Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies in the Digital Era with Special Reference to ABC Campus Sri Lanka

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Abstract: This study provides an overview of an Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) plan tailored to a university setting. IMC is a strategic approach that combines various communication channels and tactics to effectively promote and communicate the unique offerings and benefits of the university to the target audience.

The IMC plan begins with a comprehensive analysis of the higher education market, including an evaluation of industry trends, competitor strategies, and the preferences and behaviors of the target audience. Understanding the target audience, including prospective students, parents, and influencers, is crucial for developing tailored and relevant communication messages that address their needs and aspirations.

The plan identifies the most relevant and impactful communication channels for reaching the target audience. This may involve digital platforms, social media, campus events, and community engagement initiatives. By selecting the right combination of channels, the ABC Campus can maximize reach and engagement and, ultimately, convert prospective students into enrolled students.

I. INTRODUCTION

This integrated marketing communication plan aims to outline a comprehensive strategy that effectively promotes and communicates the unique offerings and benefits of AB Campus to the target audience. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is a strategic approach that ensures consistency and synergy across all communication efforts, creating a unified and impactful brand message.

In today's competitive higher education landscape, campuses must adopt an integrated marketing communication approach (Camilleri, 2020). With many choices available to prospective students, it is crucial to stand out and effectively convey the value and distinctiveness of the ABC Campus experience. By integrating various communication channels, such as advertising, public relations, digital marketing, events, and social media, we can deliver a cohesive and compelling brand message that resonates with our target audience.

The plan will then outline clear and measurable objectives that align with the ABC campus's overall enrollment and branding goals. These objectives will serve as guiding principles throughout the plan's execution, ensuring that all communication efforts are purposeful and contribute to the desired outcomes, such as increasing student applications, improving campus awareness, and enhancing the campus's reputation.

II. INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION

Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is strategically coordinating and integrating various communication channels and tools to deliver a consistent and unified message to target audiences. It involves combining traditional advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, social media, and other communication channels in a cohesive and synchronized manner to achieve marketing goals. The integrated communication method combines different promotional tools that could be an essential element for businesses to map their overall marketing strategy (Camilleri, 2017). This study is designed to develop student's knowledge and understanding of marketing communications and the techniques used in the digital landscape. The following essential elements will be focused on under the integrated communication process (Roy & Misra, 2018).

- Evaluate marketing channels for achieving communication objectives
- Develop an integrated marketing communications plan
- Produce appropriate content for a marketing channel
- Apply methods for monitoring an integrated marketing communications plan (IMC) to maximize reach and achieve a positive return on investment (ROI).

IMC's marketing strategy always focuses on the satisfaction of consumers and other stakeholders, and IMC tools can positively impact the educational institution. The website is one of the standard tools higher education institutions use (Hennicker & Koch, 2001); therefore, universities need to improve the content on their website. An integrated approach to marketing

communication enhances its efficiency, delivering synergy and integrated marketing communication campaigns using online tools to deal with university marketing problems effectively (Percy, 2023).

III. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Communications objectives are integrated to increase the business's value, maximize resources, and marketing strategy. The impact of COVID-19 prioritized a digital-based higher education system and digital marketing tools, enabling educational institutions to use the power of social presence (Baltezarevic, 2023). Digital marketing tools or platforms encourage the target audience to take a desired action, such as purchasing, subscribing to a service, or signing up for a newsletter. This objective aims to directly impact the bottom line by converting leads into customers.

Previous research indicates that social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and other applications promise a massive potential for communication between universities and their potential students (Ureña et al., 2020). Figure 1 provides information about the current social media behavior of ABC Campus based on social media analytics. Those analytics emphasize that IMC is required to pursue a social media implementation framework.

The main objective of this integrated marketing communications plan is to build ABC Campus's social media following; the company currently has 1606 followers on Instagram, 276 followers on LinkedIn, and 5 180 followers on Facebook; the target is to reach over 1000 followers on LinkedIn, 5000 in Instagram and 10 000 in Facebook. Increasing social media following is crucial for the company to obtain high response rates because they are personal and Campus's social media following; the company currently has 1606 followers on Instagram, 276 followers on LinkedIn, and 5 180 followers on Facebook; the target is to reach over 1000 followers on educational institutions can target the audience in the accurate ways. The following steps will assist in achieving the organizational objectives.
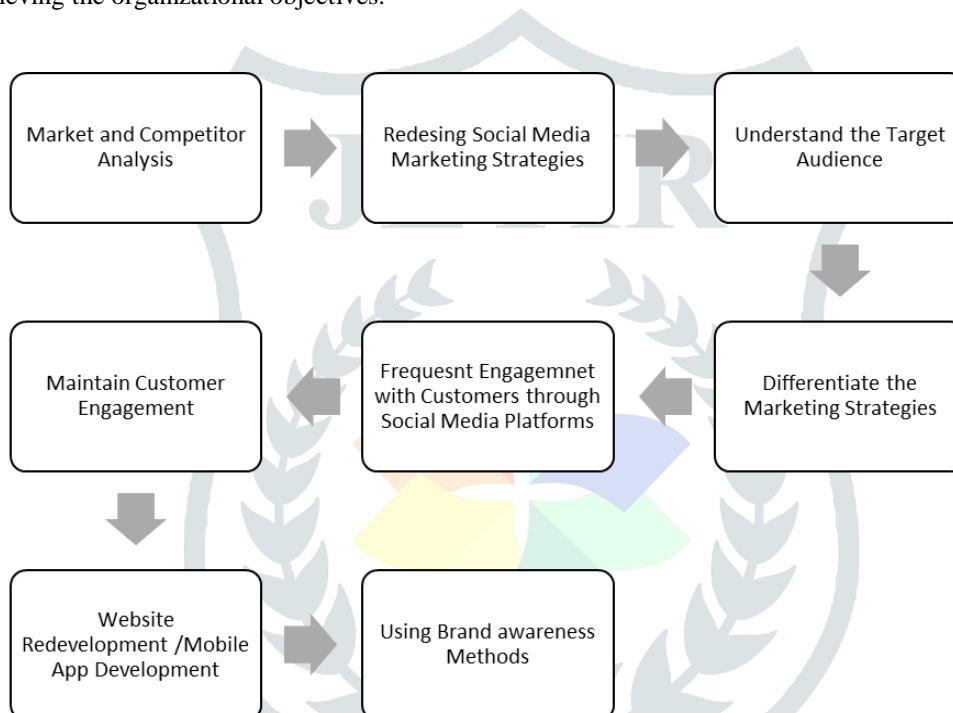

Figure 1: Objectives of Integrated Marketing Communication Plan
Source: Author's Work

IV. Market Analysis

4.1 SWOT Analysis

Before creating the integrated marketing communication strategies for Campus One, a thorough analysis of the campus's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) was carried out. This analysis served as the foundation for the campus's unique features and context. An overview of the SWOT analysis is provided below. The integrated marketing plan's goals, objectives, and strategies were created to fulfill ABC Campus's vision and mission (Wahyuningtias et al., 2016).
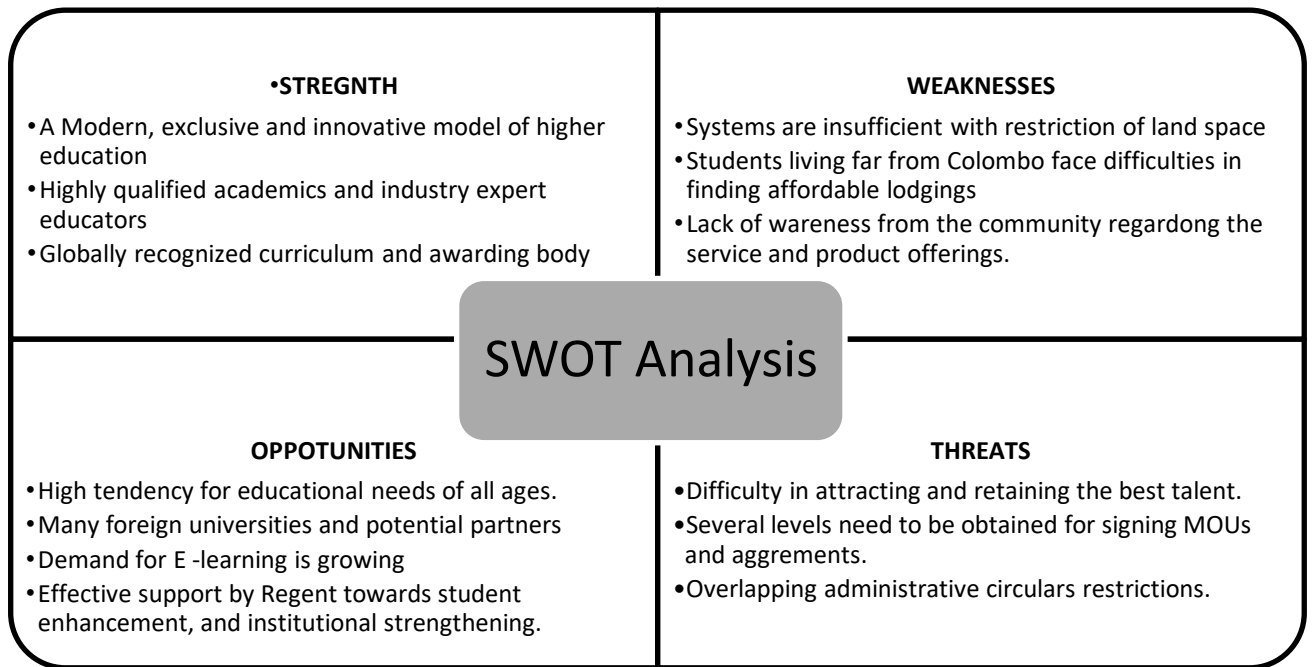

•STREGNTH
- •A Modern, exclusive and innovative model of higher education
- •Highly qualified academics and industry expert educators
- •Globally recognized curriculum and awarding body

WEAKNESSES
- •Systems are insufficient with restriction of land space
- •Students living far from Colombo face difficulties in finding affordable lodgings
- •Lack of wareness from the community regardong the service and product offerings.

SWOT Analysis

OPPOTUNITIES
- •High tendency for educational needs of all ages.
- •Many foreign universities and potential partners
- •Demand for E -learning is growing
- •Effective support by Regent towards student enhancement, and institutional strengthening.

THREATS
- •Difficulty in attracting and retaining the best talent.
- •Several levels need to be obtained for signing MOUs and aggrements.
- •Overlapping administrative circulars restrictions.

Figure 2: SWOT Analysis of ABC Campus
Source: Author's Work

4.2 Target Market Profile

Appropriately defining a target audience is crucial to any business's successful marketing strategy (Camilleri, 2017). Any marketing strategy starts with knowing the audience in the prospective market. According to this study, students are the leading target group and the main customers of Campus One. Many groups should be considered, but all university's audience segments are essential.
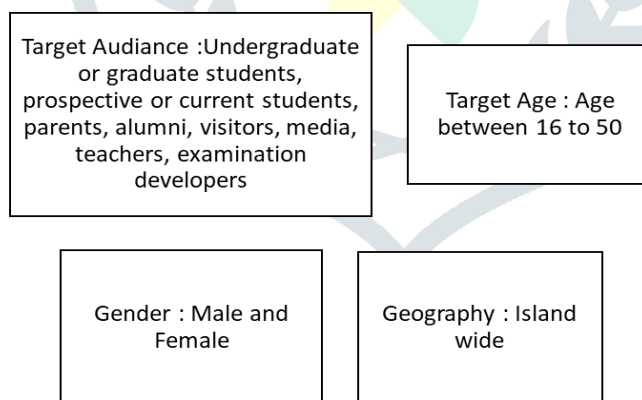

Target Audiance :Undergraduate or graduate students, prospective or current students, parents, alumni, visitors, media, teachers, examination developers

Target Age : Age between 16 to 50

Gender : Male and Female

Geography : Island wide

Figure 3: Target Market Analysis
Source: Author's Work

V. Integrated Digital Communication Plan

Based on the above discussion, ABC Campus lacks a digital media presence. Therefore, the company aims to increase brand recognition, awareness, and loyalty and extend its target segment by building a social network, Mobile App, and website development. Managing and integrating all social media content can be challenging, but the results are worth the investment.

5.1 Social Media Marketing Plan

To achieve 1000 followers on LinkedIn, 5000 on Instagram, and 10,000 on Facebook, ABC Campus must implement relevant and unique hashtags (#StudywithABCCampus, #ABCCampusSL) for each post to categorize the content. It's important to point out that the cost per follower (CPF) is based on each campaign, and the campaign can be tailored according to the company's objective.

An average of Rs. 15,000 is spent on each post, whereas developing a social strategy utilizing at least two social media platforms. A review of current financial statements included coaching expenses, ranging from Rs. 20,000 to Rs. 30,000 on average.

The drawback is that ABC Campus's social media presence will be entrusted to limited employees who will likely require a time-taxing amount of oversight and guidance needed to consider hiring an intern and train existing staff (free or very cheap)

5.2 You Tube Ads Platform

With YouTube In-stream Ads, ABC Campus increased conversions on the pages by 65-70%. When someone clicks on the video, they will be directed to the landing page URL. The displayed URL, known as the Display URL, differs from the URL the viewer receives upon clicking the advertisement.

- ✦ YouTube lets pay to run ads on others' videos and get paid to let others run their ads on Campus One's videos. According to YouTube, seasonal ads are becoming as much of an export as the Super Bowl. ABC Campus can also use those ads during the course registration periods.
- ✦ ABC Campus should not merely upload your videos online and hope someone stumbles upon them. Developing a distribution and advertising plan that uses video function video commercials and social media platforms is crucial. Additionally, video advertisements must function on all screens, as mobile devices now account for 40% of YouTube views.
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- Where want to send the traffic when the user clicks: Website and Social Media
- Budget: Daily budget and custom budget based on the audience and the campaign

- Target Audience:
  o Counselling and Applied Psychology: 16 males and females considering foundation and higher education.
  o Art and designing: 16 males and females considering foundation and higher education and Under 16 Kinds for Junior fashion club programmes.
  o Pathway Programme: 16 males and females who are considering foundation programmes.

5.3 Website Redevelopment

By providing loyalty programs, coupons, and discounts for various courses and training programs, the company may further increase brand loyalty and capitalize on this opportunity to establish a positive reputation for customer service. The approximate cost of redesigning a website for a single course module is Rs. 35,000; however, the final cost may differ based on the desired additional features. For better development, the following features must be taken into account.

• Meta description: Please use no more than 140–170 characters, including spaces. Make sure you have a distinct meta description for every one of your web pages. The meta description tag should come after the title tag within the head tag.

• Page cashing: Caching of pages on the website is prohibited. Temporarily saving the webpages on the user's device and caching them will reduce the loading time. The frequency of page updates must be considered when setting the caching delay.

• Integrated scripts: Use external files instead of excessive scripts on the page. Scripts weighing 1.21 KB are included straight into the page. JavaScript should be included in a separate file to maximize the page's loading speed.

5.4 Mobile Application Development

ABC Campus and ABC Campus can create a mobile application with many features to revolutionize smartphone users' access to "Self-Service Fast Entry" options. By making an easily accessible resource available, students can improve their experience and self-service.
Features:

- Track the status of Course Schedules
- Complete directory of academic members
- Mobile class registration and payment gateways
- Access to student portal or profile

If not, students can subscribe to special offers via email and SMS to stay informed about the newest, best offers and packages. They can also give us insightful feedback on how we can better serve them and meet their needs. As indicated by the table, the mobile application's target budget.

Table 1: Mobile Application Target Budget

Platforms	Commission or management **fee**	Account minimum	Start investing
Available for iOS (including Apple Watch), Android, Amazon and Windows Phone	Rs.20000 per trade; Volume discounts	60 days of commission-free trades (Rs.10,000+ deposit)	Rs.50000

Source: Author's Work

It can be acquired through subscription payments, in-app purchases, advertising, or the business strategy used by so-called freemium applications. ABC Campus must pay a starting investment of Rs. 10,000 for the first 12 months, in addition to a commission of Rs. 60000 (10,000 x 6 = Rs. 60000) and an additional Rs—15,000 for new developments.

VI. CONTROL AND EVALUATION OF THE CAMPAIGN

ABC Campus must select the key performance indicators (KPIs) to track results before the campaign's launch. The campaign's effectiveness will be assessed weekly until it is over. According to McKay (2017), keeping the lines of communication open within the team is also crucial because it facilitates close monitoring and helps everyone assess whether the campaigns have successfully reached the company's goals. The tools and KPIs listed below can be used to evaluate the results.

6.1 Reach

Measuring the reach and the number of potential students impacted by social media content is a good place to start. Reach will provide valuable insight into the level of appeal social media content has for ABC Campus's intended audience. Reach metrics to monitor include, for example:

Table 2:Reach Metrics

Metrics	Targets
Connections on LinkedIn	2.6 % increase
Likes on your Facebook and Instagram	More than 2.8 % increase
Views and Subscribers on your YouTube channel	2.2 % increase

Source: Author's Work

You can measure the reach by keeping track of these statistics manually. In addition, social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram all have analytics reports that can be tracked.

6.2 Engagement

The next step is determining if anyone was interested enough in the message to take action after comprehending Reach. ABC Campus will have access to this crucial data by measuring engagement. Social media engagement requires producing worthwhile content that motivates students to take action. Should your level of engagement be below, you should critically examine ways to improve the content. Metrics for "Engagement" that should be monitored include:

Table 3:Engagement Metrics

Metrics	Targets
Clicks on links in your social media posts	67 %
Retweets, Mentions and Direct Messages on Twitter	35%
Shares on Facebook and LinkedIn	56%
Comments on your Facebook and LinkedIn posts	22 %
Ratings on your YouTube videos	10%

Source: Author's Work

6.3 Conversion

Finally, it is necessary to assess the results of social media marketing initiatives. The term "conversion" refers to the number of individuals who proceeded to join Campus One and enter the lead generation funnel. Database for marketing. Using a website as the "hub" for social media content is an essential best practice for successful marketing. In order to "convert" anonymous website visitors into named leads for your sales process, your website should provide content upsells and lead generation offers. Metrics to monitor for "Conversion" include:

Table 4:Conversion Metrics

Metrics	Targets
Registrations for Courses	45 %
Webinar registrations	25%
Online lead generation form completions	66%
Phone-in leads	12 %
Online sales	42%

Source: Author's Work

VII. CONCLUSION

Digital applications have considerably influenced the marketing communication and opened new communication channels to target consumers. The above evolutions also facilitate Integrated marketing communication strategies with particular reference to the education sector. Digital marketing tools offer the possibility of analyzing the results at a much lower cost. They can understand the simultaneous use of various communication channels, which can apply to higher education institutions. Because of the cost-effectiveness of online communication, education institutes can replace traditional and digital communication methods.

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APPENDIX

[1] SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT
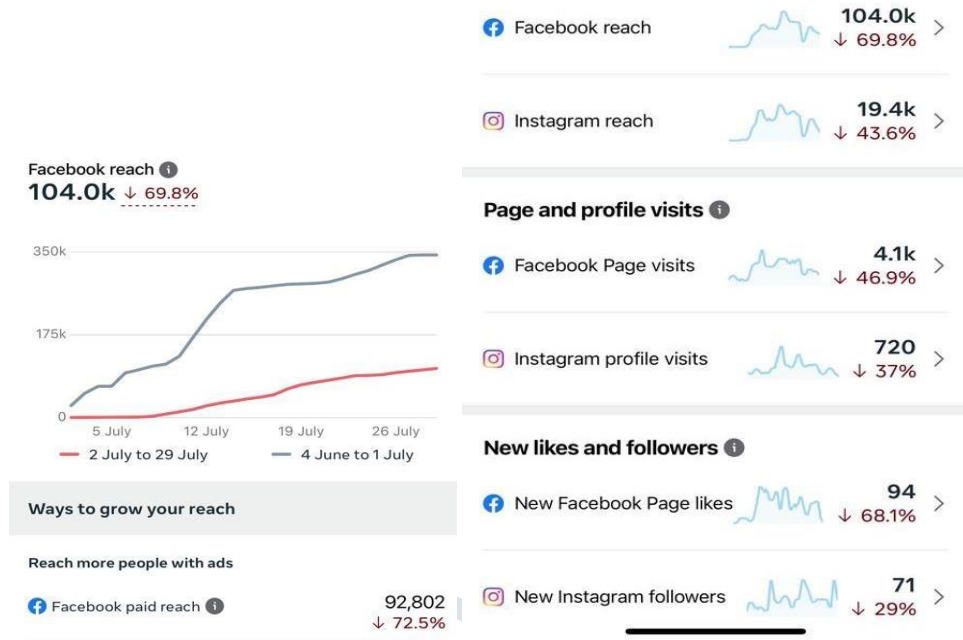
[2] YOU TUBE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

True View format	Where ads appear	Video options	Image options	Ad text limits	Click destination
In-stream ad	YouTube videos Display Network videos, games, and apps	YouTube video (less than 3 minutes recommended)	300×60 companion (YouTube only)	N/A	Website
In display ad	YouTube videos (Suggestions; video overlays); YouTube search results; video plays on YouTube watch or channel page Display Network content	YouTube video (any length)	Choose from 4 thumbnails	25 characters maximum for headline;35 characters maximum for each description Description not shown in suggestions.	Clicks on the video thumbnail go to the video Clicks on CTA overlays go to the website.