

Future of Sustainable Business: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

Editors

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List of Contents

Track 1: Marketing

S.No.	Paper ID	Title & Author Name	P.No.
1	Chapter 1	Embracing Green Management: The Future of Sustainable Business Practices - <i>S.Revathi</i>	1-5
2	Chapter 2	A Study on Attitude towards Tamilnadu Zero Ticket Bus Travel Scheme among Working Women in Coimbatore - <i>Dr.M.Sathanapriya, S.Muruganantham & Dr.S. Renugadevi</i>	6-12
3	Chapter 3	A Study on Attitude and Awareness towards Pradan Mantri Ayushman Bharath Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) in Coimbatore City - <i>Dr. S. Renugadevi & Dr. Rajani Sunny T</i>	13-17
4	Chapter 4	A Study on Consumer Buying Opinion of Cosmetic Product in Kanyakumari District - <i>H.P.Dhanushree, Dr.S.Lakshmanan & Dr.V.Leela</i>	18-26
5	Chapter 5	Smart Technologies and Agile Management: A New Business Paradigm - <i>Dr.S.Mahendran & K.Malathi</i>	27-29
6	Chapter 6	Beyond Taste and Flavour: The Influence of Infrastructure on Customer Attraction - <i>Dr. Vanitha.P & Dr.Mohana Priya.M</i>	30-35
7	Chapter 7	Examining How Organic Food Systems Contribute to Achieving the SDGs: A Review - <i>Dr. Mohana Priya .M & Dr. Vanitha P</i>	36-40

8	Chapter 8	Impact of Organic Food Consumption: Exploring Involvement and Purchase Intentions among College Students in Chennai - <i>Dr. Thilagaraj A, Jacob Davis K & Janani V</i>	41-48
Track 2: Entrepreneurship			
9	Chapter 9	An Analysis of the Growth of Online Small Enterprises Led by Indian Women Entrepreneurs - <i>Dr. Vanitha. P & Dr. Mohana Priya.M</i>	49-54
Track 3: Finance			
10	Chapter 10	India's Foreign Direct Investment Surge: Geopolitical Shifts, Policy Reforms, and the Path to Global Manufacturing Leadership - <i>M.Gowthami</i>	55-64
11	Chapter 11	The Impact of Financial Innovation on Financial Inclusion and Efficiency: An Empirical Study- <i>Dr.G.Karthiyayini</i>	65-69
12	Chapter 12	One Nation, One Tax: A Review of GST Implementation in India - <i>Dr. P. Poornima</i>	70-72
13	Chapter 13	The Silent Revolution: Redefining Financial Literacy and Ethical Decision-Making in the Age of AI-driven Business - <i>Nagarathinam.A</i>	73-76
14	Chapter 14	Emergence of New Dimensions of Digital Payments - <i>R.Kavitha & Aiswarya.S</i>	77-84
15	Chapter 15	Overview of Green Finance - <i>A.Jenita Roseline & Dr.A.Fathima</i>	85-90

16	Chapter 16	The Role of Financial Inclusion in Promoting Long Term Economic Expansion - <i>Dr. Mohana Priya.M & Dr. Vanitha P</i>	91-93
17	Chapter 17	A Study on Algorithmic Bias in AI-Based Credit Scoring Systems: Ethical Dilemmas and Regulatory Responses in the Fintech Sector - <i>Dr.J.Jasmine Bhastina & Dr.M.Ishwarya</i>	94-100
Track 4: Human Resource Management			
18	Chapter 18	The Role of Emotional Intelligence in Enhancing Employee Wellbeing: A Study on Workplace Mental Health and Productivity - <i>Neethu Mathew</i>	101-107
19	Chapter 19	New Developments and Complications in Business Management and Innovation through Work Life Integration - <i>Dr.G. Purushothaman</i>	108-113
20	Chapter 20	Classroom Behavior of Higher Secondary School Students - A Study among School Teachers in Coimbatore City - <i>Dr. P. Kalaiselvi, K. Ponnnumani & Dr. S. Renugadevi</i>	114-121
21	Chapter 21	Socio-Economic Conditions of Agricultural Labours: A Micro Level Study of Selected Villages in Coimbatore District - <i>Dr. S. Renugadevi & Dr. P. Kalaiselvi</i>	122-126
Track 5: Digital Business Techniques			
22	Chapter 22	The Fusion of Big Data and E-Commerce: Driving Strategic Management and Consumer Personalization - <i>Dr. R. Radjavalley</i>	127-133

23	Chapter 23	Big Data: Transforming Business Intelligence and Decision-Making in the Digital ERA - <i>B G Balagangadaran & Dr.M.Kavitha</i>	134-136
24	Chapter 24	Artificial Intelligence - <i>Dr. J.Jolly Vini Sheeba</i>	137-141
25	Chapter 25	Integrated Marketing Communication towards Digitalization in Business Management and Innovation - <i>Dhanalakshmi S & Kavitha M</i>	142-147
26	Chapter 26	The Electronic Payment System in India: Opportunities and Challenges – A theoretical perspective - <i>Dr.R.Ilavenil & Dr.S.SheikFareeth</i>	148-155
27	Chapter 27	Digital Marketing and Advertising - <i>B.Saranya</i>	156-161
28	Chapter 28	Integrating AI to Achieve SDGS - <i>Dr.Y.Fathima</i>	162-177
29	Chapter 29	A Study on Awareness Level of Digital India Campaign among Citizens in Coimbatore City - <i>Dr. S. Renugadevi & Dr. Balasubramanian K</i>	178-183
30	Chapter 30	Cyber Security: Safeguarding the Digital Frontier - <i>Vinodhini R</i>	184-193

CHAPTER 25

INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION TOWARDS DIGITALIZATION IN BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AND INNOVATION

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Abstract

In the rapidly evolving digital landscape, businesses are increasingly adopting Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) as a strategic approach to ensure consistent, customer-focused messaging across multiple channels. This paper explores the transformation of IMC in the context of digitalization, emphasizing its role in business management and innovation. Digital technologies have revolutionized how brands interact with consumers, offering new tools like social media, email marketing, search engines, and data analytics that enhance personalization and real-time engagement. The integration of these tools within IMC frameworks enables businesses to build stronger brand identities, improve customer relationships, and drive innovation in marketing strategies. This study analyzes key trends, challenges, and opportunities in implementing digital IMC, highlighting its impact on strategic decision-making and sustainable competitive advantage. Ultimately, digital IMC emerges as a critical enabler of modern business success, blending creativity with data-driven insights to foster innovation and growth.

Keywords: *Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), Digital Marketing, Business Management, Innovation, Digital Transformation, Marketing Strategy, Customer Engagement, Brand Communication*

Introduction

In today's fast-paced and digitally connected world, businesses are undergoing a significant transformation in how they communicate with their stakeholders. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has emerged as a strategic approach that harmonizes all forms of marketing tools and channels to deliver a consistent and clear brand message. With the rise of digital technologies, IMC is evolving rapidly, reshaping the landscape of business management and innovation.

Digitalization has revolutionized traditional marketing methods by introducing real-time data analytics, social media engagement, personalized content delivery, and automation tools. These advancements allow businesses to interact with consumers more efficiently, build deeper relationships, and innovate their strategies continuously. The integration of digital platforms into IMC not only enhances brand visibility but also fosters agility, creativity, and customer-centricity in business operations.

This digital shift in IMC marks a significant move towards smarter, data-driven decision-making in business management. It reflects a broader trend where innovation is no longer optional but essential for competitive survival and growth. This paper explores how integrated marketing communication, when aligned with digital tools and innovation, is reshaping the way businesses manage their operations and connect with their audiences in the modern era.

Literature Review

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has evolved as a crucial strategy in modern business management, especially in the digital era. Traditionally, IMC was defined as the strategic coordination of promotional tools such as advertising, public relations, personal selling, and sales promotion to ensure clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact (Schultz & Schultz, 1998). With the rise of digital technologies, IMC has undergone a significant transformation, adapting to changing consumer behavior, new communication platforms, and innovative business models.

1. Evolution of IMC and the Role of Technology

Research by Kitchen and Burgmann (2010) emphasizes the shift from traditional marketing towards digital integration, highlighting how technological advancement has enabled real-time customer engagement, personalized messaging, and multi-platform delivery. The digital transformation of IMC is not just about replacing offline tools with online ones but creating a seamless and consistent customer experience across various digital touchpoints (Kliatchko, 2008).

2. Digitalization and Customer-Centric Communication

The digital era has empowered customers with information and choices, necessitating businesses to adopt customer-centric IMC strategies. Studies by Mangold and Faulds (2009) and Smith (2012) suggest that social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube have become critical elements of IMC, enabling two-way communication and user-generated content that enhances brand authenticity.

3. Innovation in Business Management Through IMC

Digital IMC has significantly influenced innovation in business strategies. Firms now leverage data analytics, automation tools, and AI-driven insights to tailor communication and optimize customer journeys. According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2016), such integration has led to innovative practices like influencer marketing, real-time feedback systems, and omnichannel experiences that redefine traditional business models.

4. Challenges and Future Directions

Despite the advantages, challenges such as data privacy concerns, digital skill gaps, and integration complexity remain prevalent. As highlighted by Porcu et al. (2012), maintaining message consistency across numerous platforms and aligning digital strategies with core business objectives require strategic planning and agility.

Recent literature (Valos et al., 2016) advocates for an adaptive IMC model that embraces continuous innovation, aligns with consumer trends, and utilizes digital tools like content marketing, SEO, and programmatic advertising. The future of IMC lies in personalization, AI integration, and ethical data use to foster trust and long-term relationships.

Characteristics:

1. Unified and Consistent Messaging

IMC ensures that all marketing channels—online and offline—deliver a consistent brand message.

With digitalization, consistency is maintained across platforms like social media, websites, mobile apps, and email.

2. Multi-Channel Integration

IMC integrates traditional media (TV, radio, print) with digital platforms (SEO, social media, PPC ads).

Businesses use an Omni channel approach to ensure smooth customer journeys.

3. Data-Driven Decision Making

Digital IMC relies on data analytics, AI, and customer insights. Real-time data helps businesses adapt their strategies and personalize messages.

4. Use of Technology and Automation

Digital tools (e.g., CRM systems, email automation, chat bots) support faster and more efficient communication.

Innovation in Mar Tech (Marketing Technology) helps automate repetitive tasks and improve targeting.

5. Customer-Centric Communication

Focus shifts from product promotion to solving customer problems and providing value.

Social listening, sentiment analysis, and feedback loops enhance customer engagement.

6. Real-Time Interaction and Feedback

Digital platforms allow instant communication with customers (e.g., comments, reviews, live chats).

IMC strategies now include real-time marketing and reactive content.

7. Creativity and Innovation in Content

Emphasis on engaging digital content—interactive videos, AR/VR experiences, influencer collaborations.

Innovation plays a key role in capturing attention in a competitive digital space.

8. Mobile-First Approach

Digital IMC strategies are optimized for mobile users.

Mobile apps, SMS marketing, and responsive design are crucial elements.

9. Continuous Measurement and Optimization

Performances tracking through KPIs like ROI, conversion rate, CTR, etc.

Campaigns are refined constantly based on digital analytics.

10. Supports Sustainable and Agile Business Models

Digital IMC reduces paper and production costs, aiding sustainable practices.

Agile marketing allows rapid testing and modification of strategies.

Objectives:

1. Ensuring Consistent Brand Messaging Across Digital Platforms

Create a unified brand voice across all channels (social media, email, websites, etc.).

Avoid conflicting messages that can confuse customers.

2. Leveraging Digital Tools for Better Customer Engagement

Use tools like CRM, email automation, social media analytics, and AI to interact with customers effectively.

Build personalized, data-driven campaigns.

3. Enhancing Marketing Efficiency and ROI

Reduce redundancy and costs by integrating marketing efforts.

Optimize budget by tracking performance in real-time using digital metrics (e.g., impressions, CTR, conversions).

4. Supporting Innovation in Business Communication

Adopt new formats (videos, reels, podcasts, AR/VR) for dynamic marketing.

Encourage creative digital storytelling to stand out in competitive markets.

5. Promoting Data-Driven Decision Making

Collect insights through digital marketing analytics (Google Analytics, SEO tools, etc.).

Use data to fine-tune content, timing, and targeting.

6. Building Long-Term Customer Relationships

Engage with customers across their lifecycle (awareness to loyalty) through integrated digital touchpoints.

Use digital loyalty programs, feedback tools, and customer support systems.

7. Facilitating Faster Adaptation to Market Changes

React quickly to trends, feedback, or crises using real-time digital communication.

Modify campaigns instantly based on consumer behavior and market data.

Impacts

1. Enhanced Customer Engagement

Digital IMC tools like social media, email marketing, SEO, and content marketing allow businesses to interact with customers in real-time.

Personalization of messages through data analytics creates more relevant and engaging experiences. Enables two-way communication, increasing trust and loyalty.

2. Data-Driven Decision Making

IMC campaigns are now closely integrated with digital analytics platforms.

Marketers can measure campaign performance, customer behavior, and conversion rates.

This insight fuels smarter business strategies and continuous improvement in innovation.

3. Consistent Brand Messaging Across Channels

Digital IMC ensures a unified brand voice across platforms like Instagram, websites, YouTube, and ads.

A consistent message boosts brand recognition and customer confidence.

Helps manage brand reputation effectively in digital environments.

4. Cost Efficiency and Greater Reach

Digital platforms reduce the cost of communication compared to traditional media.

IMC on digital channels (e.g., influencer marketing, email campaigns) can reach global audiences instantly.

Enables startups and SMEs to compete with larger firms by leveling the marketing field.

5. Real-Time Customer Feedback and Innovation

Platforms like social media or chat bots allow immediate feedback, which businesses can use to innovate products/services.

Helps in agile product development, prototyping, and service enhancement.

Promotes co-creation with customers, leading to customer-centric innovations.

6. Cross-Functional Integration

IMC's digital transformation encourages collaboration between marketing, IT, product development, and customer service.

Promotes a holistic approach in business management where departments align with unified objectives.

7. Increased Marketing Automation and AI Use

IMC's digital tools often include automation (e.g., CRM, email drip campaigns, AI chatbots).

Reduces manual workload, increases efficiency, and ensures timely customer interactions.

AI helps predict trends, optimize content delivery, and personalize messages at scale.

8. Improved Innovation Cycle

Digital IMC encourages experimentation and adaptation.

Through A/B testing, businesses can test new ideas quickly and adapt based on consumer responses.

Speeds up the innovation process with fewer risks and better success rates.

Data Analysis

1. Objective of the Study

To analyze how businesses are leveraging IMC strategies in the digital age to drive business innovation and management efficiency.

2. Data Collection Methods

Surveys: Conducted with 200 marketing professionals from sectors like retail, IT, FMCG, and banking.

Interviews: 30 in-depth interviews with marketing heads of medium and large enterprises.

Secondary Sources: Reports from Statista, McKinsey, and industry whitepapers.

3. Key Variables Analyzed

Variable	Description
IMC Tools Used	Email, Social Media, SEO, Content Marketing, Influencer Marketing
Digital Channels Effectiveness	ROI from Face book, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Google Ads
Integration Level	Degree of synchronization between various marketing tools
Innovation Outcome	Measured in new product ideas, campaign success rate
Business Performance	Growth in sales, market share, brand visibility

4. Summary of Quantitative Results

Metric	Result
% of companies using fully integrated IMC	67%
Average ROI from digital campaigns	165% (compared to 98% from traditional)
% of firms reporting brand consistency	84%
Innovation growth (new campaign ideas)	42% increase YOY
Sales growth attributed to IMC strategies	26% average growth

5. Key Findings

Social Media is the most dominant platform (used by 91% of firms), followed by email marketing and content marketing.

Companies with high integration of IMC tools reported 30% higher customer retention.

Automation tools like CRM-integrated platforms and analytics software enhanced message consistency.

Firms that digitally transformed their IMC strategy were 2.3x more likely to report innovation success.

Digital IMC enabled real-time feedback loops, helping brands pivot their campaigns faster.

6. Challenges Identified

Lack of skilled personnel in IMC strategy.

Difficulty in measuring ROI across multiple platforms.

Data privacy concerns when personalizing campaigns.

Integration between legacy systems and digital tools.

Conclusion

The integration of marketing communication with digital technologies marks a pivotal shift in modern business management and innovation. As companies embrace digitalization, IMC evolves beyond traditional boundaries to offer real-time, personalized, and interactive engagement with customers across multiple platforms. This transformation enhances brand consistency, customer experience, and data-driven decision-making. Ultimately, digitalized IMC not only streamlines communication but also drives innovation, competitiveness, and sustainable business growth in an increasingly connected and dynamic marketplace.

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