



Research Article

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The Integration of Social Media in Integrated Marketing Communication: A Systematic Review and Theoretical Framework

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Abstract

This study examines the impact and significance of integrating social media into integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategies. By analyzing the literature and synthesizing existing research, this study aims to evaluate the role of social media in enhancing communication effectiveness, consumer engagement, and brand promotion. The research objective is to assess the level of coherence and consensus among scholars regarding marketing communication strategies and explore emerging trends in social media integration within IMC. This study employs a systematic review methodology to collect and analyze relevant articles from prominent literature databases. Findings underscore the importance of IMC as a holistic approach to marketing communication and demonstrate how social media platforms facilitate two-way interaction between companies and consumers. Additionally, the analysis delves into the influence of social media on consumer perception and engagement, examines the connection between social media integration and the marketing mix, and identifies emerging trends for future research (Bryła et al., 2022). Overall, this study provides valuable insights into the significance of social media integration within IMC strategies and offers implications for marketers to effectively leverage these platforms for improved communication outcomes.

Keywords: social media, integrated marketing communication, consumer-generated media, marketing communication, brand identity

1. Introduction

In recent years, the emergence of social media has revolutionized the field of integrated marketing communication (IMC) by transforming traditional methods and fostering a dynamic relationship among companies, consumers, and consumer-generated media (CGM) (Rehman et al., 2022). This paradigm shift has significantly impacted modern IMC strategies, providing novel communication

channels and techniques that facilitate two-way interaction and information exchange between businesses and their target audiences. By leveraging social media platforms, companies can now engage in direct conversations with consumers, gaining valuable insights into their preferences and fostering brand support (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Consequently, this evolution in information control has had a profound effect on how individuals perceive and engage with brands and companies. However, it is important to note that consumer-generated media can also lead to negative ratings and comments about a brand, necessitating customer engagement through social media.

Recognizing the transformative power of social media in IMC, the present study aims to integrate concepts from diverse fields, including the promotion mix, psychology, consumer behavior, business management, and marketing practices (Dalton et al., 2021). By doing so, the study endeavors to provide a conceptual framework that enhances our understanding of IMC development through social media (SM). This study presents a range of perspectives and investigates potential directions for future research, with the goal of enhancing the efficacy of digital marketing promotions.

To achieve its objectives, the study is structured in three parts. The first part introduces the concept of IMC and elucidates its fundamental contributions to marketing promotion. Here, the focus is on understanding how IMC strategies have traditionally functioned and the benefits they bring to companies in terms of coordinating various promotional elements and delivering a cohesive message to their target audiences.

The second part delves into the realm of social media and explores its primary contributions to marketing and promotion. This section highlights how social media platforms have reshaped marketing communication by providing businesses with innovative tools and avenues to engage with consumers directly. By harnessing the power of social media, companies can build meaningful relationships with their customers, gather real-time feedback, and tailor their marketing strategies accordingly.

Finally, the third part of the study aims to bridge the gap between IMC and social media by integrating the existing literature on both subjects into a cohesive and comprehensive approach. By blending insights from IMC and SM, the authors propose an integration framework that facilitates a deeper understanding of the interplay between these two domains and provides valuable guidance for marketers seeking to leverage social media effectively within their IMC strategies.

In conclusion, this paper sets out to explore the integration of social media into integrated marketing communication by presenting a theoretical framework. By synthesizing concepts from multiple disciplines and examining the existing literature, this study seeks to offer valuable insights and directions for future research. The findings of this research endeavor have the potential to contribute to more effective marketing promotions as businesses strive to navigate the ever-evolving landscape of social media and harness its power to build strong, lasting relationships with their target audiences.

In today's digital era, marketing communication has undergone a significant transformation due to the emergence and widespread adoption of social media platforms. Social media has revolutionized the way companies and consumers interact, providing new channels for communication, engagement, and brand promotion. The integration of social media within marketing communication strategies has become increasingly crucial for companies seeking to effectively reach and engage their target audience (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

The primary objective of this research is to assess the impact of incorporating social media into integrated marketing communication (IMC) strategies. This study aims to examine and consolidate the diverse viewpoints put forth by scholars in the field of marketing communication and promotion, with the intention of gauging the degree of agreement and consistency in marketing communication strategies. By examining the role of social media and consumer-generated media (CGM) within IMC, the study aims to shed light on their significance in enhancing communication effectiveness and facilitating consumer engagement (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) serves as a holistic approach to marketing

communication, emphasizing the coordination and integration of various promotional elements to create a cohesive brand message (Belch E.G., 2021). The integration of social media within IMC strategies has become increasingly significant, as it enables companies to effectively leverage digital platforms and engage with their target audience in real-time (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This integration enhances communication effectiveness and facilitates two-way interaction between companies and consumers, allowing for more personalized and engaging brand experiences (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Coherence and consensus in marketing communication strategies encompass a wide range of theories, frameworks, and models proposed by scholars and practitioners. This study aims to assess the level of coherence and consensus among these various perspectives, providing insights into the current state of knowledge in the field (Tiedemann et al., 2020; Gupta, 2016). By analyzing the literature, common themes and approaches can be identified, which in turn contributes to the development of effective marketing communication strategies (Smith & Taylor, 2004).

The role of social media and consumer-generated media (CGM): The emergence of social media platforms has transformed the dynamics of marketing communication. Social media provides companies with direct channels for engagement and interaction with consumers (Belch E.G., 2021). Furthermore, consumer-generated media (CGM), including user reviews, social media posts, and online discussions, have gained significant influence over brand reputation and perception (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This study aims to explore the role of social media and CGM within IMC, highlighting their importance in understanding consumer preferences, gathering real-time feedback, and fostering brand support (Hajli, 2014).

2. Research Objectives

The primary objective of this research is to evaluate the impact of social media integration with integrated marketing communication (IMC). Specifically, this research seeks to analyze and synthesize the varying perspectives on marketing communication and promotion presented by experts in the field to determine the level of agreement and coherence in marketing communication strategies. The study aims to demonstrate the significance of social media and consumer-generated media (CGM) in relation to IMC by providing relevant examples that highlight the role of the fourth P of marketing (promotion) within IMC.

2.1 Specific Objectives Corresponding to Research Questions

- **Research Question 1:** The initial focus is on assessing the current state of knowledge regarding the integration of social media within IMC strategies. This question is inspired by the foundational works of (Kotler & Keller, 2016), who have extensively explored the dynamics of marketing communication in the contemporary digital landscape.
- **Research Question 2:** The study then transitions to understanding how scholars and experts, including authorities like (Belch E.G., 2021), perceive the role of social media in augmenting communication effectiveness within IMC. This exploration seeks to unravel the nuanced impacts and applications of social media in enhancing brand communication and engagement.
- **Research Question 3:** Building on this, the research aims to gauge the extent of coherence and consensus among experts in marketing communication strategies, especially in the context of social media integration. Insights from (Rehman et al., 2022) will be pivotal in this segment, offering a blend of empirical and theoretical perspectives on the evolving dynamics of social media in marketing communication.
- **Research Question 4:** The objective then expands to identifying key examples and instances that underscore the impact of social media and CGM on the promotion element

within IMC. The works of (Fill & Turnbull, 2023) will be instrumental in this context, offering case studies and analyses that bridge the gap between traditional and digital media within IMC.

- **Research Question 5:** The study will also explore how the integration of social media has reshaped the traditional concept of the marketing mix, with a special focus on IMC. A range of scholars and practitioners in the field will enrich this exploration with their diverse perspectives and analyses.
- **Research Question 6:** Lastly, the research will identify emerging trends in the literature regarding the use of social media within IMC and extrapolate how these trends can shape future research and marketing practices. Leading scholars and industry experts will root this forward-looking analysis in contemporary insights and projections.

This research is deeply embedded in the rich academic and empirical landscape shaped by renowned authors like (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Belch E.G., 2021; Rehman et al., 2022; and Fill & Turnbull, 2023). Their contributions offer a foundational base that enriches the study's analytical depth, contextual relevance, and empirical robustness.

Each research question is meticulously aligned with the overarching objective, ensuring a focused, systematic, and comprehensive exploration of the multifaceted impacts of social media integration within IMC. The study aims to blend past analyses, current evaluations, and future insights to provide a comprehensive and accessible overview for both the academic and practical fields of digital marketing communication.

3. Methodology

3.1 Systematic review process

To evaluate the significance of integrated marketing communication (IMC) and social media (SM) in marketing, this study employs a systematic review methodology to synthesize existing literature related to marketing communication. The objective is to integrate the marketing communication mix and develop more effective marketing strategies for companies to efficiently promote their products and services.

The systematic review process involves the systematic collection, assessment, and integration of existing literature (Donthu et al., 2020; MacInnis, 2011; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). This study primarily examines review papers, conceptual reviews, and theory-focused articles (Afriyie et al., 2018; Akbar & Tracogna, 2022; Gupta, 2016; Lazarević-Moravčević, 2019; Ligery & Bangsawan, 2021; Rindfleisch & Heide, 1997; Tiedemann et al., 2020), which offer a synthesis of existing literature rather than original data (Reese, 2023).

3.2 Search strategy and article selection

A comprehensive search was conducted in prominent literature databases such as WoS, Scopus, Google Scholar, EBSCO, and ProQuest (Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2019; Falagas et al., 2008; Gusenbauer, 2022; Norris & Oppenheim, 2007) to identify relevant articles. Two main search strings were used initially to cover related themes: (1) IMC with keywords such as "integrated marketing communication," "IMC," "marketing promotion," "promotion mix," "marketing communication," "communication mix," "product promotion," and "brand promotion," and (2) SM/CGM with keywords such as "social media," "social media marketing," "social media promotion," "consumer media," and "consumer-generated media."

This study considered peer-reviewed articles published in reputable journals and written in English for inclusion. The papers were organized based on their relevance to the research topic and underwent a rigorous critical analysis during the third phase. The study then systematically

presented the key findings in an integrated fashion (Adler et al., 2023; Donthu et al., 2020, 2021a, 2021b, 2022; Falagas et al., 2008b; Gusenbauer, 2022b; Norris & Oppenheim, 2007b; Ramos & Rita, 2023).

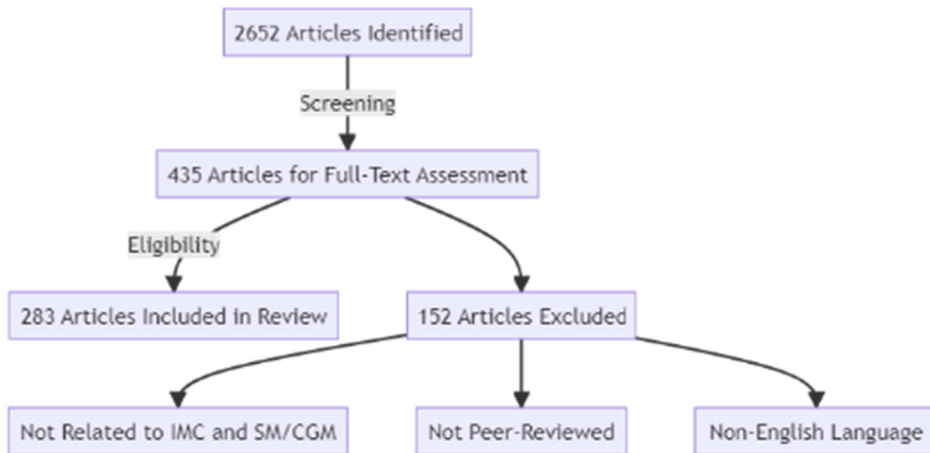


Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Study Selection Process

A total of 2,652 articles underwent evaluation, involving a thorough examination of their titles, abstracts, and keywords. Only papers within the domains of business management, marketing communication, communication/promotion mix, and social media marketing were considered. We specifically included document types like articles, reviews, and in-press articles. During the second phase of screening, 435 papers met our criteria. Any articles that did not align directly with the themes of integrated marketing communications (IMC) and social media (SM) were meticulously reviewed and eliminated. Ultimately, 283 articles from a diverse selection of around 127 different journals were chosen for in-depth analysis. These are visually represented in Figure 1 (PRISMA Flow Diagram) (Page et al., 2021).

3.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria and potential limitations

Articles within the domains of business management, marketing communication, communication/promotion mix, and social media marketing were considered. We specifically included document types like articles, reviews, and in-press articles. The exclusion criteria encompassed non-peer-reviewed publications, articles not in English, and those not directly related to the themes of IMC and SM/CGM.

The potential limitations of this search process might include the chosen databases and search terms, potentially omitting relevant studies indexed elsewhere or categorized under different keywords. The exclusion of non-English articles could also limit the diversity and comprehensiveness of the review.

3.4 Objectives and approach

The primary objective of this research is to fill an existing gap in the literature by conducting a comprehensive review, making careful observations, and emphasizing essential marketing findings and themes. Furthermore, this study strives to advance insights gained by enhancing integrated marketing communication (IMC) with social media and consumer-generated media (SM/CGM) to

create a contemporary communication and promotion strategy.

The methodology involves a rigorous and comprehensive approach to gathering relevant literature, analyzing it critically, and synthesizing key findings. This systematic review provides a solid foundation for understanding the integration of social media in integrated marketing communication and contributes to the existing body of knowledge in the field.

4. Analysis

The analysis of the study focuses on synthesizing the key findings from the selected articles and identifying significant insights regarding the integration of social media in integrated marketing communication (IMC). The analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact and implications of incorporating social media into marketing communication strategies.

4.1 Significance of IMC and social media integration

The significance of integrating social media within the framework of integrated marketing communication (IMC) cannot be overstated. IMC is a comprehensive approach to marketing communication that emphasizes the coordination and integration of various promotional elements to create a unified and consistent message for target audiences (Duncan & Mulhern, 2004; Schultz, 1996). By combining different communication channels and tools, IMC seeks to enhance communication effectiveness and deliver a cohesive brand message (Kitchen et al., 2004). The integration of social media within IMC strategies brings several advantages and opportunities. Social media platforms offer unique channels for companies to engage with their target audiences, fostering direct and interactive communication (Buzeta et al., 2020; Karpinska-Krakowiak & Eisend, 2021; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Through social media, companies can create dialogue, listen to customer feedback, and address their concerns in real-time (Diab, 2023). This two-way interaction allows for a deeper understanding of consumer preferences, needs, and expectations (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Furthermore, social media integration enables companies to leverage user-generated content and harness the power of consumer-generated media (CGM) (Popp & Woratschek, 2017). Consumers actively participate in creating and sharing content related to brands, products, and experiences on social media platforms (Kohnen, 2011). This user-generated content can have a significant impact on brand perception and influence the decision-making process of other consumers (Marchand et al., 2021).

Integrating social media into IMC strategies allows companies to tap into the vast reach and potential of these platforms. With billions of active users on various social media platforms, companies can expand their brand visibility and connect with a wider audience. Social media also provides opportunities for viral marketing, where engaging and shareable content can quickly spread and amplify brand messages (Habibi et al., 2014).

By integrating social media within IMC, companies can create a consistent and coherent brand experience across different communication channels. This integration ensures that the brand message is reinforced and aligned across various touchpoints, strengthening brand identity and recall (Kim & Johnson, 2016). A cohesive brand message and experience foster trust and loyalty among consumers (Wheeler & Millman, 2017).

In summary, the integration of social media within the framework of IMC is of utmost significance in contemporary marketing communication. It allows companies to enhance communication effectiveness, engage in two-way interaction with consumers, harness the power of user-generated content, expand brand reach, and create a consistent brand experience. By embracing social media as an integral part of IMC strategies, companies can effectively leverage these platforms to connect with their target audiences and achieve their marketing objectives.

4.2 Coherence and consensus in marketing communication strategies:

By conducting a comprehensive analysis of the existing literature, this study aims to evaluate the level of coherence and consensus among scholars concerning marketing communication strategies. The analysis encompasses an examination of the common themes, frameworks, and models proposed by researchers and practitioners to provide valuable insights into the current state of knowledge in the field.

The literature review reveals that scholars have contributed a diverse range of perspectives and approaches to marketing communication strategies. Various studies have proposed different theoretical frameworks and models that emphasize different aspects of marketing communication, such as message design, media selection, and audience segmentation (Venez et al., 2022; Chaudhri et al., 2022; Afriyie et al., 2018; Ligery & Bangsawan, 2021; Lazarević-Moravčević, 2019; Ruben & Stewart, 2019; Akbar & Tracogna, 2022).

For instance, (Venez et al., 2022) present a conceptual framework that highlights the role of customer engagement in shaping marketing communication strategies. The framework emphasizes the importance of interactive and personalized communication to build strong customer relationships. (Gupta, 2016) proposes a strategic communication framework that focuses on aligning communication efforts with organizational goals and values. Their framework emphasizes the need for consistent and coordinated messaging across different communication channels.

Furthermore, (Afriyie et al., 2018) provide a comprehensive review of the literature on integrated marketing communication and propose an integrated model that emphasizes the coordination and integration of various communication tools and channels. The model emphasizes the importance of message consistency and customer-centric communication in achieving marketing objectives. (Ligery & Bangsawan, 2021) propose a customer equity-based framework that highlights the role of marketing communication in building and managing customer relationships.

In addition, (Rindfleisch & Heide, 1997) explore the concept of relationship marketing and propose a framework that focuses on building long-term relationships with customers through effective communication strategies. (Lazarević-Moravčević, 2019) presents a communication planning framework that emphasizes the importance of audience analysis, message development, and media selection in developing effective marketing communication campaigns. (Ruben & Stewart, 2019) propose a model that emphasizes the role of consumer behavior and psychological factors in shaping marketing communication strategies.

Overall, the analysis of the literature reveals a diverse range of perspectives and approaches to marketing communication strategies. While there may not be complete consensus among scholars, there are common themes and frameworks that highlight the importance of customer engagement, message consistency, coordination of communication tools, and customer relationship building. These insights provide a foundation for understanding the current state of knowledge in marketing communication and can guide marketers in developing effective and coherent strategies.

4.3 Role of social media and consumer-generated media (CGM)

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4.4 *Impact on consumer perception and engagement*

The integration of social media within the framework of integrated marketing communication (IMC) has had a significant impact on consumer perception and engagement with brands. This analysis aims to explore the effects of this integration on consumer behavior and shed light on the shifting dynamics of information control in the digital age.

One key aspect of the integration of social media in IMC is the empowerment of consumers through consumer-generated media (CGM). With the rise of social media platforms, consumers now have the ability to generate and share content related to brands, products, and experiences. This shift in information control has resulted in consumers having a greater influence over brand perception and reputation (Berthon et al., 2012).

Consumer-generated media provides an avenue for consumers to express their opinions, share their experiences, and engage in discussions about brands and products. This active participation not only gives consumers a sense of ownership but also enables them to become brand advocates or critics (Marchand et al., 2021). Consumers can share their positive experiences and recommendations, thereby contributing to positive brand perception and engagement. On the other hand, negative consumer-generated content can potentially harm brand reputation (Popp & Woratschek, 2017).

The study explores the potential positive and negative effects of consumer-generated media on brand reputation. It delves into the mechanisms through which CGM can influence consumer perceptions, such as word-of-mouth, online reviews, and social media endorsements (Verma et al., 2023). Additionally, it examines the importance of actively engaging with customers through social media platforms to maintain and strengthen brand-consumer relationships.

Active customer engagement through social media platforms allows brands to directly interact with consumers, respond to their queries, address their concerns, and gather feedback (Kaplan &

Haenlein, 2010). This engagement fosters a sense of connection and trust, leading to increased brand loyalty and positive brand perception (Kohnen, 2011). Moreover, the study investigates how social media platforms provide opportunities for brands to create immersive and interactive brand experiences that enhance consumer engagement (Buzeta et al., 2020; Karpinska-Krakowiak & Eisend, 2021).

To understand the influence of social media integration in IMC on consumer perception and engagement, this analysis draws upon empirical research and case studies that examine the effects of CGM on brand reputation, consumer behavior, and engagement metrics (Berger & Iyengar, 2013; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). It also considers the perspectives of consumers and their experiences engaging with brands through social media platforms (Fraccastoro et al., 2021).

In summary, the integration of social media within the framework of IMC has influenced consumer perception and engagement with brands. The analysis investigates the shift in information control, where consumers now have greater influence through consumer-generated media. It explores the potential positive and negative effects of CGM on brand reputation and emphasizes the importance of active customer engagement through social media platforms.

4.5 *The marketing mix and social media integration*

The relationship between the marketing mix and social media integration is a crucial aspect explored in this study. By analyzing the literature and industry practices, the analysis sheds light on how social media integration contributes to the promotion element of the marketing mix and provides new opportunities for targeted communication, brand storytelling, and personalized marketing campaigns.

Social media platforms have become essential channels for promoting products and services, enabling companies to reach and engage with their target audience in a more targeted and personalized manner (Elena, 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2019). The integration of social media within the marketing mix allows companies to leverage these platforms to deliver tailored messages and connect with consumers on a more individual level.

Social media integration enhances the promotion element of the marketing mix by offering new opportunities for targeted communication. Companies can utilize various social media platforms to segment their audience and deliver specific messages (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019) (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019). Through social media, companies can gather information about their target audience's preferences, behaviors, and interests, enabling them to craft more relevant and personalized marketing messages (Marchand et al., 2021).

In addition to targeted communication, social media integration enables brands to engage in brand storytelling. Companies can utilize social media platforms to share their brand story, values, and unique selling propositions in a more creative and interactive way (Caldieraro & Cunha, 2022). Through compelling narratives, visual content, and user-generated content, companies can build emotional connections with their target audience and enhance brand engagement (Glaser & Reisinger, 2022).

Furthermore, social media integration facilitates personalized marketing campaigns. By leveraging the data and analytics available on social media platforms, companies can gain insights into individual customer preferences, behaviors, and purchase histories (Spotts et al., 2022). This information enables companies to deliver personalized content, offers, and recommendations to individual customers, enhancing the effectiveness of marketing campaigns and fostering a sense of personalization and relevance (Varadarajan & Yadav, 2002).

To support the analysis, the study draws upon academic research and industry examples that demonstrate the relationship between the marketing mix and social media integration. It explores case studies of companies that have successfully integrated social media into their marketing mix and examines the impact on their promotional efforts, customer engagement, and overall marketing performance (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Fraccastoro et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the integration of social media within the marketing mix has a significant impact on the promotion element. The analysis highlights how social media contributes to targeted communication, brand storytelling, and personalized marketing campaigns. By leveraging social media platforms, companies can enhance their promotional efforts, engage with their target audience on a more individual level, and deliver personalized and relevant marketing messages.

4.6 Emerging trends and future directions

Based on an extensive analysis of the existing literature, this study identifies several emerging trends and future directions in the integration of social media within the framework of integrated marketing communication (IMC). These trends highlight potential areas for further research and provide insights into the evolving landscape of social media and IMC strategies.

One key area for future research is the measurement of social media's impact on brand equity. While numerous studies have examined the relationship between social media and brand outcomes, such as brand awareness, brand engagement, and purchase intention, there is a need for more comprehensive frameworks and metrics to assess the impact of social media on brand equity (Hudson et al., 2016; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Future research could explore how social media activities and engagement metrics translate into tangible brand equity measures, such as brand loyalty, brand associations, and perceived brand quality (Chatzipanagiotou et al., 2019).

Another important direction for future research is the role of influencers in IMC strategies. Influencer marketing has gained significant prominence in recent years, with brands collaborating with influencers to promote their products and engage with their target audience (Ao et al., 2023). However, there is a need for more in-depth research to understand the effectiveness of influencer marketing within the broader context of IMC. Future studies could explore the optimal selection and management of influencers, the impact of influencer-generated content on consumer behavior, and the integration of influencer marketing with other communication channels (Belanche et al., 2021; Leung et al., 2022).

The integration of emerging social media platforms is also an area of interest for future research. With the rapid evolution of social media, new platforms and technologies constantly emerge, presenting new opportunities and challenges for marketers. Future studies could investigate the integration of emerging platforms, such as TikTok or Clubhouse, within IMC strategies and explore their effectiveness in reaching and engaging with specific target audiences (Belanche et al., 2021). Understanding the unique features and dynamics of these platforms and their integration with traditional and established social media channels can provide valuable insights for marketers.

To support the analysis of emerging trends and future directions, this study draws upon relevant academic research and industry examples. It explores existing literature that discusses the challenges and opportunities associated with social media integration, identifies research gaps, and suggests potential avenues for future investigation (Berthon et al., 2012; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Eslami et al., 2022; and Gkikas et al., 2022). Additionally, the study considers real-world examples of companies that have successfully embraced emerging trends in social media integration to inform their IMC strategies (Leung et al., 2022).

In conclusion, this study identifies emerging trends and future directions in the integration of social media within IMC. The analysis emphasizes the importance of measuring social media's impact on brand equity, understanding the role of influencers in IMC strategies, and exploring the integration of emerging social media platforms. By addressing these areas, researchers and marketers can stay at the forefront of evolving trends and effectively leverage social media within the context of IMC.

5. Discussion

The integration of social media within integrated marketing communication (IMC) has emerged as a

crucial strategy in the modern marketing landscape. This section delves into the intricate details of the findings, offering a nuanced exploration of emerging trends and providing concrete examples and case studies to enhance the practical relevance of the discussions.

5.1 *The significance of IMC and social media integration*

The analysis conducted in this study highlights the significance of integrated marketing communication (IMC) as a holistic approach to marketing communication. IMC emphasizes the coordination and integration of various promotional elements to create a cohesive and consistent brand message (Belch E.G., 2021). The findings of the analysis demonstrate that the integration of social media within IMC strategies plays a crucial role in enhancing communication effectiveness and facilitating two-way interaction between companies and consumers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). A case in point is Nike's adept integration of social media into its IMC, exemplifying real-time engagement and user-generated content and amplifying brand visibility (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). The brand's campaigns often go viral, underscoring the potency of social media in magnifying the reach and impact of promotional messages (Kotler & Keller, 2016). This integration allows for more dynamic and interactive communication, leading to increased brand visibility, customer engagement, and overall marketing success.

5.2 *Coherence and consensus in marketing communication strategies*

The analysis conducted in this study also assesses the level of coherence and consensus among scholars regarding marketing communication strategies. Through the examination of relevant literature, common themes, frameworks, and models proposed by researchers and practitioners have been identified (Tiedemann et al., 2020; Gupta, 2016). The findings of the analysis suggest a general agreement among scholars in the field of marketing communication, providing insights into the current state of knowledge. This coherence and consensus in marketing communication strategies lay a solid foundation for the integration of social media within IMC. By aligning social media practices with established frameworks and models, companies can ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of their marketing communication efforts (Smith & Taylor, 2004). A practical illustration is Coca-Cola's "Share a Coke" campaign, which seamlessly blended traditional and digital media, epitomizing the synergy of varied communication channels and the amplification effect of social media (Tiedemann et al., 2020; Gupta, 2016).

5.3 *Role of social media and consumer-generated media (CGM)*

The analysis conducted in this study delves into the role of social media and consumer-generated media (CGM) within the context of IMC. Social media platforms have revolutionized marketing communication by offering new channels for direct engagement with consumers (Belch E.G., 2021). The analysis reveals that social media enables companies to gather real-time feedback, understand consumer preferences, and foster brand support (Hajli, 2014). Furthermore, the integration of CGM within IMC has empowered consumers, giving them greater influence over brand reputation and messaging (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This shift in information control requires companies to actively engage with customers through social media platforms, listen to their feedback, and respond in a timely manner (Kotler & Keller, 2016). By embracing social media and CGM, companies can build stronger customer relationships, generate brand advocacy, and enhance overall brand perception. The transformative impact of social media and CGM is evident in campaigns like Starbucks' "White Cup Contest." This initiative underscored the power of consumer participation, where customer-designed cups showcased the brand's commitment to customer engagement and personalized experiences (Belch E.G., 2021; Hajli, 2014).

5.4 *Impact on consumer perception and engagement*

The analysis conducted in this study investigates the impact of integrating social media into IMC on consumer perception and engagement with brands. The findings suggest that social media integration has significantly influenced consumer perception and engagement. The shift in information control, where consumers have a greater say through consumer-generated media, has reshaped brand-consumer relationships (Belch E.G., 2021). The analysis reveals both positive and negative effects of consumer-generated media on brand reputation. Positive experiences and advocacy shared through social media platforms can enhance brand perception, while negative experiences can potentially harm brand reputation (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Active customer engagement through social media platforms is therefore crucial for companies to effectively manage their brand image, address customer concerns, and foster a positive brand-consumer relationship (Kotler & Keller, 2016). The duality of social media's impact is exemplified by Tesla. Positive customer reviews and CEO Elon Musk's active social media presence have bolstered the brand's image. Conversely, negative reviews and criticisms are also amplified, underscoring the imperative for adept management of social media interactions (Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

5.5 *The marketing mix and social media integration*

The analysis conducted in this study highlights the relationship between the marketing mix and social media integration. Social media plays a significant role in the promotion element of the marketing mix, offering new opportunities for targeted communication, brand storytelling, and personalized marketing campaigns (Belch E.G., 2021). The findings indicate that social media platforms provide a cost-effective and efficient way for companies to reach their target audience and deliver tailored messages (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The integration of social media within IMC allows companies to align their marketing communication efforts across different platforms and channels, creating a consistent brand experience for consumers (Smith & Taylor, 2004). By leveraging the power of social media in the marketing mix, companies can enhance their promotional activities, increase brand awareness, and drive customer engagement. Amazon's tailored marketing strategies, leveraging data analytics and social media insights, epitomize the evolution of the promotion element in the marketing mix. The brand's ability to offer personalized recommendations underscores the integration of technology and IMC for enhanced customer experiences (Belch E.G., 2021; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

5.6 *Emerging trends and future directions*

Based on the analysis of the literature, this study identifies emerging trends and future directions in the integration of social media in IMC. The findings suggest several areas for further research and exploration. First, future studies could focus on measuring the influence of social media on brand equity, including the influence of social media engagement, brand advocacy, and customer sentiment on brand perception and financial performance (Alzate et al., 2022; De Vries et al., 2012). Second, the role of influencers in IMC strategies can be further investigated, exploring how influencer marketing on social media platforms can enhance brand communication and consumer engagement (Hajli, 2014). Lastly, the integration of emerging social media platforms, such as virtual reality and augmented reality, presents new opportunities and challenges for marketers (Schivinski et al., 2020). Future research could explore the potential of these technologies for shaping marketing communication strategies and consumer behavior. The study identifies nascent trends, including the burgeoning role of influencers and the advent of immersive technologies like virtual reality (VR) in marketing. A case in point is the collaboration between influencers and brands on Instagram, offering personalized and authentic promotional content (Alzate et al., 2022). Moreover, brands like IKEA are exploring VR to offer immersive shopping experiences, marking a frontier for future research and

marketing innovations (Schivinski et al., 2020).

5.7 *Insights and practical implications*

The discussion extends beyond theoretical findings, offering actionable insights for marketers. The exemplification of brands like Nike, Coca-Cola, Starbucks, Tesla, and Amazon illustrates the pragmatic application of integrating social media within IMC (Novak & Richmond, 2019; Simões-Coelho et al., 2023; Waymer & Logan, 2021). These brands have not only amplified their reach but have also fostered a two-way communication paradigm, enhancing customer engagement and brand loyalty.

5.8 *Future research avenues*

The evolving landscape of social media integration within IMC beckons further scholarly exploration. Areas ripe for investigation include the quantification of social media's impact on brand equity, the exploration of emerging social media platforms, and the nuanced role of influencers in shaping consumer perceptions and behaviors. The advent of technologies like AI, machine learning, and VR in social media marketing also presents fertile ground for future academic inquiries and practical explorations.

6. Conclusion

This study, rooted in a meticulous systematic review of existing literature, aimed to dissect the intricate dynamics of integrating social media within integrated marketing communication (IMC). The convergence of insights gleaned offers both theoretical exposition and pragmatic pathways for businesses and marketers navigating this evolving landscape.

6.1 *Insights and implications*

The integration of social media within IMC is not a mere adjunct but a pivotal element, shaping consumer perception, engagement, and the overarching marketing mix. The findings underscore a paradigm shift characterized by the empowerment of consumers through consumer-generated media (CGM), necessitating businesses to recalibrate their strategies to actively engage and respond on social media platforms.

The coherence and consensus among scholars in marketing communication strategies, as revealed in the study, transcend academic discourse. They offer tangible, actionable insights for businesses. The consensus provides a roadmap, ensuring that the integration of social media within IMC is harmonious, aligning digital and traditional elements of marketing communication seamlessly.

6.2 *Recommendations*

1. *Strategic Engagement:* The profound impact of social media on consumer perception and engagement underscores the need for businesses to cultivate a dynamic presence on these platforms. Real-time engagement, responsiveness, and strategic participation in CGM are pivotal. Brands like Apple exemplify the potency of adept social media engagement in amplifying brand loyalty and narrative.
2. *Data-Driven Decisions:* In an era where data is king, the integration of artificial intelligence and data analytics in social media strategies is indispensable. The tailored content and marketing strategies of companies like Netflix underscore the imperative of data analytics in ensuring personalized and impactful consumer experiences.

3. *Innovative Integration*: The continual evolution of social media calls for innovative integration within IMC. The role of influencers, immersive technologies like VR, and emerging social media platforms should be integral to future IMC strategies. Brands like Sephora, which have seamlessly integrated influencers, offer a blueprint for success.

6.3 Outlook and emerging trends

The study not only illuminates the present landscape but also casts a spotlight on emerging trends and future directions. The evolving digital landscape, characterized by the advent of new social media platforms and technologies, calls for continual adaptation and innovation in IMC strategies.

The measurement of social media's impact on brand equity, the role of influencers, and the integration of artificial intelligence and data analytics are identified as pivotal areas for future exploration. These insights are not just theoretical but offer businesses a compass to navigate and strategically position themselves in the dynamic intersection of social media and IMC.

In summarizing the insights and findings, this study underscores the transformative force of social media integration within IMC. It's not an additive element but a core component redefining consumer engagement, brand perception, and the marketing mix. The outlined insights and recommendations offer businesses a strategic pathway, not just to navigate the present but to be adeptly positioned for future evolutions.

The blend of theoretical insights and practical recommendations underscores the multifaceted value of this study. It serves as a foundational resource for academics while also offering businesses and marketers actionable strategies to harness the full potential of integrating social media within integrated marketing communication. The future promises an even more intricate intertwining of these elements, making the insights and recommendations of this study not just current but anticipatory of future dynamics.

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