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### EFFECT OF IMC STRATEGIES ON THE PURCHASE INTENTION IN A MULTI-CULTURAL SOCIETY

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**Keywords: integrated marketing communication; purchase intent; customer; food retail; Saudi Arabia**

#### **ABSTRACT**

This work has analyzed on how the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategy may affect the customer purchase intent in a multicultural society for food items. This work has focused on evaluating on how do customers from diverse cultures living as a community perceive different IMC strategies. This work was carried out using quantitative method. Questionnaire survey was distributed to 229 responders in Jeddah and data were analyzed. The major findings of this work showed that the most useful IMC strategy is advertising by T.V and looking for the high quality is the reason to change the purchase intent. Most of the respondent are excited to try other countries/ traditions food items more than being affected by advertisements. The nationality and actor's language in this multi-cultural society has a effect on the consumers purchase intent. Thus, identifying the values of a culture is important for managing culture consciousness through IMC and having the knowledge of foreign cultures will lead to have effective communication with customers worldwide.

**Keywords:** integrated marketing communication; purchase intent; customer; food retail; Saudi Arabia

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Integrated Marketing communication considers important relationship strategies between the business and the market to reach the customers [1]. Marketing communications have different ideas, designs, messages and media [2]. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is the process of sending the brand messages that lead to create customer relationships. IMC strategies are the methods that are used to achieve the objectives of a marketing campaign [3]. It is difficult to understand different customers in the same market. To assemble this mix, the marketer use different tools/strategies of marketing communication. IMC helps to make brand awareness among customers at a minimal cost, not only winning new customers but also maintaining the relationship with them and saving time [4].

IMC gives numerous positive outcomes like brands mindfulness, consumer loyalty, brand reliability, positive brand picture, remarkable brand affiliation,

more noteworthy productivity, increment deals and sparing expense. Be that as it may, the significant positive effect is on the authoritative execution and brand value. The goals of advertising correspondence are giving data to the focused audience and expanding the deals to acquire benefit [5].

On the other hand, purchase intent is the plan of customer to buy a certain product or service in sometime in the near future [6]. Consumer behavior is the investigation of how the buyers utilize the accessible assets on consumption related things. It incorporates considering what they purchase, the reason of getting it, when and where they get it, the method for getting it and how regularly they use it [6].

Consumer behavior is the subject that deals with factors of offering the buying behavior [7]. Most companies perform market research to find the existing buying behavior in the market. Economic, political, technological and cultural factors always have the best effect on the purchasing conduct [7].

Consumer's purchasing conduct can be influenced by numerous variables like reference gatherings, relatives, and so forth [8]. Additionally it can rely upon the individual elements like age, gender orientation, instruction, way of life, identity and salary. Gender has been considered as a vital social segment on the grounds that the item in each nation is both solely and firmly connected with gender orientation [8]. Thus, the IMC strategy is utilized to understand and evaluate the purchasing trend of consumers across a vast area [9].

Several works has been reported regarding IMC strategies usage. Mihart et al.[10] studied the impacts of IMC on the purchaser conduct and found that all the IMC segments could be reconsidered and improved, considering the principle perspectives of customers 'input. Mihaela [11] analyzed the impact of the IMC on the customer purchasing conduct and found that IMC is an action that permits making beneficial client connections. Luxton et al.[12] evaluated IMC capacity and brand's money related execution, and found that IMC ability has a noteworthy aberrant impact on a brand's market-based execution and monetary execution. Gabrielli et al.[13] studied the act of IMC in small- and medium-sized endeavors (SMEs) and discovered proof of a specific capacity in promoting correspondence with respect to SMEs. Finne et al.[14] evaluated client IMC approach which is fixated on a correspondence used idea, and demonstrated that the model aides customary showcasing correspondence and even regular coordinated promoting communication. Csikosova et al.[15] investigated IMC practice and found that immediate and intuitive advertising and IMC endeavors can best be arranged by a cross-utilitarian group utilizing a thorough limited time plan. Kitchen et al.[16] examined the idea of IMC and found that its conventional acknowledgment in terms of postulation and deterrents or challenges obstructing further advancements, this prompts situating IMC more capably. Keller et al.[17] studied IMC decision criteria that advertisers utilized and found that advertisers should initially see how buyers settle on brand and item choices, and after that pick a legitimate IMC technique for application. Patti et al.[18] investigated on improving IMC application and found that creation a pledge to evaluation and expanding the effect of new media as the means IMC practice improvement.

The culture of any country is the major factor to influence the consumer purchase decisions. Multiculturalism refers to different cultures that live in the same country. There are many advantages of living in a multi-cultural society

like sharing traditions, culture, food, languages Considering the multi-cultural societies while using the IMC strategies for promoting any product or service is very important. The reason is that the multi-cultural society includes people from different countries/traditions, and the role of any marketer is satisfying their customers by offering their needs and wants.

Thus, this work was done to analyze the IMC strategies and the most useful IMC strategy for the retail industry in multicultural societies of Saudi Arabia. The scope of this study was to understand the dynamics of IMC, its applicability in Saudi Arabia and its effect on the customer intent to purchase the food items in retail stores in a society which is multicultural like Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has many houses of its workforce from outside the country which makes the country specially the main cities like Jeddah, Riyadh, Khobar and Dammam truly multi-cultural and cosmopolitan cities. But this study has focused on Jeddah only.

## **METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative method is examining, analyzing and interpreting of observation for the purpose of discovering the meanings. Quantitative method is a systematic investigation and statistical technique to develop statistical results by collecting empirical data, modeling and analyzing data. For this work, qualitative and quantitative method was used. Qualitative data were gathered from previous work for the development of question in the questionnaire. The quantitative tool that was used in this work is survey method. For this work, the sampling method that was used is the random sampling method. Random sampling method was the most appropriate to be used because the scope of this work that focused multicultural community in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The sample size of this work was 229 respondents. Questionnaire was designed for data collection comprising of 19 questions. Basic statistics analysis was done on the survey outcome and it presented a clear view for the majority of multi-cultural customers (respondents) that are affected by IMC strategies in Saudi Arabia for food items in retail stores.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Demographic Characteristics***

In this work, the demographic characteristics of the respondents were analyzed which include respondents ages, gender, marital status, nationality, educational level, profession and the monthly income. Thus the results from the survey showed that More than 43% of my responders are between 18-25 years old, 22% are between 26-33 years old and just 15% are 43-41 years old. 37% are females. Almost half of them are married or single. Just 8% are engaged and 2% are divorce. Most of the respondents nationality is Saudi Arabia with more than 50%, 16% are Syrian, 5% are Egyptian where 12% are Lebanese, Palestine and Yemeni. Just 2% are American and British people. No respondents from Africa. Just around 1% of respondents are from Morocco, 3% from Pakistan and 4% from India. The others are from Jordan, Libya, Australia, Tunisia, New Zealand, France, Canada, North America, Philippine and Turkey. These various nationalities emphasize that Jeddah is truly multicultural society with different cultures. Most of them have Bachelor's degree with around 31%, 17% have the Master's degree 6% have Doctorate degree and just around 2% have Professional degree. 50% are employed for wages where 20% are students and

the remaining are housewives. According to the monthly income, 63% are between 2000-20000 SR, whereas more than 10% are 2000 and more per month. This shows a bit mix of income level of the respondents.

### Survey Outcome

Figure 1 shows the outcome for type of advertisements for food items that the respondents are attracted too. Based on Figure 1, the results showed that 60% from T.V, 50 % from Instagram, 42 % from word-of-mouth, 38% from outdoor, 21 % from leaflets, 21% from Facebook, 18% from WhatsApp, 15% from Twitter, 10% radio and 5 % from LinkedIn are attracting their attention. The others said that poster, free samples, their own taste and eyes; road billboard and food blogs with recipes were attracting them to buy food items.

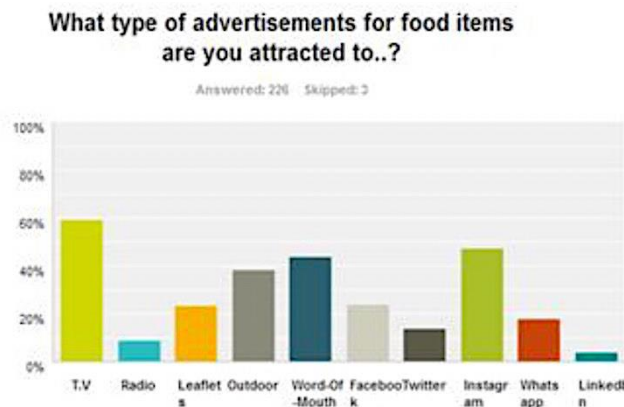


Figure 1: Advertisement for food items

Figure 2 shows the outcome for respondents purchase intent. Based on Figure 2, The dominantly more than 81% said that yes it affects their purchase intent. When they look at the kind of advertisement, their purchase intent changed. So the way of advertisement has a big effect on the consumer's purchase intent as most of them agreed and said yes



Figure 2: Purchase intent

The respondents were asked if the way of advertisements could effect the respondents purchase intent. Based on Figure 3, the respondents stated yes and said that the reason were to be discounts, low-price, high quality and brand name. The majority chose the high quality of a product/service as the main reason to change the decision, then the discounts, brand name and the low-price. Some of them wrote as comments that the reason could be the pictures that make them crave the food item or it depends on the situation.

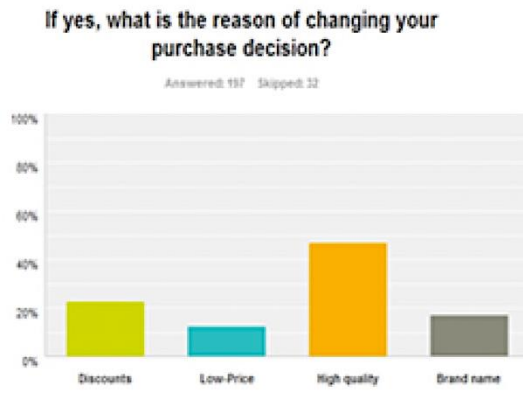


Figure 3: Changing of purchase intent

Based on Figure 4, according to the loyalty for certain food brands, more than 78% having the loyalty for particularly food brands. The major factor that could affect the loyalty is the quality.



Figure 4: Loyalty to food brands

Based on Figure 5, more than 50% of respondents stated that they could break their loyalty because of the brand quality. The other people could break their loyalty because of the price or trying new products.



Figure 5: Factors to break loyalty

Based on Figure 6, more than 78% of the respondents chose that exciting to try new things is the reason to buy food items of other countries/traditions. But just 20% are affecting by advertisements.

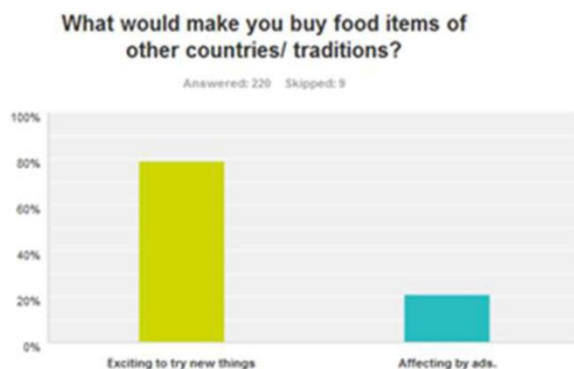


Figure 6: Food items from other countries

Based on Figure 7, the respondents were asked if they think that the language or actor's nationality of an advertisement has a big effect on purchase intent or not; 65% of them which means the majority said yes. In addition, The purchase decision is defiantly places a very important role when the celebrity endorsement appears in the advertisement. 47% of responders will not be affected by the celebrity endorsement and 53% will be affected. On the other hand, the purchase decision is defiantly places a very important role when the celebrity endorsement appears in the advertisement. 47% of responders will not be affected by the celebrity endorsement and 53% will be affected.



Figure 7: Language or actor factor on purchase intent

According to the classifying the buying attitude, the majority classify their buying attitude as affective (usage/benefit). This means they are looking to the benefit rather than anything else while looking for a certain product. But surprisingly and interestingly a good number of people look at the radical factor and emotion factor as well, because only 63% of responders are looking for the benefits.

Based on Figure 8, When the respondents were asked about where they belong in the purchasing life cycle, the percentages were comparable between the options. 8% are innovator; they just grab what they want. 17% are early adopter; they buy the product / service as soon as it is available in retail store. 14% are early majority; they buy as soon as you see others using it. However, very strong response comes from the people which are almost more than 58% that make their purchasing as a late majority and laggard. They are thinking about it before making the purchase decision. They see and agree that yes the product / service is making a good impact on people, so they will be exciting to buy and try it.

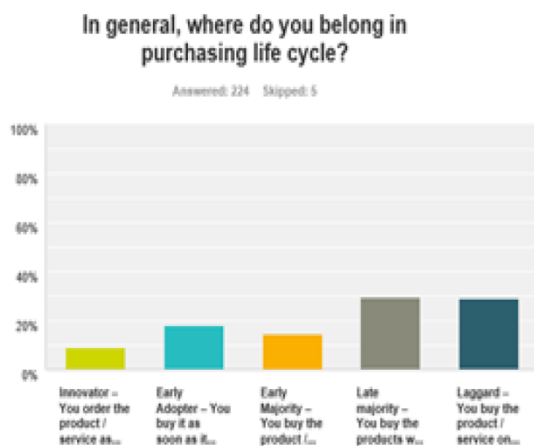


Figure 8: Purchasing life cycle.

Based on Figure 9, According to the purchase decision making process, 14% of responders are masstige - luxury for the masses, they do effort to the products that are marked as luxurious or prestigious. Whereas a huge number, which is almost 39%, like the one-stop shopping where they can buy many things from one shop. Only 7% look for the lowprice, they are trying to find out items which are the lowest price and they keep on investigating. The demand increases when there are discounts and sales, but it is very important to understand that one-stop shopping is dominantly the answer of people that make the purchase decision when they go to a place to buy many things from one place. 24% are expecting more from the shopping experience like having more discounts or sales. 12% of responders are pushing back and paradox. Shopping back is when shopping more to reach the lower price. But paradox when consumers may want something and buy the contrary, it could be by many reasons. Only 2% are considering as cross-border shopping. Cross-border shopping is when purchasing affected by the dollar rises.

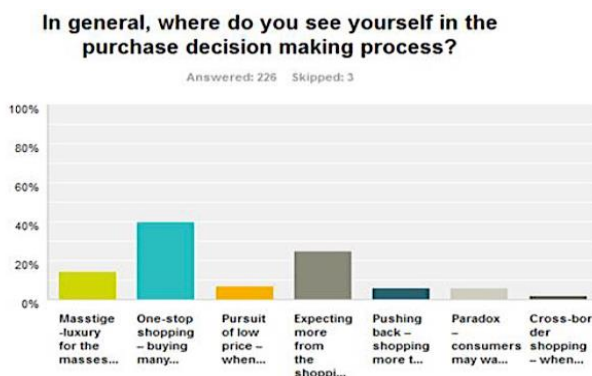


Figure 9: Purchase decision making process

**Overall Discussion**

Thus overall, the outcome of this work has shown that there are many ways to make the IMC strategies affect the purchase intent in a multicultural society. The outcome of this work showed advertising by using T.V was the most useful IMC strategy for the food industry in multicultural societies. This outcome is inline with work reported by Andrews et al.[19] where prominent advertising is strategy that influences consumers buying intention.

The next outcome of this work showed that IMC strategy can affect the purchase intent by the high quality of the product. This outcome was inline the reported work of Fill et al.[20] where it was stated that product quality has significant influence on consumers purchasing intent and it is a important strategy.

In addition, the outcome of this work showed that there were few elements of consumer's attitude and how it will lead to change the purchase intent. It comprised of Cognitive (Radical) by having a personal experience with a certain brand, Affective (Usage/Benefit) by looking to the benefits of using certain brand, and finally Conative (Emotional), most of the time comes after being cognitive and affective to have emotions for the brand. This is supported by the reports of Batra et al.[21] where it was stated that consumers own experience with product will have a significant outcome on the purchase intent.

The outcome of this work showed that most of the respondents are excited to try other countries/ traditions food items more than influenced by advertisements. Also, considering the nationality and the actor's language can affect the purchase intent because this community is multi-cultural and this was also agreed by the previous study of Demangeot et al. [22] as multi culture consumers are influenced in product purchase intent based on curiosity and media effect.

## CONCLUSION

This work was done to analyze the IMC strategies and the most useful IMC strategy for the food retail industry in multicultural societies of Saudi Arabia. The outcome of this work suggested that there are many IMC strategies that will help any marketer to reach their customers effectively. In Saudi Arabia and especially in Jeddah, the most useful one is advertising by T.V. . In addition, result also showed that consumers look at high quality of product in their purchase decision and their purchasing attitude is influenced by benefits and usage of the product. Also, the majority of multicultural customers who are living in one community are exciting to try new products about other countries/ traditions' food items rather than affecting by advertisements. The reason is that most of the responders are young and high-income level. As for future works, the authors recommend expend the sample size to other cities of Saudi such as Riyadh, Dammam and Khobar. This will be helpful for the marketers in Saudi Arabia to know the importance of considering the IMC strategies while advertising for a certain product or service in a multicultural society.

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