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Article

From outreach to outcome: exploring the impact of integrated marketing communication on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises

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From outreach to outcome: exploring the impact of integrated marketing communication on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises

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ABSTRACT

There is a growing need for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) to employ Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) components to develop a robust brand-focused communications strategy given the present uncertain market circumstances and the consequent market volatility. For SMEs, the IMC pillars are crucial for building a robust strategic presence, which in turn improves company success. A descriptive cross-sectional study was employed to establish the link between IMC components and business performance. Data from 845 SME managers or owners were collected from India and were analyzed using PLS-SEM. The results show a strong correlation between the five dimensions of IMC performance and enhanced company performance. The results of the moderation analysis also show that Market Orientation has little effect on the connection between IMC features and Business Performance. In this article, we'll look at how SMEs can improve their company performance plans by incorporating market orientation and integrated marketing communication (IMC). SMEs, especially those in the service industry, would benefit greatly from this study's findings regarding the need to use this managerial approach to boost SME performance.

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Introduction

Integrated marketing communication has been the subject of substantial study and investigation. It is a fact that technological developments and globalization have altered the corporate landscape on a world-wide scale (Rakshit et al., 2022; Rashkova et al., 2023). IMC Experts agree that it's essential for helping businesses build strong brands and formulate strategic branding plans (Wu et al., 2022). Studies confirm that IMC significantly improves several performance indicators, such as financial results, market positioning, and customer happiness (Butkouskaya et al., 2020; Finne & Grönroos, 2017). Moreover, the corpus of the research has generally confirmed that IMC procedures have a good impact on organizational performance at various strategic levels (Butkouskaya et al., 2020).

IMC is still essentially a customer-centric approach despite its many advantages (Butkouskaya et al., 2020; Reid, 2005). What customers think of a company's communications has a big impact on how effective integrated marketing communications (IMC) is. Furthermore, market orientation appears to mediate the association between IMC and business performance, according to management survey data (Butkouskaya et al., 2020). Additionally, several studies (Butkouskaya et al., 2020; Porcu et al., 2017; Luxton et al., 2015) indicate that the results of IMC may be hierarchical, meaning that different degrees of IMC implementation give varying results. A more complex model is needed to get more accurate findings on

the impacts of IMC. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to delve into how IMC affects business performance.

According to studies, IMC is a must for SMEs in today's competitive business environment. SMEs have a significant impact on the majority of economies, particularly in developing nations. SMEs constitute the majority of industries globally and play an important role in generating employment opportunities and nurturing global economic growth (Prakash et al., 2023). They constitute about 90% of all firms and over 50% of global employment (Weerakkody, 2021). As per some estimates, there are about 63.05 million micro industries, 0.33 million small, and about 5,000 medium enterprises in the country. The Ministry of State for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises stated that SMEs contributed to 35.98 percent of India's total manufacturing output in 2020-21. Moreover, SMEs products accounted for 43.6% of India's exports in 2022-23. SMEs play a vital in the growth of the Indian economy by contributing to the development of employment, exports, innovation, and inclusive growth of the country. Additionally, SMEs account for more than 45% of industrial production and 40% of all exports, which contribute significantly to India's overall GDP (i.e. about 8%) (Prakash et al., 2023). Despite the government's backing, SMEs still confront global competition and must employ critical management strategies like IMC to survive in the long run (Kadia, 2022a). Thus, this study investigates how IMC components relate to business performance, specifically to SMEs in India. Furthermore, acknowledging that SMEs frequently employ a focus strategy to achieve market leadership and that as a result, the age and size of the firm have been controlled on business performance outcomes.

Theoretical framework

This study employs the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which is particularly well-suited for exploring the impact of IMC on the business performance of SMEs in India, and the mediating role of market orientation. RBV stresses upon the usage of the firm internal resources and capabilities to achieve a competitive edge, which is crucial for SMEs that often operate with limited resources (Butkouskaya et al., 2020; Wójcik, 2019). By utilizing RBV, the researcher can concentrate on the efficient use of distinctive internal resources through IMC strategies such as marketing prowess, brand equity, and human capital (Barney, 2020).

Additionally, RBV facilitates the strategic integration and allocation of resources that are essential to IMC (Baumgarth & Schmidt, 2020). IMC entails the skillful application of a range of marketing communication instruments to convey a coherent message, augmenting the company's entire resource pool and market positioning. In order to make the most of their limited resources, SMEs must prioritize this integration (Wilden et al., 2020). As a result, this study adopts RBV, which is an excellent theoretical framework for examining the capabilities of IMC in enhancing the business performance of SMEs in India, and the mediating role of market orientation.

Literature review

Shankar (2022), Yadava et al. (2022), Hall and Wickham (2008), and Wickham and Hall (2006) are among the many writers who have delved deeply into the relevance and role of integrated marketing communications in industrial markets. Whether they are consumers or other particular and important (internal and external) clients, integrated marketing communications involve coordinating all marketing communications and synchronizing communication channels towards them (Čikošev, 2019). Marketers have begun to focus less on traditional media and more on tailored, customer-centric, technology-driven strategies. IMC has seen an increase in the use of social media communication. Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube are social media (Febriyantor, 2020; Kumar et al., 2022; Patma et al., 2021). According to previous research, information marketing campaigns for direct-to-consumer products can only be executed through social media marketing communication (Rehman et al., 2022; Laradi et al., 2023). Establishing and defining a link between a business and its customers is the focus of marketing communications. Such communication is strategically significant and has a lasting impact on customers. With the right marketing communication skills, a company can ensure long-term success in the market and craft effective communication strategies. Moreover, studies have confirmed that organizational success is positively

affected by strong marketing communication abilities (Vaid et al., 2023; Kadia, 2022a). According to research from different nations, IMC performance within SMEs has proven that IMC components impact company performance (Chaniago & Ariyani, 2023; Chong & Patwa, 2023; Dharta & Chaerudin, 2023; Ekong et al., 2023; Thamrin et al., 2023).

Reid (2005) outlined five critical IMC elements in his research that can be used to measure the extent of integration: Interactivity (Int), Mission Marketing (MM), Organizational Infrastructure (OI), Organizational Infrastructure (OI), Strategic Consistency (SC), and Planning and Evaluation (PE). These elements can be measured using the IMC.

Interactivity (int)

Interactivity refers to the dynamic engagement between a company and its customers (Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). It involves creating opportunities for two-way communication, allowing customers to provide feedback, ask questions, and interact with the brand through various channels (Vaid et al., 2023). This element is crucial as it fosters stronger customer relationships, enhances customer satisfaction, and allows for real-time adjustments to marketing strategies based on customer input (Daszkiewicz et al., 2023). Interactivity can be facilitated through social media, live chats, interactive websites, and customer service platforms.

Mission marketing (MM)

Mission Marketing involves aligning marketing efforts with the broader mission and values of the organization (Baumgarth & Binckebanck, 2021). This component emphasizes the importance of communicating a consistent and coherent message that reflects the company's core values and purpose (Vaid et al., 2023). By integrating the mission into marketing activities, companies can build a stronger brand identity and create a deeper emotional connection with their audience. Mission Marketing helps ensure that all marketing communications are not only promotional but also meaningful and aligned with the organization's long-term goals (Daszkiewicz et al., 2023).

Organizational infrastructure (OI)

Organizational Infrastructure refers to the internal structures and processes that support IMC within the organization (Daszkiewicz et al., 2023). This includes the collaboration and coordination between different departments such as marketing, sales, customer service, and product development. Effective Organizational Infrastructure ensures that all departments work together seamlessly to deliver a unified message to the market. This element also encompasses the use of technology and systems that facilitate the integration of marketing activities, such as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems and data analytics tools (Schultz & Schultz, 2020).

Strategic consistency (SC)

Strategic Consistency involves maintaining a coherent and uniform message across all marketing channels and touchpoints (Porcu et al., 2019). This element ensures that all marketing communications, whether they are advertisements, social media posts, or customer emails, convey the same core message and brand values. Strategic Consistency helps in building brand recognition and trust among consumers, as they receive a reliable and consistent experience regardless of the channel through which they interact with the brand (Vaid et al., 2023).

Planning and evaluation (PE)

Planning and Evaluation encompass the processes of setting marketing objectives, developing integrated marketing plans, and assessing the effectiveness of these plans (Tafesse & Kitchen, 2017). This element includes the strategic planning phase where marketing goals are aligned with the overall business

objectives, as well as the continuous evaluation of marketing activities through metrics and analytics (Kadia, 2022a). Planning and Evaluation ensure that marketing efforts are goal-oriented, measurable, and adaptable based on performance data. Regular assessment helps in refining strategies, optimizing resource allocation, and improving overall marketing effectiveness (Daszkiewicz & Pukas, 2025).

Reid offers a thorough framework for evaluating and improving the integration of marketing communications. Several scholars have argued that to prove that IMC components contribute to improved business performance, and thus future studies should investigate a variety of business entities (Vaid et al., 2023; Kadia, 2022b; Baumgarth & Binckebanck, 2021; Schultz & Schultz, 2020; Porcu et al., 2019).

Hypotheses formulation

Integrated marketing communication (IMC) and business performance (BP)

Luxton et al. (2015, p. 43) suggest, 'A firm's IMC capability contributes to brand performance by facilitating the development and implementation of more effective IMC campaigns, resulting in positive, brand-related market performance outcomes'. IMC has been viewed broadly by other writers. Porcu et al. (2017) offered a theoretical IMC model that included organizational elements that were thought to be significant predictors of IMC performance, such as top management, interdepartmental dynamics, and organizational systems. Orazi et al. (2017) developed the most recent IMC framework to take into account the function of marketing and advertising technologies within IMC. They felt that the IMC framework may support positive brand equity results by coordinating the collection of digital data and making it easier for internal organizational stakeholders to use these insights. The authors do point out that there is a knowledge gap in IMC's applicability to digital technologies (Pisicchio & Toaldo, 2021; Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017). As a result, there is a gap in the models of marketing communication that currently exist for incorporating digital media.

Vaid et al. (2023), Dewi et al. (2023) and Kadia (2022a) are only a few studies that show a connection between IMC and business performance. Even though there are a few research on this area, the SME sectors are mostly ignored in India. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: *There is a significant influence of Integrated Marketing Communication on Business Performance.*

H2: *There is a significant influence of Integrated Marketing Communication on Market Orientation.*

Market orientation (MO) as mediator

The term 'market orientation' describes a company's approach to identifying and satisfying customer wants and needs. This entails researching and studying the market to create services and goods that meet the needs of consumers and implement marketing plans to promote them (Manafe et al., 2024). The profitability and success of a company is known as its performance (Wilson & Liguori, 2023).

Marketing orientation has been included in this study as a mediating variable. Including market orientation as a mediating variable between Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) and business performance in SMEs is crucial because it ensures that the company's strategies are deeply aligned with customer needs and preferences (Ratnawati et al., 2023; Manafe et al., 2024). Market-oriented SMEs are adept at gathering and utilizing market intelligence, which allows them to design IMC campaigns that resonate well with their target audience. This customer-centric approach enhances customer satisfaction, loyalty, and engagement, all of which contribute to improved business performance (Wilson & Liguori, 2023). Additionally, by incorporating customer feedback and market trends into their IMC strategies, SMEs can communicate more effectively, leading to higher market responsiveness and competitive advantage (Wilson & Liguori, 2023; Dewi et al., 2023).

Moreover, market orientation facilitates strategic consistency, a key element of IMC, by ensuring that all departments within the SME work cohesively toward satisfying customer needs (Dewi et al., 2023; Pisicchio & Toaldo, 2021). This alignment helps maintain a consistent message across all communication channels, strengthening brand identity and trust, which are essential for enhancing business performance. Market orientation also enables SMEs to continuously adapt and refine their strategies based on market intelligence, driving better decision-making and more effective resource allocation (Wilson & Liguori, 2023). Overall, the integration of market orientation as a mediating variable highlights its pivotal role in

bridging IMC efforts with tangible business outcomes, thus underscoring its importance in achieving sustainable growth and competitive success for SMEs. There is a lack of thorough studies on the mediating role of IMC components in the context of SMEs in India. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: *There is a significant influence of Market Orientation on Business Performance.*

H4: *Market Orientation mediates the relationship between Integrated Marketing Communication and Business Performance.*

Research methodology

The primary goal of the research design is to build a framework that ensures that the research problem is solved precisely and that the research objectives are achieved. This study used a survey research method to gather primary data from the managers of the SMEs established in Maharashtra, specifically Mumbai, Pune, Nashik, Nagpur, and Aurangabad. The data was collected from the manufacturing sector, contributing to around 36% of the country's total manufacturing output. The survey instrument was approved by the Academic Integrity Committee of Symbiosis Centre for Management and Human Resource Development, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), India, wide letter reference number: SCMHRD/2024/34 dated 22nd Dec 2023 in writing. The participation was volunteer in nature and we ensured that each participant understood his/her rights, including confidentiality and anonymity. All participants provided informed written consent before completing the survey. The questionnaire contained an online consent form that participants must read and acknowledge before proceeding. The questionnaire did not ask for personal information such as their name, email address, or contact number. The participants were encouraged to ask any question before agreeing to participate and they could revoke their consent at any point during the research period. Additionally, they were informed that the data would be utilized exclusively for research and that there would be no commercial use.

Purposive sampling was used to help identify a specific subset of participants with particular characteristics or insights relevant to the study. In the context of exploring the impact of integrated marketing communication (IMC) on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants who have experience and knowledge of IMC practices. This method ensured that the data collected was rich, detailed, and directly applicable to the research objectives. By focusing on individuals or companies that have implemented IMC strategies, the study yields more precise and actionable insights into how these practices influence business performance, leading to more meaningful and relevant conclusions.

The minimum required sample size can vary depending on the statistical method used. According to Hair et al. (2019), the recommended sample size for structural equation modeling is 100–400, at least 10 times the number of studied variables. Hair (2022) stated that the model's complexity also affects the sample size. 20:1 is the ideal ratio between the number of observations and each variable in the model (Hair, 2021). To ensure that the sample accurately reflected the accessible population for the study, around 1500 owners of SMEs were selected out of which 845 agreed to be a part of the study which was very much in the ratio of 20:1 as proposed by Hair (2022). At a 95% confidence level, with a population proportion of 0.5 and a margin of error of 5%, a sample size of only 384 responses was required (Soper, 2023) whereas we collected 845 usable responses.

$$\text{Sample Size} = \frac{z^2 \times p(1-p) / e^2}{1 + (z^2 \times p(1-p) / e^2 \times N)}$$

Where z is the z score; e is the margin of error; N is the population size; and p is the population proportion.

Item generation

A large pool of items was adapted from the various literature to conceptualize the framework (Appendix). The 7-Likert scales are applied. The 20-item scale of Integrated Marketing Communications was adopted

from Reid (2005). IMC is a second-order construct consisting of five components: Interactivity (Int), Mission Marketing (MM), Organizational Infrastructure (OI), Organizational Infrastructure (OI), Strategic Consistency (SC), and Planning and Evaluation (PE). Similarly, a 10-item scale was adopted from Deshpandé and Farley (1998), and a 7-item scale of Business performance was adopted from Li et al. (2013). Market Orientation and Business Performance have been considered as first-order constructs in the study. IMC, which is a formative construct, did not have a multicollinearity problem. Table 1 contains the instrument design details.

Data analysis

The Data was analyzed using Smart PLS 4.0 and SPSS Version 25. PLS-SEM analysis that includes the assessment of Measurement and Structural Model. The measurement model establishes the reliability and validity of the construct. The structural model ascertains the significance of hypothesized relationships.

Measurement model

The quality of the constructs in the study is assessed based on the evaluation of the measurement model. The assessment of the quality criteria starts with evaluating the factor loadings, followed by establishing the construct reliability and construct validity.

Factor loadings

The factor loadings represent how strongly each item in the correlation matrix is associated with a particular principal component. These loadings can vary from -1.0 to +1.0, with higher absolute values signifying a stronger correlation of the item with the principal component. (Hair et al., 2019). None of the items in the study had a factor loading less than the recommended value of .50 (Hair et al., 2022). Hence, no items were further removed. Factor loadings are presented in Table 2

Common method bias

Common method bias (CMB), also known as common method variance (CMV), occurs when the measurement method itself introduces systematic error into the data, potentially distorting the relationships between variables and leading to inaccurate conclusions (Podsakoff et al., 2024). This bias can stem from several sources, such as same-source bias, where both predictor and criterion variables are collected from the same source, measurement context effects, item characteristics, social desirability, and acquiescence bias. Researchers employed Harman's single-factor test, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to mitigate CMB. The statistical analysis's outcome shows that only one component was responsible for about 25.033% of the total variance, proving that CMB wasn't a problem for this study. Then, we conducted a thorough collinearity test, and the results showed a value of less than 5 for each VIF, confirming that CMB is not a significant worry (Hair et al., 2022).

Table 1. Instrument design.

Instruments	Items	Source
Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC)	20	Reid (2005)
<i>Interactivity (Int)</i>	4	
<i>Mission Marketing (MM)</i>	3	
<i>Organizational Infrastructure (OI)</i>	4	
<i>Strategic Consistency (SC)</i>	3	
<i>Planning and Evaluation (PE)</i>	6	
Market Orientation	10	Deshpandé and Farley (1998)
Business Performance	7	Li et al. (2013)
Total Items	37	

Table 2. Factor loading.

Code	BP	Int	MM	MO	OI	PE	SC
BP1	0.830						
BP2	0.863						
BP3	0.866						
BP4	0.853						
BP5	0.844						
BP6	0.850						
BP7	0.825						
Int1		0.914					
Int2		0.915					
Int3		0.919					
Int4		0.931					
MM1			0.920				
MM2			0.905				
MM3			0.902				
MO1				0.812			
MO10				0.812			
MO2				0.846			
MO3				0.845			
MO4				0.816			
MO5				0.818			
MO6				0.840			
MO7				0.848			
MO8				0.820			
MO9				0.806			
OI1					0.867		
OI2					0.882		
OI3					0.869		
OI4					0.885		
PE1						0.884	
PE2						0.879	
PE3						0.879	
PE4						0.894	
PE5						0.880	
PE6						0.891	
SC1							0.881
SC2							0.854
SC3							0.859

Table 3. Reliability and validity analysis.

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
BP	0.934	0.935	0.947	0.718
Int	0.939	0.942	0.956	0.846
MM	0.895	0.895	0.935	0.826
MO	0.948	0.949	0.956	0.683
OI	0.899	0.899	0.929	0.767
PE	0.944	0.946	0.956	0.783
SC	0.831	0.832	0.899	0.748

Reliability and validity analysis

Reliability refers to how stable and consistent a measuring instrument is. Essentially, reliability means repeatability: if the instrument is used repeatedly, it should produce the same results each time. The two most commonly used methods for establishing reliability include Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR). The results for both Cronbach Alpha and Composite Reliability results are presented in Table 3. The Cronbach's Alpha ranged from .728 to .899 whereas Composite Reliability statistics ranged from .816 to .923. Both indicators of reliability have reliability statistics over the required threshold of .70 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Hair et al., 2022).

Convergent validity

Convergent validity reflects the extent to which multiple measures of the same concept agree with each other. The premise is that if measures are valid, they should exhibit high covariance when assessing the same phenomenon (Hair et al., 2022). In our current investigation, the AVE statistics reveal that all

constructs, except for DC and TI, have slightly lower AVE values. However, the composite reliability (CR) values for all constructs exceed 0.70, indicating no significant issues with convergent validity. Table 3 presents the AVE values for each construct.

Discriminant validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which measures of different concepts are distinct. This concept implies that if two or more constructs are unique, their valid measures should not have excessively high correlations (Hair et al., 2019). According to the Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion, discriminant validity is confirmed when the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for a construct exceeds its correlation with all other constructs. In this study, the square root of the AVE for each construct was indeed greater than its correlations with other constructs, thereby providing strong support for the establishment of discriminant validity. Table 4 presents the results of the Fornell and Larcker criterion.

The Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT) is a method that assesses the discriminant validity of constructs by estimating correlations between different constructs and comparing them to correlations within the same construct (Hair et al., 2019). This ratio provides a quantitative measure to evaluate the extent to which constructs differ from each other compared to how much they overlap. A low HTMT ratio suggests that the constructs are distinct from each other, indicating strong discriminant validity. Conversely, a high HTMT ratio may indicate potential issues with discriminant validity, suggesting that the constructs are not sufficiently distinct. Therefore, the HTMT ratio serves as a valuable tool for evaluating the discriminant validity of constructs in research studies. Table 5 presents the results of the HTMT ratio.

Validating higher order construct

Integrated Marketing Communication was the higher-order construct in the study based on five lower-order constructs Interactivity (Int), Mission Marketing (MM), Organizational Infrastructure (OI), Strategic Consistency (SC), and Planning and Evaluation (PE). To establish the higher order construct validity Outer Weights, Outer Loadings, and VIF were measured. The outer weights were found significant (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, outer loadings for four lower-order constructs were found greater than .50 and one construct had 0.39 but it was significant, thus the validity of the higher-order construct was established. Finally, VIF values were assessed to check collinearity, all VIF values are less than the recommended value of 5 (Hair et al., 2019). Since all criteria were met, the higher-order construct validity was established. Table 6 presents the results of the validity analysis of higher-order constructs.

Table 4. Fornell and Larcker criteria.

	BP	Int	MM	MO	OI	PE	SC
BP	0.847						
Int	0.306	0.920					
MM	0.758	0.190	0.909				
MO	0.792	0.289	0.715	0.826			
OI	0.735	0.339	0.657	0.822	0.876		
PE	0.485	0.625	0.403	0.418	0.363	0.885	
SC	0.741	0.303	0.670	0.885	0.764	0.407	0.865

Table 5. Heterotrait-monotrait ratio.

	BP	Int	MM	MO	OI	PE	SC
BP							
Int	0.326						
MM	0.829	0.206					
MO	0.841	0.306	0.775				
OI	0.802	0.368	0.733	0.89			
PE	0.516	0.664	0.437	0.44	0.391		
SC	0.84	0.342	0.776	0.996	0.883	0.459	

Structural model

The next step in structural equation modeling is an assessment of the hypothesized relationship to substantiate the proposed hypotheses. We employed the standard bootstrapping approach on a dataset of 845 cases. The relevance of path coefficients was assessed in this analysis. Using the results of PLS-SEM bootstrapping, we determined the mediating impacts of company market orientation. An estimation of the model is shown in Figure 1.

The R-square is also referred known as the coefficient of determination. This is a crucial criterion for evaluating a structural model in Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) (Hair et al., 2019; Henseler et al., 2009). The R-square value quantifies the extent to which the variation in the dependent variable can be accounted for by one or more predictor variables(s) (Hair et al., 2019). R-square values of business performance and market orientation were 0.706 and 0.832 respectively. This confirms that the model produced strong results.

The predictive significance of the research model was assessed using Q^2 , also known as the cross-validated redundancy metric (Stone, 1974). According to Chin (1998) and Hair et al. (2019), Q^2 is a measure that can be used to evaluate a model's prediction performance when dealing with excluded data. According to Henseler et al. (2009), if the Q^2 statistic(s) a research model with larger positive Q^2 values shows a higher level of predictive significance. Table 6 shows that the model created in this study is highly significant for the predictions. Three hypotheses were developed for direct relationships and one hypothesis was developed for indirect relationships. An exhaustive analysis of the composite model has proven that the tested hypotheses have substantial evidence to support them, proving a cause-and-effect relationship.

Direct relationship

H_{01} evaluates whether IMC has a significant impact on the BP of the SMEs in India. The result supports the relationship proposed in the model and it confirmed that there is a significant direct influence of

Table 6. Higher order construct validity.

Higher-order construct	Low-order construct	Outer weight	T-statistics	P-value	Outer loadings	VIF
Integrated Marketing Communication	Interactivity	-0.040	1.994	0.046	0.339	1.774
	Mission Marketing	0.274	8.047	0.000	0.840	2.165
	Organizational Infrastructure	0.331	10.478	0.000	0.891	2.769
	Strategic Consistency	0.123	5.013	0.000	0.514	1.934
	Planning and Evaluation	0.457	14.530	0.000	0.931	2.784

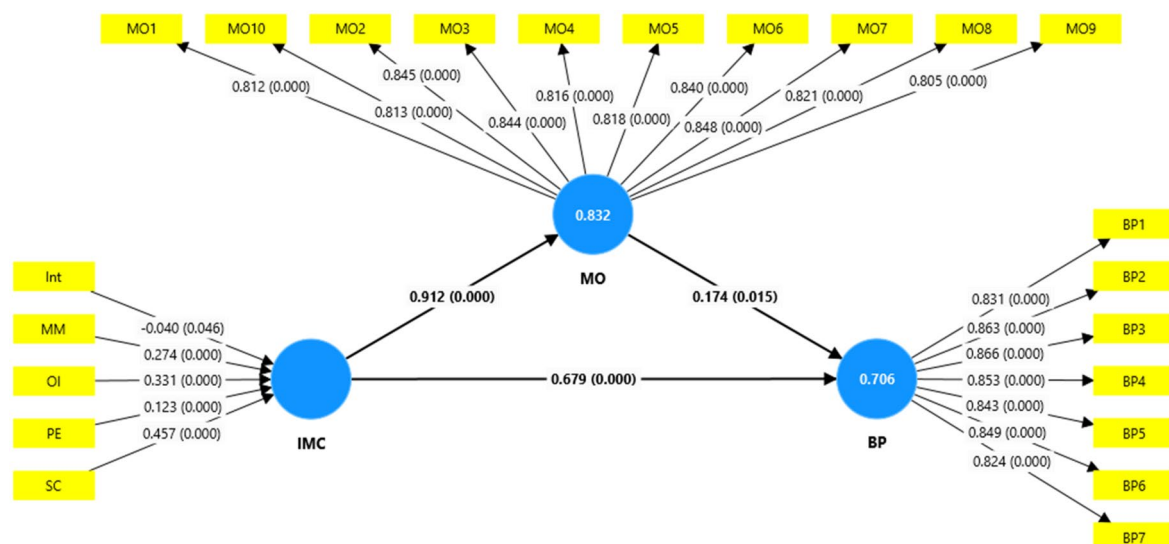


Figure 1. Structural framework.

IMC on BP with B-Coefficient: 0.679, t-statistics: 10.632, and p-value: 0.000. H_{02} evaluates whether IMC has a significant impact on the MO of the SMEs in India. The result supports the relationship proposed in the model and it confirmed that there is a significant direct influence of IMC on MO with B-Coefficient: 0.912, t-statistics: 118.65, and p-value: 0.000. H_{03} evaluates whether MO has a significant impact on the BP of the SMEs in India. The result supports the relationship proposed in the model and it confirmed that there is a significant direct influence of MO on BP with B-Coefficient: 0.174, t-statistics: 2.443, and p-value: 0.015. Table 7 presents the results of the direct relationships proposed in the structure model.

Indirect relationship

Mediation analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of market orientation. The results (see Table 7) revealed significant ($p < .05$) full mediating roles of MO (Beta Coefficient: 0.158, $t=2.437$, $p=0.015$), thus, H_{04} has been supported. Table 8 presents the results of the indirect relationships proposed in the structure model.

Discussion, conclusion, and Implications

The study examined the impact of IMC aspects on the performance of SMEs in the manufacturing sector in India, specifically Maharashtra state. Furthermore, we investigate the function of market orientation as a mediator in this association. There is a strong and positive association between the components of IMC and the overall business performance of a firm. The mediating effect indicates that the influence of market orientation between IMC and business performance is significant. Previous research indicates that the concept of IMC has gained considerable popularity not only among large corporations but also among SMEs. IMC is a pivotal factor in attaining favorable company performance. This finding is in line with Daszkiewicz et al. (2023), Kadia (2022b), Schultz and Schultz (2020), and Tafesse and Kitchen (2017).

This has been identified earlier that the duration of the decision-making processes and sales cycles is decreasing. It is important to stay updated with the current company's needs to ensure that marketing remains a crucial aspect of all companies. This implies that a greater level of interaction among the entire value chain will enhance the overall performance (Vaid et al., 2023; Hollebeek & Macky, 2019). Market performance is determined by the interaction of integrated marketing communication. The aspects of sales, brand advantage, and customer satisfaction performance seem interconnected. Firms employ communication strategies to directly engage with their target audience, such as tailoring their messages and soliciting feedback from recipients (e.g. through digital communication and direct marketing initiatives). This approach yields significant benefits and contributes to improving business performance. The study's findings unequivocally demonstrate that the Interactivity component of IMC has a significant impact on the Business Performance of SMEs in the manufacturing sector in India.

Similarly, 'mission marketing' is a crucial component of any business and is seamlessly incorporated into the operational plan to ensure that strategic objectives are achieved productively and efficiently, ultimately meeting the needs and expectations of stakeholders. The mission marketing of an organization serves as a strategic tool for enterprises to properly communicate their business stance and aims to

Table 7. Hypothetical relationship – direct effect.

Direct relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	R ²	Q ² predict
IMC -> BP	0.679	0.686	10.632	0.000	0.706	0.696
IMC -> MO	0.912	0.912	118.65	0.000	0.832	0.830
MO -> BP	0.174	0.167	02.443	0.015		

Table 8. Hypothetical relationship – indirect effect.

Indirect relationship	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
IMC -> MO -> BP	0.158	0.152	0.065	2.437	0.015

all stakeholders (Baumgarth & Binckebanck, 2021). The more effectively an organization's 'strategic marketing' aligns with its 'mission', the more accurately it reflects the organization's reason for existing. SMEs that use effective mission marketing strategies can capitalize on more favorable business prospects in the market (Vaid et al., 2023; Daszkiewicz et al., 2023). This study establishes a relationship between mission marketing and business performance, providing SME managers or owners with a clearer understanding of the need for 'strong mission marketing' in strategic branding.

While it has been theorized that business performance is affected by the level of integrated marketing communication capability, there is a lack of empirical studies that support the claim that it is closely linked to organizational infrastructure and performance outcomes. The present study revealed a robust and positive influence of organizational infrastructure, IMC and business performance. Schultz and Schultz (2020) and Davenport, (1993) argue that information technology, owing to its influence and widespread use, is the most advantageous corporate resource for driving significant enhancements in business operations. Supporting this claim, multiple researchers have reported that integrated marketing communication capability has primarily been utilized to streamline current communication processes, resulting in improved business performance rather than being seen solely as an opportunity for business process change.

Mounting evidence suggests that as businesses expand and break into new markets, they must have comprehensive organizational plans that address strategic thinking, planning, monitoring, evaluation, and structural issues. Integrating and demonstrating the consistency of strategic decisions across all decision-making levels requires the establishment of strategic coherence at the functional, business, and corporate levels (Porcu et al., 2019). Various strategic communication disciplines, including public relations, sponsorships, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling, and general advertising, are part of a comprehensive marketing communication plan known as the integrated marketing communication mix (Vaid et al., 2023). Maintaining consistency is key for SMEs in the manufacturing sector in India. The results of the present study support this claim.

The study revealed that IMC aims to enhance communication effectiveness by combining, integrating, and aligning the various components of the marketing communication mix. Planning and evaluation play a significant role in promoting and selling items in the market, including the manufacturing sector. Several scholars argue that the inclusion of a planning and evaluation component in the IMC helps achieve the objective of supporting sales channels and increasing market share for firms (Daszkiewicz & Pukas, 2025; Kadia, 2022b; Porcu et al., 2019; Tafesse & Kitchen, 2017). Optimal utilization of the most effective communication channel in network planning is achieved through cohesive organizational support, resulting in enhanced performance across all goods and services, and facilitating improved customer interactions. The results of this study confirmed the relationship between planning and evaluation and business performance.

This study validates a positive and direct association between market orientation and business performance. Market orientation is a strategic approach that guarantees the prompt recognition and fulfillment of needs (Luxton et al., 2015). Enhanced market orientation leads to improved business performance in organizations. Therefore, it can be deduced that organizations that consistently focus on acquiring market intelligence can develop a highly effective and up-to-date organizational database of market knowledge, resulting in improved business performance. The findings of the study support this argument and it is in line with Porcu et al. (2017); Orazi et al. (2017); Bruhn and Schnebelen (2017).

Practical Implications

Thus, SME executives and owners should focus on these findings. The senior managers play a crucial role in this research, as they are ultimately accountable for deciding to incorporate IMC components to achieve the desired goal. A relationship has been reestablished between the performance of SMEs and IMC components in the Indian context. SMEs can advertise their products, raise brand recognition, and ultimately increase overall sales by effectively implementing IMC capabilities. Effective communication helps boost employee motivation to give their best to pursue company goals. Strategically integrating of IMC capabilities to enhance organizational capacity is necessary to improve the business and financial success of the organization, thus managers can incorporate the same. Employee morale is boosted by

strong IMC capabilities, which lead to better business efficiency and effectiveness. This is especially true for employees responsible for connecting with suppliers, and distributors. Furthermore, the owner and management team of the company must decide how to use IMC effectively in the company to communicate about marketing and work with outside agencies.

Theoretical implications

A combination of IMC capabilities, company performance, and resource-based view (RBV) theory was used in the study. The study confirms its influence on the efficacy of communication in IMC elements and the business performance of SMEs in India. Additionally, this study demonstrates that market orientation and company success govern the influence of IMC capability. These results significantly contribute to both theory and practice. The results verify that incorporating a market orientation as a mediating variable is an essential element that has a substantial impact on the performance outcomes of an organisation. The findings are relevant to the context of small SMEs, as all assumptions are substantially validated. Products and company equity are both boosted by the early implementation of IMC elements. SME managers and owners should invest heavily in integrated marketing communications to boost company growth and performance.

Limitations

This study concentrates exclusively on quantitative research. This study restricts the ability to apply the findings to a larger number of SMEs operating in Maharashtra state. To obtain the desired level of generalization, it is necessary to broaden the scope of this study by including participation from additional states, such as Uttar Pradesh, India's largest center for SMEs. This study lacks qualitative data and observations, which are necessary to comprehensively understand the consequences of IMC aspects on business performance. Therefore, it is recommended that additional qualitative research interventions be conducted using methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, content analysis, and Delphi applications.

Author contributions

Vinod Sharma: Conception and design, Revision of paper. Yogesh Mahajan: Discussion, Drafting of the paper and final approval of the version. Manohar Kapse: Analysis and interpretation of the data, implications.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author

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Appendix. Questionnaire.

Code	Items	Source
	Interactivity (Int)	Duncan and Moriarty (1998)
Int1	Your brand's media plan is a strategic balance between mass media and one-to-one media	
Int2	Special programs are in place to facilitate customer inquiries and complaints about your brand	
Int3	In your databases, you capture customer inquiries, complaints, compliments, and sales behavior related to your brand	
Int4	Your customer databases are easily accessible (internally) and user-friendly	Duncan and Moriarty (1998)
	Mission Marketing (MM)	
MM1	Your company's mission statement is a key consideration in the communications planning for your brand	
MM2	Your mission statement is promoted among customers and other key stakeholders of your brand (e.g. employees, stakeholders)	
MM3	Your brand's social sponsorship contributions are concentrated in one specific area or program (e.g. sport, music, art, etc.)	
	Organizational Infrastructure (OI)	
OI1	In your company, the process of managing the brand's reputation is the responsibility of all departments and employees	
OI2	The people managing the communications program for your brand have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of all major marketing communications tools, such as direct response, PR, sales promotion, advertising and packaging	
OI3	Your company does a good job of internal marketing, informing all areas of the organization about your brand's objectives and marketing program	
OI4	Your major communication agencies (e.g. advertising agencies) have areas of the organization about your brand's	
	Strategic Consistency (SC)	Deshpandé and Farley (1998)
SC1	You regularly review your marketing plan to ensure relevance and consistency of your brand messages and strategic brand positioning	
SC2	Your major promotional theme for the brand is conceptually broad enough to allow for different sub-campaigns aimed at all key stakeholder groups	
SC3	You carefully coordinate the messages being sent by all of your operations, such as pricing, distribution, product performance, and service operations, to ensure consistency of brand positioning	
	Planning and Evaluation (PE)	
PE1	A SWOT analysis is used to determine the strengths and opportunities you can leverage, and the weaknesses and threats you need to address, in your brand's marketing communication planning	
PE2	You use a fresh start or zero-based approach in planning your brand's marketing communication rather than using last year's budget allocation	
PE3	When doing annual marketing communication planning, priority is given to managing the consumer contact(s) with your brands	
PE4	You use some type of systematic brand-tracking study to evaluate the strength of your relationships with customers and other key stakeholder groups.	
PE5	Your brand-marketing strategies maximize the unique strengths of the various marketing communication tools	
PE6	The stated objective of your brand's marketing communication program is to create and maintain profitable relationships with customers and other stakeholders by ensuring consistency in all messages sent to these groups	Li et al. (2013)
	Market Orientation (PMO)	
MO1	Our business objectives are driven primarily by customer satisfaction.	
MO2	We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving customer needs.	
MO3	We freely communicate information about our successful and unsuccessful customer experiences across all business functions	
MO4	Our strategy for competitive advantage is based on our understanding of customers' needs.	
MO5	We measure customer satisfaction systematically and frequently.	
MO6	We have routine or regular measures of customer service.	
MO7	We are more customer-focused than our competitors.	
MO8	I believe this business exists primarily to serve customers.	
MO9	We poll end users at least once a year to assess the quality of our products and services.	Li et al. (2013)
MO10	Data on customer satisfaction are disseminated at all levels in this business unit regularly	
	Business Performance	
BP1	Compared with major competitors our company's return on assets is	
BP2	Compared with major competitors our company's return on sales is	
BP3	Compared with major competitors our company's annual average sales growth is	
BP4	Compared with major competitors our company's percentage of sales from new products is	
BP5	Compared with major competitors our company's new product success rate is	
BP6	Compared with major competitors our company's defective product return rate is	
BP7	Compared with major competitors our customers are satisfied with our company's post-sales service	