” (Schultz & Patti, 2009:76). According to Mulhern (2009), there is an increase of channels of communication and devices available for the consumer to engage upon. These new channels of communication must be embraced and used in IMC strategies as they are able to add significant value to the process. “Technology and other factors have profoundly changed when, where and how consumers process communications, and even whether they choose to process them at all” (Keller, 2009:141). “In this new media environment, the consumer is increasingly in control. Consumers not only have more choices of media to use, they also have a choice about whether and how they want to receive commercial content”

(Keller, 2009:142).

According to Hongcharu and Eimkanchanalai (2009), due to the evolution of media that is used to communicate with target consumers, IMC is also going through very interesting evolutions as a result. The manner in which consumers and organisations communicate today has evolved due to globalisation, the internet, rapid IT evolution and thus social media's influence. Technology continues to change the way people interact every day. "With the proliferation of non-traditional media and marketing communication channels, coupled with the changing media consumption patterns of audiences today, consumers determine which media forms they want to get exposed to and the amount of time they wish to devote to each medium. This implies that they also select and determine which content they prefer to receive at their convenience" (Kliatchko, 2008:147). As a result the manner in which communication occurs to the target consumers, and where that communication occurs has to change. Marketing professionals have to research and understand the new channels of communication being utilised by the consumers, who are the target market for their brands, in order to remain relevant and impactful in their marketing communications.

Current channels of communication in the IMC landscape as illustrated in Figure 2 below include the old and the new communication channels.

Figure 2: Today's IMC Landscape

(Schultz et al., 2012)

Schultz et al., (2012), mention that the inclusion of the new channels of communication allows for more interaction with consumers in a direct manner and results in communication that is more of a relationship. The new IMC communications landscape consists of a combination of traditional and new communication channels. There is a great deal of information that consumers share which can be used to improve the brand offering and thus ensure a better relationship with the target market. These new communication channels and methods of communication allow the brand to develop a strong IMC strategy through the data generated and the relationship building element prevalent in communications of this nature.

The marketing landscape has evolved due to the rapid evolution of digital technology and the internet which has widened communication, increased the level of information and shortened the routes to market of products and services. “Today’s distracted customers, bombarded with information and options, often struggle to find the products or services that will best meet their needs” (Davenport, Mule & Lucker, 2011:84). Consumers have much more choice, they choose what to watch, where to watch it and when they want to watch it. Some examples of a negative affect for advertising is the PVR decoder. This gives consumers the option of fast forwarding through the adverts when watching a movie or a series. This results in a severe decline in the effectiveness of television ads which are one of the most expensive forms of marketing communication. The internet offers the same choice where consumers can choose to watch an advert by pressing the play button or choose not to. Marketers need to communicate with consumers on their terms and be increasingly vigilant in their research to find out what they like and where they can communicate to them. Having an integrated marketing communications strategy allows for consumer influence and conversion across all communication mediums when communication occurs.

Technological advancements have resulted in new ways of communicating which have had an influence on the manner in which marketing professionals gather data on their consumers and respond to them. According to Sago (2001) Quick Response (QR) codes can integrate marketing communications by providing consumers with convenient access to media content from different channels. QR codes create a connection between digital and traditional channels of communication which also enhances the brand experience. According to Kliatchko (2008) the new unconventional channels of communication will continue to increase and remain very content driven as there are many individuals who are very passionate about topics and want to be heard. Consumers today are also faced with many alternate methods of communication at their disposal; keeping abreast of the new technology and additional forms of communication is a challenge to marketing professionals. Kliatchko (2008) believes that the younger consumers are adopting all methods of digital communication as their preference of communication method or channel and choosing the new digital technology over the old traditional forms of communication. This digital playing field does pose a challenge to marketing professionals who have not incorporated a digital strategy into their IMC strategy and are not able to have a digital presence reinforcing the consistent brand message found in all the other forms of communication. It is also very positive for the marketing professionals who have embraced the new channels of communication as they will have the ability to present a coherent brand essence to their target market.

III. Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics

Thirdly the authors mention, “The digital revolution was not just limited to communication devices. It enabled the capture and use of vast amounts of information in the form of customer databases which spawned Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and a host of allied fields, all designed to give marketers better insights into customers and prospects” (Schultz & Patti, 2009:76). Another author who supports this is Mulhern (2009:92): “Digital media are influencing four important elements on IMC – consumer insight, data-driven planning, cross-media integration and communications to multiple stakeholders.” According to Mulhern (2009) consumer insight is the ability to utilise the extensive databases of information to develop systems which are able to analyse and predict consumer behaviour.

Consumer insight is also the ability to listen to your consumers and understand them and their needs and wants. Data driven planning is the ability to use this information to make better decisions around consumers in a shorter time frame. He mentions the increase of channels of communication and devices available for the consumer to engage upon and the data derived from these consumer interactions which can be used to develop better consumer information. Consumer behaviour that is able to give the organisation the direction and knowledge of how the consumer thinks and what they want. The information derived is powerful and it can be used to amend our current offering in a short space of time and enhance this brand offering to consumers. According to Mulhern (2009) embracing these advancements in information technology and the value they add to the manner in which we engage with our consumers is important. He mentions that adapting our systems and processes to incorporate these changes does add value to the manner in which we develop IMC strategies to engage consumers.

Rapid advancements in digital technology are changing the manner in which marketing communications occur because of the many new methods and channels now being adopted by consumers (Ofek, 2002). The author here refers to the change in the type and availability of data that has emerged which is much more specific to individual consumers and the manner in which they buy goods and services. This gives the marketer the ability to locate, track and then offer their target consumer a more relevant offering due to the knowledge they have of the consumer. The online advertising space offers tracking at every turn which makes managing your marketing investment more effective. According to Silberman (2011), digital advertising is a very appealing channel due to the readily available metrics constantly available to track the success of campaigns and the cost of these campaigns.

Ofek (2002) believes that the goal for marketing is profitability of customers, he believes that attraction and retention of profitable customers that require very little maintenance in the form of cost is what marketers should aspire to create in their strategies. This detailed research into customers allows the organisation to be more specific in which customers they choose to engage, based on profitability calculations conducted. Ofek (2002) believes in tracking profitability by comparing initial acquisition cost to the profits generated over the entire lifetime of the customer.

Davenport et al. (2011), highlight the successes of organisations such as Tesco in the UK, Microsoft and Foursquare by utilising advances in information technology, data gathering and analytics to create customised and relevant offerings to customers at the right time and place. “Targeting individuals with perfectly customised offers at the right moment across the right channel is marketing’s holy grail. As companies’ ability to capture and analyse highly granulare customer data improves, such offers are possible.” (Davenport et al., 2011:87) The authors mention that an integrated marketing communications strategy is the first step in realising this success. “Using increasingly granular data, from detailed demographics and psychographics to consumers’ click streams on the web, businesses are starting to create highly customised offers that steer consumers to the “right” merchandise or services – at the right moment, at the right price, and in the right channel.” (Davenport et al., 2011:84)

Statistical analysis, predictive modelling and other tools are utilised to provide offerings to customers that are relevant to the data gathered on their wants according to Davenport et al. (2011). Channels relevant to the particular consumers are also utilised, also coming from the data gathered on the communication methods preferred by different consumers. Monitoring occurs frequently and data is gathered from the execution phase as well to measure the effectiveness of the strategy.

Vanheems and Kelly (2009) discuss the importance of tracking consumer behaviour across channels which increases the organisation’s understanding of the consumer and their wants and needs and can use this information to be more relevant to the consumer. They mention integrating channels of communication as they believe that each channel will support the other and result in more exposure for the brand in a consistent manner. This will improve brand visibility but will also ensure cohesion of the brand message.

The manner in which the efficiency of marketing offers are researched and improved are very sophisticated and yet very readily available (Blattberg & Deighton, 1996). Microsoft has had success with its e-mail offers for its search engine Bing, which were tailored to the recipient at the moment they were opened. “These ads have lifted conversion rates by as much as 70% - dramatically more than similar but un-customised marketing efforts” (Davenport et al., 2011:86). Thus the rapid evolution of digital technology does open a whole new era of very sophisticated marketing communications, tracking tools and metrics, which organisations need to take advantage of as the returns are substantial. The rapid evolution of technology and the level of sophistication of the systems available enable the information extracted to be much more relevant and accurate due to the short lead time required. This results in more robust and timely decision making abilities on the part of the management team responsible for getting the return on investment (Blattberg & Deighton, 1996). Organisations that have gathered all the information required and use statistical analysis and predictive modelling to create information from this data. According to Davenport et al. (2011), the information that can be gathered on the customers’ day to day interactions with the organisation can be used to measure the profitability of the customer which can give management information on whether they would like to retain the customer due to the profitability of the customer to the organisation. Customer equity is a marketing metric, enabling the marketing professional to calculate the profitability of customers of the organisation. This gives the marketing professional the tools to make decisions that encourage profitable customers and direct marketing activities toward them and also determine non-profitable customers that the organisation will not invest in.

IV. IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience

According to Dolak (2003), there are also additional challenges that are prevalent in corporate that inhibit the integration that is imperative to ensure that results are delivered in a more cohesive manner. The entire business needs to be involved in the brand building efforts, internally and including external touch points. This can be interpreted to mean that the adoption of an IMC strategy is imperative in every organisation. An integrated marketing communications strategy must be implemented throughout the organisation in order for it to be impactful, relevant and effective. This consists of vertical integration, horizontal integration, forward integration, backward integration and data integration. Once integration of your vision and brand strategy is carried out within your organisation, the message you send out will be powerful at each brand touchpoint (Dolak, 2003). "Aligning and coordinating messages and incentives delivered through those four functional areas so they presented a clear, cohesive and comprehensible whole that moved customers along the communication and purchasing continuum" (Schultz & Patti, 2009:75). According to Mulhern (2009) the increase of information from these advancements in IT and the many communication channels and methods being utilised does result in a great deal of new consumer information. This information on consumer behaviour is able to give the organisation the direction and knowledge of how the consumer thinks and what they want. The information derived is powerful and it can be used to amend our current offering in a short space of time and enhance the brand offering to consumers creating a more holistic offering at every brand touch points.

Kliatchko (2008) believes that IMC is a holistic marketing strategy, implemented throughout the organisation for maximum effectiveness. Another author who supports this view is Hinson (2005), who believes that IMC is all about the development of a distinct customer focus both internally and externally, which results in a single brand message. Kotler and Keller (2009) recommend integrated marketing communication strategies as they believe that IMC are able to yield stronger communication uniformity, and in doing so, improve brand equity and increase sales. They also say that the implementation of IMC strategies improve the organisation's propensity to influence the target market with the most relevant messages in the right channel and at the right time. This is in line with the definition of a holistic marketing outlook.
According to Brakus, Schmitt and Zarantonello (2009) a brand experience affect

customer loyalty and customer satisfaction through a direct and indirect route. A brand experience does create value for the consumer as it gives an accurate holistic experience of what the brand stands for. Initial brand experiences may result in a great deal of information processing and extrapolation around the brand and the brand associations (Brakus et al.,2009).

According to Tsai (2005) IMC is a comprehensive dynamic solution which can create a holistic experience for the consumer. A customer experience is created in two ways, by direct communications to the consumer and secondly by the brand perceptions in the mind of the consumer. In order for these two experiences to blend in the mind of the consumer an IMC strategy must be employed. In Figure 3 below, Tsai (2005) illustrates the holistic consumer experience management framework of IMC.

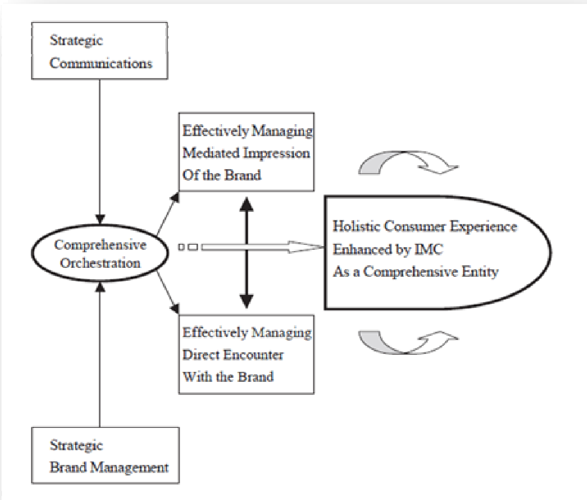

Figure 3: Holistic consumer experience management framework of IMC

(Tsai, 2005)

According to Tsai (2005), IMC is a strategy that ensures that the communications and the brand management elements of a brand experience are coordinated and deliver the same consistent message to the consumer, resulting in a holistic consumer experience. The author believes that the main purpose of an IMC strategy is to ensure that the impressions of the brand and the direct encounters that consumers have with the brand are effectively managed and have the same brand attributes and create the same brand experience in order for the experience to be effective (Tsai, 2005). Personal messages whether tangible or intangible and the actual experience customers have when purchasing or coming into contact with the actual brand must be consistent and in line with the brand image and brand strategy. According to Tsai (2005) the IMC strategy must run through the entire company, through each department that the brand progresses through “from research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, customer service management, marketing message construction and communication program execution in order for it to become a holistic consumer experience” (Tsai, 2005).

Consistency in the brand offering and relevant useful messages help create and cultivate long term relationships with consumers. Customer databases can identify accurately which consumers need what information and when they need it throughout their entire lives. “Without knowing to whom you want to sell and what you want to give them, you really cannot know how to advertise, price or promote or distribute effectively” (Sexton, 2012:7). Integrated marketing communication strategies ensure that research is done on who the consumer is, where they can be contacted and how best to communicate to them for maximum impact. This is important as in order for marketing to be effective, an emotional connection with the target consumer is imperative and this connection can only be made with sufficient knowledge on the consumer, the devices they communicate on and the channels of communication they choose to use. Customer management is concerned with tactical aspects of CRM implementation that relate to the management of customer interactions including the use of tools such as campaign management, sales force automation, web enabled personalisation and call centre management (Frow & Payne, 2009).

Miles and Mangold (2005), acknowledge the benefits to be gained by an organisation in educating employees about the values and mission of an organisation and about the brand essence of the brands they have, as they believe that employees are responsible as brand ambassadors, to convey the brand attributes to customers. The process of educating them does create the necessary motivation within the employee to become a brand ambassador and project a positive message about the brand to customers. According to Miles and Mangold (2005), when informing and educating the employees of an organisation on the brand and the keeping them informed of all the happenings around the brand it develops a solid image in the mind of the employee (who is also a consumer in most instances) and is a source of competitive advantage. Effective employee branding is a positioning which can deliver great benefits to the organisation (Miles & Mangold, 2005).

According to Dolak (2003) the brand message must be assimilated into all marketing communications across all the brand touch points to provide a clear and consistent message about the brand. Thus the new marketing function becomes acquisition, followed by retention, depending on the quality of the conversation. Business growth can be the result of customer acquisition and retention and also a clear focus on growth of the profitable customers which is where the value can be added to an organisation (Blattberg & Deighton, 1996).

Lindstrom (2005) mentions that the future of branding is holistic branding. He illustrates this form of branding as sensory branding. He mentions that this is when the brand has its own identity and the brand message is communicated in each touch point, it results in a brand experience (Lindstrom, 2005). According to the author, branding has undergone many shifts over the years resulting in brand propositions. These are illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Brand Proposition shifts

(Lindstrom, 2005)

TIME FRAME	Proposition	Insights into the Proposition
1950's	**USP** - Unique selling proposition	Physical product rather than the brand was the core differential
1960's	**ESP** - Emotional selling proposition	Similar products perceived as different purely because of an emotional attachment
1980's	**OSP**- Organisational selling proposition	The organisation behind the brand became the brand
1990's	**BSP** - Brand selling proposition	The brand was stronger than the physical dimensions of the product
1990's	**MSP** - Me selling proposition	Technological innovation paved the way for MSP brands, which saw consumers taking ownership of their brands
FUTURE	**HSP** - Holistic selling proposition	Brands that anchor themselves in tradition but also adopt religious characteristics, and leverage the concept of sensory branding as a holistic way of spreading the news

According to Lindstrom (2005), the future of branding is experiential branding which is holistic and the marketing pitch must be able to inspire feeling through all five senses by the consumer.

This prior research leads to the following research proposition:

2.2.3 Research Proposition 1: Recent trends in integrated marketing communications include:

- **Communication is more interactive, and instantaneous**
- **Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics**
- **Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing**
- **IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience**

2.3 Challenges in IMC implementation

“One of the major challenges of integration and the development of IMC is that the technology and the capabilities in digital technology development have not expanded or developed evenly around the world” (Schultz & Patti, 2009:77). According to Schultz and Patti (2009), South Africa is one of the countries identified as being ahead in terms of adoption of new technology and thus very evolved in terms of communications. South Africa should be much further ahead of most countries regarding IMC adoption and evolution. South African organisations have other challenges that hinder the effective implementation of IMC strategies, which are more organic in nature. The second part of the literature review will focus on the challenges in implementation of IMC strategies in South African organisations due to organic challenges within South African organisations and identify what these are.

There are organisational or structural complications which exist within South African organisations and make implementation of an IMC strategy a further challenge. Pearson (2011) and Dalton (2005) mention four of these challenges which are insufficient marketing metrics employed; internal and external integration; corporate silos and budget constraints.

In business, being able to measure your success is imperative to ascertain whether your strategy is relevant and delivering the return on investment. Employing the correct metrics is one part but ensuring that the metrics employed are relevant to the objectives is the other challenge. According to Pearson (2011), a plan must be measurable or it will not succeed. He believes that marketing is essential to business success and as a result, marketers need to ensure that the relevant marketing metrics are put in place to ensure relevance of the marketing plan and the objectives it seeks.

Dalton (2005) mentions some key points on alignment within an organisation and how one of the most important abilities of a leader is to ensure alignment. Alignment is the ability of a leader to ensure that all employees understand and have internalised the importance of the function of the organisation. The belief is that leaders must constantly ensure that all employees are fully briefed on the vision of the organisation and what they require to get there.

Constant communication within organisations is a challenge due to the silos that are formed and the time it takes to ensure that all employees are fully aware of the current circumstances of the organisation. It is something that has to be worked on daily according to Dalton (2005).

Another example of a challenge encountered in getting this integration within organisations is budget limitations. Dalton (2005) mentions the budget cuts that occur within organisations and the casualties that occur as a result purely due to lack of understanding of the project or the elements of a project (Dalton, 2005).

2.3.1 Uncoordinated Internal and External Resources

The lack of internal resources poses a big challenge for the successful implementation of an IMC strategy. There are very few marketing professionals who understand the entire marketing landscape "large companies often employ several different communications specialists who may know very little about the other communications tools" (Kotler & Keller, 2009:533). This results in many different strategies put together that do not seem uniform, resulting in a disjointed offering all competing for a marketing budget. The authors also mention the fragmented effect that the employment of multiple agencies in different countries has on one brand.

Raiborn, Butler and Massoud (2009) discuss the implications of outsourcing services, both the positive and negative elements. They mention that a very open form of communication between the organisation and the vendor is imperative for success. There are many grievances received from organisations that outsource an element of their services due to the loss of control of organisation work standards which results in a less than optimal service offering. The authors also discuss the implications that could arise in the breach of personal information on the part of the customer or employee which could result in identity theft or credit card theft and other illegal operations. Raiborn et al. (2009) also discuss the cultural or language differences that could arise between the company and the outsourced vendor which could have significant consequences on the customers. One of the main risks to the outsourcing of services is “companies limit the establishment of cooperative links among individuals, the potential to build a strong corporate culture, and the internalization of company vision and mission” (Raiborn et al., 2009:349). Outsourcing of the different communication strategies to different specialists, in some cases leads to a disjointed total offering. Un-integrated communications send disjointed messages which dilute the impact of the message.

On the other hand, integrated communications present a reassuring sense of order and lead to trust. Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) define trust as dependability and honesty experienced by one party to another and they mention that only through trust can commitment be established. This means that in order to have commitment on some level or other, you need to firstly work on earning trust through consistent action by maintaining high levels of reliability. According to Macintosh and Lockshin (1997) commitment is a want to uphold an esteemed association. Thus the assumption that once the trust has been established, commitment will follow. Commitment, developed through trust, enhanced through attitude and action does have a direct link to repurchase. They also mention that commitment is related directly to repurchase objective. The keys are the trust relationships as they are the main drivers of ongoing business.

Customer loyalty ensures repeat purchase and increases the bottom line. According to Bowen, Stowe and Shoemaker (1998) retention is cheaper than acquisition and the benefits from positive word of mouth communication from loyal customers has many advantages. The article also states that customer loyalty is not basic customer satisfaction, it is a measure of retention, and keeping a customer satisfied with your offering creates loyalty (Bowen et al.,1998).

Mokgata (2012) illustrates the ignorance of South African organisations regarding the implementation of the internal integration of a marketing strategy. According to the author the global best practice is that 30% of the marketing budget should be spent in internal integration (Mokgata, 2012). The team that is normally given the task of internal marketing communications are not equipped to deal with it and that is why execution is poor. The author says that internal communications are not about keeping employees informed on marketing campaigns but rather to change the behaviour of employees.

2.3.2 Lack of utilisation of suitable Metrics

In order to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of the communications strategy implemented, metrics must be employed. The financial measurement and thus the measurement of effectiveness of the marketing communications strategy is a challenge due to the intangible nature of the metrics employed. It is imperative though to get this right, as the drive for greater accountability on the part of the marketing professional and the pressure to produce business results in the boardroom, become ever more important. "As the value of intangible assets continues to rise (now at around 75% of the market value of the Fortune 500), businesses increasingly seek to articulate the value of their intangibles" (Fisk, 2006:19).

In order for anything to be effective within an organisation it must be measured. Employing metrics to measure return on investment of marketing spend is both responsible and leads to greater accountability of the marketing professional in adding value to the bottom line in organisations (Bick, 2009). The author mentions that there are two metrics used to measure shareholder value which are brand equity and customer equity (Bick, 2009).

It is clear from all the authors' contributions above that the customer equity model is very focused on shareholder value as its detail lies in the incremental increase of customer contributions to the bottom line. As with marketing communication strategies as the customer equity models are also focused on creating value for the customers by retention, acquisition or add-on strategies.

Brand equity is built through significance and perception in the mind of the consumer and has an extensive list of characteristics that influence the purchase decision (Rust, Lemon & Narayandas, 2004). Brand equity is the added value endowed on products and services. It may be reflected in the way customers think, feel and act with respect to the brand as well as the prices, market share and profitability the brand commands for the firm (Kotler & Keller, 2009).

According to Kotler and Keller (2009) guaranteeing that cutomers have the correct experience with their brand which results in the correct knowledge and perception is key. They mention that brands are built by an assortment of brand experiences that are consistent across all brand touch points. Bick (2009) highlights the value of brands, he mentions that brands create differentiation against competition and they deliver profitability to an organisation. He goes on to outline the value of brand equity, “Thus brand equity is a market based intangible asset that can be leveraged to improve the performance of the organisation.” (Bick, 2009:125)

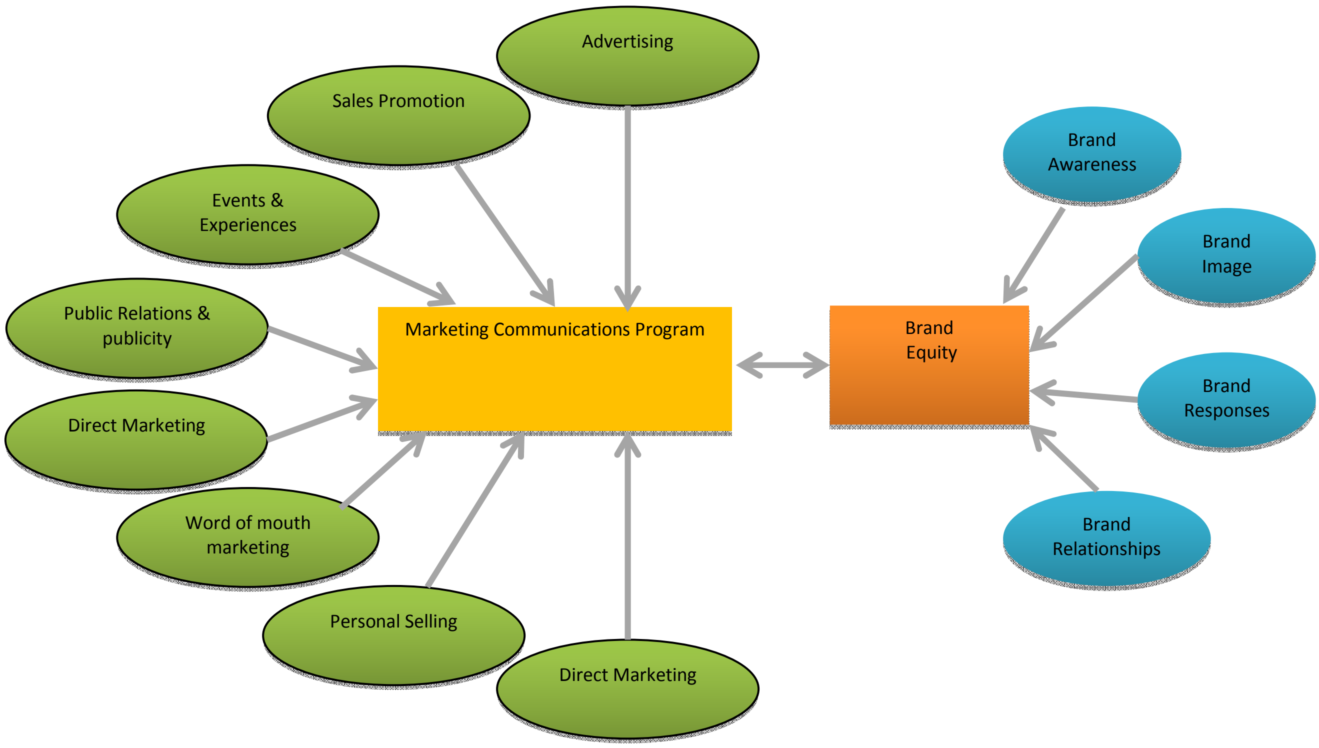

Figure 4: IMC to Build Brand Equity

(Kotler & Keller, 2009:513)

Figure 4 above shows the link between marketing communication activities and brand equity. “Marketing communications activities contribute to brand equity and drive sales in many ways: by creating awareness of the brand; linking the right associations to the brand image in consumers' memory; eliciting positive brand judgments or feelings and / or facilitating a stronger consumer brand connection" (Kotler & Keller, 2009:512).

According to Kotler and Keller (2009), marketing communications seek to impress in the mind of the target consumer, the essence of the brand. Research would have been carried out, prior to the formulation of the marketing communications strategy implementation, to establish what is relevant, appealing and aspirational to the target consumer. The essence of the brand comes from the strategic positioning chosen for the brand and in order for it to be firmly entrenched in the mind of the target market; the messages to the target market must be consistent as this will enable a stronger brand association. In order to ascertain whether the marketing communications are affective, measurements and reports on the success of the marketing campaigns and brand strength needs to be documented. Brand equity which relates directly to the marketing communications program is one of the best metrics to use in establishing the success.

2.3.3 Corporate Silo's

Integration in most of the larger organisations is a challenge due to departments working in silos. Management of key deliverables within departments such as sales, human resources, finance, marketing and logistics, is a challenge and spending additional time on integration within an organisation is costly due to the time spent on this exercise and the opportunity cost of the resources utilised. There are substantial rewards though, when making the time to educate the entire staff complement of an organisation on the IMC strategy.

According to Longenecker and Neubert (2000), a common vision and objectives or goals linked to that vision with clearly defined action plans are imperative within an organisation which seeks to improve management cooperation and teamwork within that organisation. The power of the common vision is articulated by the authors, they mention that it has the ability to motivate, direct and unite the employees of an organisation in achievement of that vision. The authors also mention the incorrect behaviours that can result from a lack of this common vision such as short-sightedness and invariably the inability to achieve goals. The lack of this vision, they believe, can result in lack of synergy within an organisation and the inability to perform as a team at different levels of the organisation (Longenecker & Neubert, 2000).

Practices that are unproductive, leading to a conflict environment in the workplace increase when the added stress of everyday work is there to further increase the pressure. This is mainly caused by the leaders of an organisation that are not adept at leadership and the poor example set by these individuals proliferates the issue (Longenecker & Neubert, 2000). Top management and their ability to understand and embrace the organisation’s vision do have a significant influence on the management levels under them. The authors mention that if top management understands the bigger picture and can relate to it and understands their role within this bigger picture, they will then be able to better inform and motivate the rest of the work force (Longenecker & Neubert, 2000). The necessity of assessment and evaluation in performance and the provision of feedback by management ties individual employees and motivates them to pursue their goals. They believe it is the relationship between goals and feedback that is the motivating factor, not just goals on their own. Another important way to enhance productivity is to allow different management levels to take part in the formulation of goals as this will make them feel as though they are part of something. They will assume ownership for the goals they have created and productivity will increase in this department (Longenecker & Neubert, 2000).

Crittenden (2005) believes that marketing must infiltrate the entire organisation, and work in partnership with all business functions in order to be effective. She mentions that cross-functional collaboration internally and externally will result in the success of the marketing strategy (Crittenden, 2005). The author illustrates the inefficiencies that occur in organisations due to the lack of integration and highlights the effectiveness of collaboration between departments and how much more value can be added by a culture of collaboration and teamwork (Crittenden, 2005).

According to Cummings and Angwin (2011), the greatest challenge management face is the ability to effectively communicate strategy internally in an organisation. The authors believe that management must be more cognisant of how the strategy is expressed to the individuals in order for them to understand it and have buy-in (Cummings & Angwin, 2011).

Marketing professionals will have to keep abreast of the changing communication landscape if they aim to provide brand content that is applicable, relevant and delivers return on investment to the marketing strategy. According to Jooste, Strydom, Berndt and Du Plessis (2008), corporate strategy may be described as an organisation's sense of purpose. In essence it is the mapping out of future opportunities and threats that match the organisation's resources. A well-researched communications strategy with clearly articulated marketing objectives is critical in a world where marketing professionals have many communications options available to them. Defining the boundaries, setting objectives and exploring all options before the strategy is mapped out are important as it is then that the strategy becomes relevant and directed to the consumers it wishes to target. Marketing communications are the means by which firms attempt to inform, persuade and remind consumers – directly or indirectly – about the products and brands they sell. In a sense marketing communications represent the "voice" of the company and its brands and are a means by which it can establish a dialogue and build relationships with consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Consumers are both internal to the organisation and external to the organisation. They all have a perception of value of the brand.

Enache (2008) mentions that even though the value has been identified in employing an IMC strategy, the implementation is still a challenge. He believes that the lack of support from top management is one of the barriers to IMC implementation. Top management are unable to comprehend that it is possible to reach the target audience by multiple media channels, and that erosion of the marketing budget occurs, and also that the marketing strategy will not be as impactful if there are too many marketing tools utilised. Enache (2008) mentions that organisations need to evolve and become more realistic and accepting of the qualities required by the organisation which will enable them to embrace and implement an IMC strategy. His suggestions on what needs to change are threefold, he believes they need to firstly “adopt a flexible organizational structure and change the mind-set of the employees”, secondly “adopt a customer centric strategy to design communication campaigns from the consumer perspective”, and thirdly, “a collaborative strategy is needed, that enables coordination and cooperation between various departments in the organization.” (Enache, 2008:1) He believes that the departmental heads focus on safeguarding their budgets and holding onto control within their particular department and that is the reason integration of an IMC strategy is a challenge Enache (2008).

2.3.4 Budget constraints

According to Favaro, Romberger and Meer (2009) organisations panic during a recession and spend budget and adopt many tactics that do not result in the returns they seek. The authors recommend more meaningful marketing investment in consumer research resulting in a more targeted approach to marketing on profitable customers already investing in the brands of the organisation. The authors believe in investment which will enable organisations to be more specific in their target market and the tactics they employ is necessary to remain profitable during a recession.

Favaro et al. (2009) mention that this is rarely carried out in organisations due to the costs associated with this approach. Consumer research on an ongoing basis due to the rapid evolution of technology is also an expensive exercise and thus most organisations are not completely up to date regarding the new communication methods being employed and utilised by the consumer to communicate.

Kitchen and Schultz (2009), mention that consumers have great power due to the recessionary environment and the scarcity that exists at present. Consumers, through the power of choice, decide which brands to support with their cash. This power will increase as the recessionary environment continues.

According to Kitchen and Schultz (2009), the significance and value of marketing is not being exercised as marketing faces continuous short term challenges in the form of budgetary constraints but marketing should not be viewed as a short term strategy. “Marketing continues to be considered a ‘cost centre’ in most organizations and is continuously subject to downsizing, reductions and downright cancellations as organizations try to balance their income and outgoings in increasingly difficult economic situations” (Kitchen & Schultz, 2009:199).

The current recession has been unsympathetic on individuals and organisations. Organisations need to find innovative ways to remain profitable and sustainable in these harsh times. “The current crisis has undoubtedly shown up some of the flaws in which businesses have been run. It has highlighted the interconnectivity and vulnerability of global value chains and will result in new rules and regulations for the conduct of business” (Carpenter, 2009).

Due to a recessionary environment the emphasis within organisations is on cost efficiencies. Organisations today are leaner, there are no heads unaccounted for, no additional hands to take on projects that are of an exploratory nature. Adopting an IMC strategy throughout the entire organisation will require additional resources in the form of employees to train and educate employees and in some instances additional heads to carry out the research required in the initial stages but that is ongoing.

According to Gulati, Nohria and Wohlgezogen (2010) there were many companies that did not survive the recession and a great deal that have not managed to reach the growth that they were accustomed to pre-recession. The recessionary environment resulted in a great deal of confusion and panic for the top management of organisations who implemented the incorrect strategies to regain control. The authors do highlight that the leaders who implemented strategies that focused on cost efficiencies in manufacturing but spent money on research and development and marketing were the ones who managed to survive and thrive in the recessionary environment.

Budget constraints do pose a challenge on the implementation of an IMC strategy due to the additional resources required in the execution of this strategy and the prudence on budget employed by organisational heads in times of recession.

Prior research leads to the following research proposition:

2.3.5 Research Proposition 2

Challenges in IMC implementation include:

- **Uncoordinated Internal and External Resources**
- **Lack of Utilisation of Suitable Marketing Metrics**
- **Corporate Silos**
- **Budget Constraints**

2.4 Conclusion of Literature Review

The literature suggests that integrated marketing communications have evolved and will continue to evolve as the consumer communications evolve due to rapid advancements in technology and the internet, providing the consumer with many alternate methods in which to communicate. The challenge for most marketing professionals is to keep abreast of the latest methods of communication being utilised by the target consumer and the manner in which they choose to communicate.

The entire organisation and all relevant stakeholders, internally and externally who communicate the brand message must be consistent in their methods of communication, and uphold the brand positioning. An IMC strategy, integrated across all touch points, (internally and externally) does have a positive effect on brand and customer equity. IMC strategies have to be relevant to the particular target market and must result in an experience of the brand and an emotional connection. Creation of these relevant strategies can be achieved through thorough research on the target market and well thought out solid strategies employed and implemented.

Employment of an IMC strategy within most of the larger organisations is a challenge due to the silos prevalent in corporate South Africa, uncoordinated external and internal resources, lack of suitable metrics employed and budget constraints.

The marketing landscape has changed but with it comes the resources to become more accountable and have a greater impact. Keeping abreast of new technology and new methods of communication by the consumer, and implementation of an IMC strategy is a challenge but the gains to be made from the employment of an IMC strategy does have a positive impact on the communications strategy of the organisation.

2.4.1 Research Proposition 1: Recent trends in IMC strategies include:

- Communication is more interactive, and instantaneous
- Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics
- Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing
- IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience

2.4.2 Research Proposition 2: Challenges in IMC implementation identified are:

- Uncoordinated Internal and External Resources
- Lack of Utilisation of Suitable Marketing Metrics
- Corporate Silos
- Budget Constraints

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Firstly the research will progress through the methodology used, then secondly the research design where the method is utilised will be discussed and the benefits and shortcomings of this approach outlined.

The population sample and the reasons for the choice of that particular sample will be elaborated upon. A discussion on the sample and sampling method made use of will follow, and the research instrument employed.

The data gathering procedures as well as how the data was analysed and interpreted will be discussed. This section will be wrapped up by discussions of the limitations that were come across and the validity and reliability of the study.

3.1 Research methodology / paradigm

The research methodology adopted here is one of a qualitative approach. "The enquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives" (Creswell, 2003:55). The goal of the data collection is to cultivate themes and dominant thought patterns. The data collated is done so informally and factually and it comprises the individual experiences (Creswell, 2003).

According to Creswell (2003), the qualitative approach is adopted when a topic or notion needs more research done in order to get a deeper understanding of what it is. This is true of a component of the research being employed as the evolution of marketing communications has been swift due to the rapid evolution of technology and new innovation in the communications industry.

As little work has been done in this field, a qualitative exploratory approach may bring out more information that would not have been unearthed with direct questioning or the adoption of a multiple choice questionnaire. According to Creswell (2003), the research problem and the audience that one is writing for, are what should determine the choice of which approach to use (Creswell, 2003).

3.2 Research Design

A qualitative approach was adopted as it provided an open discussion where information was freely shared. This also provided an opportunity to assess the individual who was interviewed, their mannerisms and confidence on the topics discussed. “Participatory knowledge claims, narrative design and open ending interviewing” (Creswell, 2003:58).

The reason for adopting the qualitative approach is that the discussion and thus the freedom to probe the respondent has resulted in greater sharing of information which could only have been done in a face-to-face interview where the respondents’ expressions were analysed as well as the answers. According to Kalof, Dan and Dietz (2008), the reason for open ended questions is that there is a great deal of new information that could come out of the interview if you allow respondents more freedom to answer open ended questions. Limiting the answers by asking closed questions would not provide as much information as open ended questions would in this environment.

3.3 Population and sample

3.3.1 *Population*

The population includes senior marketing personnel with more than seven years marketing experience within South African organisations as consequently these individuals have sufficient experience and exposure to the changes and challenges mentioned in this research report. They have a strategic and operational insight rather than a purely tactical insight to marketing.

3.3.2 *Sample and sampling method*

The sample from the population was chosen on a convenience basis. Convenience sampling was employed as it did not compromise the quality of the information as the respondents made the time to contribute to the interview with their expertise in the field. A sample of 11 respondents was interviewed at which stage convergence had been reached with no further insights being added by the final respondents.

Table 2: Profile of respondents

	TITLE	COMPANY
1	General Manager	Castle Milk Stout (SAB)
2	CEO	Ogilvy Africa
3	Marketing Manager	Tiger Brands
4	Marketing Manager	Wits Hospice
5	Channel Marketing	Discovery Vitality
6	Head of Marketing	RMB (Rand Merchant Bank)
7	Product Marketing Manager	EA Software
8	Strategic Marketing Director	Live Moyo
9	Managing Director	Sapho Sethu & Percolate
10	Strategic Director	Lesoba Difference
11	Managing Director	Free Minded Media

3.4 The research instrument

The research instrument was an open ended interview schedule and can be found in APPENDIX A. This was decided on as this type of instrument does allow for exploration and discussion on the topics at hand which can lead to additional knowledge by the respondent.

3.5 Procedure for data collection

Research was conducted by means of an appointment scheduled with the chosen respondents. They are senior executives in organisations and scheduling an appointment was the only way to create a platform for a good discussion as the time was booked in advance, giving freedom for discussion.

There was an agenda for the interview which comprised of questions and also a specific timeframe in which to perform the interview to provide structure. The difficulty was trying to maintain structure but also enabling the respondent the freedom required to converse on the topic in their own time and at their own pace. “The interviewer needs to find the right balance between maintaining control of the interview and where it is going and allowing the interviewee the space to redefine the topic under investigation” (Willig, 2008:24).

The interview was recorded as note taking would have been distracting as there would have been important discussions missed or forgotten. According to Willig (2008), note taking is a disrupting process which reduces the bond or relationship that could occur between the interviewee and interviewer as it interferes with the non-verbal communication that this process could evoke. Recording the interview would also be a more accurate way of getting the information down. The data gathered needs to provide an in-depth understanding of the executives’ viewpoint.

3.6 Data analysis and interpretation

A qualitative approach was adopted in the research and open ended questions were asked. Data was content analysed by means of identification of recurring themes (Bell, 2005). Interpretation consisted of a great deal of information based on opinions and views of each marketing professional. Most of the data was on the various opinions, so data was arranged into recurring themes and discussed in that manner.

3.7 Limitations of the study

Performing a qualitative study can limit the findings in some instances as some respondents’ will not feel comfortable divulging information that could be used by their competitors. Corporate policy could also limit the information that can be disclosed.

3.8 Validity and reliability

Validity is the level of accountability and correctness that is strived for in data collection. “Validity is concerned with congruence, or a ‘goodness of fit’ between the details of the research, the evidence and the conclusions drawn by the researchers" (Kalof et al., 2008:156). There are two types of validity, external validity and internal validity. "Reliability is concerned with consistency" (Kalof et al., 2008:156). The information must be trustworthy and dependable.

3.8.1 *External validity*

"External validity is the ability to generalise from a study to a larger population" (Kalof et al., 2008:157). External validity was maximised in this research as the sample consisted of 11 marketing organisations in South Africa across a few industries.

3.8.2 *Internal validity*

Drawing suitable or fitting deductions from the information generated from the interview is internal validity (Kalof et al., 2008). Internal validity was maximised in this research as the research questions were very specific and so was the research document. There was very little uncertainty regarding the information required from the respondents thus there was no misinterpretation.

3.8.3 *Reliability*

According to Kalof et al. (2008), reliability is concerned with steadiness and regularity of information. Research is considered reliable if there is a pattern found in the answers and the findings are similar and revealed consistently throughout the data collected. In the qualitative research method adopted in this research, where open ended questions will be asked to reach conclusions on the knowledge of the respondents, reliability and thus consistency will be paramount. Consistency will draw on topics that can be elaborated on to provide segments for discussion. Reliability will be maximised in this research as there is a clear idea of the requirements from the research. The themes that emerge from the research should be clear and precise due to the thorough nature of the research.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the findings of the research results. The responses to the interview questions are tabulated and related back to the propositions. A thorough and more comprehensive discussion around these results is done in Chapter 5.

4.2 Results pertaining to Research Proposition 1

4.2.1 Question 1: How have your marketing communications evolved in the last few years?

Question 1 of the inteview schedule, was designed to be purposefully broad in an attempt to promote discussion with the respondents and to provide a starting point for the interview. The purpose of the broadness of the question was to discover additional material on the topic. The question was intended to address Proposition 1 which is a discussion on the recent trends in IMC strategies.

The question elicited eight key themes around recent trends in IMC strategies. The major themes which address Proposition 1 are listed in Table 3 below, with some of the respondents' comments given for each theme.

Table 3: Recent trends in IMC strategies

Question 1: How have your marketing communications evolved in the last few years?		
THEME 1: Consumers want to interact with brands in real time	**THEME 2: Empowered consumer**	**THEME 3: IT Advancement**
Consumers offer their opinions and their views and want a response.	Consumers want to be engaged by brands.	The rapid development of relevant apps and communication channels will continue.
We talk one on one with our consumer as they want to be engaged.	Consumers are empowered and require transparency.	Consumers are now developing their own applications and creating better business processes.
Marketing has become a conversation.	Consumers want to be engaged by brands.	Tremendous improvement in the way we monitor and control our marketing efforts.
Consumers are used to quick responses on any channel they decide to make use of.	Recommendations from customers - forthright with advice on how to improve services.	Monitor customer profitability which has improved the customer retention decisions.
Daily conversations with our customers.	Consumers want to be educated on your brand.	Utilising GPS co-ordinates on Google maps at the click of a button done via a smartphone
Consumers communicate and they want a response in real time.	There is a great deal of user generated content.	Advances in IT will continue to have an effect on marketing communications.
Consumers expect you to be available anytime to help them on your platform.	Consumers want to question, interact or make suggestions and they want a response.	Augmented reality has changed advertising into more lifelike advertising.
Real time communication with consumers.	There are channels available that give consumers relief from bad customer service.	Shopper cards give access to owner purchases by gender and age and location.
THEME 4: New systems create efficiencies	**THEME 5: Choices of media**	**THEME 6: Compliance to regulation and Reputation Management**
CRM systems - seen the value of this investment.	Decline of the traditional channels of communication.	There are various new regulations that have an impact on communications such as CPA.
Predictive analytics helps us optimise our marketing campaigns.	They watch videos on their smartphones or tablets from YouTube rather than watch television	Marketing-become more accountable. People are giving credence to this.
We utilise one of the world's best systems to monitor the effectiveness of our campaigns.	The explosion in media has caused fragmentation.	Regulation has had an impact on marketing communications.
Make use of campaign management and we use model data and predictive analytics.	Most listen to their iPod in their car so they do not listen to the radio at all.	CSI is one of the pillars in BBBEE verification (marketing).
We use regression tools mainly and they are 98% accurate.	Consumers prefer the mobile channels more than the traditional channels of television and radio	The CPA influences and controls how marketing communications occur.
We utilise all the digital metrics such as SEO and monitoring clicks.	Engaging consumers on the devices and channels they prefer.	Social marketing (CSI) has become more relevant due to intangibles influenced.
Systems can establish what range or pack size within a brand are being bought.	Media has fragmented and the channels which brands utilise to create content-changed.	The Reputation Institute which is as of late becoming more and more of a discussion point around how brands are perceived does also have their own set of measurables in the form of seven pillars which have a strong affiliation to the consumers' perception and rating of the entire brand.
Systems available to enhance the manner in which data is collated and metrics measured.	Consumers operate a few communication devices at one time - an age of connectivity.	

Question 1: How have your marketing communications evolved in the last few years?	
THEME 7: New channels of communication	**THEME 8: Holistic Marketing through IMC creates an experience**
It's easy to keep people informed with all the new devices that are instantaneous and free.	IMC ensures all brand touch points are aligned and creates a holistic marketing
In touch on a variety of devices such as cell phones, tablets, laptops and desk top computers.	Ensuring communications are presented in a holistic manner is beneficial for your brand.
There has been a big change in the various mediums of communication.	Experiential activations require a holistic approach to marketing - 360 degree marketing.
We utilise a great deal of video in our internal marketing communications.	Marketing in our organisation has definitely become more holistic, a 360 degree approach.
Your communication channels must be supplemented in order to be effective.	They want to connect to their brands in a holistic manner - determine brand values
The new devices and channels of communication pose a challenge for the marketing department.	The brand must be authentic and to create this it must be a holistic experience.
Television - the biggest channel, but you need to be on digital for your target market.	Experiential marketing is the manner in which consumers want to be engaged.
Popular channels - BBM, Facebook desktop, WhatsApp, Skype, Twitter and Google talk.	The experience is created if a holistic strategy is used to create the experience.

The respondent interviews unearthed eight trends depicting changes in marketing communications which were:

1. Consumers want to interact with brands in real time
2. More empowered consumer
3. IT advancement
4. Efficiencies created through new systems
5. Media engagement choices
6. Compliance to legislation and reputation management
7. New channels of communication
8. Holistic marketing creates an experience

This reflects the changing technological element as well as changing consumer preference.

4.2.2 Question 2: What communication channels do you currently make use of in your marketing strategy and what is the relevance of those channels?

Question 2 was designed to be specific in an attempt to encourage dialogue around channels of communication with the respondents. The question was intended to address Proposition 1 and broaden the discussion by actually ascertaining what channels of communication are relevant in this new landscape. Table 4 below contains the responses to this question.

Table 4: Communication channels

Question 2: What communication channels do you currently make use of in your marketing strategy and what is the relevance of those channels?	
Traditional channels of communication	**New channels of communication**
Television advertisements and billboards.	New channels - Twitter, YouTube, Blogs, a website, a mobi site, BBM, SMS, MMS, Dropbox, email, Skype and a Facebook page.
Radio and television are still used but on a reduced budget.	Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn; Mxit - useful to target people with less disposable income.
Radio is widely used in the lower LSM market.	SMS, messenger, Google ads, Facebook, Twitter, Google adwords, Google circles.
Newsletters and flyers.	Counselling, recruitment and skills training can be done online on mediums such as Mxit
Magazine advertisements and newspaper advertisements.	Business directories to advertise - they enable SEO to be so much more efficient.
Digital television, and outdoor advertising has had huge advancements.	Content media such as blogging and location based marketing such as cell phone marketing.
TV brand collaboration - communication around our CSI.	We do mobile marketing and we have applications developed for it
	ATL advertisements in taxi's, on their media devices.
	Social activations done by personalities to get a message out to community members.
	Community activation - brand ambassador hosts event - brand knowledge and free stock.

The results gathered around the communication channels employed are indicative of the changes in marketing communications. From the above table, marketers now have many different new channels of communication. These are due to new technology and the manner in which the consumer chooses to communicate.

4.3 Results pertaining to Research Proposition 2

4.3.1 Question 3: What challenges have you faced in the implementation of an IMC strategy?

Question 3 was designed to be broad in an attempt to encourage dialogue around the different factors pertaining to challenges of implementation of IMC strategies with the respondents. The question was intended to address Proposition 2 and broaden the discussion by actually ascertaining how implementation is performed in the organisation.

The responses to this question are found in Table 5 below.

The respondent interviews unearthed six trends depicting changes in marketing communications which were:

1. Budget limitations
2. Lack of integration within the organisation
3. Lack of sufficient metrics employed
4. Utilising media agencies – Lack of integration
5. New skills for marketing professionals
6. Lack of integration within the marketing department

Table 5: Challenges in implementation

Question 3: What challenges have you faced in the implementation of an IMC strategy?		
THEME 1: Budget limitations	**THEME 2: Lack of integration within the organisation**	**THEME 3: Lack of sufficient metrics employed**
Budgets are smaller due to a recessionary environment that has not fully recovered.	Departmental integration is a challenge.	Marketing metrics are very minimal in our organisation - limited understanding.
Integration is a challenge with limited budget.	Integration needs top management buy-in and funds need to be allocated for it.	Marketing metrics are not a main priority in our organisation.
Cost saving initiatives employed due to recessionary environment.	Corporate silos are still a challenge and synergy is almost impossible.	Relevant set of metrics available - substantial investment in CRM software.
Budgets are cut as companies are looking for efficiency.	Lack of integration due to the manner in which budgets are structured.	Metrics in campaign management and model data as we employ predictive analytics.
Budget cuts done by persons not responsible for putting together the IMC strategy.	Lack of understanding of the importance of having an IMC strategy by top management.	No metrics used at all. Relationship marketing and one-on-one consumer experience.
Management are trying to squeeze out every last bit of productivity from each employee.	No central point of coordination of an IMC strategy.	Measure the basics such as sales increase, customer awareness, and customer service.
Lack of budget - hinders implementation of an IMC strategy.	Some people are in the know and some are not - affiliation to the key circles.	Clout is a metric for social media. It measures your social media impact.
Budgets get cut in communications - top management do not see the value in it.	Each department focuses on their own particular KPI's - little integration between departments.	SEO and other website analytics, call centre hit rates and sales reports.
THEME 4: Utilising media agencies - lack of integration	**THEME 5: New skills for marketing professionals**	**THEME 6: Lack of integration within the marketing department**
External agency hired - challenges- language barrier and different 'creativity trends'.	Fragmentation of media channels requires specialist skills.	Badly structured marketing teams result in a great deal of overlap and animosity.
External agencies pitch and ensuring that brand values are aligned is a challenge.	New titles such as campaign manager, social media manager and digital manager.	Interaction is a challenge as each individual is working in silos and not adding as much value.
Many specialists within the agency working on a campaign – corporate culture – challenge.	Producing content for a campaign, on new media platforms creates complexity.	Jealousy within the marketing department as to who has the bigger budget.
Our media agencies are treated as partners and attend company monthly seminars.	Department had to grow substantially in order to accommodate all the new specialists required.	Ego within marketing teams is a challenge.
This is a challenge as it is difficult to get the agency to understand the brand.	To ensure that brand communication is cohesive throughout the different campaigns.	Silos within marketing department due to the many new channels of communication requiring specialist services.
We do make use of a great deal of resources to ensure that the campaigns are cohesive.	Technology is evolving. This has created a greater burden on the resources.	
Work with one agency - tightly incorporated into our organisation.	Marketing teams have become much bigger due to the specialisation required.	Insufficient marketing heads to launch an IMC strategy.
Use of agencies can lead to a disjointed message that is not consistent.	There is a clear difference between the traditional marketer and the new marketers.	

4.3.2 Question 4: How do you ensure integration in your marketing communications strategy?

Question 4 was designed to be specific in an attempt to encourage dialogue around integration with the respondents. The question was intended to address Proposition 2 and broaden the discussion by actually ascertaining how implementation is performed in the organisation. Table 6 below contains the responses to this question.

Table 6: Integration of communications strategy

Question 4: How do you ensure integration in your marketing communications strategy?		
Vertical integration	**Horizontal integration**	**Data integration**
Without top management buy-in it becomes a challenge to get support for the strategy.	Once strategy is endorsed by top management, it is easier to get alignment.	Data integration - managed by employment of market analysts and very expensive systems.
Marketing strategy stems from the organisation's strategic objectives.	We make an effort to get the integration through to the entire organisation.	Weekly sales meetings where data is shared with marketing and finance.
Values of the organisation are taken into consideration in each campaign.	Yes, it is enforced by a brief that goes out to all employees via the companies' intranet.	Customer data is valued and used within our entire business.
Support of the senior team does ensure better integration of a marketing strategy.	HR, finance and other departments are not included in brief, they can see it on intranet.	Data is shared and marketing do pull sales reports and statistics off the system.
It is a very controlled process with balanced scorecards and metrics employed.	All staff informed via intranet. New campaign - the CS team is briefed by script.	Data is imperative and freely available due to the system we utilise.
Brand plans derived from the organisational strategy. It is a serious process.	Very well utilised intranet that showcases progress and updates on campaigns.	Data is not shared within the organisation. It is an issue.
The business strategy filters down to a category strategy and brand plan.	Shared metrics across and transparency upfront (at beginning of year) for all the plans.	Data shared between departments mainly exceptions statistics.
Internal integration	**External integration**	
Latest campaigns published on the intranet and monthly newsletters sent out.	External integration is done by the agencies themselves on the campaigns.	
Once a month monthly meetings where matters are discussed.	More can be done to integrate our suppliers.	
Doing seminars with webinars internally.	Website informs external stakeholders of the current happenings.	
Occurs via the intranet. Only people involved in the campaign gets briefed.	We have communication in the newspaper and our in-house magazines.	
It is a challenge to get staff to commit the time to go through the campaign mechanics.	Word of mouth is on steroids yet this channel is rarely implemented well.	
There are silos but there are monthly meetings informing all staff.	It is not a priority in the organisation - merely to inform agencies involved.	

The results gathered in Question 4, around how integration is ensured in an organisation are indicative of the challenges in implementation of the integrated marketing communications and supported the theory found in Question 3.

4.4 Summary of the results

The results gathered from the respondents had very easily identifiable dominant themes, and the information was very detailed.

In Question 1 which discusses the changes in marketing communications, eight themes were discovered.

In Question 3, which discusses the challenges in implementation of an IMC strategy, six themes were discovered.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

The interpretation of the results of this research is based on the findings from the interviews and is compared and contrasted with the issues identified in the literature review.

Reference will be made to the literature review with the intention of drawing comparisons between the information gathered from participants and the literature review.

5.2 Discussion pertaining to Research Proposition 1

Recent trends in integrated marketing communications include:

- **Communication is more interactive, and instantaneous**
- **Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics**
- **Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing**
- **IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience**

The respondent interviews unearthed eight trends depicting changes in marketing communications which were:

1. Consumers want to interact with brands in real time
2. More empowered consumer
3. IT advancement
4. Efficiencies created through new systems
5. Media engagement choices
6. Compliance to legislation and reputation management
7. New channels of communication
8. Holistic marketing creates an experience

- **Consumers want to interact with brands in real time**

The respondents highlighted that communication now consists of new communication techniques mixed with old communication methods. They mention that they are seeing real time communication daily alongside planned communication events. This was found in the literature review, and also in Figure 4, the new IMC landscape done by Schultz et al. (2012), where they mention that the new landscape consists of old and new communication channels.

Respondents discussed that the management of public relations has become a bit more challenging as messages are now instantaneous and responses in a crisis situation need to be readily available, planned beforehand and ready to implement at the relevant time. The potential for crisis communication has increased due to the manner in which communication occurs today which is instantaneous communication. According to Berthon et al. (2012), communication is more interactive and engaging. Rapid improvements in technology and the consequent depth and breadth of information that is immediately available to consumers which influences their decision making process, is a challenge to most marketers.

According to the respondents, there is a great deal of user generated content. Consumers want to be engaged. People want to be educated on the brand they support and they want responses in real time. Digital communications are interactive, engaging and instantaneous; they are word of mouth in a different platform. According to Gitomer (2011), the new social networks are an opportunity to connect with your consumers.

- **More empowered consumer**

Some respondents commented on the increase of content media such as blogging and video. They contribute this increase on the fact that consumers want to be heard and have something to contribute. Another trend is video which generates interest and additional conversation. Consumers readily offer their opinions and their views on campaigns that are running. They also play a substantial role in passing communication onto their friends if it is a worthwhile piece of information which creates more interaction on websites and our blogs. Consumers want brand experiences, they want to be able to connect with the brand and interact and be engaged by the brand. They want to be able to give feedback if something is not working for them and they want a response in real time. They want to be able to question, interact or suggest certain routes with that brand and they want a response. This has been mentioned in the literature review by Kliatchko (2008), where he mentions that consumers today require an interactive marketing communication platform as they themselves are very involved and actually take part in the communication efforts of brands. This was also mentioned by Schultz and Patti (2009) where they say that consumers are active communication generators and offer their opinions and expect responses.

Respondents discussed the direct and instantaneous manner in which consumers communicate nowadays requires a different marketing skill.

The respondents also mentioned that the communication is more targeted as conversations are one-on-one with consumers. The daily conversations can consist of trends in the industry, customer service requests and queries, suggestions on better and more effective ways of doing business and new research and development ideas. Marketing has evolved and become more of a conversation between friends. The respondents mentioned the benefits of these conversations as an opportunity to educate and engage customers about brand campaigns, brand attributes, the ability to keep on the pulse of who your target market is and the opportunity to keep and maintain a positive brand perception.

Consumers are empowered and require transparency according to respondents. Marketing before consisted of one-way communication from the brand to the consumer regarding the brand proposition but this is not sufficient nowadays. The consumers prefer to have an interactive conversation and they want to be engaged by brands and in return you get the loyalty of that consumer. The role of marketing is to be online and communicating with your consumers in order to get their attention. According to Fisk (2006), marketing has become more challenging due to the intensely challenging nature of the

markets, coupled with a more challenging, empowered consumer.
Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), mention that marketing communications have become more of a collaborative conversation instead of a marketing pitch. This is also mentioned by Hongcharu and Eimkanchanalai (2009), who say that a close interactive relationship with consumers is the future of communications.

- **IT Advancement**

IT advancements have opened up a whole new communication process in a very short space of time according to respondents. Consumers are now developing their own applications and creating better business processes as a result. Advancements in efficiencies are enhanced by these developments and productivity increased. Advances in information technology have, and will continue to have, a dramatic effect on marketing communications.
Schultz and Patti (2009) mention changes that occurred as a result of these evolutions in technology and the subsequent tools that came about which influence communication.
There are many new channels of communication such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs, Google plus and LinkedIn, which enable communication to be more transparent, interactive and instantaneous. Advancements in IT give consumers the ability to design and develop their own communication channels. According to Pearson (2011), the internet and predominantly Google, changed the way information can be accessed, it made information more accessible and the ability to go onto Google at any time of the day on any device able to connect to the internet, was convenient. The hardware and software evolution resulted in greater productivity.
These new devices also give consumers the ability to communicate more often and also to engage at all times of the day and night through broadband or mobile. Software programs and applications are being developed daily and create constant improvements within business and also improve communications within business. This rapid evolution and design of new channels of communication are creating a challenge for the marketing professional who has to continuously educate himself on how they work and how to effectively communicate with target consumers in these new channels

and devices.

According to Pearson (2011), as consumers went onto Google to search for whatever it was that they needed, they came across websites and other products which became a benchmark upon which they could build their own brands.

As the new channels and methods of communication evolve, so will the metrics used to measure the relevant statistics and marketers must understand these as well. Respondents make use of digital media departments who utilise all the digital metrics such as search engine optimisation, monitoring clicks and monitoring consumer interest on websites. They also employ predictive analytics when calculating the profitability of individual consumers based on their history which is done in a much shorter time frame than before and does have a significant effect on the manner in which the effectiveness of marketing campaigns are measured.

Mulhern (2009) discusses that consumer insight is the ability to utilise the extensive databases of information to develop systems which are able to analyse and predict consumer behaviour.

According to the respondents, IT advancement occurs on so many levels, utilising GPS co-ordinates downloaded to Google maps at the click of a button on an invitation to a party or RSVP’s done via a smartphone on the go. Geo mapping are utilised to give access to venues. These all create the feel of a brand that is techno savvy which is what consumers want to see. Berthon et al. (1999), discuss how these technological changes have the potential to change peoples’ insights, outlooks and inclinations. They have the ability to create an entirely new way of life for individuals and societies.

- **Efficiencies created through new systems**

Respondents that have invested in some very powerful and expensive marketing systems such as CRM software in order to get an advantage over their competition as they have seen the value of this investment. They do believe that this is where they will see the most growth and the most innovation.

They have witnessed tremendous improvement in the way they monitor and control their marketing efforts as a result. The information that an advanced system can generate has had a substantial improvement on the manner in which decisions are made and the speed at which they can make those decisions to minimise losses in campaigns. They are also able to monitor customer profitability individually which has really improved the decisions to retain certain customers or direct less spend towards others, utilising one of the world's best systems to monitor the effectiveness of our campaigns. They make use of campaign management and use model data as they employ predictive analytics with the software used to track campaigns. Regression tools are mainly used as they are 98% accurate.

Predictive analytics helps optimise marketing campaigns and more specifically website and digital campaigns and they enable real time, relevant statistics and results from the consumers' behaviour. This information is used to increase customer connectivity, clicks and responses to campaigns.

This has been mentioned in the literature review by Schultz and Patti (2009); and Mulhern (2009). "The digital revolution was not just limited to communication devices. It enabled the capture and use of vast amounts of information in the form of customer databases which spawned Customer Relationship Management (CRM) and a host of allied fields, all designed to give marketers better insights into customers and prospects" (Schultz & Patti, 2009:76). According to Mulhern (2009), "Digital media are influencing four important elements on IMC – consumer insight, data-driven planning, cross-media integration and communications to multiple stakeholders" (Mulhern, 2009:92).

Respondents mentioned the many new systems available to enhance the manner in which data is collated and metrics applied, due to rapid IT advancement. The systems available range from very basic to extremely advanced and the challenge for marketers is to understand how they work and which one will best suited to the business you are in. Facebook analytics and Website Search Engine Optimisation are some of the analytics employed in the new channels of communication. This really improves marketing communications as you are able to analyse whether your campaign is working in a short space of time and make the necessary adjustments to maximise return. According to Silberman (2011), digital advertising is a very appealing channel due to the readily available metrics constantly available to track success of campaigns and the cost of these campaigns.

The new sophisticated and advanced systems can establish what range or pack size within a brand are being bought. Most big shopping chains nowadays have in-store cards where a great deal of information is stored. The store owner does have access to consumer purchases by gender and age and location which can be used to make decisions if they invest in systems that can take the data and convert it into information. An article by Davenport et al. (2011), highlights the successes of organisations such as Tesco in the UK, Microsoft and Foursquare by utilising advances in information technology, data gathering and analytics to create customised and relevant offerings to customers at the right time and place.

- **New channels of communication**

Consumers are in touch on a variety of devices such as cell phones, tablets, laptops and desk top computers according to respondents. Consumers are in touch at all times of the day and night as there is truly global communication.
The new world of digital communication is becoming increasingly important. It's a combination of fixed and mobile. Smartphones are enablers in these conversations. In South Africa, broadband costs are still exorbitantly high so the smartphones with their free services are making communication possible on all these social media platforms.
According to the respondents, social media must not be used to sell but more to communicate and engage with the consumer. They will make up their own minds to purchase if they resonate with the brand through the engagement with the brand. Social media platforms have become a big player in marketing communications. Facebook pages are used differently by different brands. Some use them purely to communicate CSI projects that they are currently working on, some use Facebook for customer service issues and queries. There is a great deal of communication that is interactive and instantaneous on

the Facebook page. Twitter is being used as a broadcasting tool and LinkedIn is for recruitment.

Media has fragmented and the mediums through which brands create content and manifest content have had to adapt to this fragmented media landscape, driven by technology. The consumer has evolved and has access to many different channels of communication that need to be understood from a marketing point of view. Video is utilised more in internal marketing communications as this is a more convenient manner to keep everyone informed due to organisational structures. In prior years when this technology was not available meetings would be less frequently, which was not ideal. Video (e.g. YouTube videos) is utilised on Facebook pages which has proven to be very successful as they are educational and easy to understand which is what the consumer prefers. Simple, short, to the point and visually stimulating videos work well. The evolution of communications has been quite stark and interesting. Internal communications within a smaller company has become a lot simpler due to BBM, SMS, MMS and Dropbox, all the new devices that are instantaneous and free. The internet, email, Skype and other mediums of communication enables teams spread all over the world to communicate and stay in touch.

According to Kliatchko (2008) the manner in which and where communication occurs with our target consumers has to change. Marketing professionals have to research and understand the new channels of communication being utilised by the consumers, who are the target market for their brands, in order to remain relevant and impactful in their marketing communications.

IT advancement has been rapid in the last few years. The different devices and channels of communication that have opened up and are now utilised to communicate to the consumer are many and it does pose a challenge for the normal marketing department as they are very IT intensive and one has to know what the benefits are before incorporating the channel into your strategy. Kliatchko (2008) mentions that consumers today are also faced with many alternate methods of communication at their disposal, keeping abreast of the new technology and additional forms of communication is a challenge to marketing professionals.

- **Media engagement choices**

Respondents are aware that consumers operate a few communication devices at one time. They will watch television on their iPad and text on their phone, while responding to emails on their laptop. It's an age of connectivity. Respondents have witnessed the decline of the traditional channels of communication such as television and billboards as consumers currently prefer other devices for their entertainment and infotainment. They watch videos on their smartphones or tablets from YouTube rather than watch television, with an option to fast forward advertisements if they have a PVR decoder, making the traditional channels no longer as relevant as they were.

According to Hongcharu and Eimkanchanalai (2009), the manner in which consumers and organisations communicate today has evolved due to globalisation, the internet, rapid IT evolution and thus social media's influence. Technology continues to change the way people interact every day.

According to the respondents, there has been a big change in the various mediums of communication. A few years ago you could capture your audience with one television channel and four radio stations. Currently adopting this model would seem outdated, is very costly and will not get the return on investment required. The explosion in media has caused fragmentation. Television is still relevant but the target market has changed per television channel. The consumer will watch many programs on many different channels at different times due to the many choices available. Television channels no longer have their own clear segmentation, something that has been seen in radio broadcasting as well. Localised content is a growing trend and people want to relate to the content. Localisation is a big theme in today's communication. The smaller radio stations are starting to perform incredibly well due to their local relevance. Communication channels must be supplemented in order for them to be effective. When the South African Broadcasting Corporation eventually goes digital to 18 stations it will pose a greater challenge. According to Schultz et al. (2012), the inclusion of the new channels of communication allows for more interaction with consumers in a direct manner and results in communication that is more of a relationship. The new IMC communications landscape consists of a combination of traditional and new communication channels.

Marketing communications have moved away from a specific time and place, people now have the ability to consume the information they want at any time and any place. According to Davenport et al. (2011), consumers have much more choice, they choose what to watch, where to watch it and when they want to watch it.

The digital advancements have evolved the manner in which consumers respond to channels of communication. Television is still the biggest reached channel, but if a digital strategy is not employed then there will be a section of the target market not reached. The new reality is that many consumers listen to radio to and from work. At the office most consumers do not have the radio playing in the background to uphold office etiquette. Consumers prefer to listen to music on their iPods which are configured to their car systems. Parents trying to get the family more closely connected, do not allow their kids to watch television, thus many households do not watch television until after the children have gone to sleep. The iPad has become the most used channel that engages young families.

According to Davenport et al. (2011), marketers need to communicate with consumers on their terms and be increasingly vigilant in their research to find out what they like and where they can communicate to them.

According to Schultz et al. (2012), the new IMC communications landscape consists of a combination of traditional and new communication channels.

- **Holistic marketing creates a brand experience**

According to the respondents, experiential marketing is the new strategy for marketers to engage consumers. The experience can only be created if a holistic, integrated strategy is used to create the experience for the consumer. IMC ensures that all brand touch points are aligned and does create a holistic marketing strategy, resulting in a brand experience. Due to the evolution of marketing and the different devices being used by consumers it is an advantage to employ a holistic marketing campaign as you might not always be sure of where the consumer is viewing your brand message. According to Tsai (2005)

IMC is a comprehensive dynamic solution which can create a holistic experience for the consumer.

According to the respondents, it is a greater challenge nowadays to gain consumer loyalty. Consumers want to be engaged and the experiential marketing route is the most beneficial manner in which to do this. Ensuring your communications are presented in a holistic manner is beneficial to your brand. Also ensuring that all brand touch points are consistent and being utilised effectively will result in a holistic IMC strategy. A holistic marketing strategy is the key to brand building. Consistency across the marketing offering creates an experience for the consumer which does in fact relate back to sales. Experiential marketing is the manner in which a brand can effectively influence the consumer.
Hinson (2005) believes that IMC is all about the development of a distinct customer focus both internally and externally, which results in a single brand message.

Experiential activations require a holistic approach to marketing communications or a 360 degree marketing strategy. The experience is much more tightly linked to the brand proposition to create an experience that creates an identity for the brand in the mind of the consumer. Consumers have a need for experiences with brands. They want to connect to their brands in a holistic manner and from that experience determine whether the brand still holds the values that they subscribe to. The brand must be authentic and in order for this attribute to be created there must be a holistic customer experience at all touch points of the brand. There must not be a doubt in the mind of the consumer that the brand is unauthentic or disjointed or does not subscribe to certain values. Consumers want to have a sensory experience with the brands they engage with on every level. According to Lindstrom (2005), the future of branding is experiential branding which is holistic and the marketing pitch must be able to inspire feeling through all five senses by the consumer. According to Tsai (2005), IMC is a strategy that ensures that the communications and the brand management elements of a brand experience are coordinated and deliver the same consistent message to the consumer, resulting in a holistic consumer experience.

According to respondents, sponsorship or collaboration of brand events has become a big trend as this does create an immediate experience or positioning of the brand in the mind of the consumer. According to Brakus et al. (2009) a brand experience affect customer loyalty and customer satisfaction through a direct and indirect route. A brand experience does create value for the consumer as it gives an accurate holistic experience of what the brand stands for. According to Tsai (2005) the IMC strategy must run through the entire company, through each department that the brand progresses through “from research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, customer service management, marketing message construction and communication programme execution in order for it to become a holistic consumer experience”.

- **Compliance to legislation and reputation management**

A trend was noted that was not identified by prior research.

There are various new regulations that have an impact on communications. The Consumer Protection Act (CPA), which concerns marketing communications directly, is mainly handled by the compliance division in larger organisations. Marketing has had to become more accountable. People are giving credence to this. Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE), and the seven pillars, has also had an impact on regulation as CSI is one of the pillars in BBBEE verification. Social marketing (CSI) has become more relevant. Management have realised that the intangibles that are influenced such as reputation management and brand equity in the implementation of CSI initiatives or social marketing does contribute to the bottom line. The contribution is in the form of customer retention and customer loyalty which is becoming increasingly hard to maintain with the multitude of brand offerings consumers now have at their disposal.

Regulation has had an impact on marketing communications. The CPA influences and controls how marketing communications can occur as they are making marketers more accountable. BBBEE influences the seven pillars and one of them concerns CSI initiatives thus marketing now has to design and implement CSI initiatives in line with their brand and consumer. The Reputation Institute which is as of late becoming more and more of a discussion point around how brands are perceived have their own set of metrics in the form of seven pillars which have a strong affiliation to the consumers' perception and rating of the entire brand.

The second question in the respondent interview related to Proposition 1 is a conversation around the channels of communication employed and the relevance of those channels. This is supporting information for Question 1 and does relate directly to Proposition 1.

- **Communication channels and their relevance**

Respondents still make use of traditional channels of communication but the budget for the traditional marketing channels has been significantly reduced. These old traditional channels are television advertisements, radio advertisements, billboards, newsletters, flyers, newspaper advertisements and magazine advertisements. According to Schultz et al. (2012), the new IMC communications landscape consists of a combination of traditional and new communication channels.

Many respondents have added the new channels of communication to their IMC strategy as they are very relevant to business nowadays. These new channels are Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, blogs, a website, a mobi website, a Facebook page, email marketing, SMS, MMS, Mxit and other applications, mobile marketing, BBM, Dropbox and Skype. Content media and location based marketing has become a bigger channel of communication as consumers prefer the more interactive communication channels. Interactive and instantaneous communication has definitely taken over in our marketing channels. According to Schultz et al. (2012), the inclusion of the new channels of communication allow for more interaction with consumers in a direct manner and results in communication that is more of a relationship. Kliatchko (2008) believes that the younger consumers are adopting all methods of digital communication as their preference of communication method or channel and choosing the new digital technology over the old traditional forms of communication.

Mxit is most useful in the campaigns to target people with less disposable income and access to broadband. Other methods include BBM, SMS, MMS and Dropbox. It is easy to keep people informed with all the new devices that are instantaneous and free such as the internet, email and Skype. Counselling, recruitment and skills training can be done online on mediums such as Mxit. Radio and television are still used but not by as many people as before.

According to Kliatchko (2008), consumers today are also faced with many alternate methods of communication at their disposal; keeping abreast of the new technology and additional forms of communication is a challenge to marketing professionals.

Some of the more unconventional new channels are above the line ads in taxi's, and looped media content of an informative nature within stores. Also activations in stores where the products are sold one-on-one to customers and internal marketing workshops each quarter of the year to all staff to brief them on the campaigns that are adopted for the brand. Brand collaboration and brand sponsorships are on the increase as they are a good medium to ensure positioning and save on the marketing budget. Community based networks such as community radios and murals, such as shebeen walls or private residence walls in prominent parts of the community. Social activations are done by personalities to get a message out to community members. According to Mulhern (2009) these advancements in information technology must be embraced and recognised for the value add through engagement with consumers.

- **Conclusion of Proposition 1**

The respondent interviews contained a great deal more information on implementation and day-to-day challenges than the literature review and can be a great source of information to marketing professionals who are unsure of the current landscape. The changes in marketing communications are indeed numerous and evolution is occurring at an alarming rate.

Table 7: Proposition 1 – Analysis of themes and trends

Literature review trends identified		Respondent interviews - Themes identified	
NO	**TRENDS**	**NO**	**THEMES**
1	Communication is more interactive and instantaneous.	1	Consumers want to interact with brands in real time.
		2	More empowered consumer.
2	Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics.	3	IT advancement.
		4	Efficiencies created through systems
3	Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing.	5	Media engagement choices.
		7	New channels of communication.
4	IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience.	8	Holistic marketing creates a brand experience.
		6	Compliance to legislation and reputation management.

Table 7 above shows the themes and trends and their similarities. Theme 1 and 2 unearthed from the respondent interviews when combined have the same attributes as trend 1 derived from the literature review. Theme 3 and 4 unearthed from the respondent interviews combined has the same attributes as trend 2 that was derived from the literature review. Theme 5 and 7 unearthed from the respondent interviews combined has the same attributes as trend 3 that was derived from the literature review. Theme 8 unearthed from the respondent interviews is the same as trend 4 from the literature review. There was an additional trend found in the respondent interviews which was not present in the literature review. It is a trend that is specific to South Africa due to new legislation and methods of compliance. This new trend is called compliance to legislation and reputation management.

In summary the four trends discovered in the literature review are present in the respondent interviews. The additional trend was not found in the literature reviews as it is specific to the South African business landscape.

5.3 Discussion pertaining to Research Proposition 2

There were similarities between the literature review and the respondent interviews in the second proposition which elaborates on the challenges in implementation of integrated marketing communication strategies. There were four trends that emerged from the literature review. Proposition 2 is detailed below.

Challenges in IMC implementation include:

- **Uncoordinated Internal and External Resources**
- **Lack of Utilisation of Suitable Marketing Metrics**
- **Corporate Silos**
- **Budget Constraints**

The respondent interviews elicited six trends which are detailed below:

1. Budget limitations
2. Lack of integration within the organisation
3. Lack of sufficient metrics employed
4. Media agencies – lack of integration
5. New skills for marketing professionals
6. Lack of integration within the marketing department

The respondent interviews elaborated much more on the content, the structures within South African organisations and the day–to-day challenges they faced.

- **Budget Limitations**

Most of the respondents mentioned that this was their main challenge in the implementation of IMC strategies. Budgets are smaller for various reasons but mainly due to a recessionary environment that has not fully recovered. Employees are more pressed for time and management are trying to squeeze out every last bit of productivity from each employee so the time to go through marketing communications in a manner that will drive good behaviour is not a priority. Implementation of an IMC is very expensive and companies have limited budgets. Most companies have cost saving initiatives employed due to the recessionary environment and will not add to the budget for something as intangible as an IMC strategy as they have never been privy to the effects it could possibly have or are not too familiar with what the building of brand equity actually entails. In some instances South African organisations are very ignorant regarding IMC and it is a challenge to ensure integration with limited resources.

According to Carpenter (2009) the current recession has been unsympathetic on individuals and organisations. Organisations need to find innovative ways to remain profitable and sustainable in these harsh times.

All budgets are being cut as companies are looking for efficiency. On the other hand, marketing is becoming more of a front line service and being recognised more for its efforts to increase profits and acquire or retain customers which are imperative for business to continue.

The bottom line can be impacted substantially through effective communication but this is where most of the budget cuts to a marketing strategy occur. An IMC strategy is formulated and all brand touch points have been identified and incorporated into the strategy. Budget cuts are then performed by persons who were not responsible for putting together the strategy and therefore do not understand the relevance of each of the channels of communication. The challenge comes in when decision makers who are not specialists in communications or any of the components involved in the marketing strategy and then cut down to elements or sections of the strategy that they deem not to be necessary in order to save costs, which makes it virtually impossible to implement.

Marketing has had substantial head count increases due to all the specialist functions that are now required to be employed, leading to massive budget cuts in other departments to accommodate the marketing department. Budgets are definitely a challenge. Costs have had to be stripped in other elements of the business to fund the face of the business which is marketing and sales. The

investment in marketing and sales is what contributes directly to the bottom line in our business. Distribution, finance and human resources departments have had to cut costs to keep the budget afloat for sales and marketing.
The biggest hindrance of implementation of a fully integrated marketing communications strategy is budget. The full IMC strategy is what is formulated but halfway through the campaign, budgets get cut and mostly this is done in communications as most top management do not see the value in communications due to the spend it entails and the return that is not instant.

- **Media agencies – lack of integration**

The respondents were particularly frustrated regarding this trend; they mentioned the lack of marketing talent in the current South African marketplace and the limited resources that they have internally to work within the implementation of all the new channels of communication. According to Kotler and Keller (2009), there are very few marketing professionals who understand the entire marketing landscape. “Large companies often employ several different communications specialists who may know very little about the other communications tools” (Kotler & Keller, 2009:533).

According to the respondents, the amount of people required to implement an IMC strategy are insufficient within an organisation. Limited resources mainly due to lack of staff and lack of skill to run and implement the IMC strategy. External agencies are then utilised to pitch for campaigns, and the challenge arises in ensuring that the bigger brand values are aligned. Sometimes they pitch a really interesting campaign which cannot be implemented as it does not align with the brand values. This is a challenge as it is difficult to get the agency to understand the brand in as much detail as they should. It is easier to work with some agencies but the creativity does not always come from those specific agencies. There is a great deal of resources utilised to ensure that the campaigns are cohesive and brand attributes are aligned.
According to Kotler and Keller (2009), the fragmented effect that the employment of multiple agencies, in different countries has on one brand can result in many different strategies put together that do not seem uniform,

resulting in a disjointed offering all competing for a marketing budget.

Also, in the matter of global companies, external agency talent is hired and that comes with its own challenges for integration as the language barrier and the ‘creativity trends’ in different countries are not the same. Raiborn et al. (2009) discuss the cultural or language differences that could arise between the company and the outsourced vendor which could have significant consequences on the brand perception by the customers.
On occasion, specialists within the agency working on a campaign who do not necessarily have the same corporate culture as the company marketing campaign that they are working on, and having a strong campaign manager to streamline communication between agency and company is important to ensure that the correct message is being delivered to the company and consumers in the correct manner. This includes all systems that need to be streamlined such as culture, communication, billing systems, etc.
Raiborn et al. (2009), mention that a very open form of communication between the organisation and the vendor is imperative for success.

Some of the respondents have no challenges in implementation as instead of external agencies, they employed specialist talent internally and are thus able to perform all the functions in-house. They have very few issues with implementation as a result. This has had a substantial effect on the size of the marketing departments and marketing budget. Some respondents also have found the benefit in working with only one agency. The reason for this is the prior challenges experienced due to agencies not understanding the brand and it became more of a challenge to do business with them.

Marketing skills are a challenge in South Africa so the need to go outside of the organisation is becoming more necessary. The South African marketing landscape consists of small pockets of great skill, and there is not enough talent out there. This comes with its own set of challenges which is ensuring the communications strategy is integrated and consistent. Fragmentation in communications is a challenge. This can lead to a disjointed message that is not through the line and consistent. Without the capacity and the skills in-house, outsourcing is the only option but it has to be tightly controlled in order to remain consistent. According to Raiborn et al. (2009), outsourcing of services in marketing can lead to a disjointed total offering. Un-integrated communications send disjointed messages which dilute the impact of the message.

- **Lack of integration within the marketing department**

Badly structured marketing teams result in a great deal of overlap and animosity regarding roles and responsibilities which can result in work not being done and blame resulting in greater animosity. Interaction is very seldom which is a challenge as each individual is working in silos and not adding as much value as they have the potential to do had they been more integrated in their approaches.

According to Longenecker and Neubert (2000) the incorrect behaviours that can result from a lack of common vision are short-sightedness and invariably the inability to achieve goals. The lack of this vision, they believe can result in lack of synergy within an organisation and the inability to perform as a team at different levels of the organisation (Longenecker & Neubert, 2000).

Ego within marketing teams also becomes a challenge as each specialist is concerned about the accolades they will get if they are able to put together a great plan instead of working as a team to establish a great brand plan. According to Longenecker and Neubert (2000), a common vision and objectives or goals linked to that vision with clearly defined action plans are imperative within an organisation which seeks to improve management cooperation and teamwork within that organisation. The power of the common vision is articulated by the authors, they mention that it has the ability to motivate, direct and unite the employees of an organisation in achievement of that vision.

Respondents mentioned the challenges within the marketing department itself, due to the fragmentation of channels of communication and a lack of clear outlines of how each channel works, there is a great deal of indecision on the part of the marketers themselves. Even after a strategy has been signed off, people were still unsure and create reactive implementations instead of

implementing the original strategy they put together. The indecision and lack of confidence is evident in the marketing department.
According to Mokgata (2012), the team that is normally given the task of internal marketing communications are not equipped to deal with it and that is why execution is poor.

- **Lack of sufficient metrics employed**

The responses in this trend varied greatly from severe lack of skill and understanding on the topic to complete control and command on the topic. All the respondents are aware of the need for marketing to become more accountable but not all understand the value of some of the metrics they need to employ in order to gain that accountability. Most of these respondents adopted very minimal metrics within their organisations as according to them there is a very limited group of individuals who understand marketing metrics.
On the other extreme there are organisations that have purchased very expensive software that is able to calculate metrics required to create efficiencies and monitor profitability within the marketing department and campaigns which is very effective. According to Silberman (2011), digital advertising is a very appealing channel due to the readily available metrics constantly available to track success of campaigns and the cost of these campaigns.

According to the respondents, there is much more scrutiny and need for CMO’s and marketing professionals to report back to the business and show value and return on investment for marketing strategies and campaigns. According to Fisk (2006), the drive for greater accountability on the part of the marketing professional and the pressure to produce business results in the boardroom, become ever more important.

The classic external metrics are being measured such as return on investment in sales and return on investment in brand equity which is all about how successful the brand is at selling itself and how successful it is at building its own brand equity. New metrics have arisen due to the new channels of

communication such as social media. One such metric is Clout, which measures your social media impact. It measures how many followers you have and how influential your followers are which will tabulate a score of how influential you are as a person. As technology evolves and a deeper understanding of the new channels of communication is found, there will be new ways of looking at information and new metrics will arise to measure what has now become important.
According to Davenport et al. (2011), the rapid evolution of digital technology opens a whole new era of very sophisticated marketing communications, tracking tools and metrics, which organisations need to take advantage of as the returns are substantial.

There were the very few respondents who had adopted very relevant metrics due to a substantial investment in some good CRM software. Metrics are a big part of marketing campaigns and also enables switching course quickly if the desired results anticipated are not achieved. Having metrics at hand creates an environment that ensures the achievement of goals and flexibility in the application of the campaign. Respondents use metrics such as campaign management and model data and employ predictive analytics with the software used to track campaigns. Regression tools are mainly used and they are 98% accurate. Predictive modelling is replacing the customer equity metric and is done by a system, thus there is no need for manual calculations. According to Mulhern (2009) consumer insight is the ability to utilise the extensive databases of information to develop systems which are able to analyse and predict consumer behaviour.

Marketing metrics are not a main priority in many South African organisations. Most organisations measure the basics such as sales increase, customer awareness, and customer service ratings, SEO and other website analytics. They measure call centre hit rates and sales reports on the success of the campaigns in the form of acquisition and retention. Common metrics are employed in the media such as reach, frequency, and penetration. Other metrics employed are employ rate of sale increase, repurchase, market share, and efficiency metrics. Day to day metrics include units sold per activation, the

AR (audience rating) per television campaign, planned versus actual , sales percentage increase, repurchase percentage, loyalty measures. Brand equity is done at a very high level of the organisation and not really applicable to day-to-day metrics.

Some respondents have global benchmarks where they are benchmarked as a country based on efficiency. There are global metrics such as content spend relative to media cost, in other words looking at the percentage spend relative to budget and the return on investment relative to that, as well as Facebook presence where communication performance is a metric. The measures are being influenced by what is happening globally.

- **Lack of integration within the organisation**

Integration is a challenge and synergy is almost impossible in South African organisations. Integration requires shared resources which are a challenge. Integration needs top management buy-in and funds need to be allocated for it. According to Longenecker and Neubert (2000), a common vision and objectives or goals linked to that vision with clearly defined action plans are imperative within an organisation which seeks to improve management cooperation and teamwork within that organisation.

Some respondents mentioned the challenges in their larger organisations and how difficult it is to ensure integration due to the manner in which budgets are structured. Each manager is looking after their own budget and will not contribute to enabling integration as they feel this is a KPI of the marketing department. According to Enache (2008) departmental heads focus on safeguarding their budgets and holding onto control within their particular department and that is the reason why the integration of an IMC strategy is a challenge.

Respondents mention that top management do not see the value that it could add to the entire organisation in equipping all staff with the knowledge that could inform them and excite them about the vision and enable them to become brand ambassadors. According to Cummings and Angwin (2011) management must be more cognisant of how the strategy is expressed to the individuals in order for them to understand it and have buy-in.

The greatest task for marketing heads is managing complexity within the organisation. Nowadays it is imperative that you are able to ensure that your brand is consistent. Within organisations it has been found that the biggest challenge is the lack of understanding of the importance of having an integrated marketing communications strategy by the management team, thus there is no central point of coordination of an IMC strategy. Enache (2008) mentions that even though the value has been identified in employing an IMC strategy, the implementation is still a challenge. He believes that the lack of support from top management is one of the barriers to successful IMC implementation.

Some respondents reported that this was not an issue within their organisation. They identified this challenge and made use of all their resources to ensure that the silos were broken down. According to the respondents, this was obviously driven by top management. It was a great challenge, but it eventually led to more integration, urging regions and departments to conform. This also resulted in more standardisation across the departments and regions for the brands. Crittenden (2005) believes that marketing must infiltrate the entire organistion, and work in partnership with all business functions in order to be effective.

- **New skills for marketing professionals**

Due to the fragmentation of media channels and the mediums through which brands create and manifest content brands and organisations have had to learn how to communicate on these channels and employ specialists who can add value by their skill of this new form of communication. The production of content for a campaign, on the new media platforms creates complexity in the marketing strategy. New titles such as campaign manager, social media / digital manager, trade marketing manager and the like have had to be added in order for the strategy to be adequately managed and the most value derived. The offering from an agency perspective is that the offering is now augmented with the addition of all these specialists.

Our department has had to grow substantially in order to accommodate all the new specialists required to look after these new functions. The specialists discover new attributes very often as the technology is continually evolving. This has created a greater burden on the management to ensure integration of the marketing strategy and the need to understand the consumer even more due to the direct conversations had with them on a daily basis.

Marketing teams have become much bigger due to the specialisation required. Our entire structure per brand has changed in order to accommodate the massive growth and keep it more manageable and controlled. It is a constant challenge to ensure that brand communication is cohesive throughout the different campaigns.

There is a clear difference between the traditional marketer and the new up-and-coming marketers. The older generation still try to force the traditional methods down and convince themselves that these channels are still working when the return is much less. It takes a great deal of convincing for them to take the leap and try out the new channels and they do not take the time to understand or formulate the idea conclusively of why the new channels work. They are still constantly looking for issues or short comings in the new channels of communication which leads to even greater uncertainty in the marketing environment.

The fourth question in the respondent interview related to Proposition 2 is a conversation around how integration is performed within organisations. This is supporting information for question 3 and does relate directly to proposition 2.

1. Vertical integration

According to the respondents, marketing strategy stems from the organisations strategic objectives found in the corporate strategy and they have to align in order for objectives to be met. It is a very controlled process with balanced scorecards and metrics employed to ensure that objectives are reached. Top management is very clear on incorporating the values into the organisation. Corporate culture is imperative in the organisation and if the employee does not connect with the culture it is easily noticeable. The values of the organisation or brand have to be taken into account in each brand campaign. The brand remains cohesive in this manner. Without top management buy-in it becomes a challenge to get support for the strategy. Dolak (2003) believes that a shared vision is imperative for success within an organisation as he believes that if all employees are associated and affiliated to the shared vision within an organisation then the results are competence and efficiency. According to Kliatchko (2008), IMC is a business process which manages internal and external customers, the brand information, the channels of communication utilised and the results that arise from the campaigns or brand communication. IMC includes the integration of the whole organisation, and he refers to IMC as a business process.

2. Horizontal Integration

According to respondents, horizontal integration is an effort and requires constant work. All the departments across the business work closely together and are all conscious about managing expectations and communicating unified messages and actions to external stakeholders. Once the strategy is endorsed by top management, it is easier to get the different departments to participate effectively in the campaign. Kliatchko (2008) discusses that the employment of an IMC strategy encompasses both the corporate and operational level of the organisation, and that each level focuses on strategic and management matters.

Respondents found that having a joint goal setting and joint balanced scorecards ensured joint decision making across departments at management meetings. Distribution must understand their role and KPI’s and HR must understand the talent required to deliver on the goals, finance must understand the type of spend required and sales must understand what type of consumers to target and what type accounts these consumers have in their names. The entire organisation needs to be educated and informed on the brand plans in order to execute effectively. There is an education forum for each employee of the organisation before the launch of the campaign which has proven to be very effective in creating excitement around the campaign and additional word of mouth.

According to Tsai (2005) the IMC strategy must run through the entire company, through each department that the brand progresses through "from research and development, manufacturing, price formulation, channel arrangement, customer service management, marketing message construction and communication program execution in order for it to become a holistic consumer experience" (Tsai, 2005).

3. Data Integration

Most respondents reacted positively to this form of integration due to shared systems. Customer data is valued and used within the entire business. Respondents mentioned the need for weekly sales meetings where data is shared across departments. Data integration is very well managed by employment of market analysts and very expensive systems with capabilities to keep the entire organisation informed on balanced scorecard progress, brand equity, current statistics and new opportunities for growth. According to Silberman (2011), digital advertising is a very appealing channel due to the readily available metrics constantly available to track success of campaigns and the cost of these campaigns.

4. Internal Integration

Most respondents had positive feedback regarding internal integration mainly due to technological innovation available such as an intranet and videos which are used to communicate, especially in larger organisations.

There is an onus on marketing to publish all the latest campaigns on the intranet and send out monthly newsletters informing all staff. Internal integration is a challenge as it requires staff commitment to go through the campaign or strategy on the intranet or the newsletters. Some respondents have monthly internal communication via webinars. They ensure that communication is continuous across many platforms such as a website, intranet, email marketing, blogs and videos. Success is shared throughout the organisation. Ambassadors are created within the organisation. All employees are incentivised to be brand ambassadors. There are silos but to counter this, there are monthly meetings informing all staff of current and future happenings in the marketing department. According to Miles and Mangold (2005), they acknowledge the benefits to be gained by an organisation in educating employees about the values and mission of an organisation and about the brand essence of the brands they have, as they believe that employees are responsible as brand ambassadors to convey the brand attributes to customers. They believe that effective employee branding is a positioning which can deliver great benefits to the organisation.

5. External Integration

External integration is done by the agencies themselves on the campaigns. When sending out a brief, a great deal of detail is included and when an agency pitches, all the brand guidelines must be met. Communications done by third party agencies need to be constantly managed insuring that the campaigns are integrated and the “brand bible” is maintained. Ensuring a consistent and single message is maintained and communicated. According to the respondents, more can be done to integrate suppliers. Customers are not the only stakeholders of the brand and the rest of the stakeholders such as suppliers and agencies must be aware of the brand values as this will enable them to become ambassadors for the brand. According to Fisk (2006) brands are not just stickers and pictures but they are experiences that are brought to life through their values, by the people who work for them, in creating everyday experiences. He believes that all stakeholders should be involved in branding – employees, shareholders, suppliers and government.

- **Conclusions regarding Proposition 2**

Regarding the second proposition which deals with the challenges in the implementation of an IMC strategy, it is apparent that there are a few obstacles in the South African business landscape. The advancements in technology and communications have helped significantly to close this gap if they are employed within an organisation. The main challenge is lack of education within organisations firstly, of the benefits of an IMC strategy and secondly, of how to effectively deal with the challenges in the implementation of an IMC strategy. The marketing department is becoming more accountable and also expanding at an alarming rate. The rate of advancements in technology creates a gap in education where very few specialists in South Africa are informed and can educate on how to effectively utilise these new channels.

Marketing metrics are a challenge and there was inconsistency between the employments of metrics. The literature review and the respondent interviews were not consistent in this regard. The employment of marketing metrics within South African organisations vary and more focus is given to the metrics derived from systems as it is easier (because it is system generated) and more frequent which enables the marketing professional to keep a close eye on campaigns especially when they are not very confident of the channel being used.

Table 8: Proposition 2 – Analysis of themes and trends

Proposition 2 - Literature Review Trends Identified		Respondent Interviews - Themes Identified	
NO	**TRENDS**	**NO**	**THEMES**
1	Uncoordinated internal and external resources.	4	Media agencies - lack of integration.
		6	Lack of integration within the marketing department.
2	Lack of utilisation of suitable marketing metrics.	3	Lack of sufficient metrics employed.
3	Corporate silos.	2	Lack of integration within the organisation.
4	Budget constraints.	1	Budget limitations.
		5	New skills for marketing professionals.

Table 8 above shows the themes and trends and their similarities. Theme 1 unearthed from the respondent interviews has the same attributes as trend 4 derived from the literature review. Theme 2 unearthed from the respondent interviews has the same attributes as trend 3 from the literature review. Theme 3 unearthed from the respondent interviews has the same attributes as trend 2 from the literature review. Theme 4 and 6 unearthed from the respondent interviews when combined, have the same attributes as trend 1 that was derived from the literature review.

There was an additional theme identified through the respondent interviews and not identified in the literature review which is new skills for marketing professionals. Due to the rapid evolution of marketing communications and all the changes identified in Proposition 1, one of the challenges that have been identified is the lack of skill in the marketing department on how to effectively implement and utilise the new channels and advances in IT.

5.4 Conclusion

In both the literature review and the respondent interviews, a common thread emerged that the challenge for most marketing professionals is to keep abreast of the latest methods of communication being utilised by the target consumer, and understand how to communicate effectively in the new channels. Consumers are overwhelmed with the plethora of marketing communications and brand offerings and communication is ineffective, unless the consumer has an emotional connection with the brand. The emotional connection can be made through relevant brand experiences where a holistic marketing approach is adopted and an IMC strategy is executed.

There are many challenges currently faced by the marketing professional, but the most dominant challenge seems to be lack of knowledge, of the benefits of an IMC strategy, the new methods of communication, and the lack of resources in implementing an IMC strategy in the form of budget and head count.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter starts off by summarising the findings from the research done. It then discusses the conclusions derived from the study, with particular reference to the context specified in the beginning of the research report.

Suggested recommendations are then made to each of the stakeholders identified in the beginning of the research under the heading "Significance of the research", based on the results that have been derived from the research done.

This chapter is brought to a conclusion by suggestions for further research that were inspired by the process carried out in the research and the further questions that arose whilst conducting this research, that were beyond the scope of study of this research topic.

6.2 Conclusions of the study

Research Proposition 1: Recent trends in integrated marketing communications include:

- **Communication is more interactive, and instantaneous**
- **Advances in IT enhance data gathering and predictive analytics**
- **Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing**
- **IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience**

The context of this research was to provide insight to marketing professionals and key stakeholders within organisations to investigate the challenges in implementing integrated marketing communications strategies.

The main themes identified in the research regarding the changes to IMC strategies in Proposition 1 are:

- Consumers want to interact with brands in real time
- More empowered consumer
- IT advancement
- Efficiencies created through new systems
- Media engagement choices
- Compliance to legislation and reputation management
- New channels of communication
- Holistic marketing creates an experience

As discussed in Chapter 5 and Table 9 below, (derived from Table 7 on page 62), there are similarities between some of the trends and the themes.

- **Table 9: Verification of Proposition 1**

Literature Review Trends Identified		Respondent Interviews - Themes Identified		Conclusion
NO	**TRENDS**	**NO**	**THEMES**	
1	Communication is more interactive and instantaneous	1	Consumers want to interact with brands in real time	ACCEPT
		2	More empowered consumer	
2	Advances in IT enhances data gathering and predictive analytics	3	IT advancement	ACCEPT
		4	Efficiencies created through systems	
3	Alternate channels of communication are available and media consumption is changing	5	Media engagement choices	ACCEPT
		7	New channels of communication	
4	IMC is a holistic marketing strategy which creates a brand experience	8	Holistic Marketing creates a brand experience	ACCEPT
		6	Compliance to legislation and reputation management	NEW FINDING

These themes have been identified as having the most impact to the changes that have occurred in marketing communications. There have been strategies identified in the study on how to deal with these challenges and how brands in corporate South Africa are implementing these changes.

The trends identified in Proposition 1 regarding the changes to communications and the respondent responses regarding what they view as trends and also what channels of communication they employ from Question 2 sheds some light on this uncertainty. The challenge of marketing professionals in the midst of this changing landscape is a deeper understanding of how to deliver the relevant communication to the relevant consumer at the relevant time. With the changes occurring in the manner in which consumers communicate, the many new channels of communication and the manner in which consumers interact on these new devices, is not an easy task.

The additional information that has come out of the respondent interviews and the literature review gives a basic outline of how other organisations are dealing with this uncertainty**.**

- Consequently Proposition 1 is **effectively accepted**, with the additional insight from the research.

Research Proposition 2:

Challenges in IMC implementation include:

- **Uncoordinated Internal and External Resources**
- **Lack of Utilisation of Suitable Marketing Metrics**
- **Corporate Silos**
- **Budget Constraints**

The main themes identified in the research regarding the challenges in implementation of an IMC strategy in Proposition 2 are:

- Budget limitations
- Lack of integration within the organisation
- Lack of sufficient metrics employed
- Media agencies – lack of integration
- New skills for marketing professionals
- Lack of integration within the marketing department

As discussed in Chapter 5 and Table 10 below, (derived from Table 8) there are similarities between some of the trends and the themes.

- **Table 10: Verification of Proposition 2**

Literature Review Trends Identified		Respondent Interviews - Themes Identified		Conclusion
NO	TRENDS	NO	THEMES	
1	Uncoordinated internal and external resources	4	Media Agencies - lack of integration	ACCEPT
		6	Lack of integration within the marketing department	
2	Lack of utilisation of suitable marketing metrics	3	Lack of sufficient metrics employed	ACCEPT
3	Corporate silos	2	Lack of integration within the organisation	ACCEPT
4	Budget constraints	1	Budget limitations	ACCEPT
		5	New skills for marketing professionals	NEW FINDING

These are the themes that have been identified as the challenges to the implementation of an IMC strategy within organisations in South Africa. There is one theme that was not identified in the literature review which is new skills for marketing professionals. This theme highlights some of the uncertainty currently in the business landscape regarding the new channels of communication and how to effectively implement them. Marketing metrics, although they have been around for many years are still not being implemented effectively within organisations. Currently, systems are able to get this done which is very effective as it enables the marketing professional to change elements of a campaign if it is not as effective as was originally thought to be.

- Consequently, Proposition 2 is **effectively accepted** with the additional insight from the research.
-

6.3 Recommendations

The stakeholders identified under “significance of the research” were marketing professionals and leaders within business organisations in South Africa who are instrumental in formulating marketing communications strategies and also responsible for the implementation of the marketing strategy.

The significance of the research was that the marketing professional is faced with many challenges in the formulation and implementation of IMC strategies. This is due to the environment which is constantly evolving due to all the rapid changes occurring in communication and also that the landscape in which they operate in which is not conducive for the implementation of an IMC strategy. This research was meant to identify all the challenges faced, the changes that have occurred and identify organisations in the research that have been able to effectively bridge the gap and overcome these challenges.

This research is meant to be a source of value to marketing professionals who seek to comprehend how brands in corporate South Africa are formulating and implementing integrated marketing communications strategies, in the rapidly evolving communications landscape, within corporate South Africa.

- **Recommendations are:**

Employment of an IMC strategy within South African organisations will add value to a brand by delivering a consistent brand message at each brand touch point. This will enhance the brand perception that is created and improve the customer experience of the brand. The necessary technology is available to employ an effective IMC strategy in South Africa and yet very few organisations do.

Experiential marketing is the new strategy for marketers to engage consumers. The experience can only be created if a holistic, integrated strategy is used to create the experience for the consumer. IMC ensures that all brand touch points are aligned and creates a holistic marketing strategy, resulting in a brand experience.

Interactive and instantaneous communication is a challenge because of the repercussions that this may have on consumers. It requires a specialist within the organisation to monitor and maintain. The insights that can be derived from these consumer interactions are invaluable and can help to improve the relations with customers and the internal workings of the organisation.

IT advancements have become an enabler within South African organisations and with individual consumers. Organisations and consumers are now developing their own applications and creating better business processes. Predictive analytics helps to optimise marketing campaigns and more specifically website and digital campaigns as you are able to draw real time, relevant statistics and results from the consumers' behaviour and use this information to increase customer connectivity and campaign response. The information that an advanced system can generate has had a substantial improvement on the manner in which decisions are made and the speed at which those decisions can be made to minimise losses in campaigns. The ability to monitor customer profitability individually has improved the decisions to retain certain customers or direct fewer budgets spend towards others.

Media has fragmented and the mediums through which brands create content and manifest content have had to adapt to this fragmented media landscape. The consumer has evolved and has access to many different channels of communication that need to be understood from a marketing point of view.

IT advancement has been rapid in the last few years. The different devices and channels of communication that have opened up and are now utilised to communicate to the consumer are many and it poses a challenge for the normal marketing department as they are very IT intensive and one has to know what the benefits are before incorporating the channel into the brand strategy.

Localised content is a big trend. People want to see themselves and relate to the content. Localisation is a big theme in today's communication. The smaller radio stations are starting to perform incredibly well due to their local relevance.

Experiential activations require a holistic approach to marketing communications or a 360 degree marketing strategy. The experience is much more tightly linked to the brand proposition to create an experience that creates an identity for the brand in the mind of the consumer.

Regulation has had an impact on marketing communications. The CPA influences and controls how marketing communications can occur as they are making marketers more accountable. BBBEE influences the seven pillars and one of them concerns CSI initiatives so now marketing have to design and implement CSI initiatives in line with their brand and consumer. The Reputation Institute which is as of late becoming more and more of a discussion point around how brands are perceived also have their own set of measurable in the form of seven pillars which have a strong affiliation to the consumers' perception and rating of the entire brand.

Employing marketing metrics creates an environment that ensures the achievement of goals and flexibility in the application of the campaign. Currently, a substantial investment in some good CRM software will ensure that you are able to track and measure results efficiently and gives the marketing professional the option of changing elements of the mechanics should they not get the desired results which they had anticipated. Marketing metrics such as campaign management and predictive analytics are some of the new advances in IT.

There are many challenges within corporate South Africa regarding the implementation of an IMC strategy such as corporate silos, lack of integration, budget constraints and lack of sufficient skills within the marketing department to implement all the new channels of communication but the benefits of implementation far exceed the challenges. Having top management driving the process does ensure that integration occurs throughout the organisation. Once the strategy is endorsed by top management, it is easier to get the different departments to participate effectively in the campaign.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

This exploratory work lends itself to follow up research. Suggestions for further research include:

- A quantitative study on the impact of corporate silos within organisations and the losses that come about as a result of these silos.
- A quantitative study on integration within organisations and what the consequences are for non-integration.
- A quantitative study on changes within marketing communications and the effects these changes are having on marketing budgets.
- A quantitative study of the levels of integrated marketing communications within South African organisations.
- A qualitative study on the channels of communication adopted by organisations in South Africa and the return on investment of each of these channels of communication.
- A comparison of the different social media channels and their return on investment to the organisation.

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APPENDIX A

Letter to respondent

The Graduate School of Business Administration
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Telephone: +27 11 717 3600,
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Website: www.wits.ac.za/wbs

Wits Business School
Sculpting global leaders

Dear Respondent,

I am completing an MBA at The University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg (Wits). My research report discusses the challenges in implementation of an integrated marketing communications strategy in South African organisations. I would be grateful if I could arrange an interview with you to discuss your integrated marketing communications strategy, how it has evolved, and the challenges you have encountered in implementation.

The utmost levels of confidentiality will be observed throughout the research report and finally thesis process. The final report will not include confidential information and will be used for academic purposes only. I will not be asking questions on your future strategy or tactical plans. I will send through the interview questions beforehand so you are able to prepare and not be caught off guard by questions you are not prepared for.

I am very aware of your busy schedule and I am very grateful to have the opportunity to meet with you. Your agreement to contribute to my research will be greatly appreciated.

I will be available to meet with you at a location and time of your convenience.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,
Myrna Brauns
+27 83 731 9404

APPENDIX B

Actual Research Instrument

Interview schedule (for use by researcher only)

Definition and relevance of integrated marketing communications strategies

1. How have your marketing communications evolved in the last few years? Please give clear examples and include what the evolution has been.

(These trends will be probed if not mentioned by the respondent. a) communication becoming more interactive and instantaneous; b) IT advancement such as predictive analytics; c) *Alternate channels of communication and changing media consumption; d) IMC is a holistic marketing strategy*

2. What communication channels do you currently make use of in your marketing strategy and what is the relevance of those channels?

IMC implementation challenges

3. What challenges have you faced in implementation of an IMC Strategy? Please give clear examples and include what the challenges are.

(*These trends will be probed if not mentioned by the respondent. E.g.* Corporate Silos, Limited marketing budget, external marketing agencies employed or limited resources etc.)

4. How do you ensure integration in your marketing communications strategy? (Please give examples of vertical, horizontal, data, internal and external integration