

INTEGRATING SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL MEDIA AS NEW ELEMENTS OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION FOR CREATING BRAND EQUITY

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ABSTRACT

Communication with target prospects results cost to the company. In this highly competitive environment all marketers work on cutting cost. They try to allocate their marketing budget very carefully to create brand equity and achieve their marketing objective within the given budget. The selection of integrated marketing communication tools has become problematic task for marketers. This paper provides how integration of digital and social media within integrated marketing communication helps to create brand equity of hospitality and tourism industry in India. This paper also examines the effectiveness of each IMC tool to create brand equity. The nonprobability convenience sampling technique was used to gather opinions from 512 tourists of Himachal Pradesh state of India. The findings reveal that both social media and digital media are more effective than the traditional IMC tools. The study also found that the efficiency of Modern IMC tools is better than the traditional IMC tools. Smart PLS-SEM 3.0 software has been used to scrutinise data and validate conceptual framework.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Social Media, Digital Media, Modern Integrated Marketing Communication.

INTRODUCTION

Though the first 'P' of marketing is product but marketing starts with communicating products or services related information to target prospects. This creates awareness about products or services to the customers and helps in convincing them to buy the offered products (Naeem & Naz, 2013). As a marketer, we try every communication channel that helps to make effective reach of information to target audience. Message reach has become a key aspect of successful marketing and helps to achieve objectives of the company and brand equity (Cvetkov, 2019). Today, organizations are using various forms of media to reach target customers (Brunello, 2013). This has given birth to Integrated

Marketing Communication (IMC). Integrated marketing communication is defined as a strategic process to choose, develop, execute, evaluate, and coordinate with all the stakeholders of organization for a given period of time (Belch. & Belch, 2007). Effective use of integrated marketing communication has recognized a valuation instrument to achieve marketing objectives. Marketers can use it strategically in order to gain competitive advantage, and increase sales volume, market shares, and brand equity (Mongkol, 2014; Bao, et al., (2019)).

Integrating marketing communication tools is regarded as prime concern these days because of efficiency of these communication tools

(Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2013; Valos et al., 2017; Mortimer & Laurie, 2017). However, there are many reasons of growing integrated marketing communication practices in today's business (Brunello, 2013) such as targeting mass consumers, event marketing, social networking sites & direct emails, accountability of media, payment methods, etc. In this globalization era, it is not possible to research all target consumers because of diversified characteristics of customers and availability of diverse range of communication tools. Development in technology and communication media is remodelling integrated marketing communication (Keller, 2016; Zwerin, Clarke & Clarke III, 2020). Many companies are increasing their budget for advertising their offerings on programmatic advertising and social media to gain competitive advantage (Valos, et al., 2017). So far, traditional IMC consists of few popular tools such as advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, and public relations (Jones & Schee, 2008), which are not enough to research generation-Z (Bhatt, Goyal and Yadav, 2018; Adeola, Hinson & Evans, 2020).

Therefore, digital media marketing, and social media have to be integrated into the traditional IMC tools to make it modern IMC. Digital marketing is defined as an exploration of digital technologies which is a channel to research potential customers and communicates required information to achieve organisational objectives and brand awareness (Sawicki, 2016; Lee & Cho, 2020). Social media is collection of applications build on technological foundation of Web 2.0 and helps to create community and exchange users' generated contents (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Digital and social media helps to engage target audience, personalization of message, user generated contents, ubiquitous connectivity, social graph, and is environment friendly (Sawicki, 2016; Mairaru, et al., 2019). Digital media grew by 33% and social media grew by 47% whereas television advertising shrank by 1.3% in 2019. Digital and social media has likely become 2nd largest media with market share of 26.9% in 2020 (Sawatzky, 2019).

The major role of IMC is to convey consistent messages and build long term healthy relationship with customers. This process helps to increase brand equity of the company (Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2013). Brand equity is

considered as an asset for the company and is incorporated in balance sheet of the company. The effective marketing activities improve the valuation of brand equity. Because of huge advertising cost, immense competition, and flattening demand, companies try to improve the efficiency of marketing overheads. The power of brand depends on the minds of consumers. The minds of customers depends on how they have experienced and perceived brand offering over the period of time. Aaker (1991) has suggested five dimensions of brand equity and which add value to it are awareness, perceived quality, associations, loyalty, and other proprietary brand assets. These dimensions can be improved through modern IMC approach.

The impact of traditional IMC on brand equity has been studied by several scholars however, there are few literatures where social media has been integrated into traditional IMC. There is a study gap in this area where both digital media and social media are integrated into traditional IMC to create brand equity. This signifies that there is a need to study modern IMC to improve brand equity. This study is going to integrate both digital media and social media into traditional integrated marketing communication and upgrading it into modern integrated marketing communication to achieve marketing objectives and increase brand equity. This study is targeted to tourism and hospitality industry of India. This study has considered IMC tools such as advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, public relations (Brunello, 2013; Jones & Schee, 2008), social media (Braojos, Benitez & Liorens, 2015; Valos, et al., 2017), and digital media marketing. This study will also find the effectiveness of Modern IMC over Traditional IMC to create brand equity in tourism and hospitality industry.

REVIEWS OF LITERATURE

Brand Equity

Promotion and positioning of any product in the market needs several types of marketing communication channels. These marketing communication elements make clear understanding of the message and enforce brand image in the mind of consumers (Shakeel Ul Rehman & M Syed Ibrahim, 2014), although marketing communication channels need to be modified according to customers'

demographic factors. In the field of marketing, major promotional activities are taking place under IMC and result in brand awareness, brand loyalty and brand equity among customers (Selvakumar, 2014). Branding and brand equity are the most valuable intangible assets of the organizations. Outcome results of marketing activities are the end results of brand equity which place and maintain an identified value proposition in the mind of customer (Hartley & Pickton, 2010). One of the key benefit and a rationale behind building a strong brand of a product or an organization is to increase effectiveness of marketing communication and positioning in the mind of customer (Keller, 2017).

Traditional Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)

Integrated marketing communication is one of the major element of promotional marketing strategy. Prior to digitalization, integrated marketing communication consists of advertising, sales promotion, word of mouth, direct marketing, and public relations (Philip J. Kitchen & Don E. Schultz, 2009). These major elements were benefiting businesses in terms of creating product's awareness and yielding more revenue (Selvakumar, 2014). IMC is basically a multi-facet communication technique which synchronizes the different promotional elements of marketing mix to create and provide greater value to target customer and promotional impact towards customers in the market (Rodney G. Duffet & Myles Wakeham, 2016).

American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) formally defined Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) as:

"a concept of marketing communications, planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations – and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact" Amanda Zwerin, Theresa B. Clarke & Irvine Clarke III (2019).

H1: Traditional Integrated Marketing Communication has positive impact on building brand equity.

Advertising

Unlike personal selling, advertising covers target market and mass potential customer base. It is basically a non-personal form of creating awareness (Victor A. Barger & Lauren I. Labrecque, 2013). The main concern of advertising is to disseminate the information to mass in a short time through various print and electronic media but major challenge was the selection of medium/ vehicle to advertise. Advertisement's effects or outputs are usually measured in terms of brand awareness (Selvakumar, 2014).

H3: Advertising has positive impact on building Traditional Integrated Marketing Communication.

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is basically a small push to have more sale of a particular product which usually results in more revenue and brand preference while selecting the products to buy (Hartley & Pickton, 2010). Sales promotional activities are mainly helping and pushing actual and potential customers to take quick decisions to buy, making more and repeated purchases (Michael J. Valos, Vanya Louise Maplestone, 2017). Even marketers dealing in business to business trade are also promoting through trade shows, event marketing, sponsorships, special prices, or discounts but use of technology was limited to certain areas of operations (Kalyan Raman and Prasad A. Naik, 1991).

H4: Sales Promotion has positive impact on building Traditional Integrated Marketing Communication.

Public Relation

Public relation is an integral part of promotional strategy of the organization. This approach is the most cost effective proposition which results in long term customer's association with the company (Hilde A.M. Voorveld, 2019). The main functionality of public relation towards customer is to communicate about new introduced products, repositioning of the service or product, influencing new target customer, and reshaping the product and company's overall brand image (Victor A. Barger & Lauren I.

Labrecque, 2013). IMC facilitates all the functionality of public relation smoothly and timely (Jerry G. Kliatchko, 2009).

H5: Public Relation has positive impact on building Traditional Integrated Marketing Communication.

Direct Marketing

To bridge the gap between marketer and customer, direct marketing strategy works best to cover this gap and creates awareness about the product portfolio of company (Victor A. Barger & Lauren I. Labrecque, 2013). Various mediums or channels are being used to deliver personalized or customized promotional materials (Hilde A.M. Voorveld, 2019). In the modern era, direct marketing with internet covering wide range of customers globally whereas before internet of digitalization it was restricted to a location (Luangrath, Andrea Webb Peck, Joann Barger, 2017).

H6: Direct Marketing has positive impact on building Traditional Integrated Marketing Communication.

Modern Integrated Marketing Communication (MIMC)

MIMC is strategic approach that consists and integrates various communication channels to be more interactive to convey the message. MIMC facilitates new way of transferring or sharing information on multiple platforms and messages reach to actual and potential customers within seconds (Philip J. Kitchen & Don E. Schultz b, 2009). Marketers have divided MIMC strategy into four stages to get best result out of it. The first stage focuses on content creation and tactical coordination rather than hiring advertising agency (Amanda Zwerin, Theresa B. Clarke & Irvine Clarke III, 2019). The second stage evaluates and monitors the communication practices selected considering customers' needs, wants, and evaluating the customers' feedback (Ogechi Adeola, Robert Ebo Hinson, 2020). The third stage monitors regular flow of information and finally fourth stage implements MIMC at organizational level strategically and ensures that all the department working together with coordination to broadcast a coherent organization's brand image (Claudia Elisabeth Henninger, Panayiota J. Alevizou, 2017). The

main focus of MIMC is to work and integrate traditional IMC with social media through digital platforms and focusing on cost effective and result oriented approach (Šerić, 2017).

H2: Modern Integrated Marketing Communication has positive impact on building brand equity

Social Media (SM)

A rapid change in digital media is facilitating platforms for social communication with and without face to face interaction which is providing useful information and ease of use to customers. Social media is a key role player in influencing and attracting consumers' behaviour and perception towards products or brands (Duffet & Wakeham, 2016; Aydin, 2020; Ibrahim, Aljarah&Ababneh, 2020). Social media seems to be more influential than the normal or traditional marketing communication techniques (Lepkowska, Parsons and Berg, 2019; Sümer, 2020). Consumers search product's information and reviews on social media platforms (Cheung, et al., 2019). Some social media supports customised marketing of products and services offered to customer to consumer, business to business, and finally results in brand building (Swani, Brown, and Milne, 2014; Fonseca, Duarte & Gustavo, 2020). Social media communication is being used by marketers in their marketing strategies. Surprisingly, more than 90 percent of businesses or marketers are using social media platforms like Instagram, Pinterest, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, Facebook, Youtube, Whatsapp, Tumblr and other social media to create awareness and attract the new customers (Yurdakul & Bozdağ, 2018; Khan, 2017; Shiva & Singh, 2019).

H7: Social Media has positive impact on building Modern Integrated Marketing Communication.

Digital Marketing

Digitalization has brought a revolutionary change in data management, media management and finally in business. Digital media at global pace was estimated around 38.3 percent in 2017 and mobile advertising which is the most popular medium accounts for 63.3 percent of digital advertisement spending (eMarketer, 2017). Digital marketing provides wider coverage of customer base and provides insights to even smaller segment of

customer base (Selvakumar, 2014). Content marketing is an integral part of digital marketing which focuses on creating and distributing relevant, consistent and valuable content to attract new customers and retain them (Rocha et al., 2019; Dinis, Breda & Barreiro, 2020). In fact Search Engine optimization (SEO) and blogs are also growing its presence among customers (Amatulli, Angelis & Stoppani, 2019; Alves, Sousa & Machado, 2020). Approximately 72 percent marketers state that search engine optimization is the most effective tactic, whereas approximately 32 percent consider content marketing as an effective tool in digital marketing (Yurdakul & Bozdağ, 2018; Adeyinka et al., 2020).

H8: Digital Marketing has positive impact on building Modern Integrated Marketing Communication.

Advertising

Before digitalization, advertising elements of IMC were totally dependent on physical materials and one way communication or non-personal communication. The current situation is totally different in terms of communication, customers' level of information, needs and wants of information in advertising and moreover customer seeks everything quick or immediately (Michael John Valos Fatemeh Haji Habibi Riza Casidy Carl Barrie Driesener Vanya Louise Maplestone, 2016). Modern era of technology provides these all solutions and multi-fold results in terms of quick information about new launch, interactive-two way communication, after sales service (Ogechi Adeola, Robert Ebo Hinson, 2020). Digital marketing including social media has proved to be a great support in modern advertising which provides all solution at one place (James G. Hutton, 2010).

Digital marketing facilitates advertising in terms of widespread and personalization of messages, time and cost effectiveness, more impactful, targeted, more interactive and responsive, building strong brand with less time frame, less use of resources and finally results in more return on investment (Michael J. Valos, Vanya Louise Maplestone, 2017).

H9: Advertising has positive impact on building Modern Integrated Marketing Communication.

Sales Promotion

Promotion through social media and other digital marketing tools provides a wide range of customer and work on multi-dimensional approach using digital self-promotional tools, products reviews, price based promotion campaign, loyalty programmes, drop shopping incentives and reseller promotion (Michael John Valos Fatemeh Haji Habibi Riza Casidy Carl Barrie Driesener Vanya Louise Maplestone, 2016). Traditional sales promotion was a short term increment in sales and has covered only a particular market segment whereas digital sales promotion is constant and having wide coverage because of huge traffic on social media platforms with less expensive and fast results (Kalyan Raman and Prasad A. Naik, 1991).

H10: Sales Promotion has positive impact on building Modern Integrated Marketing Communication.

Public Relation

Modern digital marketing tools are focusing on building professional network between salespeople and company and / or corporate to corporate (Hilde A.M. Voorveld, 2019). These modern tools of integrated marketing communication tools also support marketing research, strengthen buyer-seller relationships, focusing on public flow of information on development in corporate governance, and promote customer relationship management (Wang, Pauleen, and Zhang, 2016). Digital content marketing is supporting significantly in public relations (Ogechi Adeola, Robert Ebo Hinson, 2020).

H11: Public Relation has positive impact on building Modern Integrated Marketing Communication.

Direct Marketing

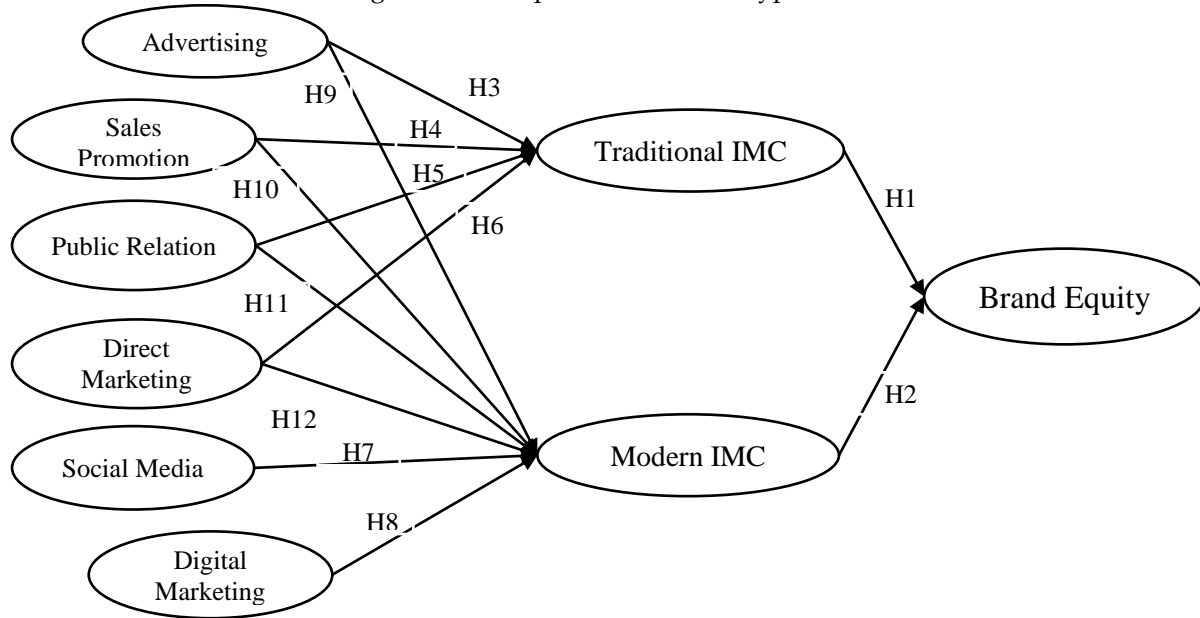
Digital marketing has been proved to be the best supporting element for direct marketing which is being done through emails, e brochures, and spreading information through social media to actual and potential customers (Michael John Valos Fatemeh Haji Habibi Riza Casidy Carl Barrie Driesener Vanya Louise Maplestone, 2016). In the modern era of technological advancement phase, marketers are using face to face communication and textual paralanguage (Hilde A.M. Voorveld, 2019). Textual paralanguage includes

nonverbal audible, visual elements that usually replace written language like symbols, images (emoji and stickers, etc.), and words like alternants (normally used in Whatsapp chat and differentiators like haha, ohh hoo)

(Luangrath, Andrea Webb Peck, Joann Barger, 2017).

H12: Direct Marketing has positive impact on building Modern Integrated Marketing Communication

Figure-1: Conceptual model and Hypotheses



Source: Author’s Observations

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is focused on tourism and hospitality industry of Himachal Pradesh. The survey method for opinion collection is conducted to study the impact of integrating digital and social media into traditional IMC to create brand equity (Adeyinka, et al., 2020). The survey instrument was self-administered questionnaire.

A series of questions were prepared with the help of extensive literature reviews, tour guides, and marketing consultants and categorised on the basis of six IMC tools under this study (Fonseca, Duarte & Gustavo, 2020; Dinis, Breda & Barreiro, 2020). The instrument’s questions were related to the sources from which these respondents got

information regarding present visit to Himachal Pradesh as a tourist. Shimla, Kullu, and Manali are the major tourist spots in Himachal Pradesh therefore tourist visiting these locations during the study period were interviewed.

The non-probability convenience sampling technique was applied to select 512 samples for this study. The sample units were tourist of Himachal Pradesh state of India who have visited this location from August, 2019 to February, 2020. These respondents were the residents of various states of India. SPSS and Smart PLS-SEM were used for data scrutiny.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity

Table 1: Measurement Model Assessment

| Latent Variables | Manifest Variables (Measured Variables) | Codes | Standardized Factor loading | Mean | SD |
|------------------|---|-------|-----------------------------|------|------|
| Advertising | TV Commercials, and Visual & Audio Ads | AV1 | 0.7958 | 3.97 | .765 |
| | Magazines and Newspapers | AV2 | 0.8263 | 3.96 | .767 |
| | Brochures, Pamphlets, and leaflets | AV3 | 0.7577 | 3.93 | .752 |
| | Posters, Banners, and Hording Boards | AV4 | 0.8125 | 3.89 | .765 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------|--|-------|--------|------|------|
| | Fair, and Event Advertising | AV5 | 0.7560 | 4.02 | .769 |
| Sales Promotion | Discount Offers | SP1 | 0.8315 | 3.66 | .917 |
| | Coupons, Contests, and Lottery Tickets | SP2 | 0.8754 | 3.64 | .828 |
| | Loyalty Programs and Sponsorships | SP3 | 0.8377 | 3.63 | .815 |
| | Media Relations | PR1 | 0.8787 | 3.99 | .751 |
| Public Relation | Investors Relations | PR2 | 0.7762 | 3.95 | .712 |
| | Community Relations | PR3 | 0.8446 | 3.95 | .711 |
| | Internal Relations | PR4 | 0.8143 | 3.58 | .923 |
| Direct Marketing | Tele-calling | DM2 | 0.8760 | 3.63 | .862 |
| | Door-to-Door Approach | DM3 | 0.8320 | 3.62 | .915 |
| | Text (SMS) Marketing | DM4 | 0.8910 | 3.59 | .880 |
| Social Media | Social Networking Sites | SM1 | 0.8283 | 4.00 | .757 |
| | Social Entertainment Apps | SM2 | 0.8458 | 3.96 | .764 |
| | Social Community Apps | SM3 | 0.8914 | 4.04 | .724 |
| Digital Media | Email Marketing | DG1 | 0.8589 | 3.95 | .741 |
| | Web Display Ads | DG2 | 0.8799 | 4.00 | .757 |
| | Search Engine Marketing | DG3 | 0.8586 | 4.01 | .729 |
| Traditional IMC | Advisements through Traditional Media | TIMC2 | 0.8154 | 4.00 | .767 |
| | Promotional Offers | TIMC3 | 0.8669 | 3.63 | .864 |
| | Maintaining Reputation on Public Domain | TIMC4 | 0.8540 | 3.64 | .826 |
| | Approaching Directly to prospects | TIMC4 | 0.8540 | 3.58 | .866 |
| Modern IMC | Advisements through Modern Media | MIMC1 | 0.8991 | 4.00 | .757 |
| | Promotional and referral offers | MIMC2 | 0.8380 | 3.95 | .711 |
| | Reputation building on Digital and Public Domain | MIMC3 | 0.9168 | 4.00 | .729 |
| | Modern Approach directly to prospects | MIMC4 | 0.0732 | 4.01 | .763 |
| Brand Equity | Brand Perceived Value | BE1 | 0.8701 | 4.00 | .757 |
| | Brand Awareness | BE2 | 0.8213 | 3.96 | .710 |
| | Brand Loyalty | BE3 | 0.8063 | 4.00 | .766 |

Source: Author's Calculations

Table 3: Correlation Coefficients Matrix and Quality Criteria

| | Advertis- ing | Brand Equity | Digital Media | Direct Marketing | Modern IMC | Pubic Relation | Sales Promotion | Social Media | Traditional IMC |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| Advertising | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Brand Equity | 0.6275 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Digital Media | 0.7322 | 0.9032 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Direct Marketing | 0.6556 | 0.7000 | 0.8147 | 1 | | | | | |
| Modern IMC | 0.6000 | 0.8981 | 0.8582 | 0.0885 | 1 | | | | |
| Public Relation | 0.7195 | 0.9300 | 0.9599 | 0.7299 | 0.8630 | 1 | | | |
| Sales promotion | 0.6371 | 0.7209 | 0.8209 | 0.6857 | 0.0600 | 0.7518 | 1 | | |
| Social Media | 0.7411 | 0.9057 | 0.8302 | 0.0895 | 0.9383 | 0.8580 | 0.7601 | | |
| Traditional IMC | 0.6377 | 0.8019 | 0.0888 | 0.7448 | 0.0682 | 0.7216 | 0.8781 | 0.0823 | 1 |
| Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | 0.6244 | 0.6939 | 0.7497 | 0.5215 | 0.5891 | 0.6878 | 0.7198 | 0.732 | 0.7152 |
| Composite Reliability (CR) | 0.8925 | 0.8717 | 0.8998 | 0.8053 | 0.819 | 0.8979 | 0.8851 | 0.8911 | 0.8828 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | 0.8535 | 0.7826 | 0.8368 | 0.8505 | 0.689 | 0.8493 | 0.8069 | 0.8183 | 0.8028 |

Source: Author's Calculations

The above assessment table-2 represents standardised factors loadings, mean value, and standard deviation value for all items. One item under direct marketing construct has been removed, remaining all items were retained as the factor loading of these items are more than 0.70 (Sarstedt & Wilczynski, 2009). Mean and standard deviation values have been calculate for all the items to avoid any bias in analysis result. The mean values of all items under study lie between 3.58 and 4.04 and standard deviation values lie between 0.71 and 0.92 which reflect good data and is

appropriate for further analysis (Hair et al. 1995).

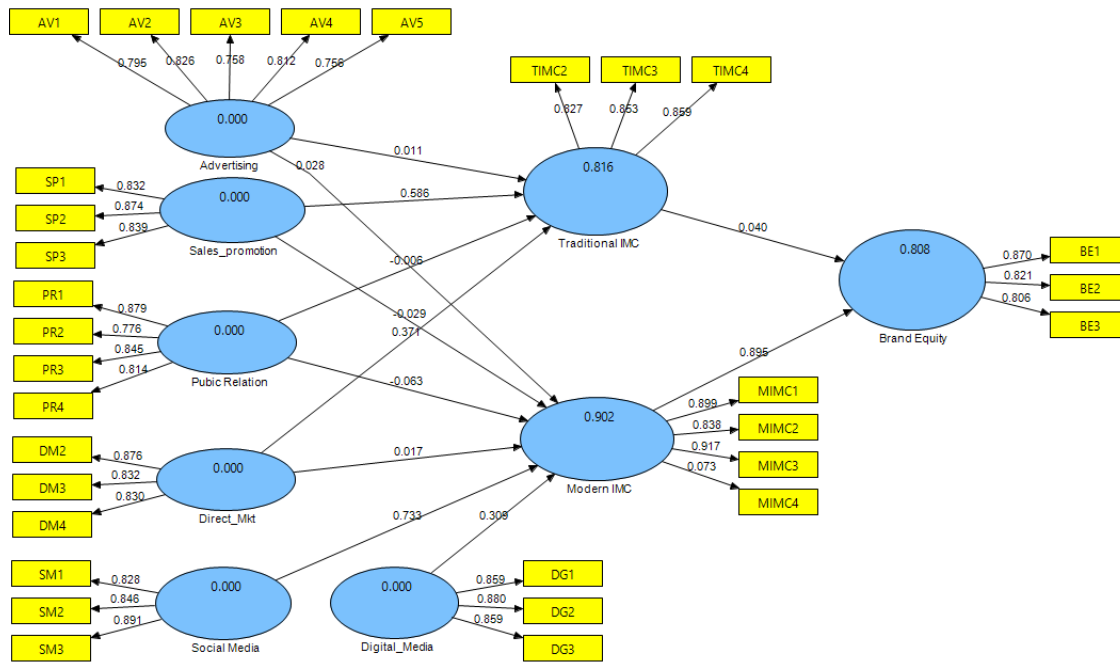
The correlation coefficients matrix of constructs under this research in the above table-2 reflects that the correlation coefficients values in the above table are not so high therefore the issue of multicollinearity situation does not occur. The average variance extracted (AVE) score of all constructs are more than 0.50 which reflects the mean of squared loadings for all indicators are allied with constructs. Similarly, the constructs

explain above 50% variance in its items thus, convergent validity of all constructs has been established successfully (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, et al., 2012). Likewise, the shared variance of all constructs with other constructs are greater than its AVE therefore, discriminants validity is established (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Sarstedt, Ringle, et al., 2014). The composite reliability values of all

constructs are falling between 0.80 and 0.89 which is more than 0.70 and less than 0.95 therefore internal consistency reliability is proven (Sarstedt, Ringle, et al., 2014). Cronbach's Alpha values are more than 0.70 for all constructs which denote the data passed the reliability test (DeVellis, 2003).

Structural Equation Model

Figure 2: Path Relationship Diagram



Source: Author's Calculations

Table 4: Structural Model Assessments

| Hypothesis | | | Beta Estimate | S.E. | t-values | Final Decision |
|------------|------------------|---|---------------|--------|---------------------|----------------|
| H1 | Traditional IMC | → | 0.0403 | 0.0074 | 5.438*** | Accepted |
| H2 | Modern IMC | → | 0.8954 | 0.0039 | 30.614*** | Accepted |
| H3 | Advertising | → | 0.0112 | 0.0079 | 1.420* | Accepted |
| H4 | Sales Promotion | → | 0.5856 | 0.0156 | 37.590 | Accepted |
| H5 | Pubic Relation | → | -0.0064 | 0.0082 | 0.776 ^{ns} | Rejected |
| H6 | Direct Marketing | → | 0.3705 | 0.0166 | 22.332*** | Accepted |
| H7 | Advertising | → | 0.0281 | 0.0107 | 2.620** | Accepted |
| H8 | Sales Promotion | → | -0.0286 | 0.0108 | 2.649** | Accepted |
| H9 | Pubic Relation | → | -0.0629 | 0.0272 | 2.313** | Accepted |
| H10 | Direct Marketing | → | 0.0167 | 0.0104 | 1.612* | Accepted |
| H11 | Social Media | → | 0.7326 | 0.0133 | 55.050*** | Accepted |
| H12 | Digital Media | → | 0.3091 | 0.0246 | 12.562*** | Accepted |

Source: Author's Calculations

***p<0.01; **p<0.05; *p<0.10

The above figure-2 indicates path relationship between dependent and independent variables. It represents that the impact of

modern IMC is quite higher than traditional IMC in creating brand equity in tourism and hospitality business. Social media and digital

media plays vital roles in achieving the marketing objectives of an organization whereas there is negative impact of advertising, sales promotion, and publication on modern IMC. Similarly, advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing have positive impact on traditional IMC.

The above table-4 indicates results of bootstrapping procedure with (512 cases, 5000 subsamples, and no sign change option). This indicates that hypothesis H5 is rejected which means there is insignificant impact of public relation tool of IMC on traditional IMC in context of tourism and hospitality business. However, rest all hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, H7, H8, H9, H10, H11, and H12 are significant and accepted. This reflects that both traditional IMC and modern IMC have significant impact on Brand equity however, modern IMC has more impact than traditional one. Similarly, advertising, sales promotion, and direct marketing have significant impact on traditional IMC. Likewise, advertising, sales promotion, public relation, direct marketing, social media, and digital marketing have significant impact on Modern IMC. This reveals that modern IMC is more powerful than Traditional IMC for creating brand equity in tourism and hospitality industry.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Marketing programs are directly aimed to increase sale however, indirectly it is done to create brand equity. Brand equity is an assets which also plays roles in amalgamation and merger. Integrated marketing communication provides us a holistic marketing tools to reach target customers whereas modern IMC is more effective than traditional IMC which is proven from our empirical analysis. Most of the tools under traditional IMC have become obsolete to reach audience. Today, marketers are trying to reach customers in more customized way because every customer is different. Interest and preference of customers varies therefore, selection of tools to reach target prospect has to been done very tactically. Digital generation is hanging with digital devices most of the time. It is not possible to reach this segment through traditional tools of IMC. The modern IMC tools can helps us to overcome this problem. Social media and digital marketing have been proven the most effective tools of modern IMC. These both tools are cost effective

because of accountability of such platform advertisers. These both platforms provide us more customized service to reach targetted segment of customers and paymentis purely based on reach of customers. These both platforms allows us to fix date, time and budget, and also allow us to characterise target audience & their locations. Modern IMC has assimilated all tools available in old IMC along with modern tools which provide us to reach both conservative and digital consumers. Thus, modern IMC allows us to reach old fashioned consumers also who can still be connected through traditional tools.

Theoretical Implications

Though, the existence of literature in this area is numerous however, there was gap in integration of digital and social media into integrated marketing communication. The existing studies were mostly carried out on traditional tools of IMC. This study has integrated both digital platforms of marketing to reach every segments of customers. It has also identified some of the tools which may not be useful for IMC of tourism and hospitality organisations. Tourism and hospitality industries marketers can neglect those tools for integrated marketing communications. This study has also proven that the traditional IMC is less effective than modern IMC. This has provided a new framework of understanding modern integrated marketing communication application for today's digital and competitive environment.

This supports the study of (Valos, Maplestone, Polonsky, & Ewing, 2017) who has firstly integrated social media into IMC. This also supports the study of (Shafi & Madhavaiah, 2013; Selvakumar, 2014) who have proven that integrate marketing commination helps to gain brand equity. This also supports the study of (Brunello, 2013; Mongkol, 2014) who has studied the importance of IMC in creation of brand equity of service organisations.

Practical Implications

The aim is to provide a way to reach target customers effectively integrating social media and digital marketing within IMC to create brand equity in the digital era. This paper also provides the impact of each tools in traditional and modern IMC which helps marketing managers to choose effective tools as per their

objectives and characteristics of audience. This study provides solution to manager who face difficulty in deciding which media should be selected for communicating targeted audience. This will also helps to integrate social media where customer created content can be used for creating brand equity. This paper will assist senior marketing manager to frame marketing strategies for their offerings.

CONCLUSION

The basic agenda of this paper is to add digital tools into the most practiced integrated marketing communication tools. The idiom 'old is gold' may not work for longer therefore we keep on modernising our existing system. The modern technologies are more efficient than older. Likewise, integration of social media and digital media into traditional integrated marketing communication have upgraded it to modern integrated marketing communication. This study concludes that both new tools of IMC contribute better than the existing tools therefore it is requirement of these days for successful marketing activities. Marketing managers should use modern IMC tools rather than continuing with the older one. These tools will help to reduce IMC budgets and achieve organisational objectives. The tools provide flexibility of payment and help to target audience more efficiently. The limitations of this research is the location of study i.e. Himachal Pradesh state of India. However, the participants in this study are from every corner of India therefore, we can generalise the outcome in context of India. This study is focused on hospitality and tourism business which can also be studied on another segments of business like FMCG, Fashion, Automobile, electronics, etc.

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