



**ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT**

**THE EFFECT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER
PATRONAGE IN THE CASE OF PRIVATE GENERAL HOSPITALS, ADDIS ABABA**

**BY
HIWOT TEREFE**

**JUNE 2021
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APPROVAL SHEET

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BY

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis “**THE EFFECT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER PATRONAGE IN THE CASE OF PRIVATE GENERAL HOSPITALS, ADDIS ABABA.**” is my original work, prepared under the guidance of Mulugeta Gebremedihin (Ph.D.). All sources of materials used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged. I further confirm that the thesis has not been submitted either in part or full to any other higher learning institution for the purpose of earning any degree.

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JUNE 1, 2021

ENDORSEMENT

This thesis has been submitted to St. Mary's University, School of Graduate Studies for examination with my approval as a University advisor.

Advisor

St, Mary's University, Addis Ababa

Signature

June 1, 2021

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ACRONYMS AND ABBERIATION

TV	Television
EIA	Ethiopian Investment Agency
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communication
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
SOR	Stimulus-Organism-Response

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays the private healthcare industry is in a stiff competition against each other to dominate the market. However, on which promotional mix strategy should allocate resources to make customers patron for the brand is the foci of this of this study. Integrated marketing communication is a critical approach to enhance customer loyalty as companies try to do some more attractive, influencing promotions through various media. The prime motive of the study is, thus, to investigate the effect of integrated marketing communication on customer patronage of selected private general hospitals in Addis Ababa. The study utilized explanatory research design along with quantitative approach. Out of 400 distributed questionnaires, a total of 302 valid responses were attained from sample respondents (both admitted and out-patients) from ten private general hospitals. Convenience non-probability sampling was applied to select the targeted respondents. Primary data were collected using self-administered questionnaire. The result endorses that, except sales promotion, all the other four integrated marketing communication tools such as advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, public relations/ publicity, personal selling had significant effect on overall customer patronage. Advertising and personal selling exhibited relatively the highest positive and statistically significant effects .Therefore, it is recommended that Marketing messages should be advertised through social media and be accompanied by personal selling. Promoting on event organization and frequent contact of the targeted potential customers in person enhances the customer patronage.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Private General Hospitals, Customer Patronage, Personal Selling, Advertising

CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the effect of integrated marketing communication practices on customer patronage in the case of private general hospitals in Addis Ababa. It presents the background, the research gap, the objectives, significance and scope of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The emergence of private investments in the healthcare service sector escalates the intense competition in the hospitality industry. Healthcare facilities have been known for accommodating patients far beyond their maximum capacities due to lack of sufficient medical professional and supplies to exceed the minimum standards. The issue is more pronounced in the public health centers but the emergence of private investments in the sector mitigates their burden to a certain level. But, to the contrary, the increase in the number of private hospitals, physicians and medical equipment with competent technologies emanate stiff competition in the medical environment. Serious legal requirements, increasing customers' awareness, demanding better medical services and complicated doctor-patient relation augmented the competition to patronage customers for their services. To survive in such highly sensitive and tensed rivalry, hospitals have turned into building long term relations through promotion and marketing to ensure their survival (Chang, 2000).

Extant studies revealed that marketing communication is a building block of all business relationships (Andersen, 2013; Gilliland and Johnston, 2017; Keller, 2009). It is found to have mainly positive effects on the relationship, as communication mediates various important relationship outcomes through satisfying and instilling trust or confidence on customers (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998). Serving as a means of relational governance that enhances affective commitment toward the hospitals to patient's relationship, it is generally believed that the investments in long-term relationships pay off in creating and adding values results in strengthens customers' intentions to have future purchases of the medical service from the same hospital (Hutchinson, 2011; Mohr, 2016). Repurchase intention and loyalty as a basis for customer patronage is crucial for the hospital managers and marketers to know the patient's perception towards their experience with perceived value attained from the ultimate outcome of the relation (Sirdeshmukh, 2002).

However, despite the existing body of knowledge on hospital-patient communication, less is known about the role of marketing communications in the medical service industry (Andersen, 2011). Even though it is an essential element of a value-based approach, addressing marketing messages to the targeted customers (i.e. patients) in an integrated manner have been neglected for decades and less is known about the role of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in business relationships (Andersen, 201; Sharma., 2013) in Ethiopian healthcare service's context. IMC is suggested to have a mediating role in transforming of perceived service quality into loyalty (Gilliland, 2017) but it may have been traditionally considered irrelevant due to lack of the medical services in the country. Rather likened to advertising in mass media channels merely aiming to create awareness regarding their presence in the market.

To enhance their customer's patronage, implementation of promotional mix as a tool for IMC in medical service context by private hospitals helps them sustain in the market for long period. It can be achieved by media advertising, implementing volunteer medical activities to foster a good image of the hospital, announcement of activities through publication, provision of consistent medical updates and holding press conferences periodically or medical column on the newspaper. All of which increase the awareness and understanding of the consumers towards the hospital benefits both the service providers as well as the publics. For the public, it promotes the health awareness of consumers, the well-being of consumers through free health information, creates trust and instills trust which, in turn, keeps them loyal and makes the right choices in medical care. The hospital is also advantageous as it brings business and promotes a good reputation results in patronizing clients, however, many hospitals ignore such critical marketing strategies (Chien, 2014).

The main purpose of this study is thus, to investigate the effect of IMC on customer patronage taking private general hospitals in Addis Ababa as a case study. The output of this research may have a significance in filling knowledge gap in regard to keeping customer relationship for longer through implementing effective marketing communication in an integrated manner. Besides, customers would have more awareness about the private hospitals' overall activities to make informed decision.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The trend in Ethiopian health sector revealed that shortage of physicians and related healthcare providers boosts the demand of additional health facilities beyond the capacity of the existing public hospitals (Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoHE), 2012). But recently, after having substantial reforms

aggressively in the health sector, a number of private investors and stakeholders have been encouraged to participate in the emerging market to mitigate the social crisis through minimizing the gap to a certain level. However, according to Central Statistics Agency of Ethiopian (ECSA), 2018, due to considerably high demand-supply gap (physicians to population ratio of 1: 60,000); and existence of few numbers of private hospitals in the country, private hospital managements argue the necessity or effectiveness of marketing communication strategy as they still believe the market has not been exploited yet. Utterly biased by the profitability of the business, they gave less due attention for strong brand building through well designed and implemented marketing communication.

Annual population growth, urbanization, awareness and disposable income increment heavily aggravate the demand-supply gap in the sector (MoHE, 2012). Meaningful changes in such macro-economic factors can be considered as significant role players in creating favorable opportunity to new entrants in terms of garbing market share effortlessly even though initial investment cost is a major barrier (Zelalem, 2016). However, the emerging new entrants as well as the existing medical institutions in the existing business may face a huge competition in regards to providing low medical service charges (price) with high service quality. Private hospital's image has become as a function accommodating prominent or famous specialist rather than the reputation of the private hospital's reputation (Bruh, 2018). Customers are used to switch to other private hospitals in pursue of the "known" physicians rather than considering the overall medical service quality. These trends often ended up "worshipping" a given specialist in the field which resulted in motivating the private hospitals for their price skimming strategy through chasing famous physicians against the medical ethics (Jonson, 2011).

Hence the healthcare market is highly sensitive and competitive, customers are prone to switch to other competitors easily (Keller, 2009). Private hospitals should be dedicated to create strong brand loyalty through IMC to position their brand into targeted customers' mind. To achieve such sound competitive advantages, thus, marketers or concerned hospital managements should build strong customer patronage through effective marketing communication as high brand loyalty is known to lead to higher consumer preferences and behavioral intentions which in turn resulted in long-term sustainability (Freling, 2011). Identifying the most effective way of promotion is crucial to private hospitals to direct their promotional effort appropriately so as to build sustainable brand loyalty. However, although brand loyalty is a common theme of consumer research in Ethiopia (Zelalem, 2016; Bruh, 2018; Zeresenay, 2018), little has been done in evaluating the effect of integrated marketing communication

on customer's patronage in private general hospitals. Most of them promote their services in different brand names with almost similar promotional tools, like commercial advertising merely.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to investigate the effect of integrated marketing communication on customer patronage in the case of private hospitals in Addis Ababa.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i- Evaluate the effect of advertising on customer patronage of private hospitals in Addis Ababa
- ii- Evaluate the influence of sales promotion on customer patronage of private hospitals
- iii- Investigate the effect of direct marketing to patronage customers of private hospitals
- iv- Investigate effect of personal selling of private hospitals to retain loyal customers
- v- Evaluate the effect of public relations/ publicity on customer patronage of private hospitals

1.4 Significance of the Study

The assessment of integrated marketing communication practices of private hospitals has a number of significances to different stakeholders such as manager and marketers of private hospitals, in- and out-patients, adding values to the existing knowledge, and the likes. The output of this research may benefit the Hospital managers and marketers to design and implement cost effective marketing strategy to attract and retain customers for longer period. It also helps them allocate appropriate budget based on informed decision making. The customers (patients) will have better information regarding the overall activities of the hospitals what they have or have not. It also mitigates the hassle of accessing information and chasing known-physicians here and there in pursue of better medical services. Since the area has been neglected for different reasons, the findings of this research may contribute to the existing knowledge by adding values in filling the gap. It may also serve as a spring board for further study in the field by prospect fellow graduates.

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was limited geographically, conceptually and methodologically to manage it within the existing resources (time, finance, COVID-19 debacles). Geographically, the scope is limited to Addis Ababa as most prominent private hospitals are located in the capital city. The homogeneity of the medical service nature in the country makes it the overall practices of the private hospitals by taking representativeness of cases in Addis Ababa.

There are a number of other factors that affect customer patronage in the private hospital service industry in Ethiopia. For instance, previous reputation of the hospital, prices, location, customer satisfaction, and the likes. But, in this study, only IMC is taken as an independent variable that accounted for variation in customer patronage.

This study also targeted only private general hospitals and their respective customers residing in Addis Ababa as a study target population. Customers out of the city were intentionally excluded as they are out of the scope.

1.6 Limitation

The debacles of COVID-19 imposed its own impact on the reliability of the study as unavailability of loyal customers due to fear of the current pandemics. It affected the reliability of the study to a certain extent. Besides, marketers or managers of the hospitals were hesitant to disclose their marketing strategy for the case sensitivity. This also contribute its own influence the overall picture of the study.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study is classified into five main chapters. The first chapter refers introduction of the study which includes the background, the problem statement, the research objectives, significance and scope of the study. The second chapter focuses on literature review. It contains relevant theories, conceptual and empirical discussions leading to identification of research gaps and the conceptual framework. The third chapter presents the research design, target population, sampling methods, sample size, data collection instruments to be used as well as method of data analysis and presentation. The fourth chapter presents demographic characteristics, descriptive and inferential statistics analysis, findings and their interpretations. The last chapter consists summary of major findings, conclusions and recommendations of the research study.

CHAPTER TWO

2. REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explores the relevant theoretical and empirical literatures in which the conceptual framework of the study is derived. The theoretical part comprises the definitions, concepts and dimensions or tools of IMC, customer patronage/ loyalty and its relationship between IMC. The empirical literature is reviewed to back up the arguments in the theoretical review and guide the conceptual framework of the study.

In order to attract new customers and maintain existing ones in order to increase the sustainable competitiveness of companies, strategies to improve customer loyalty are important. In order to introduce new products/ brands and to capture new customer base in the market, IMC measures are extensively used by the marketing managers. Attractiveness and encouraging characteristics of orchestrated promotional activities push the attention of the consumers towards a specific promoted product. Marketing messages which are delivered through different marketing communication tools in an integrated manner has a significant influence on the customer loyalty of companies. As a result, retaining and maintaining a loyal customer base becomes an asset for their sustainable growth.

With these notions, marketing literature also found that consumers avoid to switch to those products or brands where they have to face certain costs (monetary or nonmonetary), fear of losing established relationship etc. Moreover, the products with high rate of awareness, established image, high perception of quality and higher loyal customer base succeed in strengthening their customer base. The conceptual model of this study is tuned based on this notion. It states that the creation of awareness, provision of new information or kind reminder of the targeted consumers via IMC are believed to influence the behavioral intention of the buyer to purchase the product results in increasing their loyalty in the long-run.

The process of reviewing the literature develops an understanding of the subject area better thus, helps to conceptualize research problem clearly and precisely. Besides, an understanding of the various procedures and methods adopted in the literature also provided an additional advantage. Therefore, the main objective of the present chapter is to dig out the fact from the extant literature about the main

constructs of the study which revolves around the relationship between IMC practices and their effect on customer loyalty/ patronage of business companies.

2.1 Theoretical Review

The theoretical framework underlying this study is the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) theory (Russell, 1974). The IMC program is structured as a stimulus, whereas the client is an entity and customer loyalty is a reaction. The theory of SOR suggests that the organism can mediate the effect of stimulus on response (Wu & Li, 2016). The core proposition therefore is that the formation of customer patronage begins with effective and efficient IMC strategies, followed accurate delivery to consumer (organism) and finally this will result in the output (customer loyalty) response.

IMC in the recent times centered on customers who are the essence of any business, as most definitions tend towards integrating different marketing communications disciplines to inform, persuade and remind customers to patronize the company, its products and services. According to Kotler (2003), IMC has a way of looking at the whole marketing process from the point of view of the consumer, which ensures a marketing communication discipline that stimulates mutual profit for both the business and its consumers. In addition, Kotler (1999) describes IMC as 'the definition under which a company carefully integrates and schedules its communication networks in order to provide a straightforward, consistent and persuasive message about the organization and its goods.' IMC is a strategy in which companies communicate brands through the incorporation of various elements of a promotional mix to work together to create a seaml. The basic aim of IMC is to optimize the synergetic ability of the various marketing relations disciplines as a whole and not in isolation, which in most cases maximizes their cost-effectiveness (Csikósová, 2014).

The five principles underlying IMC are ; customer prospecting through identification of customer's needs, effective and efficient use of relevant contacts or touch points to reach target consumers, communicating with a single voice meaning that all messages relayed to targets across communication channels and touch points should be consistent, consolidating relationships with customers, and lastly, it must generate appropriate behavioral response (Shimp, 2013). Furthermore, Schultz (1993) operationalized these in six steps namely; outside-in planning, which emphasizes consumer needs, then the use the collected data to select the most suitable communication approach to meet the consumer's needs, developing a customer-oriented database, which helps marketers understand and predict consumer behaviors, as well as aid them in reaching the right targets, brand contacts which

entail integration of different marketing communications disciplines in order to produce a greater impact than using a single tool. Initiate zero-based planning by making current market environment and brand situation to plan and budget, communication with one voice in order to harmonize of communication tool to the same brand concept, adopting a cross-functional work in order to focus activities towards a common goal (Schultz, 2014), drawing on the resource-based view theory, Luxton (2015) that investigates how IMC capability drives a brand's financial performance through influencing the effectiveness of communication campaigns and the brand's market-based performance. The results show that the IMC potential has a significant direct impact on the success of the campaign and a significant indirect impact on the market-based performance and financial performance of the brand. The study highlights the role of IMC as a core firm-specific capability that has a major impact on performance outcomes. The study concludes that companies need to be successful in developing distinctive IMC capabilities, which in turn contribute to superior market-based and financial success of brands.

On the other hand, consumer loyalty can be seen as an important principle in the market that is used to enhance the intent of the life of every market. According to Anderson and Jacobsen, (2000), consumer loyalty is the product of providing benefits for consumers so that they can retain and increasingly repeat business with the company. Benefits can be provided by the successful implementation of the IMC dimension assortment for the mutual benefit of both the consumer and the business. In addition, Van (2012) specify that customers are loyal to a firm whenever they have been satisfied consistently, and they tend to become passionate doing business with, and loyal to the firm. Relevant theories of marketing communication and customer loyalty are reviewed. The concepts of IMC, promotional mix tools and their relationship with customer loyalty is discussed under the theoretical review.

2.1.1 Theories and Models of Marketing Communication

There are several theories and models concerning marketing communication mix that expound in numerous ways through which communication strategies are used to communicate information to potential and current customers in the market. Three different marketing theories such as Theory of Reasoned-Action, Theory of Dagmar, and Theory of Persuasion and three theoretical models namely AIDA, Hierarchy of Effects and Diffusion of Innovation Theoretical models are presented as follow.

Theory of Reasoned Action

In Godin's (1994) argument, the principal goals of the theory of reasoned action are to comprehend and thus foretell social behaviors. To be able to do this, the behavior has to be clearly described, under balanced control and done in specified situation. Moreover, a hypothesis is made that the key point behind the immediate and exclusive determinant of the behavior is the purpose of performing or not performing that behavior. As a result, this theory considers social behavior at the level of individual decision making. According to his theory, the possible determinants of the intention to espouse a given behavior are the individual's personal attitude towards social factors in performing the behavior.

Theory of Dagmar

Dagmar is a marketing theory which is used for evaluating the results of an advertising operation. It includes outlining specific, measurable objectives for an operation to decide if specific objectives were actually met. Precisely, Dagmar goes through four steps to communicate a specific message such as awareness making the consumer aware that the product is available; comprehension notifying the consumer about the purpose of the product or why it is used; conviction convincing the consumer to purchase it; and action making the consumer definitely purchase it. Karisson (2007) made the argument that he created Dagmar by the time he set a report for an association of National Advertisers. And hence, the title of the report was 'defining advertising goals for measured results' which was abridged to Dagmar and was published later in 1969 in a book form with that same title (Mackay, 2005). The main reason why Dagmar was created was to boost measurable objectives for every stage of communication (Smith, 2012). As Belch (1995) stated it emphasizes the level of understanding that customers have to be satisfied with the firm and how to evaluate the result of an advertising campaign.

The Dagmar theory has created an immense impact on how to set objectives in advertising, planning process. And these models have been used as a benchmark by many planners. And yet, like any other theory of marketing, Dagmar has faced several challenges. Among the critical criticisms is its dependence on the hierarchy- of- effects theory as AIDA. Customers don't always go through the stages in a uniform manner. So, the conclusion that was given in the case of Dagmar theory was put in the quotation as follows: "All commercial communications that drag down the sales have to take an understanding of the prospect (potential customer) in four levels: First and foremost, the prospect has to be aware that a brand or a business firm exists. Second, he should have a full understanding of the

product and what advantage he gets from it. Third, he should reach the mental suspicion or conviction to buy it and fourth, he has to act (Macky, 2005).

Theory of Persuasion

Either negatively or positively, realizing the effect of advertising on its audience is the essential part of persuasion theory. The overall concept of persuasion has led to progress in other fields of attitudes and persuasion research which have a tremendous input in marketing and advertising research. Definitely, attitude is likely to increase when people view themselves as being resistant to persuasion communication (Shrum, 2012), and in Postbank's case, persuading customer has to be done through media or any means of communication.

The AIDA Model

AIDA is a communication model used by businesses to expedite their sales of products or services. The model was applied in a way to address how advertising a potential audience may pass through the different steps bearing in mind that attention takes the priority. It was formulated by Elias (1925) who was an advertising and sales innovator and who also believed that advertising would be effective if it incorporated the four best features. It presents thorough clarification of the whole process of how advertising creates an impact on consumer behavior and the purchasing decision. It is an abbreviation for factor of Attention, Interest, Desire and Action, all of which are significant for the relation between consumer behavior and advertising. AIDA model is initiatory constituting beginning initiatory proceeding and simplest (Aaker, 2000). It describes how personal selling is done and it also shows the step-by-step process leading a potential customer to make the purchase. According to Kotler (2007) the first ingredient, *attention*, outlines the stage at which the brand is able to grip the attention of the consumer via the advertisement he\she has come across. The attention might be positive or negative or sometimes, with the worst case, no attention is spotted. From the advertiser's perspective, only the first case is a preferable one because it is where the consumer gives a full attention to the advertisement and ultimately the brand.

Organizations arousing attention, interest, desire and attraction of products in the market through proper channels of communication to reach the bulky market accordingly stimulate demands of current and new products in the market. And so, the espousal of the theory by business organizations encourages tremendous growth of the companies with regards to client base and revenue. They all share three stages in common despite the fact that the number or names of sub-stages might vary. And

these stages are: Cognitive stage (what the receiver knows or apprehends; Affective stage (receiver's feelings or affective level) and Behavioral stage (consumer's behavior) (Aaker, 2000).

This AIDA model can be used in the conceptual model i.e. for advertising, sales promotion and personal strategies to achieve their goals, they have to incorporate the four qualities of the model. The first quality is captivating the attention of the audience. Second, infuse interest to get information about the product. Third, the information which is obtained has to arouse a desire to possess the product and fourth, proper actions of purchasing a product should occur as a reaction from the audience. Attention, interest and desire in a product can be initiated through public relations strategies and direct marketing.

Hierarchy of Effects Model

This model was created by Lavidge and Gary in 1961. According to this marketing communication model, there are six stages in the process between viewing a product advertisement and product purchasing. The main responsibility of the advertiser is to provoke the customer to pass through the six stages and purchase the product that embraces: Awareness, knowledge, liking, preference, conviction and purchase. It is definitely clear that customers are exposed to a number of advertisements each day, but will merely remember a handful of products. In Steiner's (1961) elaboration, it is a hierarchy of effects due to the fact that the number of customers dwindles when you move from one stage to another which connotes that business firms must exert their utmost efforts to retain as many customers as possible to the final stage of purchase by way of creative marketing communication messages which deliver exclusive value or service proposals to the target audience.

As per the view of this model, customers don't switch from the point of no interest to the point of being convinced to buy at once. It indicates the process or steps that that an advertiser thinks customers would pass through the real purchase process. The Response hierarchy theory supposes that the customer goes through three stages: cognitive, affective and behavioral stages. First, the learn-feel-do sequence is suitable when an audience has high involvement-high differentiation product category. Example, a house or furniture. Second, do-feel-learn theory pattern is valid when an audience has low involvement but there is no differentiation product category. Example, airline tickets. Third, learn-feel-do progression is proper when an audience has low involvement but little differentiation. Example, sugar. So, by determining the correct sequence, the marketer is in a position to accomplish an excellent task of planning marketing communications.

Smith (2012) once again wrote that they are completely aware of the spontaneous purchases made by customers but they mean that for higher economical goods, these steps are necessary for the advertiser to encompass. This model again has the assumption that advertising takes place through time and may not result in immediate response and purchase. But instead, it is a succession of effects which has to take place with each step completed towards the next step.

Diffusion of Innovations Theory

This theory of diffusion of innovation was devised by Roges (2015) to expound how marketing communication mechanisms and interpersonal relationship render information and affect the opinion and decision of the target audience. According to him, this model has four stages: invention, diffusion or communication through the social system time and consequence. It describes how different classes of customers adopt new products at various time intervals with innovators (2.5%) being the first, early adopters (13.5%) early majority (34%) late majority (34%) and laggards at (16%) respectively. This theory adds that the rate of adoption always relies on the product's complexity, comparative advantage, try-ability, compatibility and observability. This theory suggests that firms should endeavor to convey marketing messages through a variety of communication tools in order to rise the rate of adoption of a new product.

2.1.2 Promotion – A Marketing Mix

Promotion, can be defined as a tool of marketing mix, consists of communicational efforts in order to persuade the consumers to accept the services offered in the tourist market (Kozak, 2006). Promotion is one of the marketing activities together with product design and development, pricing and distribution (Kotler and Armstrong, 2001). Promotion is to make a product, an institution, a person or an idea known and accepted by the public, particularly by the target market (2006). Promotion means using the informative, monitory and persuasive every publicity efforts in order to increase the product sales or to ease the acceptability of an idea Promotion can be used as a tool of marketing (Minh, 2007) or marketing efforts to send messages to the target market by the business enterprises in order to give information about the products offered to the consumers and create positive image about the business enterprises, hence it can act as a strategic marketing tool in the development and the sustainability of the businesses.

The power of branding and brand loyalty require intensive promotional efforts in the tourism industry as it happens in many other industries (Erol, 2003). Promotional activities are becoming more and

more important in today's competitive business climate, due to the growing geographical and cultural gap between producers and customers, a rise in the number of consumers as a result of an increase in population, growth in markets as a result of sales growth, increased competition as a result of alternative goods, increased growth and spread. Possible objectives of promotion are to create awareness, stimulate demand, encourage product trial, identify prospects, retain loyal customers, facilitate reseller support, combat competitive promotional efforts, reduce sales fluctuations (Peter, 1998). Real estate industry is not exceptional to the above given features of promotional efforts.

2.1.3 Integrated Marketing Communications

Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) is characterized as a customer-centric, data-driven form of communication with the customer. IMC coordinates and incorporates all marketing communication resources, avenues, roles and sources within an organization into a seamless program that maximizes the effect on customers and other end users at minimal cost. This management philosophy is structured to ensure that all facets of marketing communication, such as advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing, function together as a single force rather than allowing each to operate in isolation.

It can be seen as a mechanism for managing consumer relationships that drive brand value primarily through communication efforts. Such activities also include cross-functional processes that establish and nurture profitable relationships with consumers and other stakeholders by strategically managing or manipulating all messages sent to these groups and facilitating data-driven, purposeful dialog with them. IMC shall organize and incorporate all marketing communication methods, avenues and sources within an organization into a seamless program in order to optimize the effect on end users at a minimum cost. It's a really easy idea. It ensures that all modes of communications and messages are closely connected together.

2.1.4 Promotional Mix Tools

Promotion mix endeavors to catch the attention of new customers, encourage customer loyalty, encourage trial, inform and remind potential customers about new arrivals, encourage new customers, modify attitudes, build an image, encourage brand switching etc. (Kotler, 2007). It consists of five diverse fields of communication channel: advertising, personal selling, public relations, direct marketing and Sales promotion.

2.1.4.1 Advertising

In Kevin's (2009) definition, advertising is any paid means of non-personal communication about an organization, good service or idea by a recognized sponsor. The paid facet of this definition is important because the space for the advertising message normally must be bought. Advertisement covers policies and procedures related to amount to spend. For example, the load to be placed on advertising and copy platform to acquire product image desired and corporate desired and finally mix of advertising to the trade through the trade to consumers. In his conclusion, he elaborates that advertising attracts new customers to a company in addition to boosting customer loyalty, since it requires making the brand well known to people. Moreover, Shimp (2010) states that advertising is aimed at promoting the seller's products by making them public through various kinds of media like printed and electronic. This is made clear by the fact that messages can reach large numbers of people and make them aware, persuade and remind them of the firm's offers.

From a marketing management viewpoint, advertising is an essential strategic tool for keeping a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Advertising budgets are indicative of a large and growing element in the cost of goods and service (Kotler, 2005). The usage of interactive media in the market place is undergoing fast growth. Unluckily, high expectations have been replaced by dissatisfaction with many companies becoming more and more uncertain as to when their interactive media efforts will become profitable. The American marketing association has adopted the following definition: any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, products or services by an established sponsor (Baker 1991). Planning advertising goals should be focused on previous decisions on the target market, positioning and marketing mix, which determine the role of advertising in the overall marketing program.

The advertisement purpose is a particular contact task to be carried out with a specific target group over a specific period of time. Advertising targets can be categorized by primary intent, whether the aim is to educate, convince or remind the public. Informative advertising is used actively by developing a new category of goods by developing primary demand. Some convincing advertising has been comparative advertising in which a company directly or implicitly compares its brand to one or more other products. Reminder advertising is important for mature products – it keeps consumers preoccupied with the product (Kotler, 2011).

According to Minh (2007), it is relevant for any organization to realize that Advertising mass media has made Advertising more accurate, has played an important role in business to consumer marketing and enabled companies to achieve communication and other marketing objectives. A study by Aliata (2012) made the premise that the amount of money spent on advertising has a statistically substantial relationship with the performance of national bank of Kenya measured by profits. The main purpose of this study was to establish the direction that relationship takes for the case of Post bank. The bank should be having mass media advertisement that would help it improve productivity and performance.

2.1.4.2 Personal Selling

According to Etzel (2010) personal selling is a direct communication between a sales representative and more potential buyers with an intention to act upon each other in purchasing situation. Similarly, Futrell (2012) describes Personal selling as the personal communication in which a seller considerably sways a potential customer into buying goods or services, an idea, or anything which satisfies the individual. Personal selling is the most reliable method at a certain stage of the buying process, especially in building buyer's preferences, convictions, and actions. It contains personal interaction between two or more people, so each person is able to notice the other's needs and characteristics and make swift alterations. Besides, Kotler (2006), explains that Personal selling also gives presents a big chance for all forms of relationships to grow, starting from normal selling relationships to personal friendships.

The effective salesperson takes the customer's interest seriously to bring a sustainable relationship. Finally, with personal selling, the buyer is normally aroused to listen and response is a polite "no thank you". These exceptional qualities are costly by themselves. A sales force requires long-lasting dedication more than advertising –advertising may be irregular; however, the size of sales force is difficult to change. Personal selling is also the company's costly promotion tool, incurring a lot of expenses to the bank. For example, in the bank the sales people need a car and time to meet a client.

Furthermore, Davis (2014) suggests that companies that successfully take part in personal selling boost their performance through rising sales of the company's products. A study by Aliata (2012) summarizes the relationship between personal selling and performance. The study discovered that personal selling is essentially related to profits of banks in a positive way. Callen (2010) on his part said that Personal selling is a form of person-to-person communication, whereby a seller exerts an effort to help and/or persuade potential buyer to purchase the company's products and service. It has

a direct communication between a buyer and a seller, which makes the market communication flexible. This means that the seller has the chance to see or hear the potential buyer's reactions closely and modify the message.

Personal selling is any face-to-face promotion of the company and its products to the customer's. Personal selling is commonly used by suppliers (manufacturers and importers) to deal directly with retailers. Personal selling is the most feasible method at later stages of buying process and three distinctive qualities are Personal Confrontation Personal selling involves an immediate and interactive connection between two or more people. Secondly, Cultivation where personal selling allows all kinds of relationships to grow starting from regular selling relationship to a deep personal friendship and finally, response where the buyer is obliged to listen to the sales talks.

According to Kerin, (2009), personal sale is a two-way contact between the consumer and the seller, with a plan to influence the purchasing decision of a individual or community. Shimp (2010) also claimed that the value of personal sales is that consumers can get more attention than ads or displays. The sales person may correct what they say or do in accordance with the interest, desires, questions and suggestions of the customer.

2.1.4.3 Direct Marketing

Armstrong (2005) again argued that direct marketing is the use of direct consumer networks to access and distribute products and services to consumers without the use of marketing facilitators. These platforms include direct mail, catalogues, telemarketing, digital television, newsstands, blogs and mobile devices. It consists of a direct interaction with carefully selected individual customers, not just in order to achieve an immediate response but also to cultivate a long-term customer relationship. Direct marketers engage directly with consumers, often on an immersive, one-to-one system. Through making use of a comprehensive database, they tailor their marketing and communications offerings to the needs of closely defined segments or even individual customers.

Direct marketing if well planned and implemented effectively becomes more cost effective than other promotional methods due to the specific targets that the technique is applied to. Existing customers can be communicated to familiarize them with new products and special offers, hence, affecting their loyalty while the new customers can be identified and stimulated to purchase products or services of a business organization through direct channels (Callen, 2010).

According to him, direct marketing has increased the consumer's use of internet for purchasing many products. Direct marketing activities are often very effective in producing sales leads when a customer asks for more information about a product or service. Other than brand and image building, direct marketers usually search for a direct, instant, and measurable consumer feedback. For example, Dell computer runs its operation in direct contact with customers_ by telephone or through its web site to design, build systems that meet customer's individual needs. Direct marketing communicates directly with customers, often on a one- to o-ne, interactive basis. Using detail databases, they adjust their marketing offers and communications to the needs of narrowly specified segments or even individuals (Kotler, 2006). Direct marketing is suitable, easy to use, and private. In other words, just by keeping their comfort at home, they search mail catalogs or company websites. Direct marketing is such an indispensable tool for the sellers in establishing customer relations using database marketing.

The present-day marketers can target small groups or individual consumers, adjust-offers to individual needs and promote these offers via personalized communications. Direct marketing can make a low cost-efficient offer in searching for markets. For example; direct marketing has advanced swiftly in business- to -business marketing, to some extent in reaction to the ever-rising costs of marketing through sales force (Kotler, 2006). In his further statement, he suggests that direct ethical marketing activities can be best nurtured through moral conviction, by creating an ethical business atmosphere for direct marketing, efforts to make a conscious commitment that you and the organization will accept and stick to high principles by adopting, leading with courage, hiring and promoting the right people and creating an ethical culture.

2.1.4.4 Sales Promotion

As defined by Peter (1998), Sales promotion, known as a demand–stimulation method, is devised to support advertising and to expedite personal selling. Sales promotion may be carried out by producers and middlemen. The target for producer' sales promotions may be middlemen, end users-households or business users-or the producer's sales force. Middlemen implement sales promotion on their sales people or potential customers up to the channel of distribution. Sales promotion today in Kenya is properly used on fast moving commodities and other industries should also integrate the vigorous use of sales promotion. Kotler (2011), realized that sales promotion comprises a wide collection of tools–coupons, contest, cents–off deals, premium, and others they all have many distinctive features. They captivate consumer's attention, provide valuable incentive to purchase, and be used to make product offers more appealing and boost declining sales promotions, invite and reward quick reaction -where

advertising says “buy our product”, sales promotion says buy it now. Most of the time, Sales promotion results are ephemeral _they don’t last long, and frequently not as reliable as advertising or personal selling in creating long-term brand preference.

In reality, the studies conducted by Aliata (2012) found a statistically fundamental relationship between sales promotion and performance. They made the proposition that sales promotion raised brand preference, which in turn improved brand performance and later high profits/performance. The two reasons which brought about this higher popularity without any question are the increased burden on management for short –term results and the availability of new purchase tracking technology. Push and pull marketing are two options open to marketers interested in selling their goods to consumers. Push strategy is concerned with concentrating advertising activities on manufacturers, suppliers and sales staff to collaborate in buying, storing and accelerating product sales. The Pull strategy is concerned with direct efforts on the part of consumers to encourage them to ask the retailer for the product.

Smith (2012) discussed selecting the suitable techniques in promotional plans, which include: first, the nature of the target audience where the target group is expected to be loyal to the brand. Secondly, the nature of the products, which require sampling, demonstration, or multiple –item purchase. Thirdly, cost device where sampling to a larger market may be extremely expensive. The other point which Kerin (1992) gave emphasis to in regards to the advantages of sales promotion is that the short-term nature of these programs (such as a coupon or sweepstakes with an expiration date) mostly encourages sales for the time being. Providing a customer with a value in terms of a cents-off or discount coupon can increase store traffic from consumers who are not shop-loyal. Sales promotion can’t be the only justification for a campaign, as returns are always fleeting and fall off when the offer is over. Advertising back up is required to turn the consumer who tried the product as a result of sales promotion into a long-term purchaser. According to Keegen (2002), sales promotion talks about any particular time of a customer or trade program that gives real value to a product or brand.

2.1.4.5 Public Relation/ Publicity

As Etzel (2010) stresses, Public Relations is a management tool applied to positively influence attitudes towards an organization, its products, and its policies. It is a frequently disregarded form of promotion. Management doesn’t pay due attention to public relation because the organizational behavior is not responsible for the marketing department. It is normally managed by a small public

relations department that is directly accountable to top management. Secondly, insufficient definitions which are used improperly by both businesses and the public organization; thirdly unrecognized benefits only recently have many organizations come to appreciate value of good public relations. As the cost of promotions have hiked up, firms have come to realize that positive exposure(publicity) through the media or as a result of community involvement can produce a high return on the investment of time and effort. Public relations are any form of commercially significant news item about organizations, goods, medium which the sponsor doesn't pay for. It is news transmitted in the media by the editor or reporter, and which has significant news value (Ayozie 2011). Public Relations is the management activity that forms and sustains mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and public (Cutlip, 2010).

Kerin (2009), states that public relations are a form of communication management which aimed at influencing the feelings, opinions or beliefs held by customers, potential customers, stock holders, suppliers, employees and other publics about a company and its products or services. Public relations are a non-personal way of communication that attempts to create an impact on the whole image of the organization and its products and services among its various stakeholder groups. The main purpose of PR is to attain customer loyalty, attract new customers, increase the purchase of the products or services, and boost the general acceptance of the company commands in the society. Public relations managers emphasize on communicating positive images about the organization, but they have to be in a position as well to reduce the undesirable impacts of a crisis (Armstrong 2005).

According to Kotler (2006), there are several forms of publicity and they are: news release that is an announcement in regards to changes in the organization or product line, sometimes calls a press release and news conference, which involves meeting held for representatives of the media so that the organization can publicize major new events such as new products, technologies, mergers, acquisitions and special events (Kotler, 2006). Public relations are the management operation that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relations between organizations and the public on whom its success or failure depends" (Cutlip, 2010). Sponsorship in Public relation provides support for associating the organization's name with events, programs, or even people such as amateur athletes or teams and also it allows Public Service announcements. Many non-profit organizations rely on the media to donate time for advertising for contributions and donors.

2.1.4.6 Customer Patronage/ Loyalty

The idea of loyalty is a multidimensional concept and there are several meanings in literature (Soderlund, 2002). Generally, loyalty has been and continues to be characterized as a strong commitment to purchase or patronize the preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite the potential for situational pressures and marketing efforts to trigger switching behavior (Oliver, 1997). Jacoby (1978) noted that, as a result of an evaluative decision-making process, consumer loyalty is the behavioral outcome of the customer's choice over a period of time for a particular brand from the preference of similar brands (Gilmore, 2003).

Oliver (1997) came up with a new theory of consumer loyalty. Oliver described loyalty as a firmly held commitment to re-buy or re-sponsor the preferred product or service consistently in the future, resulting in a repetitive purchase of the same brand or the same brand, despite situational influences and marketing efforts that have the potential to trigger switching behavior. Loyalty, he said, is a learning process that illustrates the relationship between attitude and actions. He noted that loyalty would be established in three stages. "First of all, loyalty is in a cognitive context, then in an affective context, and then in a conative way." These three phases are often related to the concept of attitude. Many studies around the world have shown that behaviors can be classified into three groups, such as cognition, affect and conation, which can otherwise be referred to as behavioral intent (Murale, 2007). Griffin (1995) classified consumer loyalty into four types: regularly repeated buying conduct, willingness to purchase other items from the same provider, constructive appraisal, and willingness to recommend. On the other hand, Jones and Sasser (1995) assumed that there were three forms of consumer loyalty, such as repurchase, basic actions and subsequent behavior.

As a quantitative indicator, the concept of consumer loyalty has been conceptualized from three primary viewpoints: (a) behavioral, (b) attitudinal, and (c) as a combination of the first two perspectives (McMullan, 2005). Behavioral loyalty is linked to the tendency of the customer to re-purchase a product or service from the same supplier that is assessed and directly affects brand sales (Haghighi, 2014). Attitudinal loyalty is the predisposition of the consumer to a brand that is a result of psychological processes (Jacob and Chestnut, 1978). The attitudinal perspective of loyalty is the keen, internal, emotional, liking of a specific brand. Much of the previous loyalty research has investigated attitudinal dimension of loyalty (La and Yi, 2004). The measurement limitations of behavioral loyalty are obvious, where dimensions simply measure behavioral variables to predict the customer's

frequency of purchase and level of cross-buying (Kim, 2015). In addition, Uncles (2003) found out that the distinction between behavioral and attitudinal conceptualization between loyalty is not convincing. Chen's (2009) retail-based research has shown that consumer outcomes and environmental quality expectations can have a high effect on attitudinal loyalty, which in turn contributes to higher behavioral loyalty (Shafti, 2014).

By incorporating the fourth phase of action, Oliver (1997) developed a four-phase model of consumer loyalty growth based on the following four dimensions: (a) cognitive loyalty, (b) affective loyalty, (c) conative loyalty and (d) action loyalty.

Cognitive loyalty as the lowest state of loyalty is based on the expense and benefits of the product, but is not based on the brand itself. It is the worst form of loyalty since it consists of the costs and benefits of the offering and does not cover the brand itself. Consumers are therefore likely to turn when they see alternative offerings as superior to the cost-benefit ratio (Kim, 2015). The second step is affective loyalty, which includes both the likeness of the product and the enjoyment of the brand. Affective fidelity is also a matter of degradation. The deterioration is mainly due to the increased attractiveness of competitive products and is expected to occur through the balancing of expectations and perceived results (McMullan and Gilmore, 2003).

The third phase of loyalty development is *conative loyalty*, which is stronger than cognitive and affective loyalty as it contains what, at first, appears to be the deeply held commitment to buy noted in the loyalty definition (Oliver, 1999). At this phase of loyalty development, consumers continue to buy one company's product with their commitment to the company (Wunderlich, 2006).

The *action* phase is the last phase added by Oliver (1999) to existing models. According to him, "*Cognitive loyalty focuses on the brand's performance aspects, affective loyalty is directed toward the brand's likeableness, conative loyalty is experienced when the consumer focuses on want or buys the brand, and action loyalty is a commitment to the action of re-buying.*" (Oliver, 1999). When a consumer is actual loyal, his/her attitude is transformed into action (Kim, 2015).

Customer loyalty is essential for any organization to return customers, and loyalty of customers has many advantages to organization. Loyal customers are less sensitive to price and loyal customers saves an organization's marketing activities in order to attract new customer (Kim, 2015). Customers are the driving force for profitable growth and customer loyalty can lead to profit. Adopting a communicative approach to private hospital marketing has several advantages. A communication theory improves

scientific research on consumer loyalty and thus reinforces the loyalty of outpatients. First, it promotes structures such as company or institution trust or attachment helping in distinguishing the communication and exchange services. Second, research leads to cross-level that links areas of healthcare and patients together, and it makes us to explain how healthcare centers like hospitals arise and maintain strong customer relationships (Shafti, 2014). For hospitals' owners or managers, loyal and strong relationships could enhance financial performance by positive verbal encouragement and justifying the premium payments.

Further studies in private healthcare marketing understand the appropriate use of marketing communication applicability. Many marketers believe that brand loyalty is a key factor for business successful. According to Oliver (1999), brand loyalty implies the customer's ability and dedication to repurchase or sponsor a probable product or desired service on a regular basis over the long term, and thus contributes to the same brand set purchase. Chen (2007) concluded that loyalty consists of two key dimensions: actions and attitude, the first of which implies regular customer activity as a result of brand loyalty, the second of which relates to powerful actions as a commitment. Rust (1993) claimed that it is more efficient, advantageous and cheaper to maintain existing firm customers rather than to acquire new ones.

2.1.5 Linking IMC and Customer Loyalty

Promotion and communication strategy is one of the key components of the services marketing mix strategy which hospitals use to inform customers of their health services (Lovelock, 2001). The hospital's managers must first examine customer needs in the area served by the hospital and choose the communication tools that suit the environment, according to the potential for profit and growth, in line with the hospital's resources and objectives.

Promotion can provide an opportunity for differentiation between organizations corporately and in terms of brand (Thwaites, 1998). A service promotion strategy has a number of components that are known as the "promotional mix" (Harrison, 2000). There is no one promotional tool which can achieve the objectives of the promotion strategy which, in turn, means that most service organizations use more than one promotional tool, so they can obtain maximum advantage from the various tools, while avoiding the disadvantages. It implies that the tools differ from each other in terms of their advantages and disadvantages (Harrison, 2000).

The IMC is the set of tools used by a hospital to successfully inform customers of the benefits of its products and customers that drive customers to be loyal to the brand. The IMC includes the following tools to instill confidence on patients through marketing communication:

Advertising and Customer Loyalty: According to Kotler and Armstrong (2008), "advertising is any sort of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, products or services by an established sponsor." Three forms of ads can be used: descriptive, convincing and reminder ads. Choosing a form depends on whether the hospital's mission is to raise awareness and convey patient / customer value, create brand preferences and alter patient / customer perceptions of the brand, or preserve patient / customer relationships and inform patients of the use of health services.

There are a number of forms of media used in advertisement, i.e. TV, newspapers, magazines, radio, billboards, internet. Advertising via these medias are a critical component along with greater education and awareness amongst customers which have led to more sophisticated buyers of healthcare services today. Buyers have more discernment about the level of care rendered by one hospital relative to another (Nelson, 1989). In this regard, Heistand (1986) argues that today, consumers rely less on doctors than they did in the past to select the "right" hospital. In another report, Wagner (1985) indicated that more customers would prefer physicians through ads. Similarly, Johns (1989) claims that customers are finding and preferring ads as a way of accessing information on medical services. These results suggest that ads will become more relevant as a marketing tool in the healthcare sector.

Andaleeb (1994) discussed advertising as being an important tool for hospitals for two reasons. First, it is a competitive tool. Its effective use should assist hospitals in their bid to bring in and keep clients through evolving market circumstances where the clients are increasingly involved in selecting a hospital. Second, it was shown in a national survey that 50% of consumers remembered seeing or hearing a hospital advertisement. It is the most cost-effective means for healthcare facilities to reach large audiences (Belch, 2009). It is basically used to create awareness, provide information, reminds consumers and to persuade consumers about a brand. The customers' perception is a good basis for measuring the effectiveness and contributions of advertising activities of hospitals towards gaining customer patronage and loyalty. Based on these facts, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁ - Advertising has significant and positive effect on customer loyalty of private hospitals in Addis Ababa

Personal selling and Customer Loyalty: personal selling is one of the oldest forms of promotion, as it is mostly used in the service industry and in highly technological and complicated products. There are advantages in using a sales force, in that the sales message can be customized to meet the needs of the customer, especially with the two-way nature of the sales process that allows the sales team to quickly answer customers' questions and concerns. Bowers (1991) claimed that healthcare salespeople are responsible for promoting health services in their hospitals and are asked to market the expertise of medical professionals and hospital personnel to a wide range of clients, including primary care doctors and employers. Healthcare promotion has grown from the emphasis on ads to the present focus on personal sales. In addition, increased competition and demand for cost-efficiency have driven many healthcare companies to sell their goods through a sales force. In addition to public relations and research planning, sales are becoming an integral part of the marketing function of healthcare organizations (ibid). From this notion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂ – Personal selling has significant and positive effect on customer loyalty of private hospitals in Addis Ababa

Public Relations/ Publicity and Customer Loyalty: Building good ties with the public by receiving favorable publicity, building a positive picture of the company, and coping with any negative rumors, reports, and events (Kotler and Armstrong, 2008). It includes attempts to create positive attention in a company and its goods by third parties, such as press conferences, news releases and sponsorships. Hunt (1984) describes public relations as the mechanism by which an entity maintains successful contact with its client base. Ledingham and Bruning (1998) summed it up by describing public relations as 'relationship management.' This means that public relations are based on managing the organization's relationship with the public through a four-step method of research, preparation, execution and assessment. In this sense, public relations concentrate on the strategic use of communication. Studies in the 1990s enabled public relations professionals to illustrate the approach and strategies that needed to be discussed in order for PR to step forward as a discipline and to broaden its value within the promotional mix. The PR industry is rising rapidly and is very permeable to new entrants because it is viewed as a simple start-up. Competition is a challenge to PR skills provided by advertising, sales promotion and management agencies (Lages 2005).

H₃ – Public Relation/ Publicity has significant and positive effect on customer loyalty of private hospitals in Addis Ababa

Sales Promotion and Customer Loyalty: Sales promotion refers to marketing and communication activities that change the price/value relationship of a product or service perceived by the target, thereby generating immediate sales and alters long term value (Schultz, 1998). To initiate instant sales or specific purchase, sales force and consumers are given incentives that result in tangible and non-tangible benefits (Percy, 2008). It is one of the simpler tools within the IMC and is inessential part of the marketing communication for all types of companies. The objective of sales promotion is to deliver an incentive for the customer to buy the product or service. This incentive is normally delivered by providing free goods/ services, gifts, discounts, coupons or samples. Everything that adds additional value to the actually purchased/ consumed goods/ services is seen by the customer as a benefit and therefore appreciated by the customer. Customers have shown that they are willing to pay a premium for real value, which can easily be influenced by sales promotion (Belch, 2003).

In regards to Broderick research (2005), sales promotion can result in increasing sales volume with less profit. Sales promotion is aiming to influence consumer buying behavior by introducing new brand product which is going to be targeted the customers who have no previous experience with it (Solomon, Marshall and Stuart, 2008). Private hospitals often provide free outreach services (e.g., surgeries, vaccination, etc.) or campaigns (e.g., eye-camp) as a sales promotion strategy to position their brands in the minds of the customers. Besides, after the provision of the service to the community, sets schedules for medical follow-ups which creates long-term relationship with the beneficiaries (Semenik, 2002). Healthcare sales promotion is any effort taken by private hospitals to improve their sales, encourage emerging technology and use or test a new service. In hospital marketing, this involves brand reminders such as pens, paper weights, writing pads, etc. Gifts of varying meaning are also included in this group.

Sales promotion has been seen as any activity designed to produce a temporary increase in sales and includes a range of contact activities aimed at delivering added value or incentives to consumers, wholesalers, suppliers or other organizational customers (Blythe, 2006) in order to encourage immediate sales either by trial or by re-purchase (Cravens, 2013). The added benefit or rewards given by the promotion of sales to customers and others may be in a monetary and non-monetary type. Some sales promotional practices are conveyed in the form of loyalty schemes, various health care campaigns and discounts (Chandon, 2000) as experienced by private hospitals around the world. With this notion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₄ – Sales Promotion has significant and positive effect on customer loyalty of private hospitals in Addis Ababa

Direct Marketing and Customer Loyalty: direct marketing is a management concept, a multi-level communication and distribution tool. It is accountable, interactive and used to ensure direct response from customers (Percy, 2008). A Direct Marketing campaign accesses huge recorded database to build profiles of potential customers and provide valuable marketing information for effective direct targeting. It involves activities like direct mail, telemarketing, database management, direct response ads through the direct mail, the internet and various broadcast and print media (Belch, 2003, Hesse, 2007). Direct Marketing is divided into two elements, namely building a quality database over a long period and cost monitoring and controlling. The controlling elements indicate that there is much control given to the marketer as opposed to social media which puts control in the hands of the consumers. Scholars suggest that the main aim of direct marketing is to stimulate the targeted audience to take a now action, and create an individualized customer relationship (Hesse, 2007).

The objective of direct marketing is to support the customer in a purchase decision by making them aware of the existing and new goods/ services or just to remind them about a demand, which is not yet distinct. On the other hand, there is also a negative side to direct marketing as marketing communication tool. It is an unsolicited advertisement, which is nowadays often seen as annoying by the general public. The same holds for telemarketing and direct marketing via e-mail, which is seen as spam or an invasion of privacy and often has the contrary effect for the company. Therefore, companies should handle the direct marketing tools with caution in order not to upset their customers and weaken the relation between the company and the customers (Mullin, 2002).

Direct marketing is a form of advertisement campaign that seeks to initiate action on the part of a selected group of consumers in response to a communication from the marketer. Communication itself can be in any of a range of formats, including postal mail, telemarketing, direct e-mail marketing and point-of - sale experiences. Hospital marketing includes sending information about new services and brand ads through mail, mobile, email or other communication media (Percy, 2008). Based on this understanding, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₅ – Direct marketing has significant and positive effect on customer loyalty of private hospitals in Addis Ababa

Marketing communications must become more integrated the various elements of promotion devoted to informing, persuading and inducing action from a range of target audiences must be studied, analyzed, planned and implemented in a coordinated and effective manner. The fundamental principle of IMC is that it takes a holistic approach to communications and drives an organization to consider the total impact of all of their communications activities at any one time (Egan, 2007). It can be taken as the process of IMC calls for a “big-picture” approach to planning marketing and promotion programs and coordinating the various communication functions. It requires that hospitals to develop a total marketing communications strategy that recognizes how all of a hospital’s marketing activities, not just promotion, communicate with its customers (Belch, 2003). Many healthcare centers, private hospitals in particular, have adopted this broader perspective of IMC. They see it as a way to organize and monitor their marketing communications programs to ensure that clients / patients receive a clear message about the hospital and/or its products. For these facilities, the IMC approach represents an improvement over the conventional method of treating the different marketing and communication components as essentially separate practices.

Belch (2003) stressed the value of IMC by emphasizing the very significance of the integration of promotional resources. They noted that by organizing the hospital's marketing communications activities, duplication can be prevented, alignment between promotional tools can be used, and more efficient and effective marketing communications systems can be created. By doing so, it can maximize the return on its investment in marketing and promotion. It is also believed that the move to IMC reflects an adaptation by hospital marketers to a changing environment, in terms of consumers, technology, and media.

2.2 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Related studies conducted on the effect of IMC strategies on customer loyalty of private hospitals has been briefly stated as below.

Customer loyalty can be seen as an important principle in the market that is used to enhance the intent of the life of every company. According to Anderson (2000), consumer loyalty is the product of a company providing incentives for consumers so that they can retain and increasingly return business or visit the company. Benefits can be provided by the successful implementation of the IMC dimension assortment for the mutual benefit of both the consumer and the business. In addition, Van (2012) specify that patients are loyal to a hospital whenever they have been satisfied consistently, and they

tend to become passionate about visiting more and loyal to the facility. A recent cross-sectional survey of private hospital customers was taken in Romania between June and August 2015 by Tichindelean (2015). The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation and the analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results reveal that online advertising and managing events have the highest influence on the patients' revisiting behavior of the hospital.

In another report, Thaichon (2015) explores the relationship between two elements of marketing communications – advertisement and sales promotion – in relation to consumer loyalty to health service providers in Thailand. Using secondary data to test the variables found that consumer satisfaction and confidence contributes to attitudinal and behavioral loyalty. This study is limited in application as it does not explore all the relevant dimensions of IMC. It did not equally collect the data directly customers that IMC efforts and resources are aiming at in order to assess how effective is the integration from demand side (patients that the company is communicating their service attribute to). This current study tries to fill this gap by collecting data on the four dimensions of IMC mostly used in Nigeria from the frequent visitors of outpatients.

Kotler and Armstrong (2012) argue that public relations and advertising promote the building of good relations with the different audiences of an organization by receiving favorable publicity, building a good corporate image, and managing or discharging unfavorable rumors, stories and events related to such an organization. Through dialogue and consensus, public relations and publicity greatly foster mutual understanding, and promote harmonious co-existence between people, groups and nations (Ajai, 2005). Consumers prefer organizations that portray credible image, and public relations seek to mirror such an image.

Through the use of direct marketing techniques, marketers can create and sustain dialogue with customers, potential customers and other significant stakeholders without the use of intermediaries. It includes various media activities used to generate a series of communications and responses with an existing or potential customer (Fill, 2009). The scope also covers the distribution of products, information and promotional benefits to target consumers through interactive communication in a way that allows the response to be measured. In direct marketing, consumers can be reached by practices and strategies such as direct mail, telemarketing, direct response advertising, catalog marketing, mobile marketing, electronic media (Aremu, 2006), inserts (magazine leaflets) and door-to - door leaflets.

In Khizar 's work (2016), which assessed the influence of IMC components on brand recognition and consumer loyalty using primary data collected through a questionnaire administered to 105 managers employed in the selected Pakistan Beverage sector listed on the Lahore Stock Exchange. The data was analyzed through the descriptive statistical technique by using the graph and Pearson Bivariate Correlation Matrix and regression analysis. The result revealed that IMC positively affect brand awareness and customer loyalty. This study assessed the effect of IMC from the supplier side of the service provider rather than the demand side where a customer who is a direct target of IMC request for the product or service.

Personal selling serves as a face-to-face interaction with one or more prospective purchasers for the purpose of making presentations, answering questions, and procuring orders (Kotler, 2012); and it creates the single most important link with the customer (Jobber, 2009). However, annual expenditures on personal selling are much larger than on advertising (Cravens, 2013).

In the same way, Cogoljević (2017) pointed out the basic advantages of a strategic approach and functioning of the integrated marketing communications (IMC) concept in companies in the Republic of Serbia. With a sample of databases using the survey method, estimated results based on 42 samples indicate that the strategic approach to IMC concept lead to a positive impact on companies' businesses. However, a large number of companies in the country (Serbia) continues to rely more on traditional forms of marketing communication. Moreover, IMC have strategic implications on firms` ability to compete favorably in the market, particularly in the telecommunication industry where service providers offer similar services to homogeneous customers in the same market.

Likewise, Quach (2015) explored incorporation of social media (SM) within the organizations' marketing communications. The authors drew on grounded theory methodology to conduct an in-depth interview with senior marketers for the first phase of data collection which guides the other two- phases of data collection within the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector of the Australian economy. The study found out that integrating implementation solution will allow IMC to leverage on social media unique strengths into marketing capabilities. However, none of the existing three sequential decision-making models as developed by Duncan (2002) and Kliatchko (2005) provides a major implementation emphasis essential for SM integration within IMC. This further exposed the need to integrate different marketing and promotional tools in the organizations' communication with

stakeholders in order to avert the negative consequences of failure and to implement effective IMC in the firms' competitiveness.

Wenny (2011) revealed that the Integrated Marketing Communication either partially or simultaneous positive and significant effect against the loyalty. It is confirmed by another study of Ruth (2017) which says that there is a positive influence among Integrated Marketing communication and loyalty towards the Brand Image or loyalty. The present study investigated the effect of IMC dimensions on customer's patronage/ loyalty in the offerings of private hospitals' in the fastest growing healthcare service industry in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

2.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

The conceptual framework is an abstract representation connected to research projects and direct the collection and analysis of data. It is also an analytical tool with several variables and context. Conceptual framework cross both scale of theories with distinctive organized ideas (Kotler and Keller, 2006). Based on thorough theoretical and empirical reviews, marketing communication strategy is one of the key components of the services marketing mix strategy which hospitals use to inform customers of their health services (Lovelock, 2001). The hospital's managers must first examine customer needs in the area served by the hospital and choose the communication tools that suit the environment, according to the potential for profit and growth, in line with the hospital's resources and objectives to create long-term customer's patronage.

The IMC is the set of tools used by private hospital to successfully inform customers of the benefits of their respective services so as to position their brands in the minds of customers to create meaningful customer patronage in the long-run. IMC provides an opportunity for differentiation between private hospitals in terms of customer loyalty (Thwaites, 1998). There is no one promotional tool which can fit and achieve all objectives of the promotion strategy which, in turn, means that most service organizations use more than one promotional mix tools. Such promotional tools namely advertising, personal selling, direct marketing, sales promotion and public relations/ publicity in an integrated manner are good predictors of variation in customer loyalty (Thomas, James and Clara, 2017). Thus, the conceptual framework of the study adopted from the research conducted by Thomas, James and Clara in 2017.

Advertising

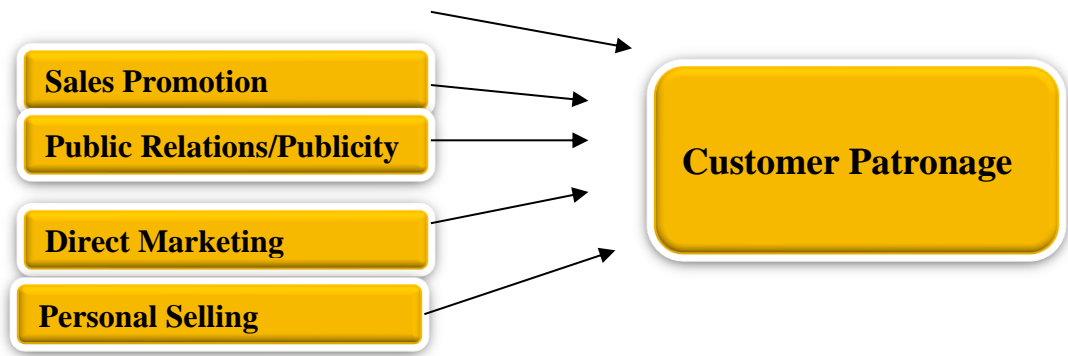


Figure 2.1 - Conceptual Framework of the Study (Source: Thomas, James and Clara, 2017)

CHAPTER THREE

3. METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines and elaborates the methodologies of the study. It covers research approaches, research design, sampling techniques, sources of data collection, data collection procedures, scale validity and reliability test, methods of data analysis and presentation. Finally, ethical consideration is also included.

3.1 Research Approach

There are basically two research approaches. The first one is qualitative research which involves studies that do not attempt to quantify their results through statistical summary or analysis. In a way it seeks to describe various aspects about behavior and other factors studied in the social sciences and humanities. In qualitative research data are often in the form of descriptions, not numbers. The other one is quantitative research which engages in systematic and scientific investigation of quantitative properties and phenomena and other relationships. The aim of quantitative research is to establish and use mathematical models, theories and hypotheses relating to natural phenomena. The quantitative research methodology used in this study was focused on the fact that it required the generation of quantitative data for analysis. Data were quantified and statistical methods used for the analysis of data were used to find proof of the relationship between of the variables indicated.

3.2 Research Design

Three forms of research design are exploratory, descriptive and explanatory. The aim of exploratory research is to find insights and ideas, while descriptive research is generally about defining a population as regards major variables. The study of how one or more variables affect changes in

another variable is used to create cause-and - effect relation among variables and causal analysis. Therefore, a analysis is carried out of functional relations between two or more variables (Kothari, 2004). This study follows explanatory research design as it evaluates the variables of interest in the IMC and customer loyalty measurement and determine the relationship between the constructs.

3.3 Population

A population can be defined as the complete set of subjects that can be studied: people, objects, organizations from which a sample may be obtained (Shao, 1999). According to Ethiopian Central Statistics Agency (CSA) report on 2017, the dwellers in Addis Ababa are estimated roughly around 6 million but the number is expected higher for the fact that the population has been growing 3% annually and the local migrants to the capital city substantially increasing since the last two decades. According to federal ministry of health (FMoH) report on 2019, there are a total of 144 hospitals in the country of which 54(37.5%) are owned by private investors but, in the vicinity of the capital city, only 44 private hospitals are licensed to provide the service up to the standard.

According to Ethiopian health-tier, one of the criteria to level the healthcare institutes is their respective bed capacity. Based on minimum bed capacity requirement, those which have up to a minimum of 35, 50 and 110 beds are categorized under primary, secondary and tertiary level healthcare institutes respectively. There are a total of 37 primary hospitals, 10 general hospitals and 1 specialized hospital in the city currently (Addis Ababa Health Bureau, 2019). General hospital shall mean a health facility at secondary level of healthcare tier which provides promoted, preventive, curative and rehabilitative service that requires diagnostic facilities and therapeutic intervention with a minimum capacity of 50 beds.

A population of admitted inpatients in general hospitals is targeted as the study population. The study population, thus, constitutes the inpatients admitted for a medical treatment in 10 private general hospitals namely Hayat, Yordanos, Tirunesh Beijing, Korean (MCM), Kadisco, St. Yared, Bethezata, Bethel Teaching, Yearrer, Halelujah and St. Gebriel general hospital in the period of Aug. – Sept., 2021.

3.4 Sampling Techniques

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of study units from a defined study population (Abiy, 2009). It is economical to take representative sample for the intended investigation when conducting census is unrealistic. Even though hospitals are obliged to have their own records of patients, the ethics doesn't allow them to transfer patients' medical history for third parties. As both the health institutes and concerned authorities are hesitant to provide the patients' list and their respective addresses, it is impractical to select samples from the sample frame randomly. According to Zikmud (2000), there are two main sampling methods, probability and non-probability sample. In this study, the lack of access to a list of the population under study makes fully randomized samples (probability sampling) difficult to obtain. Thus, convenience non-probabilistic sampling was applied to determine the sample size.

3.5 Sample Size

Sampling is the process of selecting a number of study units from a defined study population (Carvalho, 1984). Sample size for unknown population is selected based on Cochran (1963) who developed the formula to yield a representative sample for large population size at 5% margin of error and within 95% confidence level. It is demonstrated as:

$$n = \frac{z^2(p)(q)}{e^2}$$

Where: n- Sample size; z- Standard deviation given a corresponding confidence level of 95%; p - Estimated proportion of incidence (success rate = 0.5); q-(1 -p) or assumed failure rate (0.5); e- Proportion of sampling error or error margin in a given situation (5%).

Thus, the sample size of the intended study with 95% confidence level, probability of 50% occurrence, probability of 50% failure and 5% marginal error, is obtained as:

$$n = \frac{z^2(p)(q)}{e^2} = \frac{(1.96)(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.05)^2} = 384.16 = 384$$

A representative sample size of 384 respondents were taken from 10 general hospitals with a capacity of accommodating 50 and more beds for the reason that more than 39 patients from each hospital are required to get the intended sample size taking the possibility of relatively high non-response rate due to COVID-19 and their current health status during conducting the survey.

3.6 Source of Data

According to Catherine (2017), data can be collected as primary, secondary or both. Primary data are originated by the researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the problem at hand. On the other hand, secondary data contains relevant data that has been collected for a different purpose, but from which the conclusion is valuable for the purpose. In this study, basically the primary source, i.e. data collected from admitted patients at the selected private hospitals were used for analysis.

3.7 Data Collection Instrument

Questionnaire to be used must be prepared very carefully so that it may prove to be effective in collecting the relevant information. Structured questionnaires are questionnaires in which there are definite, concrete and predetermined questions (Kothari, 2004). The questions are posed to all respondents in precisely the same language and in the same order. This kind of standardization is used by resort to ensure that all respondents respond to the same collection of questions.

A hierarchical questionnaire, based on a 5-point Likert scale, named for American social scientist Rensis Likert is used as a main tool for collecting data. There are three parts of the questionnaire. The first section contains information on the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the second section contains information on the independent variables of the sample, i.e. IMC in terms of advertisement, product promotion, personal sales, digital marketing and public relations / publicity, while the third section deals with the dependent variable – consumer patronage. The attributes were calculated using a 5-point Likert scale of 1-for "strongly disagreed" to 5-for "strongly agreed." IMC problems were agreed by Thomas, James and Clara (2017) and consumer loyalty from Faizan (2011) would then be changed to suit the study background.

3.8 Scale Validity and Reliability

Validity, on the other hand, is concerned about whether the conclusions are really exactly what they seem to be. Validity is defined as the degree to which data collection methods accurately measure what they intended to measure (Saunders and Thornhill, 2003). Reliability can be characterized as the degree to which measurements are error-free and thus produce consistent results. Operationally, reliability is characterized as the internal consistency of the scale that assesses the degree to which the objects are homogeneous.

To ensure the validity and reality of this research, the researcher utilizes the criterion argued by Bryman and Bell (2007) to test the process of the research. First of all, the internal validity was fulfilled by the consistency between the research data collection and the theoretical framework. On the other hand, the external validity, which was also met by this formal theory generated, represents that the findings would be used in more general area. Secondly, the researcher made an adequate agreement in the process of the research, and the extent of the agreement determined the consistency.

Reliability was computed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the entire set of factors affecting the adoption of brand personality and customer loyalty. The use of Cronbach Coefficient to measure reliability of instrument enabled to identify the strength of items included in the questionnaire such that measure between 0.7 and 1.0 signifies a strong consistency of item used in questionnaire (Mugenda, 2003). However, the acceptable Alpha value that meets the statistical prerequisite for the instrument to be characterized as reliable should be between 0.70 and 0.9 as the value more than 0.9 could be an implication of redundant variables measuring same subject (Travakol, 2011).

3.9 Data Collection Procedure

A pilot survey was conducted on 30 respondents at Landmark hospital, excluded from the sample frame, prior to administrating the questionnaire to the targeted sample respondents so as to check whether the questioner is clear, easy to understand and straightforward to ensure that the respondents able to answer the questions with no difficulty. In addition to these, the pilot study was administered to test the appropriateness, validity and reliability of the questioner, and then based on their feedbacks; some changes were made on the questionnaire before distributing to the selected sample size. Based on the sample size computed on the above formula, 40 self-administered questionnaires were distributed to willing participants at each general hospital to collect a total of 400 responses. Adult patients those who are believed in a good health condition, capable to understand the contents of the questionnaire and willing to participate were contacted to gather unbiased responses.

3.10 Data Analysis and Presentation

Data in this study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics is used to interpret data in general and for testing hypothesis and investigating research objectives inferential method use statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 20. Descriptive statistics is applied to interpret demographic variables of the respondents and to discover the frequencies of

each dimension whereas inferential statistics is used for hypothesis testing such as correlation and multi-regression. Tables and graphs are used to present analysis results pictorially.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

In order to keep the confidentiality of the data given by respondents, the respondents were not asked to write their name and assured that their responses were treated in strict confidentiality. The purpose of the study is disclosed in the introductory part of the questionnaire. Furthermore, the researcher tried to avoid misleading or deceptive statements in the questionnaire. Lastly, the questionnaires were distributed only to volunteers after having their full consents in verbal or written form.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. DATA PRESENTATION ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATIONS

This chapter encompasses the data analysis, interpretation and presentation of the results. The analyses comprised of both descriptive and inferential statistics in which the former describes the demographic profile of respondents, analysis of responses under each attribute; whereas the latter includes scale reliability test, correlation and multiple regression analysis.

The data collected through self-administered questionnaire featured personal information of the respondents, five dimensions of IMC and customer patronage attributes in the case selected private general hospitals located in Addis Ababa. After distributing 385 questionnaires to the targeted customers/ patients admitted in the general hospitals, a total of 347 questionnaires were collected which accounted for 90.1% of the total distributed questionnaires. Then, further screened for missing data and other inconsistency, it was found 302 valid and usable questionnaires for statistical analysis. The responses further screened for error correction and then encoded accordingly to make them suitable for data analysis. SPSS 20.0 was used to organize and prepare the collected data for analysis. Regarding the reliability test, Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the internal consistency of variables in the research instrument. The scale represents as a number between 0 and 1 but the alpha value above

0.7 indicates good reliability of the measurement scale (Zikmund, 2010). For this study, thus, a Cronbach's alpha score of .70 or higher is considered adequate to determine reliability.

Table 4.7 Reliability Test

	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Advertising	5	.819
Sales Promotion	5	.777
Personal Selling	5	.710
Direct Marketing	5	.752
Public Relations/Publicity	4	.801
Overall IMC	24	.783
Customer Patronage	5	.827

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

Based on this notion, the scale reliability was found to be within the acceptable range as all the variables' test scores were found to be above $\alpha = .70$. Thus, showing as indication of acceptability of the scale for further analysis, the reliability score of overall IMC and Customer patronage yielded $\alpha = .783$ and $\alpha = .827$ respectively. The overall scale reliability score is $\alpha = .799$ on average. It can be concluded that the measuring instrument is credible to conduct data analysis based on the collected data using the questionnaire.

4.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics is used to describe the demographic characteristics of the respondents and the summary of each study variables based on their responses.

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The first part of the questionnaire consists of the demographic characteristics of the respondents. It requested a limited amount of information related to their personal and socio-demographic status. Accordingly, the following variables such as sex, age and preferred promotional tool or media were summarized and described in the subsequent figures below. Referring their gender orientation, female patients constituted relatively the highest percentage 199(65.9%) while their male counterparts shared the rest 103(34.1%). This implies that majority of the respondents were females who came to the private hospitals than males. It is a common phenomenon that females are frequent visitors of

healthcare centers for the fact that they are more prone to contraceptive issues at the reproductive age and depression at late ages than men.

Regarding the age group, 107(35.4%) of the respondents was found to be within the age range of 31-45-years followed by 91(30.1%) within 15-30 years. Whereas those respondents whose age fall within 46 - 60 years and above 60-years old belonged to 60(19.9%) and 44(14.6%) respectively. This also implies that adults within reproductive/ productive age groups came to the hospitals were more in number. This could be taken as a good opportunity for targeting customers/ patients for effective marketing promotion in regards to positioning their brands into customer’s mind.

Majority of the respondents, 152(50.3%), preferred social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) for accessing promotional ads followed by 85(28.2%) media advertising such as TV, radio, billboard, etc. and 38(12.6%) physical presentation (event organization, conference, campaigns, etc.). Whereas publication took the rest 27(8.9%). This implies that the majority of the respondents accessed social media as well as media advertising; thus, promoting on such platform seems more effective to address the intended marketing messages to the target customers.

In general, results of the findings revealed that the demographic characteristics of the respondents were dominated by female patients within reproductive age range. It’s obvious that youngsters in this age range have more exposure for internet and more interactive in social medias. Proper identification of their demographic factors helps in designing effective and efficient marketing promotions in an integrated manner with minimum cost.

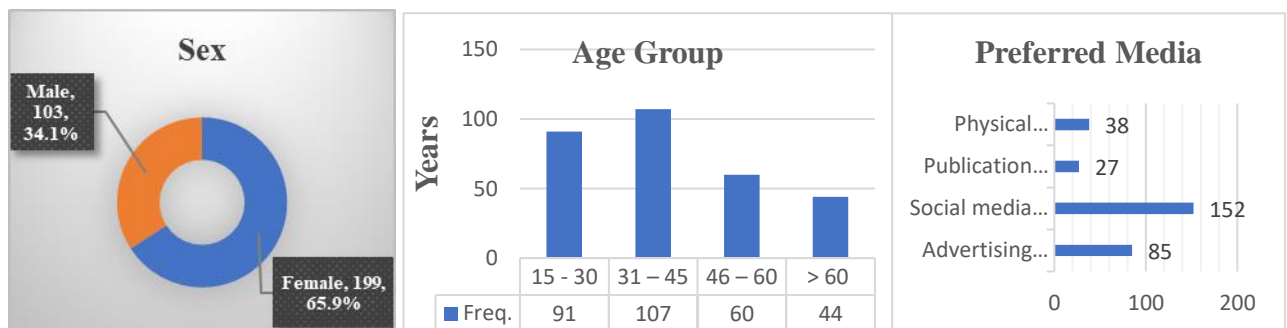


Figure 4.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

4.1.2 Description of Study Variables

Because Likert survey questions are neatly ordered with numerical responses, it's easy and tempting to average them by adding the numeric value of each response, and then dividing by the number of respondents. Under the description of study variables, summary of IMC variables (Advertising, Sales Promotion, Personal Selling, Direct Marketing and Public Relations/ Publication) and Customer Loyalty are presented as follows.

4.1.2.1 Advertising

Results of the findings on Table 4.1 indicate that majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the information provided through advertisement was trustworthy (mean 4.33) and appealing (mean 4.29). They also admitted that the messages are informative (mean 3.69) and frequent advertising reminded them to use the medical service (mean 3.85). However, they disagreed on clarity of the messages to understand easily (mean 2.77). This implies that majority of the respondent gained reliable information through media advertising even though the messages were hard to grasp easily due to the contents are stuffed with medical jargons. Overall advertising (grand mean 3.79) as a marketing promotional tool was utilized to disseminate the intended message to the targeted customers even though more efforts were required to improve its effectiveness.

Table 4.1 Respondents' perception on Advertising

Description	Mean	Std.
The hospital's advertisement is clear to understand	2.77	.556
The hospital's advertising is informative	3.69	.548
The information advertised by the hospital is trustworthy	4.33	.614
Frequent advertising of the hospital reminds me to use the service	3.85	.391
The hospital uses appealing media advertising to promote its services	4.29	.485
Grand Mean	3.79	.519

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

4.1.2.2 Sales Promotion

Referring Table 4.2, except tempted by the frequent sponsorship of social events (mean 3.63), the results revealed that the respondents disagreed on provision of low-cost gifts (impregnated with their logo, moto, slogan, etc.) to motivate them to consider to use their medical service (mean 2.49), organizing holiday events/ campaigns to excel competitors (mean 2.50), offers of sales discounts

(mean 2.67) and attractive medical packages (mean 2.71) during the holiday or other social events in ascending order. Overall, the sales promotion practices of the hospitals were perceived negatively (grand mean 2.80) by the majority of the respondents which implies that less due consideration has been given for sales promotions to disseminate marketing message to the targeted customers.

Table 4.2 Respondents' perception on Sales Promotion

Description	Mean	Std.
The hospital uses low cost gifts to motivate me to use the service	2.49	.502
The sales discount during holiday events attracts me more	2.67	.419
The hospital offers me attractive packages time to time	2.71	.644
The hospital organizes events/ campaigns compared to competitors	2.50	.573
Frequent sponsorship of social events by the hospital tempted me to visit it	3.63	.482
Grand Mean	2.80	.524

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

4.1.2.3 Direct Marketing

Direct marketing practices of the hospitals were perceived positively (grand mean 3.53) as majority of the respondents had inconsistent perception for different activities regarding the direct marketing strategy. They strongly agreed that the hospitals utilized social medias to promote their companies (mean 4.47) and the quality and competence of their medical staffs' persuasive interactive communication (mean 4.31). On the other hand, they denied that the managements used phone calls to send clear message regarding new service offers (mean 2.83) and contacting them through personal emails didn't help as expected (mean 2.22). The overall perception of respondents on companies' overall direct marketing practices were found to be slightly positive which indicates that the hospitals had a lot to do on accessing more media to create one-to-one interactive communication channel with the customer that remind them the products/ services offered by a given hospitals.

Table 4.3 Respondents' perception on Direct Marketing

Description	Mean	Std.
The hospital updates me about its services through my personal mail	2.22	0.621
The hospital uses social media to promote its new services	4.47	0.215

The hospital uses phone calls to send clear messages regarding new service offers	2.83	0.518
The hospital staff's interactive communication persuades its customers to purchase	4.31	0.433
Direct marketing practice of the hospital makes me decide to use its service	3.84	0.523
Grand Mean	3.53	.462

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

4.1.2.4 Personal Selling

Majority of the respondents are strongly believed that sincerity (mean 4.50), friendly relationship (mean 4.43), and knowledgeability (mean 4.27) of the hospital's staff instilled confidence on patients in which it influenced them to use their services again when needed. Meanwhile, they also admitted that the managements provided customized services for patients (mean 3.94) but complained that the medical staffs didn't contact them frequently to visit their services in person (mean 2.58). The overall mean scored value (grand mean, 3.94) of personal selling practices was perceived positively for the fact that sales staff personal competence and sincerity have influence customers to visit their facilities again and again when required. This implies that customers/ patients seem to demand a skilled medical staff to answer all their inquiries and instill confidence on them.

Table 4.4 Respondents' perception on Personal Selling

Description	Mean	Std.
The medical staffs contact me frequently to visit its services	2.58	.681
The medical staffs of the hospital are knowledgeable to instill confidence on customers	4.27	.339
The medical staffs of the hospital offer me customized service which suits my personality	3.94	.509
Sincerity of the hospital's medical staffs influences me to use its services	4.50	.427
The medical staffs create friendly relationship which influenced me to visit the service	4.43	.411
Grand Mean	3.94	.473

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

4.1.2.5 Public Relations/ Publication

The results revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that the hospitals disseminated reliable (3.73) and more detailed (mean 3.82) information. They also provided appealing printed materials (mean 3.66) to promote their services. Besides, they also acknowledged the public relation staffs made customers perceive their company’s image positively (mean 3.81). The overall public relations/ publicity practices of the hospitals were found to be satisfactory (grand mean 3.76) which implies that the concerned managements were not implementing it in the direction that would result into positive impact to their respective organizations’ image.

Table 4.5 Respondents’ perception on Public Relations/ Publication

Description	Mean	Std.
The hospital uses appealing printed materials to promote its services	3.66	.664
Reliable information, disseminated via the public relation, tempted me to use the service	3.73	.508
The hospital provides more detailed information via its public relation officers	3.82	.617
Information from the hospital’s public relation makes me perceive the brand positively	3.81	.467
Grand Mean	3.76	.564

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

4.1.2.6 Customer Patronage/ Loyalty

Results of the findings, Table 4.6, revealed that the respondents agreed that they liked the treatment (mean 3.96), preferred to go to their specific hospital if medical treatment is needed (3.59) as they had more faith on it (mean 3.71). They also admitted that they could tell more positive sides of the hospitals (mean 3.71) and recommend them to their intimates as the service is trustworthy (mean 3.63). this indicates that majority of the respondents were found to be loyal for their specific hospital brand (grand mean 3.75) but their patronage was found to be slightly higher than average. It requires more effort to retain the customers to make them loyal through different promotional activities.

Table 4.6 Respondents’ perception on Customer Patronage/ Loyalty

Description	Mean	Std.
-------------	------	------

If I need medical treatment, I prefer to go to this hospital again	3.59	.502
I would like the treatment of this hospital in particular	3.96	.419
I can tell more positive sides of this hospital medical services	3.71	.644
I have more faith in this hospital because of its reputation	3.88	.573
I recommend this hospital to my intimates as the service is trustworthy	3.63	.482
Grand Mean	3.75	.524

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

4.2 Inferential Statistics

Inferential statistics uses sample measurements of the subject and make generalization about the larger population. It comprises correlation analysis among variables, assumption of data test for their suitability or fitness to the intended regression analysis model namely normality, collinearity, linearity and homoscedasticity, and finally, the multi-regression analysis in terms of model summary, ANOVA test and determination of beta coefficients are conducted to address the objectives of this study.

4.2.1 Correlation Analysis

This study employs correlation analysis, which investigates the strength of the relationships between the studied variables. Pearson correlation analysis was used to provide evidence of convergent validity.

Table 4.8 Relationships between Promotional Mix and Customer Patronage

Dimensions	ADV	SPR	PSL	DMK	PRP	CPL
Advertising [ADV]	1					
Sales Promotion [SPR]	0.417	1				
Personal Selling [PSL]	0.360*	0.604*	1			
Direct Marketing [DMK]	0.681*	0.081	0.104	1		
Public Relations [PRP]	0.092	0.283*	0.501*	0.405*	1	
Customer Patronage [CPL]	0.577*	0.191	0.474*	0.241*	0.427*	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

(Source, Own Survey, 2020)

Pearson correlation coefficients reveal magnitude and direction of relationships (either positive or negative) and the intensity of the relationship (-1.0 + 1.0) between useful measure of association

between two or more variables. To interpret the direction and strengths of relationships between variables, the guidelines suggested by Field (2005) were followed. His classification of the correlation coefficient (r) refers 0.1– 0.29 is weak; 0.3 – 0.49 is moderate; and ≥ 0.5 is strong.

Table 4.8 below shows the relation between the five dimensions of IMC and overall Customer Patronage/ Loyalty. The results of the correlation test revealed that, except Sales Promotion, the other four dimensions of IMC had positive and significant relation with overall Customer Patronage. Specifically, Advertising had relatively strongest positive relation ($r = 0.577$) followed by Personal Selling ($r = 0.474$) and Public Relation/Publicity ($r = 0.427$); whereas Direct Marketing ($r = 0.241$) had moderate relationship. However, Sales Promotion had insignificant relationship with overall customer patronage ($r = 0.191$). In summary, except Sales Promotion, the relationship between other promotional mix tools and overall customer patronage had significant and positive relations.

4.2.2 Assumption for Multiple Linear Regression Model Test

Linear regression is an analysis that assesses whether one or more predictive variables explain the dependent (criterion) variable. The regression assumptions are correlation (linear relationship), Multicollinearity, Homoscedasticity and Normality test.

I. Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity is an assumption that there are no highly related predictor variables. Having such problem or violation of the assumption may lead the prediction of the linear regression model inconsistent output. Thus, before running the linear regression (Ordinary Least Square Method), one should check for the problem of multicollinearity issue s high correlation between some of the independent variables. The study checks this with the variance Inflation Factor (VIF) which calculates the influence of correlation among the independent variables on the precision of regression estimates. The VIF should not exceed 10. If the Tolerance ($1/VIF$) value is less than 0.1 it also indicates that there is possibility of multi-Collinearity, but if it is greater than 0.1 it means that there is no multicollinearity problem with in the model (Hair, 2004). In this study, it shows that the collinearity statistics analysis of VIF value ranges from 2.551 to 5.618 and Tolerance value ranging with 0.179 to 0.392 indicated that there was no collinearity problem. This could be taken as a confirmation that there were no multi-collinearity problems to proceed for regression analysis.

Table 4.9 Collinearity Assumption Test

	N	Mean	Std.	Tolerance	VIF
Advertising	302	3.79	.519	.219	4.566
Sales Promotion	302	2.80	.524	.178	5.618
Direct Marketing	302	3.53	.462	.209	4.785
Personal Selling	302	3.94	.473	.392	2.551
Public Relations/Publicity	302	3.76	.564	.225	4.444
Customer Patronage	302	3.75	.524	.200	5.000
Valid	302				

(Source: Own Survey, 2021)

II. Homoscedasticity

There should be homoscedasticity before running multiple regression analysis, this means that the residuals (the differences between the values of the observed and predicted dependent variable) are normally distributed, and that the residuals have constant variance (Burns & Burns 2008). If the assumption of homoscedasticity is violated (i.e. there is heteroscedasticity).

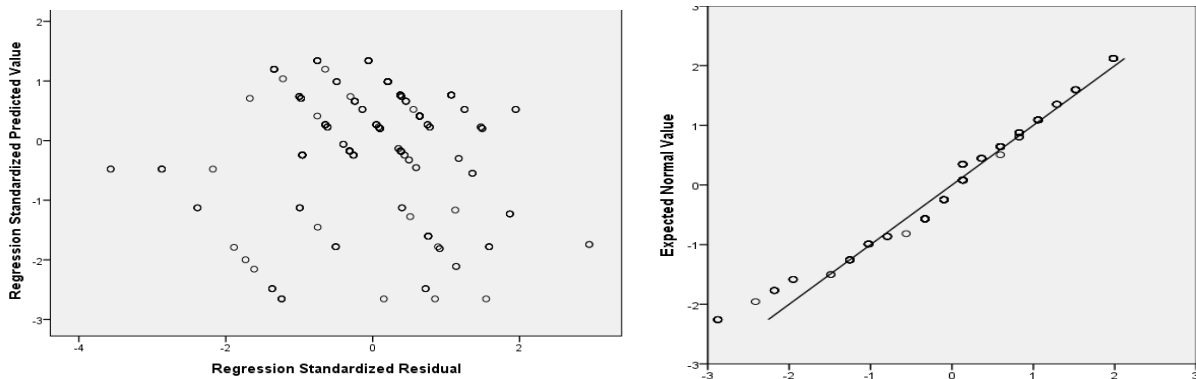


Figure 4.2 Scattered Plot

The graph has demonstrated homoscedasticity of the study. Using the plots of ZRESID against ZPRED, the researcher tried to check whether the graph looks like a random array of dots evenly dispersed around zero because the Testing for Homoscedasticity lies with an assumption in regression analysis that the residuals at each level of the predictor variable(s) have similar variances. This is to mean that at each point along any predictor variable, the spread of residuals should be fairly constant. In figure 4.2, it shows that each of the five IMC dimensions (the predictor variables) against the

expected value (straight line). The plot in the same figure of the annexed plot shows that how the points are randomly and evenly dispersed throughout the plot. And, these patterns are indicative of a situation in which the assumption of linearity and homoscedasticity have been met in whole the three variables against satisfaction.

III. Normality

For the sample size above 50 responses is usually sufficient to ignore the assumption regarding normal distribution (Weinberg and Abramowitz, 2008). Since samples size of the study exceeds by far the suggested number hence it assumes normality by default. For further confirmation, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been carried out. It compares the scores in the sample to a normally distributed set of scores with the same mean standard deviation. If the test is nonsignificant ($p > 0.05$) it tells us that the distribution of the sample is not significantly different form a normal distribution (i.e. it is probably normal). If, however, the test is significant ($P < 0.05$) then the distribution in question is significantly different from a normal distribution (i.e., it is non-normal). In the case, as presented in Appendix III, value of each variable is almost zero and less than 0.05 and the distribution are slightly different from normal distribution as presented in the appendix table.

Table 2. Normality Test

	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Stat	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Advertising	302	-.944	.144	1.133	.288
Sales Promotion	302	-1.182	.144	0.843	.288
Personal Selling	302	.028	.144	1.094	.288
Direct Marketing	302	-1.113	.144	.803	.288
Public Relations/Publicity	302	-1.108	.144	1.137	.288
Customer Patronage	302	0.821	.144	0.244	.288
Valid N	302				

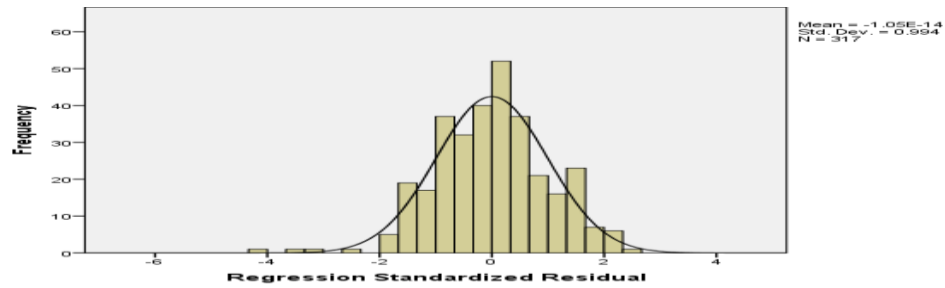


Figure 4.3 Frequency Distribution of Standardized Residuals

Source: SPSS output, 2021

I. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Regression model was applied to test how far the IMC had impact on the customer patronage/ loyalty. Coefficient of determination (R^2) is the measure of proportion of the variance of dependent variable about its mean that is explained by the independent or predictor variables. Higher value of R^2 represents greater explanatory power of the regression equation. Multiple regression analysis in this study was used to model the value of customer loyalty based on its linear relationship to two or more predictors (Advertising Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing, Personal Selling, and Public Relations/Publicity). This means, the overall customer loyalty is an aggregation of the IMC dimensions. In order to indicate the impact that each predictor had on the construct variable, the unstandardized coefficients are checked.

Table 4.10 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.815 ^a	.664	.633	.287

^a. Predictors: (constant), Advertising, Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing, Personal Selling, Public Relations/Publicity

As indicated in the model summary of the analysis on Table 4.11, above, the value of R (.815) indicated relations of the five independent variables with the dependent one affecting approximately 66.4 % (R^2) of the variance of sales performance. However, the remaining percent (33.6%) was explained by other variables not included in this study.

ANOVA test, Table 4.11, value of 102.214 is significant at $p < 0.001$. Therefore, it can be inferred that with 66.4% of variance (R^2), IMC is statistically significant and the model appropriately measured

the dependent variables – customer loyalty. In short, the regression model predicts overall customer loyalty and has been significantly explained by the five independent (IMC) dimensions.

Table 4.12 ANOVA Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	14.580	5	2.916	42.261	.000 ^b
	Residual	16.224	235	.069		
	Total	40.804	240			

^a. Dependent Variable: Customer Patronage/ Loyalty

^b. Predictors: (Constant), Advertising, Sales Promotion, Direct Marketing, Personal Selling, Public Relations/Publicity

The last output in the analysis of the multiple regression models represents the output for the beta coefficients of each IMC dimensions. The regression equation for this research is presented below.

$$CPL = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5X_5 + e$$

Where, CPL = Customer Patronage/ Loyalty, ADV = Advertising, SPR = Sales Promotion, DMK = Direct Marketing, PSL = Personal Selling and PRP = Public Relations/Publicity. β_0 = Constant, β_1 to β_4 = beta coefficients, and e = error terms. Based on multiple linear regression analysis on Table 4.13, substituting the results in the model yields, excluding Sales Promotion variable as it was found to be statistically insignificant at $p < .10$:

$$CPL = .227 + .414ADV + .202PRP + .311PSL + .111DMK$$

The regression analysis revealed that, except sales promotion, each IMC dimensions have positive and significant effect on overall customer patronage/loyalty. Advertising ($\beta = .200$) has relatively the highest effect followed by Personal Selling (.409) and Public Relation/Publicity (.139) but Direct Marketing (.440) have relatively lower contribution to the prediction model. This predicted change in the customer patronage for every unit change in that specific predictor variable. This means, a unit change in Advertising, for instance, is accounted for .414 units change in customer loyalty. The results, Table 4.13, implies that all the four dimensions of IMC had statistically significant influences on overall customer loyalty at 95% confidence level ($p < 0.05$), indicating that, for general hospitals, these factors are important in assessing overall their customer's patronage.

Table 4.13 Estimated Regression Coefficients

	Beta	t	Sig	Hypothesis
1 (Constant)		.982	.027	
Advertising	.200	8.625	.000	H1 - Supported
Sales Promotion	.244	5.164	.117	H1 - Refuted
Direct Marketing	.440	2.775	.000	H1 - Supported
Personal Selling	.409	3.534	.000	H1 - Supported
Public Relations/Publicity	.139	5.179	.005	H1 - Supported

4.3 Discussion

This part elaborates the findings of the results in line with the objectives of the study. This study was intended to assess the effect of IMC on overall customer loyalty. The discussion focuses on the major findings of advertising, sales promotion, direct marketing, personal selling and public relations/publicity and their relationship with overall customer patronage of the selected ten private general hospitals located in Addis Ababa.

The first specific objective was to determine the effect of advertising on customer patronage/ loyalty of selected private general hospitals. The results indicate that Advertising has positive and significant effect on customer loyalty ($\beta = .200$). The finding is also supported by Belch (2009) as he argued that an effective use of advertising assists hospitals in their bid to bring in and keep clients through evolving market circumstances where the clients are increasingly involved in selecting a hospital. That mean, it enhances the attraction of customers through creating awareness, providing detailed information, reminding patients to persuade them to use the service again and again. Similarly, Johns (1989) also supported the findings by claiming that consumers look for and favor advertising as a means of obtaining information about medical services. However, in the Ethiopian context, consumers are now depending more on doctors than in the past to select a "right" hospital than advertisements (Bersahbet, 2018) and it has been shown that consumers have remembered seeing or hearing a hospital advertisement that can be used as a cost-effective way for healthcare facilities to attract and hold wide audiences for longer periods.

Referring the second specific objective, assessing the effect of sales promotion on customer patronage of selected, it was found that sales promotion had positive and significant effect on customer patronage. Relative to advertising and personal selling, its effect is lower and statistically insignificant (Neema, 2017). Even though researches found out sales promotion has a capability to enhance the sales performance of a given company/ hospitals through provision of sales discount, offer free medical check-up or examination, facilitates long term loan for credit customers, and organizing events to promote their products during holiday events and other social events. Sales promotion is a contact linked to an incentive, needs to be unique to the time, price or customer category, and allows consumers to use a specific service earlier, more often or more often for each purchase (Kotler, 2008). Such short-term promotional practices have important effects on improving the revenue growth of business companies, but do not play a significant role in consumer patronage (Keller, 1991).

Regarding the third objective, determining the effect of direct marketing on customer patronage of private general hospitals, it was found that direct marketing activities such as reminding potential customers through different personal contacts, social medias and telephones increased their sales through frequent visitors. Similarly, creating platform for interactive communication as well as updating new information regarding product innovation played significant role in promoting their sales growth. This is also consistent with the findings of Shimp (2012) which argued that direct marketing had an impact on the sales of branded goods purchased or service consumed by loyal customers. In particular, direct marketing means that a promotional message is delivered directly to consumers rather than through a mass channel aimed at establishing and leveraging a direct connection between manufacturers and their customers (Gloria, 2011). However, this study showed a comparatively low impact than advertisements and personal sales on the fact that medical staff used to reach their patients when they came to the facility rather than contacting them via emails, mail, personal phones on arbitrary days.

Evaluation of personal selling's effect on customer loyalty of selected private general hospitals in Addis Ababa, the fourth specific objective, revealed that personal selling has positive and statistically significant effect on customer patronage. Personal selling which involves personal contact is gradually becoming most preferred promotional tools in Ethiopian healthcare industry (Tesfaye, 2019). Medical staffs of the hospitals are believed to be communicative and empathetic during the medical treatment or consultancy with potential customers in person is perhaps the best way to promote customers loyalty. Personal sales as face-to - face encounters with one or more prospective purchasers in order

to make presentations, answer questions and orders (Shimp, 2012). Unlike the other methods of the promotional mix, personal sales allow for a direct contact between patients and medical staff, which is found to be more successful than advertisement.

Finally, the fifth objective was to evaluate the effect of public relations on customer loyalty, it is the overall term for marketing activities that raise the public's consciousness regarding either their best reputation or clarifying medical mischiefs, in this case. The results of this study revealed that the public relations/ publicity had positive but weak significant effect on customer loyalty. The finding reconciles with the study conducted by Grunig and Hunt (1984). They found out private healthcare centers don't give due consideration for promoting their company images unless otherwise major medical issues raised by the public. Managers exerted unlimited efforts to change the bad image of the hospitals through aggressive public relation/ publication when critical concerns of the public are initiated. Such reactive strategy usually fails to build their company's image, attract potential customers and retain them for long.

It can be concluded that IMC practices have significant and positive effect on prediction of customer patronage/ loyalty of private general hospitals. Advertising, personal selling and Public relations/ publicity played significant role in enhancing customer patronage. Periodic evaluation of promoting marketing messages to the targeted customers should be required to enhance the effectiveness of such marketing strategies. Having properly integrated marketing communication has an advantage of cost-efficiency, assurance of message delivery and potential to build brand equity in the long-run.

CHAPTER FIVE

5. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter of the study, summary of the major findings, conclusion and recommendations of the study is presented.

5.1 SUMMARY OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The primary objective of this study was to investigate the effect of IMC on customer patronage in the case of private owned general hospitals in Addis Ababa. To address the intended research objectives, five dimensions of IMC namely Advertising, Sales promotion, personal selling, Direct Marketing and Public Relations were considered to investigate their significant effect on customer loyalty to their specific branded hospital. A sample size of 385 respondents was selected using convenience sampling technique from patients who admitted in the selected hospitals. Based on the theoretical framework and objectives of the study, a questionnaire with 29 items were provided in a 5-point Likert scale filled by the respondents. The gathered data was analyzed by descriptive and inferential analysis using descriptive and inferential statistics respectively. The major findings of the study are summarized and presented as below:

Demography

- The results of the demographic characteristics of the respondents shows that majority (65.9%) of the respondents were females, 35.4% within the age range of 31-45 years, with a preference of social media to access marketing/ promotional messages.

Advertising – Specific Objective -1

- Information provided through advertisement was trustworthy (mean 4.33) but clarity of the messages to understand easily (mean 2.77) is under question.
- Advertising had positive and strong relation with Customer Loyalty ($r = 0.577$)
- Advertising had relatively the highest statistically significant effect on overall Customer Loyalty ($\beta = .414$).

Sales Promotion – Specific Objective -2

- Except frequent sponsorship of social events (mean 3.63), majority of the respondents disagreed on provision of low-cost gifts, offers of sales discounts (mean 2.67) or attractive medical packages (mean 2.71) during the holidays or other social events.
- Overall, the sales promotion practices of the hospitals were perceived negatively (mean 2.80).
- Sales promotion has positive but weak relation ($r = .191$) with Customer Loyalty but its effect ($\beta = .284$) was found statistically insignificant at $p < .10$.

Direct Marketing – Specific Objective -3

- The respondents strongly agreed that the hospitals utilized social medias to promote their companies (mean 4.47) and the competence of medical staffs' interactive communication (mean 4.31).
- On the other hand, they denied that the managements used phone calls to send clear message regarding new service offers (mean 2.83) and contacting them through personal emails didn't help as expected (mean 2.22).

- Direct marketing has direct but weak relation with customer patronage ($r = 0.241$) and had relatively the lower effect ($\beta = .400$).

Personal Selling

- Majority of the respondents are strongly believed that sincerity (mean 4.50), friendly relationship (mean 4.43), and knowledgeability (mean 4.27) of the hospital's staff instilled confidence on patients.
- Personal Selling has positive moderate relation with customer patronage ($r = 0.427$) and relatively highest significant effect on customer patronage ($\beta = .311$) next to Advertising.

Public Relations/ Publications

- The results revealed that majority of the respondents agreed that the hospitals disseminated reliable (3.73) and more detailed (mean 3.82) information.
- Publication relations/publication had direct moderate relation ($r = 0.327$) but relatively lowest effect ($\beta = .111$) on overall customer loyalty.

In summary of the major findings, the predictor variables accounted for 66.4% variation in customer patronage. Except sales promotion, the other four dimensions of IMC had positive and statistically significant effect on customer loyalty to private general hospitals. They can be taken as good predictors for retention of customers in long-run.

5.2 CONCLUSION

IMC is a term used to describe the set of promotional tools that a business can use to communicate the benefits of its products or services to its customers effectively. The challenge is to select the right mix of promotional activities to suit the particular business at a particular time and to then use it correctly to achieve the intended long-term relationship. One of the most important marketing decisions that managers may need to make centers around determining the most effective way to promote their business and products. This study examines which promotional mix are effective to influence customer patronage in an integrated manner.

In this regard, the main objective of this study was, thus, to assess how IMC, as a combination of two or more of the promotional mix tools (such as advertising, personal selling, sale promotion, public relations and direct marketing) significantly affect private owned general hospitals' capability to retain

customers for long. Results of the findings revealed that all promotional mix dimensions, showed positive and statistically significant relationship with customer patronage. It also endorsed that all independent variables, except sales promotion, also had positive and statistically significant effects on patronage even though public relations/publicity and direct marketing had relatively lowest effect compared to advertising and personal selling.

Advertising plays a vital role to diffuse the information among the potential customers through different broadcasting media which in turn increases sales volumes. Regarding their preference, broadcasting media (such as TV, Radio, billboard) and websites (Social Media) are most preferred promotional channels to address marketing messages to the main targeted segments as majority of the respondents were found to be within the reproductive/ productive age range (16 – 45 years). Meanwhile, next to advertising, personal selling had also a positive significant impact on overall customer patronage of private general hospitals as well.

Similarly, personal selling is also the rich source of brand awareness and brand image because when medical staffs and patients interact face to face, then patients got brief information about their inquiries of the service. Such attachment results in making positive and trustworthy relationship with the patients/ customers. In this regard, the finding revealed that the private hospitals had a lot to do on accessing more media to create one-to-one interactive communication channel with the customer so as to remind them the services of which a given healthcare facility has been offering. Medical staff's personal competence and direct contact of the prospect customers have influence on improvement of their sales volumes in short run but build long-term relationship (Neema, 2017). This implies patients seem to demand a skilled professional medical staff who has the competence to address all their inquiries and instill confidence on them.

On the other hand, Direct Marketing also plays significant role to enhance customer loyalty through creating platform for interactive communication as well as updating new information regarding product innovation. It plays significant role in promoting their sales growth as well as retain customers for substantially longer period. It is aimed at creating and exploiting a direct relationship between patients and their medical service providers. This is also consistent with the findings by Shimp (2010) which maintained that direct marketing influenced the sales of the advertised services. Managers exerted unlimited efforts to change the bad image of the private general hospitals through aggressive public relation only when medical mischiefs happened.

Private general hospitals' managements were also aggressively working on sales promotion focusing only on sales discount during holiday, creating brand awareness through providing low cost items impregnated with their logos to promote their short-term sales volume. But it wouldn't help in developing long-term relationship with patients/ customers (Keller, 1991).

It can be concluded that promotional mix tools have significant and positive effect on prediction of customer loyalty when designed in an integrated manner and effectively implemented. Advertising, Personal Selling and Direct Marketing played relatively more significant role in enhancing sale volume, target and growth results in creating or maintaining long term relation with customers. This research has underlined the impact which advertising, personal selling, public relations, and direct marketing play on customer loyalty. It is supposed that IMC plays a very important role in increasing the customer patronage, and this may be right to some extent. On the other hand, sales promotion does not play a significant role in retaining customers. This result is generated because the targeted hospitals do not pay attention to the sales promotion techniques. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of integrated marketing communication practices on customer loyalty, and the result is that effective advertising, personal selling, public relations and direct marketing strategies can increase the customer loyalty of the private health sector in Addis Ababa. Hence, managers should acknowledge how important these relationships are, and enshrine them in their strategy to maximize the customer patronage and to bring superior service excellence. Thus, concerned managers should evaluate periodically to investigate which promotional tool or a mixture of two or more tools improve their overall sales performances in the long run with minimum costs.

5.3 RECOMMENDATION

It was found to have positive and significant relationships between IMC and customer patronage of private general hospital in Addis Ababa. Except sales promotion, all the other four dimensions of promotional mix tools such as advertising, direct marketing, personal selling and public relations/ publication are appropriate predictors to measure overall customer patronage keeping other variables constant. If private hospitals properly use these factors to the right target customers at the right place, in the right time, then they can easily increase the patronage of patients and hospital visitors. In view of the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are made to the concerned managements.

- Advertising has positive and strong effect on making customers patron on top of attracting new potential customers. Private general hospitals should address the intended marketing message through advertising on social medias.
- The managements of the hospitals should design and implement the sales promotion policy such as special offers and contacts for special business customers, medical checkup, free medical days, etc.
- The effect of direct marketing practices of the private general hospitals was found to be relatively lowest. Human resource managements should recruit, select and train marketing salesforce to address customized or tailored marketing messages for a specific target audience.
- Personal selling strategy has relatively higher significant influence on customer patronage. Through integrating with advertising, managements should improve its effect considerably.
- Public Relations/ Publicity had relatively lower effect on customer patronage. Marketing managers should make the printing medias like brochure, fliers, posters, etc. more attractive and properly customized to enhance buyers' awareness.
- This study is limited in nature and discusses only the slight element of IMC even there are some other marketing tools and technique which contribute to the overall customer patronage. Customer preference, price, technology, culture and other marketing factors may affect their loyalty. The future research can examine the impact of the aforementioned factors on the overall customer loyalty for both private and public hospitals.

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5. Appendix I – Survey Questionnaire



ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING MANAGEMENT

Survey Questionnaire

Questionnaire to be filled by customers of private hospitals in Addis Ababa

Dear Respondent,

My name is Hiwot Terefe and I am a graduating class currently enrolled at St. Mary's University, School of Graduate Studies. I am conducting a research on ***THE EFFECT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER PATRONAGE: THE CASE OF PRIVATE GENERAL HOSPITALS IN ADDIS ABABA*** as a case study for a partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of Master of Marketing Management. This study is done to examine the effect of integrated marketing communication practices on brand loyalty. How promotional mixes are currently implemented and to what extent they affect the retention of customers for longer period. Please be honest in filling this questionnaire, as the results of this study can be used as a basis for further study. Your confidentiality will be protected, and any information collected in this Study will be granted with full confidentiality.

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any doubts, comments or suggestions regarding the content and the subject matter as well. My good contact no. is:

Name- Hiwot Terefe

Mobile- 0946 80 25 34

Part I. General Information

1. Gender Female Male
2. Age (years old) 18 - 30 31 – 45 46 - 60
 Above 60
3. Preferred Media Broadcast (TV/Radio/Billboard) Sponsorship of Events
 Website (Social Media) Publications
 (Fliers/Magazines/ Brochures) Physical Presentation Others,
 please specify _____

Part II. Study Questions Related to Integrated Marketing Communication and Customer Loyalty

Please read each statement carefully and show your level of agreement on the statements by putting “X” mark in the boxes using the following 5-scale Likert scales: Strongly agreed (SA)=5, Agreed (A)=4, Neutral (N)=3, Disagreed (DA)=2, and Strongly disagreed (SDA)=1

Description	SDA	DA	N	A	SA
-------------	-----	----	---	---	----

	1	2	3	4	5
The hospital uses media advertising for its services					
The hospital's advertising is more informative					
Trustworthy information is advertised by the hospital					
Frequent advertising of the hospital reminds me to use the service					
Overall advertising practices of the hospital influenced me to prefer the service					
	1	2	3	4	5
The hospital uses low cost gifts to motivate me to use the service					
The sales discount during holiday events attracts me more					
The hospital uses attractive packages as a tool for promotion					
The hospital organizes events as sales promotion					
The overall sales promotion activities of the hotel tempt me to go there.					
	1	2	3	4	5
The hospital updates me about its services through my personal mail					
The hospital uses social media to promote its new services					
The hospital uses phone calls to send clear messages regarding new service offers					
The hospital staff's interactive communication persuades its customers to purchase					
Overall direct marketing practice of the hospital makes me decide to use its service					
	1	2	3	4	5
The medical staffs contact me frequently to visit its services					
The medical staffs of the hospital are knowledgeable to instill confidence on customers					
The medical staffs of the hospital offer me customized service which suits my personality					
Sincerity of the hospital's medical staffs influences me to use its services					

The medical staffs create friendly relationship which influenced me to visit the service					
	1	2	3	4	5
The hospital uses appealing printed materials to promote its services					
Reliable information, disseminated via the public relation, tempted me to use the service					
The hospital provides more detailed information via its public relation officers					
Information from the hospital's public relation makes me perceive the brand positively					
	1	2	3	4	5
If I need medical treatment, I prefer to go to this hospital again					
I would like the treatment of this hospital in particular					
I can tell more positive sides of this hospital medical services					
I have more faith in this hospital because of its reputation					
I recommend this hospital to my intimates as the service is trustworthy					

Many Thanks for Your Valued Time!!!

6. Appendix II – Survey Questionnaire - Amharic Version

የዳካሚ ጥናት የጽሑፍ መጠይቅ

ይህ መጠይቅ በአዲስ አበባ የሚገኙ የግል ሆስፒታል ድርጅት ደንበኞች የሚሞላ ነው።

ውድ ተሳታፊ፡

ስሜ ሕይወት ተፈራ ሲሆን በአሁኑ ሰዓት በቅድስተ ማርያም ዩኒቨርስቲ ድንገረ ምረቃ ት/ቤት የሁለተኛ ዲግሪ (ማስተርስ) ተማሪ ነኝ። በማርኬቲንግ አስተዳደር የማስተርስ ዲግሪዬን በከፊል ለማሟላት እንዲረዳኝ “*THE EFFECT OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION ON CUSTOMER PATRONAGE: THE CASE OF PRIVATE GENERAL HOSPITALS IN ADDIS ABABA*” በሚል ርዕስ ጥናት እያካሄድኩ እገኛለሁ። ይህ ጥናት በብራንድ (ምርቶች/አገልግሎቶች መለያ) ቁርኝት ላይ ያለውን የገበያ ትስስር ግንኙነት ተግባር ለማጥናት ያለመ ነው። የማስታወቂያ ሥራዎች በአሁኑ ሰዓት በምን ዓይነት ሁኔታ ተግባራዊ እንደሚረጉ እና በምን ያክል መጠን ከደንበኛው ጋር ያለውን ትስስር ለረጅም ጊዜ ለማቆየት ይረዳሉ

የሚለውን ያጠናል። ስለዚህም እባክዎትን ይህንን መጠይቅ በትክክል በመሙላት እገዛ ያድርጉልኝ። ይህ ጥናት ለቀጣይ ጥናቶች እንደመነሻ የሚያገለግል ጥናት በመሆኑ የእርስዎ ትክክለኛ ምላሽ ለስኬታማነቱ ጉልህ አስተዋጽኦ አለው። የሚሰጡት መረጃ ምሥጢራዊነቱ የተጠበቀ ሲሆን ማንኛውም ለዚህ ጥናት የሚሰጡት መረጃ ሙሉ በሙሉ በምሥጢር ይያዛል።

የዚህን መጠየቅ ይዘት እና የጉዳዩን ርዕስ በተመለከተ ጥያቄ፣ አስተያየት ወይንም ማንኛውም ዓይነት ጥርጣሬ ካልዎት እባክዎትን እኔን ከማግኘት አይቆጠቡ።

ስም፡ - አይወት ተረፈ

ስልክ፡ - 0946 80 25 34

ክፍል 1 - ጠቅላላ መረጃ

1. ፆታ ሴት ወገን
2. ዕድሜ (በዓመት) 18 - 30 31 – 45 46 - 60 60 እና ከዚያ በላይ
3. ተመራጭ የሆነ ማስተላለፊያ ዘዴ ብሮድካስት (ቴሌቪዥን/ራዲዮ ቢልቦር የክስተት ስፖንሰሮች ድረ ገፅ (ማኅበራዊ ሚዲያ) ጎንደሮች (በራሪ ወረቀቶች፣ ጋዜጦች፣ ብሮሽሮች) በአካል የሚቀርብ ሌሎች፣ ይገለጹ _____

ክፍል 2፡ ከገበያ ግንኙነት እና የደንበኛ ታማኝነት ጋር ግንኙነት ያለው መጠየቅ

እባክዎትን ከዚህ በታች የተመለከቱትን እያንዳንዱን ጥያቄዎች በጥቃቄ ካነበቡ በኋላ ለተጠቀሰው በምን ያክል ጥያቄ ሊስማሙ እንደሚችሉ ባለ 5 - መለኪያዎቹን ማለትም ፡- በጣም እስማማለሁ = 5፣ እስማማለሁ = 4፣ የምለው የለም = 3፣ አልስማማም = 2 በፍፁም አልስማማም = 1 የሚሉትን ቁጥሮች ሥር “X” ምልክት በማኖር ይግለጹ።

ገለጻ	በፍፁም አልስማማም	አልስማማም	የምለው የለም	እስማማለሁ	በጣም እስማማለሁ
	1	2	3	4	5

<p>ሆስፒታሉ ለሚሰጠው አገልግሎት የሚዲያ ማስታወቂያዎችን ይጠቀማል</p>					
<p>ሆስፒታሉ የሚጠቀመው የሚዲያ ማስታወቂያ መረጃን በጣም በጥሩ ሁኔታ ይሰጣል።</p>					
<p>ጠቃሚ የሆነ መረጃ በሆስፒታሉ ማስታወቂያ በኩል ይተላለፋል።</p>					
<p>ሆስፒታሉ በተደጋጋሚ የሚያደርገው ማስታወቂያ የሚሰጠውን አገልግሎት እንድጠቀም ያስታውሰኛል።</p>					
<p>ሆስፒታሉ የሚያደርገው ሁሉ አቀፍ የማስታወቂያ ትግበራ የሚሰጠውን አገልግሎት እንድመርጥ ተጽእኖ አድርጎብኛል።</p>					
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>ሆስፒታሉ አነስተኛ ወጪ ያላቸው ስጦታዎችን ስለሚሰጥ ይህ የሚሰጠውን አገልግሎት እንዲጠቀም አነሳስቶኛል።</p>					
<p>በበዓላት ጊዜ የሚሰጠው የሽያጭ ቅናሽ አገልግሎቱን እንድጠቀም በይበልጥ አድርጎኛል።</p>					
<p>ለማስታወቂያ ስራ ሆስፒታሉ ጥሩ እና ሳቢ የሆኑ ፓኬጆችን ተግባራዊ ያደርጋል።</p>					
<p>ሽያጭን ከፍ ለማድረግ እና ለማስተዋወቅ ሆስፒታሉ ልዩ ዝግጅቶችን ያዘጋጃል።</p>					

<p>ሆስፒታሉ የሚያደርገው ሽያጭን የማሳደግ ማስታወቂያ ወደ ሆስፒታሉ እንድሄድ አድርጎኛል።</p>					
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>ሆስፒታሉ ስለሚሰጠው አገልግሎት በግል ኢሜሌ በኩል ወቅቱን የጠበቀ መረጃ እንዲደርሰኝ ያደርጋል።</p>					
<p>ሆስፒታሉ ስለሚሰጠው አዳዲስ አገልግሎቶች የማህበራዊ ሚዲያዎችን ይጠቀማል።</p>					
<p>ሆስፒታሉ ስለሚሰጠው አዳዲስ አገልግሎቶች ስልክን በመጠቀም መልዕክቶችን ይልካል።</p>					
<p>የሆስፒታሉን ሰራተኞች የሚያደርጉት የቁርኝነት ግንኙነት ደንበኞች ሆስፒታሉን እንዲጠቀሙ ይገፋፋቸዋል።</p>					
<p>ሆስፒታሉ የሚጠቀመው የቀጥታ ገበያ ትግበራ እኔ የአገልግሎቱ ተጠቃሚ እንድሆን አድርጎኛል።</p>					
	1	2	3	4	5
<p>አገልግሎቱን በተደጋጋሚ ጊዜ ለማግኘት ሆስፒታሉን እድገብኝ የህክምና ባለሙያዎቹ እኔን በግል አግኝተውኛል።</p>					
<p>የሆስፒታሉ የህክምና ባለሙያዎች እውቀታቸው ከፍተኛ በመሆኑ በደንበኞች ዘንድ ተአማኒ እንዲሆን አድርገዋል።</p>					
<p>የሆስፒታሉ የህክምና ሠራተኞች ለእኔ የሚያስፈልገውን</p>					

አገልግሎት በመስጠት ፍላጎቱን እንዳገኝ አድርጓል።

የሆስፒታሉ ሠራተኞች አክብሮት የሚሰጠውን አገልግሎት እንዳገኝ ተጽእኖ አሳድረውብኛል።

የሆስፒታሉ ሠራተኞች ጓዳዊ ግንኙነት ሆስፒታሉ የሚሰጠውን አገልግሎት ለማግኘት በእኔ ላይ ተጽእኖ አሳድሯል።

1	2	3	4	5
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ሆስፒታሉ የታተሙ እና ግልጽ የሆኑ ማስታወቂያዎችን አገልግሎቱን ለማስፋት በጥቅም ላይ ያውላል።

ታማኝነት ያለው መረጃ በሕዝብ ግንኙነቱ በኩል የሚሰራጨው የሆስፒታሉን አገልግሎት እንድጠቀም በእኔ ላይ ተጽእኖ አድርጓል።

በሕዝብ ግንኙነት በኩል ሆስፒታሉ የተሟላ መረጃ ይሰጣል።

በሆስፒታሉ ሕዝብ ግንኙነት በኩል የሚሰጠው መረጃ ስለ ሆስፒታሉ አገልግሎት አዎንታዊ አመለካከት እንዲኖረኝ አድርጓል።

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1	2	3	4	5
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የህክምና አገልግሎት የሚያስፈልገኝ ሆኖ ሲገኝ ወደዚህ ሆስፒታል በድጋሚ መሄድን እመርጣለሁ።

የዚህን ሆስፒታል አገልግሎት በጣም እመርጣለሁ።

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<p>ስለዚህ ሆስፒታል የህክምና አገልግሎት በርካታ የሆኑ አዎንታዊ ጎኖችን መናገር እችላለሁ።</p> <p>ስለዚህ ሆስፒታል ከፍ ያለ እምነት አለኝ ምክንያቱም ጥሩ ዝና ያለው ሆስፒታል ነው።</p> <p>ይህ ሆስፒታል የሚሰጠው አገልግሎት ጠቃሚ ስለሆነ ለሚቀርቡኝ ሰዎች ይህንን ሆስፒታል እንዲጠቀሙ ሃሳቤን እለግሳለሁ።</p>					
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7. Appendix III

Table 1. Multicollinearity Test

	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Advertising	.219	4.566
Sales Promotion	.178	5.618
Personal Selling	.209	4.785
Direct Marketing	.392	2.551
Public Relations/ Publication	.225	4.444
Customer Patronage	.200	5.000

Table 2. Normality Test

	N	Skewness	Kurtosis
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	Stat	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Advertising	302	-.944	.144	1.133	.288
Sales Promotion	302	-1.182	.144	0.843	.288
Personal Selling	302	.028	.144	1.094	.288
Direct Marketing	302	-1.113	.144	.803	.288
Public Relations/Publicity	302	-1.108	.144	1.137	.288
Customer Loyalty	302	0.821	.144	0.244	.288
Valid N	302				

8. Appendix IV

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	Tolerance	VIF
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