

**THE ROLE OF INTERGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION
TOOLS IN DRIVING RESIDENTIAL PROPERTY SALES AMONG
SELECTED REAL ESTATE COMPANIES IN NAIROBI COUNTY**

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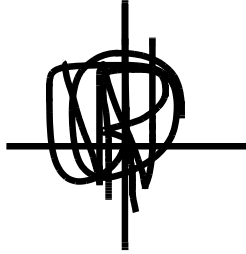
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DECLARATION

This research project is my original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been submitted for the award of a degree in any other university.



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This research project has been submitted for the award of degree of Master of Arts in communication studies, with my approval as the University Supervisor.



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May God bless you all.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my loving mum, dad and the few true friends I have, for their support and inspiration.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IMC – Integrated Marketing Communication

CBD – Central Business District

SME – Small and Medium Enterprises

TRA – Theory of Reasoned Action

PR - Public Relations

ABSTRACT

The Kenyan real estate has experienced tremendous growth, more so Nairobi County that has been characterised by increased infrastructural development, improvement in utilities and population influx. This has led to stiff competition in the industry as players strive for sustainable competitive advantage. In this regard, the concept of Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a crucial element for organisations seeking to increase sales and overall performance. This study sought to examine the role of IMC as a tool for driving residential property sales among selected real estate companies in Nairobi County. Specifically, the study sought to; 1) explore the aspects of integrated marketing communication employed by real estate companies within Nairobi County; 2) assess the effectiveness of integrated marketing communication in driving residential property sale in Nairobi County and 3) establish the factors that hinder the application of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sale in Nairobi County. The theory of reasoned action and the hierarchy of effects theory were adopted as frameworks for guiding this study. Consequently, descriptive design was used in the study with qualitative techniques being used in data collection and analysis. Primary data was gathered from selected real estate companies in Nairobi County. The study adopted purposive sampling techniques with interview guides as data collection instruments. Data was analysed by applying the six-steps thematic analysis approach by Braun's & Clarke's (2006). Presentation of the study data utilized themes and paragraphs derived from inductive analysis of information gathered. Study findings revealed a balanced gender representation and that the participants demonstrated a good understanding of integrated marketing communication tools. It was established that integrated marketing communication tools helped in creating awareness, building trust, credibility, relationships and lead generation, and that the tools included advertising, public relations, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotions and online presence. However, several factors hindered the application of integrated marketing communication tools such as limited resources, lack of integration across channels and touchpoints, technological barriers, intense market competition, and constant changes in marketing approaches and practices. The results could offer valuable insights to sales and marketing managers in real estate industry for evaluating the efficacy of their strategies and improving overall sales performance. Additionally, scholars in marketing and other relevant fields within the social sciences can draw upon these findings as a point of reference when reviewing the existing literature and conducting research related to Integrated Marketing Communication in Sales Performance. The study therefore recommends that organisations should allocate enough budget to IMC tools and that further research be done to explore additional factors that may influence the effectiveness of these tools, such as the impact of specific marketing channels, the role of customer segmentation, and the integration of traditional and digital marketing approaches in residential property sales.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

The section gives overview of the study including study back-ground, statement of the problem, study objectives and questions, the rationale, its significance, scope, limitations and operational definitions.

1.2 Background Information

Today's business environment is one that is characterised by cut-throat competition and complexities in the external environment resulting to marketing competition among organisations in the same line of business (Chong, 2014). Strategic alignment and harmonization of marketing communication activities to create a strong brand identity in this high dynamic environment characterized by competition is now an issue of most goal-oriented companies as posited by Duncan (2012), as a critical factor to stay competitive and survive in such an environment. It is in this regard that businesses resort to strategic marketing communication for sales performance improvement as posited by Asiegbu (2011). According to Ballowe (2018), IMC serves as the bridge connecting organisations to its customers, allowing them to convey information thus persuading and reminding customers about their core product and service offerings.

IMC encompasses; advertising, PR, personal selling, sales promotion, direct marketing, exhibitions as well as sponsorship. The integration of IMC tools is increasingly replacing the traditional separated ways of managing promotion element where each had a distinct strategy, to achieve a seamless communication and brand consistency. Borden (2016) notes that with IMC tools, companies can easily segment their customers based on profitability and device effective means of communication for enhanced relationships.

A lack of effective marketing communication would hinder sales performance as the organisation customers would not be aware of its product offerings and the associated benefits. Traditionally, those involved in marketing activities particularly in developing and less developed nations would fuse promotion and marketing communication concepts. Several studies within marketing and related domains like Kotler (2002) have highlighted sales promotion as the practice that conveys organisation's interest while facilitating exchange of various forms of information with both internal business operations and its external relationships. On the other hand, whereas promotional activities inform, persuade, induces action and affects consumer's buying decisions IMC refers to a combination of tools that organisations may employ to convey information regarding its product and service offering to its target market in a unified way. Therefore, it entails harmonization of all communication efforts towards optimization of results or output and realization of an organisation's strategic goals as advanced by Walsh (2012).

The Kenyan real estate sector closely mirrors these aspects, having experienced challenging periods, particularly reported in the 2020 Business Daily are the urban areas like Nairobi and Mombasa, where there has been an excess supply of real estate, especially in office spaces and residential areas. The sector has rapidly emerged as a profitable industry in Kenya, a trend highlighted in 2019, KNBS report. From 2010 to 2015, 3-4-bedroom houses were trending, followed by an increased demand for larger units in 2019. Currently, the nation grapples with huge deficit of houses. This shortfall is attributed with the exponential growth in population and rise of middle-class population. Nairobi's high demand in real estate could be attributed to the growing

rural to urban migration and the increasing income of city dwellers among other factors such as improvements in infrastructure. For instance, there are infrastructure developments like the Nairobi Expressway, improvements in utility connections, and upgrades to the airport.

1.3 Problem Statement

The real estate sector in Kenya has experienced significant fluctuations. Major urban centers like Nairobi and Mombasa have witnessed a substantial surge in real-estate projects, particularly in office spaces and residential areas (Business Daily, 2020). This surge has led to intensified competition within the broader industry. Real-estate enterprises that cannot effectively adapt to this heightened competition frequently find themselves compelled to cease their operations.

According to Muraya (2019), organisations have resorted to IMC for sustainable competitive advantage in the current age of technological advancement and increasing use of social network marketing to reach a wider market within quite a short period of time. Data from Realtors and Google (2017), reveals that the sector is characterized by technological enhancements across this past decade, with a substantial shift toward online platforms which have become one stop information centre for consumers to support their buying decisions. Contrary to the growth in real estate developments, reports from the Business Daily (2020) reveal that sales in this sector have seen a dramatic decline, particularly in the excess availability of unoccupied office spaces and residential properties, especially in Nairobi. This situation is primarily linked to the

economic decline in Kenya. Onger (2019) highlights that numerous businesses are facing auctions, and large corporations are resorting to staff layoffs and business closures. These trends in real estate industry call for strategic marketing measures to remain competitive.

Going by the afore mentioned facts, an organisation cannot underestimate the significance and impact of IMC tools which form the foundation of the current study. However, owing to the huge gaps in demand and supply accounting to a national housing yearly shortfall of approximately 200,000 units, leading to a cumulative deficit of more than 2 million units (KNBS, 2019), real estate marketers and managements are yet to appreciate the importance of marketing communication strategy with a belief that the market is yet to be fully exploited. On the contrary, real estate companies allocate significant financial resources to various promotional mix strategies. Moreover, they have made substantial efforts in coming up with customer prospects by identifying customer needs, maintaining consistent communication across various channels, fostering strong customer relationships, and ultimately eliciting the desired behavioral responses. However, the strategies are yet to yield the expected transformation in sales performance and has been pointed out by Onger (2019) and Business Daily (2020). Therefore, it underscores the need for assessing effectiveness of IMC mechanisms applied as well as their efficacy in promoting sales performances of the companies.

Achieving a sound competitive advantage calls for establishing a loyal customer base via efficient IMC, as heightened brand recognition has been shown to correlate (by Freling, 2011 and other scholars) with increased consumer purchase intentions, ultimately fostering long-term viability. Odhiambo (2015) points that the challenge lies on how the sellers communicate with the target customers for example the prices communicated over the social networks in Nairobi.

When determining the prices of their properties, sellers often engage in a process of assessing the market value of similar properties. Various techniques are employed to make price adjustments for these properties. Regrettably, some sellers struggle to establish competitive prices for their products in order to stimulate sales thus a need for integrated marketing communication tools to bridge the gap.

1.4 Research Objectives

1.4.1 Main objective

This study sought to assess the role of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales among selected real estate companies in Nairobi County.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

1. To explore the aspects of integrated marketing communication tools employed by real estate companies in Nairobi County.
2. To assess the effectiveness of integrated marketing communication in driving residential property sale in Nairobi County.
3. To establish the factors that hinder the application of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sale in Nairobi County.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What aspects of integrated marketing communication tools are employed by real estate companies within Nairobi County?
- ii. What is the effectiveness of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sale in Nairobi County?
- iii. What are the factors that hinder the application of integrated marketing communication

tools in driving residential property sale in Nairobi County?

1.6 Rationale and Justification of the Study

Integrated marketing communication is integral in ensuring that business operators evaluate their consumer's buying trends hence tailoring it to their daily performances as it seeks not only to promote but to communicate with consumers (Lingham, 2009). Al Khattab, Abu-Rumman, and Zaidan (2015) contend that the rapid advancements in marketing communications have had a profound influence on consumer behavior as a whole, and more specifically, on consumers' attitudes toward products in this evolving and interactive market environment. Therefore, the critical role of IMC in the real estate industry in Kenya particularly in Nairobi that has faced an immense growth in terms of office space and residential areas, a trend that has been observed, as reported by Business Daily in 2020 resulting in stiff competition with several organisations being forced to close, can surely not be understated (Ongeri, 2019). Gaps have however been identified on how the sellers for example those in real estate industry communicate with the target customers (Odhiambo, 2015). This study attempts to highlight the factors that impede the use of IMC tools in driving residential property sales among real estate companies in Nairobi County.

Considering that IMC is a growing concern for all the real estate companies with an immense impact on sales performance and business sustainability of real estate companies, and as there are limited studies especially in IMC over Real estate industry in Nairobi, the current study has a huge significance in this arena. The goal is to generate a deeper understanding into IMC tools, providing critical perspectives and their application in real estate industry. Furthermore, the researcher is aware of studies on IMC in different companies in Kenya such as Commercial banks by Mutia (2017), Safaricom by Elisa (2016), printing companies by Oduor (2017), but insights on real estate sector in Kenya are currently lacking.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Owing to its focus on impact of IMC among firms operating within Nairobi County, Kenya, the results of this study hold significant importance for sales and marketing managers within the real estate industry, as they can use these insights to develop effective plans and employ various promotional strategies when pursuing proactive approaches to enhance profitability in the real estate sector through strategic marketing communications.

The study's theoretical significance lies in its potential to assist marketers and relevant managers in evaluating the efficiency of their marketing strategies to improve their sales performance. Additionally, it provides for expansion beyond existing information and scholars in these disciplines could apply the invaluable information when conducting literature reviews and studies related to IMC or sales performance.

The study would also help in establishing a connection between traditional and modern business practices in the real estate industry which can inform further developments in that area. The insights obtained from this research would serve as valuable information for investors when considering opportunities within the Kenyan real estate market. Learning from the digital strategies employed by marketers worldwide, emerging entrepreneurs, predominantly composed of young individuals, would be encouraged to embrace contemporary marketing techniques to enhance their sales and business growth.

1.8 Scope and Limitation

Selected real estate companies in Nairobi were involved in the study, conducted on marketing managers and senior employees or supervisors involved in sales and marketing within these companies. Geographically, the scope was therefore confined to the capital city, Nairobi, where it is both cost-effective with good representation.

Generalizability of data may be limited due to the focus of the study on only selected IMC variables in residential property. There may be other factors such as external environment and government policies that fall out of current study scope that may bring a twist to the study if introduced. However, this study will open room for more research in IMC and real estate industry that is currently understudied. Scholars undertaking studies in strategic communication and social sciences may find this study valuable as a reference for their future research.

This study encompassed qualitative data collection, resulting in the generation of self-reported data. It is important to acknowledge that there was potential for bias, including selective recollection where respondents may recall certain incidents while not recalling others, as well as the tendency to attribute positive occurrences to the organization while attributing negative ones to external factors. The researcher, who collected the data personally, was vigilant in identifying inconsistencies in responses and inquiring for a more consistent account. Given the discretion and sensitivity of the study, respondents might have been hesitant to answer questions, concerned that the study findings could be used competitively against their respective firms. It is worth noting, however, that the purpose of the study was effectively communicated as not intended for competitive purposes.

1.9 Operational Definition of Terms

Integrated Marketing Communication: Is a strategic approach to marketing that involves the coordination and integration of various communication channels and tools to deliver a consistent and unified message to a target audience (Saeed et al., 2013).

Communicational Messaging: The process of conveying messages between a sender and a receiver within a marketing medium.

Direct Marketing: The practice of sending advertising and marketing materials directly to specific individuals (Bird & Bird, 2004).

Online Marketing: The utilization of internet-based means to carry out marketing activities.

Promotion: Involve activities and strategies that businesses and organizations use to communicate with their target audience and influence their purchasing decisions.

Public Relations: Strategies for managing relationships between the company and its stakeholders (Harlow, 2013).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The section encompasses presenting pertinent theoretical structures, reviewing of available literature and a summary of literature reviewed coupled with an identification of research gaps.

2.2 The Concept of Integrated Marketing Communication

IMC increasingly, is becoming growing phenomenon over the recent years thus dominating and influencing most organisational communication and marketing strategies. The success of IMC has been recorded in areas such as brand appeal and brand equity (Šerić, 2017). In fact, it's more crucial than ever due to the dynamic, fast growing business landscape particularly in the spheres of marketing and communication to curb the increased market competition (Vernuccio & Ceccotti, 2015).

As per Porcu et al. (2019), IMC is a reciprocal approach to dealing with stakeholders where an organization plans and aligns its various teams and communication methods. Its primary objective is to facilitate ongoing, transparency, and consistency in messaging across channels towards nurturing enduring and profitable relationships, ultimately creating value. Luxton et al., (2017) posited that the implementation of IMC should encompass the entire organizational framework, involving the entire company as a means of deploying marketing strategies. This comprehensive approach enables optimization and the attainment of superior communication effectiveness with all stakeholders. The strengths of IMC lie in the ability to amalgamate, integrate, and harmonize

elements of the communication mix into a unified message, avoiding the isolation of individual components, as emphasized by Kliatchko (2005). This concept if applied in the organisation set up helps to manage and promote communication combination in a way that ensures similar messaging across platforms, avoiding disjointed or fragmented communication elements (Duncan & Moriarty, 1998).

According to Kotler and Armstrong, (2001) promotional activities help to make a product known and accepted by the target market. It serves as an essential tool for enhanced growth and organizational sustainability, as highlighted by Minh (2007). It is frequently employed in marketing endeavors to convey messages to the intended target market. In today's highly competitive business landscape, the power of promotional activities is one that cannot be overlooked by the organisation. Peter (1998) points to awareness creation, demand stimulation, e free trials, identifying potential customers, retaining loyal clientele, facilitating reseller support, countering competitive promotional initiatives, and mitigating fluctuations as the key goals in promotion.

Real estate industry is no exception to the characteristics of promotional efforts described above. As demands of stakeholders grow and they increasingly seek for deeper connections and relationships with brands, marketing communication must incorporate these demands in order to succeed (Wright, 2000).

Davies (2006) points to IMC to encompass advertisements, promotional activities, PR, direct sales and targeted marketing as the specific combination of advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations, utilized by an organization to achieve its business goals. Other scholars concur with Davies.

Organizations convey information of importance both to the organization and the stakeholders. The two-way communication approach is essential allowing for incorporation for stakeholders' views, thus maximum satisfaction. A customer-centric approach is advocated for (Belch and Belch, 2004) involving a thorough needs assessment on target market and environmental scanning to ensure communication is tailored to the prevailing circumstances.

Advertising forms the second component of IMC. As defined by Kevin (2009), it refers to paid approach of disseminating information on the company, its goods or services by an agency. It helps ensure that messages reach a large audience, creating awareness, persuading customers, and reminding them of the company's offerings. Overall, advertising is seen as improving sales, as Aliata (2012) found in his study, thus highlighting importance that advertising holds for organizations.

Personal Selling is the third component of IMC carried out with the aim of influencing a purchase decision (Kerin, 2009). Etzel (2010) defines it as directed exchange of information and ideas between an organisation's representative and a prospective customer, seeking to influence decisions regarding a particular intended purchase. The prospective customer is targeted by communication activities that arouse the desire and create a need to satisfy their existing needs thus influencing purchase.

Davis (2014) noted that organizations that have successfully engaged in personal selling have improved their overall performance through increased sales. Aliata (2012) also found a direct link between personal selling and performance. The difference between personal selling and advertising lies in the fact that personal selling is more customer-centric and pays more attention to customers compared to advertising (Shimp, 2010).

Direct Marketing as another component of IMC, is described by Armstrong (2005) as an approach where the seller targets the customers directly without relying on marketing middlemen. It's the use of consumer direct channels to reach out and supply goods and services to customers without using marketing intermediaries. This provides first-hand contact with targeted customers, offering immediate responses while fostering long-term customer relationships. According to Callen (2010), it has resulted in increased online purchases and has given organizations detailed customer databases allowing them to personalize communication based on the target customer.

Sales Promotion, as defined by Peter (1998), is a method for inducing consumer demand towards a particular product over a certain period of time. Sales promotion is widely used today in Kenya for fast-moving consumer goods, and other industries, including real estate are slowly integrating it in their marketing strategies. It involves use of contests, money-off, premiums, price-coupons, each with unique features. These tools aim to capture the attention of the buyer with a sense of immediacy using words like, "buy it now." This method has been found to be effective in enhancing consumer preference thus contributing to growth on sales (Aliata, 2012). Finally, Public Relations is also used to persuade buyers towards a brand or product through interactions, managing consumer attitudes in a way that promotes sustainable relationship (Etzel, 2010).

2.3 Residential Property and Sales Performance

Haskell (1980) defines sales performance as the quantified amount of goods sold over the company's hours of operations, measured in numbers or units. Neema (2017) suggests that measurements of performance employed various elements and aren't strongly interrelated, with the connections also established as less robust. However, Campbell (1990) outlines ten significant elements that influence sales performance, including customer relations, sales volume, quota achievement, expense account management, knowledge and skills, product expertise, customer and competitive pressure awareness, effective plans and use of available time. These ten elements can be categorized into four groups: objective performance measures, consumer relationships, growing profitability, sales-profit.

In the real estate industry, especially for residential properties, price sensitivity is a critical factor. Achieving significant improvements in sales growth, sales volume, and profitability can be challenging for most companies. Scholars (Al-Rfou, 2015) have established that competitive pressures have immense impact on overall organisation's performance. Neema (2017) established in her findings that changes in management accounting systems had significant influence in mediating connections of competition with company management. This indicates that competition significantly affects organisational choices, demand and supply and overall profitability of the firm.

Real estate industry investors as advanced by Fisher & Boltzmann (2005), recognize the difficulty of translating returns to reliable information for strategic decisions drawn from trends depicted. Measuring real estate sales performance shows immense improvement over time including constructing portfolios and other measures. The concept of performance encompasses economic aspects (minimizing material costs), effectiveness (achieving desired outcomes), and efficiency (maximizing results).

As per Soup Tongkong (2012), empirical results indicate that factors influencing leverage include industry median leverage, growth profitability, firm size, and growth opportunities. Specifically, a firm's leverage is directly correlated with industry leverage, firm size, and growth opportunities, while profitability shows a negative correlation. Organizations with higher universal profitability tend to have lower debt levels, while companies with greater growth opportunities tend to have higher leverage (Tongkong, 2012).

2.4 Integrated Marketing Communication Tools and Sales Performance

According to Eagle and Kitchen (2000), IMC plays a critical role in enhancing organizational performance, enhancing its competitiveness and the value placed on its shares. With intensifying competition in the global business landscape, numerous scholars have investigated the impact of IMC on sales performances. Clow and Baack (2016) define IMC as the synchronization and amalgamation of all activities involved in dissemination of marketing information across all media with overall aim of maximizing its impact on all stakeholders. IMC is seen as influential in shaping people's perceptions fostering discussions reinforced through transparency and consistency in messaging across channels thus nurturing mutually beneficial relationships.

Given the pivotal role of IMC, organizations must adopt a company-wide approach in marketing, facilitating seamless dissemination of information (Vernuccio & Ceccotti, 2015). Its success in enhancing sales performance is derived from its capacity to effectively manage organizational communication across all channels. According to Clow and Baack (2016), IMC can provide a unified voice within the marketing mix, encompassing products, pricing, distribution systems, and promotions, thereby enhancing coordination and integration of all marketing tools.

Firms in the real estate industry, among others, have embraced IMC strategies when launching new products or brands and when targeting new customer bases. McCarthy's 4 Ps have been widely adopted by both marketing scholars and practitioners in various industries (Keelson et al., 2012). This IMC-driven approach represents elements which organizations may adopt in inducing buyer responses and develop a unique selling proposition and brand image to foster customer loyalty (Masri and Tan, 2020). For instance, sales promotion as a component of IMC can directly emphasize the importance of IMC, its advantages, and the respective marketing positions of different companies (Chen, 2018).

Orasmäe (2017) suggests that all communication resources perform optimally when integrated into a unified strategy rather than operating in isolation. The sum is greater than its parts, provided they convey a consistent message at all times (Orasmäe, 2017). This idea is supported by Caemmerer (2009), who agrees with Orasmäe's (2017) views and adds that IMC is a marketing approach that combines all marketing tools in a harmonized and cost-effective manner. Therefore, applying IMC in real estate is likely to improve sales performance by aligning company goals, strategic communication planning aiming to increase brand awareness, boost sales revenue, and create a strong brand. Additionally, IMC can be used to evaluate the success of marketing strategies, analyze and manage marketing communications by the marketing team (Helen, 2018).

Studies have shown a significant increase in marketing budgets over the years. Gartner's annual CMO Spend and Strategy Survey (Gartner, 2021) confirms this trend, indicating an increase in marketing budgets 10.9% including real-estate. Although marketing expenses are still less significant, it's no longer viewed as mere expenses but rather as investments due to their significant benefits.

Armstrong (2005) notes that the past few decades were characterized by mass marketing, involving selling highly standardized products to a large customer base. Organizations adopted mass media advertising techniques to support mass marketing strategies. However, increased competition has led shifting trends towards adoption of IMC. IMC, therefore, ensures greater communication with enhanced overall outcome on an organisation's products and brand.

Scholars emphasize a need for firms to allocate the marketing communication budget across essential components in IMC. Companies operating in a similar sector may significantly vary in their approaches to marketing. The global competitive environment is highly dynamic, prompting organizations to continually seek better ways to integrate their communication tools to enhance sales performance. The sustainability of communication tools underscores the necessity for coordinated marketing functions. Neema (2017) argues that customers require information about a product's features to decide whether to buy. Therefore, with access to necessary product information promptly and comprehensively, they may feel more confident in their choice of products and services, promoting customer loyalty. This highlights the importance of effective marketing communication channels in adding value to the company's products and services, as customers have confidence in their choices compared to competitors.

2.5 Real Estate Sector in Kenya

The trends in real-estate industry globally may seem as if it is being guided by market forces though studies point to public policies as the key factor influencing the industry trends at both local and national levels. According to Cytonn research report (2020), home ownership rates in Kenya are relatively low, especially in urban areas, in relation to other nations in Africa. There has been a growing trend in developments related to real-estate owing to improvement in the business

landscape (KNBS, 2022). According to Sathe (2006), the demand and supply in real estate industry is influenced by Government regulations and their bureaucratic procedures which may hinder or facilitate entrepreneurship tendencies. Policies such as increase in property interest rates by the government often influence the demand for commercial real estate. Additionally, there are other costs associated with mortgages, including expenses related to professionals, legal fees, and stamp duty, among others that hinder demand for residential properties. Property developers point to enormous costs apportioned on land particularly in Nairobi County as a major contributor to the high costs of housing units (KNBS, 2012).

Studies have revealed that for ordinary Kenyans to afford mortgages and own residential properties, authorities must work closely with financial institutions as well as other stakeholders to ensure reduced interest rates and increase repayment period (KMPND, 2007). An investment in real estate in Nairobi is a matter of speculation whereby individuals buy property and sell them when prices increase thus real estate is seen as strategic investment industry by various investors seeking to maximize returns.

The trend experienced in 2011 with high ranking globally, has persisted as a 2022 report indicates that investors are still reallocating their investments towards operational real estate sectors. These sectors include data centers, medical facilities, build-to-rent properties, seniors housing, and student accommodation, as noted in the Knight Frank report from 2022. The findings depict an increase in such investments since the beginning of the pandemic by 9 percent globally in 2021 in comparison to the average over the five years to 2019. The Nairobi County experienced an impressive growth rate, with a reported price increase of about 25 percent for top-notch residential properties. The population of Kenya is expected to continue growing by over one million people

annually, and this growth is attributed to factors such as long-life span, quality education thus increased urban population. World Bank report suggests the need for effective management of social and economic transformation in order to catalyse its development impact (World Bank, 2011).

Nairobi County, the capital and largest city of Kenya, stands out as a prominent destination for expatriate communities in Africa. This is largely due to the presence of a significant number of multinational corporations that have established Nairobi as their African hub, serving both East and Central Africa. The recent developments in property within Nairobi have garnered global attention. In a report by Knight Frank in 2012, Nairobi was ranked as the world's fastest-growing real estate market, surpassing cities like Miami and Monaco. These trends continued to be similar, as indicated in reports by Knight Frank, in 2022.

The high demand for real estate in Nairobi could be attributed to infrastructural development and increased rural to urban migration among other factors e.g., the construction of Thika Superhighway, enhanced access to utilities (water and electricity), technological enhancement among others. Several gated communities have come up to serve the growing demand for residential property in Nairobi. These fully serviced communities are favored for their comprehensive amenities and security services, making them highly desirable options for residents. The growth of such communities is also linked to the introduction of better regulations and favourable market conditions, granting access to small investors, as noted by Julius in 2012. This has further fueled the development and investment in the Kenyan real estate market.

2.6 Empirical Review

In his study Belch emphasized the significance of Integrated Marketing Communication by underlining its importance in integrating marketing tools (Belch, 2003). This integration is a key aspect of effective marketing and communication strategies. The findings revealed the significance of IMC in an organisation as it enhances efficiency and effectiveness of marketing communications programs. They found that IMC was effective in profit maximization attributed to marketing and promotional activities. This affirmed study findings by Aliata (2012) who concluded on prevailing direct link between marketing promotion along with sales.

Hua (2015) studied Australian market, exploring marketing communication and its proposed effects on sales growth. The study found that advertising had a positive impact, with TV advertising having a more significant effect on increasing sales performance compared to print advertising. Studying the real-estate industry in Ethiopia, Biruk established that marketing and promotional activities influenced sales (Biruk, 2012). The findings indicated that sales promotion and personal selling had a positive and significant effect, which was more pronounced than advertising and direct marketing.

Peter (2011) also concluded that the promotional mix significantly affects sales turnover, and making an appropriate choice of the promotional mix can greatly improve sales and enhance an organization's image. The study found that strategic allocation of promotion elements can foster organizational sustainability and expansion amidst such competitive environment.

Ebitu (2016) conducted a study on Nigerian market. The findings depicted a connection between using quality of the product as a strategy and employing relationship marketing on overall profits and market-share of small and medium scale enterprises.

Kisaka (2012) studied SACCOs in Mombasa, looking at their strategic marketing practices and overall performances. The findings revealed that there was a link among the variables and that other strategies were adopted to position themselves to be cost-effective options in the market.

Additionally, Muola studied SMEs in Nairobi's Central Business District, looking at the strategies that they employed in marketing and later recorded an impact of these strategies on their performance and profitability (Muola, 2017). Adopting these practices ensured that their consumers were aware of their offerings, pricing, and product availability.

Wanjiru (2019) aimed at looking at real-estate firms operating within Nairobi. Her findings affirmed the prevailing connection between social media advertising and market performance, suggesting that increased social media advertising led to improved sales performance, and further recommending adopting social media advertising and allocation of substantial budgets for its use.

Hassan (2020) studied the real estate industry with a focus in Nairobi. He examined elements that influence consumer behavior and their choices. Their findings revealed several factors that affected consumer purchase behaviour including economic factors, socio-cultural factors, psychological factors. This study concluded that psychological factors affect consumer buying behavior and that it's the level of the mental drive behind a particular purchase. It also concluded that a purchase conviction and demeanor to a large extent impact the purchasing choices. The study finally recommended that real estate firms in Nairobi should create innovative real estate products and employ strategies to drive the perception of customers in regard to housing needs and desires.

Ndung'u (2020) investigated the impact of the type and frequency in utilizing social media network marketing and employing descriptive statistics to analyze its impact on the sales outcomes of real estate firms. The study encompassed all marketing professionals within the organizations. The study's results indicated that social network marketing had a substantial impact on sales.

2.6.1 Summary of Literature Review

Studies reviewed across different sectors reveal a direct correlation between marketing promotional activities and sales performance. Irrespective of industry or sector e.g., SME's Muola (2017), real estate (Wanjiru, 2019), SACCO's (Kisaka, 2012), the use of marketing promotional strategies has resulted in improvement of sales performance.

Further, the above studies also portray a global outlook presenting studies from different regions in the global space. The findings are seen to be similar across the different countries. For example, those conducted in Nigeria and Kenya revealed similar results and that marketing activities were found to enhance sales performance. The ones in Nigerian state (Ebitu, 2016) revealed similar findings as studies in Kenya e.g., by Muola (2017) on SME's and real-estate where marketing strategies were found to improve sales performance.

However, a gap in existing literature exists on strategies employed particularly on integration of these elements to a unified strategy. The existing studies mentioned above did not specifically bring out significance and use of IMC in Kenyan real estate industry, which is the focus of your current study. The focus on addressing this knowledge gap focuses on looking at ways in which IMC influences the sales performance of residential properties in Nairobi County, a rapidly growing real estate sector. Additionally, this research builds upon Peter's (2011) recommendation alluding to competitive environment, emphasizing the need for further research in IMC.

2.7 Theoretical Framework

2.7.1 The Theory of Hierarchy of Effects

This theory was advanced by Robert J. Lavidge and Gary A. Steiner in 1961. It delineates influence by marketing strategies on customers' decision-making process by outlining a sequence of behavioral stages. This theory encompasses six distinct stages: awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction, and purchase. These 6-stages essentially encapsulate the progression of consumer purchasing behavior.

Awareness is the initial process. It states that consumers ought to be informed of the brand and product information including the product benefits. Knowledge is the second step in the hierarchy of effects theory, whereby the company product is compared with other similar products from other companies by the customer. At the third stage is Liking, a stage which assists in establishing an emotional rapport with the customer. Customers are likely to remain loyal to a product if satisfied with the product quality and functionality. The Preference stage occurs where the consumer experiences a desire to try out other brands. Marketers overcome this by ensuring that the product they are selling possess distinct features making it stand out and their product a preference for the consumers in the market. Once the consumer is cleared all the doubts regarding a particular brand or product, marketing strategies should be employed to convert the positive perception into action. This is the final stage, the Purchase stage whereby the customer decides to buy. Marketing strategies ought to be aligned with customer's purchase cycle for retention.

The theory emphasizes the need for consumers progressing through all six stages and ultimately culminating in the purchase of the product. With the understanding that sometimes the consumer may not follow other steps as highlighted in this theory, the critical objective is to ensure they buy the product. The current study will employ the framework and different stages as highlighted in this theory to assess the role of IMC in residential property sales performance. The emphasis of the theory on marketing communication will serve as a guiding principle when investigating the various themes of the study. IMC is a marketing strategy aimed at elucidating the processes involved from the point of interaction with a product advertisement by the customer to the moment they buy the item. Thus, a marketer's role focuses on ensuring customer progression through these 6-stages and lead to them making a purchase.

Despite criticism of this hierarchy of effects theory for being ineffective, as it breaks down the impact of marketing and advertising assuming a similar progression on all product buying activities while overlooking other strategies, this model is effective in describing the buying process as a step-by-step journey where the number of people willing to participate at each level decreases. The model, therefore, serves as a foundational guide in the current study on IMC and residential property sales in Nairobi Furthermore, Adebisi (2006) points that, customers are exposed to several advertisements thus IMC's main objective focuses on retaining consumers using diverse methods for enhancing repeat sales. This theory therefore depicts a classic marketing theory centered around measures to attract buyers and inducing the buying decisions. Its application in the current study would help to bring a twist in the current age where majority of past usage of direct marketing are steadily integrating into this new approach of IMC as its increasingly gaining recognition (Berglof & Bolton, 2002) thus the growing trend in application of integrated marketing communication across different industries.

2.7.2 Theory of Reasoned Action

This theory posits that individual behaviour is shaped by their purpose to indulge in the particular act and that this purpose is driven by attitudes towards the behaviour and prevailing norms as advanced by Fishbein & Ajzen (1975). According to this theory, when a person believes that others expect them to perform a certain behavior (subjective norm), it leads to a stronger intention (motivation), increasing the likelihood of them actually carrying out the behavior.

According to Godin (1994) the main aim of this theory is on comprehension as well as prediction of behaviour in a social context. Furthermore, the theory operates under the assumption that an individual's intention governs their decision to perform or abstain from a specific behavior. As a result, the theory serves as a tool for elucidating individual decision-making processes related to social behavior. It also places emphasis on the individual's personal attitude towards a certain behavior as the determinant of the intent to adopt that particular behavior with social factors guiding the process. The current study employed this theory to interrogate the research questions as it tried to establish how IMC tools influence the purchase decisions of consumers of residential properties in Nairobi.

Orr et al. (2013) re-conceptualized this theory by examining the formation and alteration of intentions in the context of an active constraint resolution system. In this perspective, the already formed belief engages with the prevailing circumstance to result in decision-making, a concept that is also endorsed by Read et al. (1997). IMC strives to unify various marketing aspects to ensure a unified and coordinated approach rather than having them operate solely. The primary objective is to influence attitudes and perceptions, thereby promoting consumers' purchase decisions. The theory therefore helps to explain elements relevant to the decision process and how they are

interconnected to result in improvement of sales. While the theory of reasoned action has faced criticism, particularly due to the notion that intentions doesn't at all times lead to action, the criticism has paved way for the development of the theory of planned behavior. Furthermore, several scholars have supported the theory like Sheppard et al. (1998). Therefore, it provided guiding principles when looking at the purchase behaviour and trends in the real estate industry as influenced by marketing communications delivered in structured and unified ways.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter the research design and approach, study site, data requirements, data collection, target population, methodology, data gathering and analysis, considerations of validity and reliability, and ethical considerations are discussed.

3.2 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive research design, which focuses on determining and reporting the factual state of affairs without manipulating the information (Ponelis, 2015). This design was chosen as it allows the researcher to provide a comprehensive description of issues under study.

Descriptive research designs are advantageous as they enable the researcher to observe and describe the natural unfolding of a phenomenon, as well as elucidate the connections between the variables under investigation (Bryman & Bell, 2015). It seeks to furnish data on specified issue in its current state, delineating its characteristics and properties, and unraveling any discernible relationships (Creswell, 2013).

3.2.1 Study site

The study site was identified as Nairobi County, focusing on selected companies within the real-estate sector. In recent times, Kenyan real-estate industry, especially Nairobi, has witnessed an oversupply of real estate, particularly in office spaces and residential areas (Business Daily, 2020). Data from KNBS' 2019 report reveals an exponential growth in the industry towards becoming a profitable business segment.

Owing to existing fact that Nairobi's currently experiencing high demand in real estate and stiff competition, a fact attributed to the growing rural to urban migration and the increasing income of city dwellers among other factors such as improvements in infrastructure it was deemed appropriate for the current study.

3.2.2 Research approach

Qualitative approach was used, with study questions serving as the foundation for drawing conclusions related to the objectives. This approach aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the research problem, derive research findings using inductive reasoning, and explore real-world issues deeply.

As Korstjens (2017) suggests, qualitative research is instrumental in providing deeper insights into real-world problems. It focuses on gathering participants' experiences, perceptions, and behavior, addressing the "how" and "why" aspects rather than just the quantitative aspects such as "how many" or "how much."

3.2.3 Data Needs, Types and Sources

Kombo and Tromp (2013) emphasize the significance of data collection in research, allowing for sharing empirical data and drawing useful meaning and conclusion. According to Arbner (1994) it is a process of collecting information necessary in the study.

In this study, primary data was gathered by interviewing selected participants even though secondary data also supplemented the data collected. The participants included marketing personnel in management and supervisory roles.

3.2.4 Population

Kenya Marketers Association (2020), reveals approximately 68 registered companies in real estate industry operating in Nairobi region. The study therefore, focused on Marketing Managers and Supervisory Staff within these organizations, estimated to be around 1,260 registered permanently employed marketers (KMA 2020).

3.3 Sampling Procedure

The selection of study participants in a manner ensuring representation as advanced by Mugenda & Mugenda (1999) is what is referred to as sampling. In this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to identify participants from the selected companies. This approach involved the deliberate selection of participants for key informant interviews, specifically those with experience related to the issue under investigation.

Saunders et al. (2000) emphasized the importance of purposeful sampling in allowing a researcher to select information-rich participants who are best suited for the study. The selection is also based on availability and readiness coupled with the ability for individuals to articulate experienced events in a coherent manner (Bernard, 2002). Participants were selected until data saturation was achieved, which is a common guiding principle to assess the sufficiency of purposive samples in qualitative research (Morse, 2015).

3.4 Data Collection

The process of collecting data helps in comprehension of theories guiding the study (Benard, 2002). Therefore, qualitative information was collected by using semi-structured interview guides which facilitates gathering of open-ended-information and inclusion of diverse perspectives into the study.

Data was obtained through Key Informant Interviews, involving the collection of information from twenty individuals who were considered to possess unique insights or perspectives that might not be readily available through random interviews. These participants were chosen based on their extensive involvement in IMC, articulation of events and those free from external biases. The interviews involved a combination of online tools over the internet and in-person meetings.

3.5 Research Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide strikes a balance between focus and adaptability, offering a structured framework for collecting information while still allowing room for flexibility (MacNamara, 2009). Therefore, it was used as the instrument for data collection owing to its flexibility in questioning of respondents and adoptability to various situations prevailing at the time of data collection.

The semi-structured interview guide included a list of questions that were addressed during the interviews, aligning with the variables and overall objectives of the study. Audio recording tools helped to ensure completeness and exactness in information gathered.

3.6 Pilot Testing

Following structured approach recommended by O'Leary (2014), a pilot testing of interview guides and data collection and analysis techniques was done prior to the actual study. The pilot study consisted of six essential steps, designed to identify and address any issues before the actual data collection.

The first step involved a thorough review of the research instruments to become familiar with their content and structure. This initial review allowed comprehensive examination of all tools being used.

The second step was reflection, during which the researcher critically evaluated the research instruments and assessed their suitability for the study's objectives. This reflection process aimed to identify any potential shortcomings in the instruments.

The third step focused on seeking feedback and responses from relevant parties, such as experts in the field and potential participants. This feedback was invaluable in understanding how the instruments were perceived and identifying any areas of concern or improvement.

In the fourth step, the research instruments were put to the test. This testing phase allowed the researcher to simulate the actual process of gathering information and data collection process and evaluate analysis tools based on essential functionality. Any technical issues or challenges were noted.

Following the testing phase, the fifth step involved making necessary modifications to the research instruments. Based on the feedback and testing results, adjustments were made to enhance the instruments' effectiveness and accuracy.

The final step marked the commencement of the data collection phase, armed with the refined and improved research instruments. This proactive approach ensured that the instruments were well-prepared and optimized for gathering high-quality data during the main study.

3.11 Data Analysis

The qualitative data analysis followed the systematic approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), involving six key steps. The process initiated with a comprehensive review of the entire dataset, encompassing multiple readings and attentive listening to the data. This iterative process aimed to unveil underlying meanings while fostering a deeper familiarity with the collected information. Subsequently, the recorded interview data was transcribed to facilitate the analytical process. This transcription served as the basis for the subsequent analytical steps. The NVIVO software, a computer tool designed to aid in the organization and analysis of unstructured data, was employed to support the coding and categorization of the data. This software assisted in

systematically organizing and examining the data, ensuring an efficient and structured analytical process. The researcher conducted a thorough examination of the data, segmenting it into nodes that represented specific themes and concepts. These nodes were instrumental in identifying and delineating the emerging themes within the dataset.

Throughout the analysis, careful attention was given to the selection of key words, concepts, and themes. The criteria for these thematic elements were rigorously reviewed and validated to ensure that each theme was substantiated by a sufficient amount of data.

Ultimately, the analysis culminated in the production of a comprehensive report. This final report was developed by linking the emerging themes back to the research questions and the relevant literature, thus providing a well-grounded and insightful analysis of the qualitative data.

3.7 Data Presentation

The coded data underwent a rigorous assessment to ensure its validity and reliability. This process involved a thorough validation of the coded information to confirm its accuracy and consistency. During this exploration, the properties and dimensions of the data were carefully examined. This entailed identifying relationships, uncovering patterns, and exploring the various aspects of the dataset. The objective was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the dataset's characteristics and interconnections.

The findings obtained from this analysis were then presented through a thematic approach, where key themes and narratives that emerged from the inductive analysis of the interview data were highlighted. These thematic presentations allowed for a coherent and structured depiction of the conclusions drawn from the data.

Additionally, representative quotes from the interviewees were incorporated into the presentation to provide excerpts that closely reflected the research findings. These quotes served to further illustrate and support the conclusions, adding depth and authenticity to the presentation of the study's results.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Golafshani (2003) underscores the importance of validity and reliability in research, emphasizing their role in ensuring dependability, thoroughness, and research quality. To enhance these aspects, the use of semi-structured interview guides was instrumental in maintaining validity and reliability. These guides provided a structured framework for the interviews, promoting consistency and systematic data collection without compromising flexibility. This approach ensured that the information gathered could be relied upon, regardless of variations in the study setting or the researcher's involvement.

The study employed practices aimed at achieving stability, consistency, and predictability in data collection such as prolonging the interview sessions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). By engaging participants over extended periods and employing probing techniques, the research aimed to ensure that the data collected was both reliable and consistent.

Ethical considerations, as noted by Bryman (2011), encompass a range of issues, including possibility of harming the respondent, issues of consents, privacy or even deceit. To address these ethical and practical concerns, the study implemented several measures. Informed consent and transcription played a crucial role in managing these elements. Clarification of purpose of the research and assuring participants of their confidentiality.

Other ethical matters were also addressed, the individuals were requested for consent through information sheets and consent forms before the interviews. This practice was essential in ensuring that they willingly agreed to share their views and opinions, having been taken through all the details (Wiles et al., 2007). To safeguard data confidentiality, participants were referred to by unique numbers rather than their names, further protecting their privacy and anonymity.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA FINDINGS, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

In this section, study findings regarding role of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales among selected real-estate companies in Nairobi County is discussed. This chapter addressed study objectives including; exploring aspects of integrated marketing communication tools employed by real-estate companies, assessing the effectiveness of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales, and identifying the factors that hinder the application of integrated marketing communication tools.

4.2 Response Rate

Focus was on marketing personnel in management level and supervisory staff within the selected real estate companies. These individuals are responsible for implementing and overseeing marketing strategies. The sample size for this study included 20 individuals comprising of managers and supervisory staff from the organisations under study. Consequently, 20 participants were selected based on their level of proximity, availability and familiarity with integrated marketing strategies and approaches. All the individuals who were selected as participants were successfully contacted and the outcomes were analysed according to their responses to the interview.

4.3 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This research aimed at identifying several traits on selected participants with regards to gender, educational level and years of experience with integrated marketing communication.

4.3.1 Gender of the Respondents

The researcher actively recruited and encouraged participation from female and male marketers thus ensuring their perspectives are adequately represented in the data collection and analysis processes. Results revealed a balanced representation of participants, both male and female.

Examining the gender distribution of participants was helpful in identifying potential variations in perceptions or approaches to integrated marketing communication tools within the real estate industry. The findings therefore reveal a balanced gender representation ensuring that the research findings are more representative of the population being studied. The findings are more likely to be applicable and relevant to a diverse range of individuals. The findings further provide a comprehensive understanding of the research topic as different genders may have unique perspectives, experiences, and approaches that can contribute to a richer and more nuanced analysis.

4.3.2 Level of Education

Participants were requested to provide details about their educational background, which was crucial in assessing their awareness level as well as expression of their views. The results showed that the majority were degree and masters holders while those with college qualifications were the least represented.

This information was important in interpreting study findings, as the education of participants could potentially impact their knowledge, perspectives, and understanding of the research topic. However, the educational background of the participants was not used to undermine their views and opinions on the study and all views were represented.

4.3.3 Job Position

Participants were requested to specify the nature of their respective organizations as to whether private or public companies and the positions held in their respective companies. The findings indicate that all the individuals worked within the private sector. Further, findings revealed that most of them held managerial positions and had more than 3 years of experience while the others held supervisory positions.

The information on job positions held by participants, such as Marketing Managers, Supervisory Staff, or other roles within the real estate companies, was crucial in understanding their involvement and decision-making power in marketing strategies.

4.4 Integrated Marketing Communication Tools Employed by Real Estate Companies

The first study objective aimed at exploring aspects of IMC tools employed by real estate companies in Nairobi County. The participants were tasked with describing their comprehension of integrated marketing communication. The findings were that it's an aspect of integration of marketing activities.

“It's a process whereby all Marketing concepts are put together to achieve one aspect of marketing.” said P1.

Other participants described IMC in relation to consistency of brand messaging and the utilization of multiple communication channels.

“IMC involves ensuring a single piece of information intended for marketing, channeled through all marketing platforms, to have a wider reach of the target audience,” said P6 while another participant described it as *“a planning process designed to ensure that all brand contacts received by a customer or prospect for a product, service, or organization are relevant to that person and consistent over time,”* said P3.

Participants also described IMC as the synergy of all aspects of marketing and communication. Other ways of defining IMC as found by the researcher include adopting a customer-centric approach and a focus on measurable results in overall sales performance. The finding therefore demonstrated a good understanding by participants thus capable of effectively responding to the research questions. Further, participants interviewed revealed that integrated marketing communication is important in their organization, ensuring all communication channels are harmonized and aligned, operating in accordance with the same strategic approach, and overall goals of the organization. It helps with making sure the needs met are specific to the client,

increasing efficiency and that it is very easy to have all the concepts of marketing in one place. Regarding the aspects of integrated marketing communication tools employed by the organizations in the real estate industry, the findings revealed openness to channels that generate wider reach and returns.

“We are in the business of selling real estate, and every platform that gives us a chance to reach out to our clients, is a big welcome for us,” said P15

Among the various marketing communication tools, the most commonly used ones identified were advertisement, PR, targeted-marketing, direct sales as well as online presence employed as a way of informing potential customers of available rental or selling residential units. These are indeed the elements pointed out by Kotler (2007) who viewed IMC as a marketing communication mix of various elements.

“Advertising assists in reaching out a wider scope of prospects while public relations strengthen the brand by building the customer trust,” said P8.

Other participants were of the opinion that *“advertising makes the client aware of the products,”* sales promotions, helps to *“communicate the promotion that are currently running to increase conversations,”* and that these tools were effective in achieving major sales goals as well as keeping in contact with potential buyers through WhatsApp and other channels.

Further the data analyzed revealed that the real estate companies under study utilized a combination of traditional and digital marketing communication tools to promote their residential properties. The real estate companies utilized various advertising media, particularly online platforms like social media, and real estate websites were found to be particularly popular due to their wider reach and cost-effectiveness. They also engaged in public relations activities to enhance their brand image and maintain positive relationships with stakeholders through press releases, media relations, and participation in real estate events, expo and exhibitions. Direct marketing techniques, such as email marketing and direct mail campaigns and use of various sales promotions, including discounts, incentives, and special offers were also employed.

According to one interviewee:

"We use a combination of advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotion, and online presence to communicate with potential buyers. Our goal is to create a consistent and cohesive message across different channels."

A similar opinion was given by another participant noting that they use *"Digital-all digital spaces, from YouTube, social media, web etc., billboards, newspaper, TV, Radio, e.g., Maina Kageni in the morning. Email, web, SEO optimization etc."*

These key roles of IMC found from the findings corroborate with Peter's (1998) assertions as he pointed to awareness creation, demand stimulation among others as the key goals relating to integrated marketing communication.

4.5 Effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication in Driving Residential Property Sales

The second study objective aimed at assessing effectiveness of IMC in driving residential property sales. The researcher sought the views and opinions of participants regarding tools of IMC employed in their company. All the participants were in agreement that the tools employed were effective. The participants cited their effectiveness in building trust, credibility and relationships with potential buyers through consistent messaging, positive media coverage, and testimonials from satisfied customers that contributed to the perception of reliability and professionalism.

“I believe they are good tools as they can also help to foster relationships. With bigger projects, I think additional tools can be used,” said P10.

The findings revealed that the tools were useful in engaging with potential buyers through two-way communication and that the online platforms, social media, and personalized direct marketing efforts provided opportunities for dialogue, answering queries, and addressing concerns, thereby fostering trust and a sense of connection.

“The tools are very effective. We prefer to have as many leads as possible, coming from every platform, and this is where we appreciate the IMC,” said P1.

Additionally, integrated marketing communication tools were found to have helped the real estate companies create awareness about their residential properties among the target audience and that the use of multiple channels ensured that potential buyers received consistent and repetitive messages, leading to increased brand recognition and recall.

"Integrated marketing communication has been instrumental in increasing awareness about our residential properties. By utilizing different channels, we have been able to reach a wider audience and generate more leads," said P2.

The participants also revealed that sales promotions and time-bound offers communicated through integrated marketing communication tools created a sense of urgency among potential buyers, encouraging them to take immediate action and make a purchase decision.

"We use sales promotion to encourage repeat purchases and brand loyalty, increase sales and/or market share, with the goal of broadening reach within a time period," said P9.

Regarding the contribution of integrated marketing tools on sales performance, participants revealed that it was one of the best marketing strategies for real estate companies. They cited elimination of buyer's confusion leading to increased sales, resulting in more closed sales, guarantees that customers obtain a uniform brand message, minimizing any ambiguity regarding the ongoing promotion and sales, and the locations where they can acquire the products.

Additionally, personalization of messages and lead generation was found to have resulted in effectiveness of marketing efforts and increased sales.

"It helps in lead generation, and also given we have a wide array of products, from Affordable housing to high end, different marketing channels helps to reach to different classes of target market for lead generation," said P4.

The data analyzed indicated that IMC played an integral part of influencing buying decisions by potential customers. Also, that integrated marketing communication has been effective in creating awareness and generating leads for residential properties. The findings emphasize the positive impact of integrated marketing communication in driving residential property sales by reaching a larger audience and generating interest.

Other factors other than IMC that were found as contributing in increase in sales performance included employee incentive, creativity, product expertise, competence, job contentment, role understanding, individual elements such as age, gender, self-motivation, and customer empathy, coupled with personal presence like meeting the client on a face-to-face meeting, proper targeting and channeling of the communication to available platforms.

4.6 Factors Hindering the Application of Integrated Marketing Communication Tools

Third study objective was pinpointing the factors that impede the utilization of integrated marketing communication in driving residential property sales. The findings revealed several challenges faced by real estate companies in implementing effective integrated marketing communication strategies.

"One of the main challenges we face is the limited resources, including budgets and personnel, which restrict our ability to implement comprehensive integrated marketing communication strategies," Said P3.

Some of the participants also revealed how they struggled to integrate their marketing communication efforts across various channels and touch points and that the lack of integration resulted in inconsistent messaging, confusion among potential buyers, and a diluted brand image.

It was found that the real estate companies faced challenges in keeping up with the rapid advancements in technology and digital marketing platforms. Limited technical knowledge, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of digital marketing skills hindered the effective utilization of digital marketing tools.

“We are faced with many challenges such as movement away from relying on advertising focused approach to an integrated approach and a shift in traditional promotions,” said P7.

Additionally, competition was revealed to be intense, a participant stating that, *“the real estate market in Nairobi is highly competitive, with numerous companies vying for customers' attention.”* This intense competition made it challenging for individual companies to stand out and effectively communicate their unique selling propositions.

Other participants cited shifts in market power and constant changes in marketing and advertising costs and models of compensation.

“There has been a great shift in marketplace power coupled with change in the way the advertising agencies are compensated thus making it challenging to employ IMC effectively,” said 20.

The findings highlight the main challenge as limited resources faced by real estate companies, which hinders their ability to implement effective integrated marketing communication strategies. The implication is that firms should allocate adequate budgets for their marketing activities in line with the postulations of Kotler (2006) who emphasized the need for firms to allocate the marketing communication budget over strong components of IMC. The other challenges were found to include lack of integration of IMC tools, technological barriers, a competitive market, and constant changes in approaches and practices as the factors hindering the application of IMC tools.

4.7 Discussion on Key Findings

Results of this study indicate that real estate companies in Nairobi County employ a combination of integrated marketing communication tools to drive residential property sales. They had a good understanding of the meaning of IMC which they described as the aspect of integration of marketing activities, consistency of brand messaging, the utilization of multiple communication channels and the synergy of all aspects of marketing mechanisms.

The IMC tools identified in the study including advertisement, public relations, direct marketing, sales promotions, and online presence. These IMC tools have been supported by other scholars like Kotler and Keller (2009), who mentioned that IMC comprised five main components, even though more elements are advanced by other scholars.

Further, integrated marketing communication was found to be effective in increasing awareness, providing information, building trust, engaging with potential buyers, and creating a sense of urgency. The literature reviewed also affirms these findings and in line with those of other scholars like Aliata (2012) and Peter (2011) who pointed to significant effect on sales turnover, improved sales and enhanced organisational image. This implies that IMC is a critical component of success and ought to be embraced by any real estate considering the current competitive landscape.

Regarding the factors hindering the implementation of integrated marketing communication tools, organizations were found to be faced with challenges such as limited resources, lack of integration, technological barriers, a competitive market, and regulatory constraints. These findings provide valuable insights for real estate companies in Nairobi County to improve their marketing communication strategies and enhance their residential property sales. The reasoned action theory reviewed in this study also acknowledges implementation challenges and the influence of external factors on firm's behavior. This study identified several challenges faced by real estate companies in implementing effective integrated marketing communication strategies. These external factors can act as barriers to implementing IMC practices, affecting the actual organizational behavior in real estate sector.

Based on the data findings and analysis, the participants' understanding and perception of integrated marketing communication (IMC) reflect their attitudes and beliefs towards this marketing approach. Reasoned action theory proposes development of attitudes based on existing beliefs about a particular behavior and its associated outcomes. In this study, the descriptions given by participants on the meaning of IMC reflect their positive attitudes towards IMC and its effectiveness in achieving marketing goals. These positive beliefs about the outcomes of IMC contribute to participants' intentions to continue using these tools and strategies.

The concepts in Hierarchy of Effects theory positing that consumers go through a series of stages in their decision-making process, from initial awareness to the ultimate purchase have also been depicted. The results of the study indicate, IMC tools play crucial role in guiding consumers through these stages and driving residential property sales.

The study found that IMC was effective in creating awareness about residential properties among the target audience. This aligns with the first stage of the Hierarchy of Effects, which is awareness. IMC tools were also found to be effective in providing information, building trust, and engaging with potential buyers which correspond with the subsequent stages in the Hierarchy of Effects, such as knowledge, liking, preference, and conviction.

Additionally, the study demonstrated that IMC tools, particularly sales promotions and time-bound offers, created a sense of urgency among potential buyers, encouraging them to take immediate action and make a purchase decision which corresponds to the final stage of the Hierarchy of Effects, which is the action stage. Therefore, the findings of the study align with the stages of the Hierarchy of Effects theory, illustrating how IMC tools help consumers in progressing through the various stages of purchase decision to the final action of buying, as the findings highlight the importance of utilizing various IMC tools strategically to lead consumers through these stages and ultimately drive sales in the real estate industry.

The study therefore provides insights into the importance of IMC, its positive outcome, and the challenges associated with its implementation, which can inform companies' decision-making and strategy development processes. These findings further suggest that real estate companies need to allocate sufficient resources, develop a cohesive and integrated approach to marketing communication, embrace technological advancements and differentiate themselves in a competitive market, to overcome the challenges and enhance their residential property sales.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The chapter details overview of results derived from investigation on role played by integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales among selected real estate companies.

5.2 Summary of the Findings

These results are drawn from data collected by interviewing Marketing Managers and Supervisory Staff within the real estate companies which was analysed to generate findings.

The study found a balanced gender representation among the participants, ensuring that the research findings are more representative of the population being studied. This balanced representation enhanced the validity and generalizability while incorporating diverse perspectives.

Participants demonstrated a good understanding of IMC, describing integration of marketing activities, consistency of brand messaging, utilization of multiple communication channels, and a customer-centric approach. They highlighted IMC's role on enhancing trust, credibility, and relationships with potential buyers. Integrated marketing communication tools employed by the real estate companies were found to be effective in creating awareness, engaging with potential buyers, and generating leads. They contributed to the perception of reliability and professionalism, facilitated dialogue and two-way communication, and created a sense of urgency among potential buyers.

However, several factors were found to hinder the application of integrated marketing communication tools. Limited resources, including budgets and personnel, restricted the implementation of comprehensive strategies. Lack of integration across channels and touchpoints resulted in inconsistent messaging and a diluted brand image. Technological barriers, intense market competition, and constant changes in marketing approaches and practices were additional challenges faced by the real estate companies.

5.3 Conclusion of the Study

These conclusions are drawn from diverse views as well as perspectives shared by the marketing managers and supervisors in real estate companies in Nairobi. It's concluded that IMC refers to the aspect of integration of marketing activities and communication in a way that results in consistency and effectiveness of brand messages. The study concludes on existence of good understanding by marketing practitioners in the real estate sector on IMC as a key element in their organisations.

Further, it concludes on ad campaigns, PR, personalized marketing, direct sales, promotional offers, online visibility as the most commonly used tools of IMC even though real estate companies utilize a combination of traditional and digital marketing communication tools to promote their residential properties.

The study also concluded that IMC tools are effective in creating awareness, building trust, credibility and relationships, generating leads, and reaching a wider audience through consistent messaging, positive media coverage, and testimonials from satisfied customers that contributed to

the perception of reliability and professionalism and that two-way communication and online platforms, social media, and personalized direct marketing efforts provide opportunities for dialogue, answering queries, and addressing concerns, thereby fostering trust and a sense of connection.

However, challenges such as limited resources, lack of integration of IMC tools, technological barriers, intense market competition, and changes in marketing approaches hindered the application of integrated marketing communication tools. Addressing these challenges is crucial for real estate companies to fully leverage the potential of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

Drawing from results and analysis above, the researcher recommends as below:

1. The study found that the major challenge that hinders successful implementation of integrated marketing communication strategies is a lack of resources both financial and technical capacities. The study therefore recommends that real estate companies should allocate adequate budgets and qualified personnel to implement comprehensive integrated marketing communication strategies. This will enable them to effectively utilize various tools and channels to reach their target audience and achieve their sales goals.
2. While integration of various marketing tools was found to enhance message consistency and effectiveness, this was also found to be a challenge. This study recommends that organisations should implement integration tools such as customer relationship management platforms like salesforce and strive for greater integration across

marketing channels and touchpoints to ensure consistent messaging and a cohesive brand image. This can also be achieved through the use of marketing automation tools, centralized data management systems, and cross-functional collaboration.

3. Additionally, real estate companies should stay updated with the latest technological advancements and digital marketing platforms. Investing in training programs and acquiring digital marketing skills will enable companies to effectively utilize digital tools and reach a wider audience.
4. Since the study found that the real estate industry is very competitive, it recommends that in such a highly competitive market, real estate companies should focus on differentiation strategies, identification of unique selling propositions and developing innovative marketing strategies. This will help them stand out from the competition and effectively communicate their value to potential buyers.
5. Finally, given the dynamic nature of the real estate sector, this study recommends that organisations be adaptable and flexible in their marketing approaches. This can be achieved through continuous monitoring of market trends, consumer preferences, and changes in marketing practices to stay relevant and effectively respond to evolving market conditions.

5.5 Suggestion for Further Studies

These findings provide invaluable information about IMC in driving residential property in Nairobi County. However, it's advisable to conduct more studies exploring other factors that may impede the effectiveness of these tools, such as the impact of specific marketing channels, the role of customer segmentation, and the integration of traditional and digital marketing approaches in residential property sales.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION



UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION

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P.O. Box 30197
Nairobi,
Kenya

OUR REF:

YOUR REF:

DATE: April 13, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

RE: KABURI RACHEL WANJIKU - K50/11944/2018

This is to confirm that the above named is a bonafide student at the University of Nairobi, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication pursuing Master of Arts degree in Communication Studies.

Ms. Kaburi has completed her course work and is currently collecting data for her research project entitled: **"The Role of Integrated Marketing Communication Tools in Driving Residential Property Sales among Selected Real Estates in Nairobi County"** leading to a Master of Arts Degree in Communication Studies.

Any assistance accorded to her will be highly appreciated.

Wendy Cheron
Senior Administrative Assistant
Department of Journalism & Mass Communication



Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Role of Integrated Marketing Communication Tools in Driving Residential Property Sales among Selected Real Estate Companies in Nairobi County

My name is Kaburi Rachel Wanjiku, a graduate student at the University of Nairobi, Department of Journalism and Mass Communication. I am currently conducting a study on; “Role of Integrated Marketing Communication Tools in Driving Residential Property Sales among Selected Real Estate Companies in Nairobi County,” as part of the partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Communications Studies. The study aims at developing an in-depth understanding of the role of Integrated Marketing Communication Tools in Driving Residential Property Sales and your organization has been chosen as a research case. Your individual responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality and will be used for purposes of the academic research only. I am also willing to share with you the final report of the study if you wish to have a look.

Your kind assistance in providing responses for the study will be highly appreciated.

Yours Sincerely,

Kaburi Rachel Wanjiku.

APPENDIX II: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW GUIDES

1. How would you describe integrated marketing communication?
2. In your opinion, do you believe that integrated marketing communication is considered important in your organisation? Why?
3. What aspects of integrated marketing communication tools are employed by your organisation? Please explain.
4. What are your objectives of using integrated marketing communication tools in your sales strategy? Please explain.
5. In your opinion, are the tools of integrated marketing communication employed by your company effective?
6. How would you describe the contribution of integrated marketing tools on your sales performance?
7. In your opinion, are there other factors other than the use of integrated marketing communication tools that contribute to an increase in your sales performance?
8. What kind of problems have you experienced with the application of integrated marketing communication tools in your organisation? What suggestions or recommendations would you give with regards to the problems?

APPENDIX III

CONSENT FORM FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Declaration of Informed Consent by Participant

Researcher: Kaburi Rachel Wanjiku

Phone: +254 702 365048

Purpose of study

The study aims at developing an in-depth understanding of the role of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales among real estate companies in Nairobi County. This interview seeks to get your input in answering the research questions.

Your rights as a participant

I (participant) declare that I have understood my rights in relation to this research exercise, which include, confidentiality and anonymity in the use of my responses, right not to answer some questions if I wish not to, right to withdraw my participation at any time without any consequences whatsoever. I am also in agreement with any recording or transcription of my responses, as long as they will be kept confidential and used for the research only.

In recognition of the above, I hereby declare that I am participating in this research at will, and that I am above 18 years of age.

Participant Name: _____

Signature : _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX IV

DEBRIEFING FORM FOR KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

Debriefing Form

Thank you very much for your valuable input into this study. Your responses will go a long way into demonstrating the role of integrated marketing communication tools in driving residential property sales among selected real estate companies in Nairobi County. The researcher will be happy to share with you the final report of the study once it is completed and approved.

In case you have any concerns or further questions regarding any aspect of the study, please contact the researcher by telephone +254 702 365048.

APPENDIX V
LIST OF SELECTED REAL ESTATE COMPANIES

1. Symonns Realty Limited
2. Superior Homes
3. Centum Real Estate
4. Elegant Properties
5. Vaal Real Estate
6. Commercial Property Kenya
7. Mi Vida Homes
8. Biuld X Studio
9. Dunhill Consulting
10. Coral Property
11. Pam Golding
12. Maxapi Limited
13. AMG Realtors
14. Tysonns Limited
15. Ark Consultants
16. Saif Real Estate
17. Rama Homes
18. Username Investment
19. Tsavo
20. BuyRentKenya