The Effect of Integrated Interactive marketing on the Profitability of Irancell Company

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of integrated interactive marketing (IIM) on the profitability of the Irancell Company. The population of this study consisted of all managers and employees at the Irancell Company in Tehran. A sample size of 207 individuals was determined according to the Krejcie-Morgan’s sample size table using simple random sampling. Data were collected by a questionnaire assessed by the Likert scale in this descriptive correlation study. The validity of research tool was approved using experts and specialists’ consensus and a reliability of 0.895 was confirmed for the questionnaire. Data were analyzed using structural equation modeling. The results showed that the dimensions of IIM (customer satisfaction, marketing strategy, brand, and advertising) had a significant impact on the profitability of Irancell Co. The ranking results indicate that the variable marketing strategy is ranked the first in terms of affecting the profitability of Irancell Co., and variables of customer satisfaction, advertising, and brand are ranked as second to fourth, respectively.

1. **Introduction**

The globalization of services market, emergence of new competitors, and introduction of private sector have led to more competition and the risk of market share reduction on individual commercial companies [1]. In the era of competition and globalization, therefore, customers are assigned one of the most important assets of companies that should be maintained and developed. A challenge facing all marketers today is to find a way of increasing customer loyalty and preservation [2]. In addition to the establishment of long-term relationship with customers, using IIM can identify, strengthen, and improve the activities that are important and value creating from their perspectives, thereby, to attract more customers making them loyal to the organization and its brand [3]. In addition, the need for advertising services in communities is increasing more than ever and people expect better and more varied services from enterprises and service providers. Maintaining existing customers’ loyalty and confidence to attract new customers require an efficient and effective management in all aspects of services, with an emphasis on the concept of marketing. Successful marketing enables the company to obtain and maintain customers. Thus, the success of financial institutions depends on the quality of long-term relations between them and their partners, including customers, employees, financial intermediaries, companies, and so on. In modern companies, moving from traditional marketing toward a comprehensive marketing is considered a new approach. Traditional marketing focuses on the needs of customers so it can bring along immediate benefits, but this approach does not always bring benefits to the company and its customers [4]. Today, companies with superior performance in various industries are moving towards retaining their customers and their loyalties because most markets are in their infancy. Competition is increasing and the cost of attracting new customers has increased [5].

An important issue in the competitiveness of an organization is its ability to act and react in a competitive environment. Business performance includes the performance of customer (customer satisfaction

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and loyalty), market performance (high sales volume and market share), and financial performance (profit and return on investment compared to competitors). Marketing literature shows that companies apply the abilities to convert resources into outputs based on IIM and as such, IIM is linked to financial performance. Song et al. argued that IIM could help the structure of the company and maintain long-term relationships with customers and distribution channel members. Marketing capabilities create a strong visible brand that allows companies to have access to a superior corporate performance. Access to a higher financial performance and profitability for a company depends on creating sustainable competitive advantage and providing durable superior value for its customers [6]. This assures the company to create and maintain a sort of organizational culture that paves the ground for behaviors required [7]. The purpose of IIM is to identify the important elements of integrated market and leveraging strategic, organizational, and operational issues for the effectiveness of businesses operating in the e-commerce market. Mixed marketing-IIM is considered as empowerment of strategic marketing planning on the web. On the one hand, this tool is useful to all organizations that are active in the real world and intend to activate on the internet and related applications. On the other hand, the tool is operative for companies in the trade and services in order to reassess their presence in e-commerce [8]. However, IIM is noted as an innovative technology-based activity accounting for a main aspect of marketing operation being different from other marketing operations. In fact, the mixed marketing-IIM is the use of effective advertising through apps and other interactive technologies in order to encourage communication and mediation between companies and customers [9]. This innovative activity develops new methods of interaction with customers and provides new service delivery systems leading to cost reduction, growth and profitability of exports, entering new markets, improving market share, and creating positive views about products, services, brand, and a high performance of the company. It can also improve the usability and quality of services as well as the profitability.

Another important condition for IIM business is a strong linking network with a high confidence. Key variables such as a high level of technical knowledge and expertise of managers, customer relationship management and proper responsiveness, sharing knowledge and developing security in research and development are important factors affecting the adoption of IIM by firms. Yet, any company and organization should properly identify and understand the needs, preferences, and expectations of its customers to be able to manufacture products with the highest value for consumers and to price, distribute, and promote it effectively and also easily sell the product in the end. In addition, elements of IIM are a set of controllable marketing variables that companies combine them to achieve marketing objectives in the target market and to create the reaction required. Such a combination includes any action that the company could perform to sell its products and to influence the demand [10]. Hence, inappropriate conditions in the process of IIM including advertising through apps and paying attention to the activities of competitors originate from a technological view to e-commerce management, while the market orientation of operators (including Irancell) is a process that should be coordinated with all activities within and out of the organization, demands of managers, and the ability of human resources. Disagreements between the market processes, demands of customers, and the approach of IIM provided by the company have often reduced the competitiveness of the company compared to other companies (operators). Thus, adoption of IIM by the company becomes necessary in order to identify an appropriate solution to improve the profitability by developing app-advertising and integrated marketing. In this context, the use of each parameter studied by the researcher in the current situation and the importance of each will be examined in the pending status at Irancell Co. Finally, the study tries to answer a fundamental question: What impact will IIM have on Irancell profitability?

2. Literature review

2.1. Integrated marketing

Communications of integrated marketing include coordination and integration of all communicative tools of marketing, which is executed with minimal costs at companies using a perfect program for maximizing the impact on the final consumer. This integration will affect all marketing channels, customer-based communications and even intra-organizational communications (Bells & petti 2010). The interactive connections of integrated marketing is defined as an interdisciplinary process for the creation and increasing beneficial relationships with customers and other beneficiaries by means of control or strategic influence on all messages sent to all groups.

An important advantage of the communication system of integrated marketing is an increase in profit due to an appropriate effectiveness. Sometimes an appropriate and integrated message may have far greater impact on the audience than thousands of irrelevant messages. The communication system of integrated marketing ensures that all forms of communications and messages to be carefully tied or connected. The principle purpose is to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing communication using integrated marketing communications. In fact, the integrity of the communication means can occur at various horizontal, vertical, interior, and exterior levels [11]. Horizontal integrity of the marketing communication means and across units of the organization occurs when all the units, including production, financing, distribution, and communication, work together and send fully informed, shared messages of their decisions and actions to the customers while [12].
Customer consent: Today, all organizational units or enterprises and institutions are customer-oriented and the direction of all organizational units is to gain customer satisfaction. In a general view, each customer (as a whole) is satisfied or dissatisfied after receiving a service and/or purchasing and using a product. Satisfaction is a positive feeling ultimately created in the consumer or in the recipient [13]. The feeling is primarily created by satisfying customer expectations and performance of the supplier. Given that customer expectations and the product or service are of the same level, or the product is higher or lower than the level of customer expectations, a feeling of satisfaction, excitement or frustration is aroused in the customer. The point is that that merely providing a service or a high quality product cannot draw the customer’s satisfaction.

Considering our own purchases in the neighborhood shops, it can be found that a fair-minded, good-natured, and patient salesman, which has quality commodities as well, will always encourage future purchases and vice versa [14].

Marketing strategies: The focus of marketing strategic is to allocate appropriately and to coordinate the activities and marketing resources in order to secure the operational objectives of the company in terms of a special market/product. Accordingly, the main issue concerning marketing strategy domain is to determine specific target markets for a product family or a particular product. Consequently, companies seek to gain competitive advantage and to create synergism through a design and implementation of an appropriate plan for the mixed elements of marketing (basically, four mixed products of price, place, and promotion) according to the needs and desires of potential customers in the target market [15]. Marketing is also primarily responsible for designing and implementing strategic marketing plans for every one-product market and the product family. However, as we have seen, such strategic marketing plans are not designed in vacuum without considering internal and external environments. In contrast, the objectives of product-specific marketing strategies for any type of market should now be achievable by taking advantage of existing resources and capabilities, which are harmonized and coherent with orientations and resource allocation to institutional and business strategies. In other words, there should exist proper internal congruity, consistency or continuity among all elements of three strategic levels [16].

Brand: In the competitive condition of current markets, it is of utmost importance to obtain a proper status in the mind of the consumer so that the consumer feels loyal to the company. An effective factor in reaching such a position in the minds of customers is the specific value of company’s brand (Aker, 1991). Brand specific value is the marginal utility or benefit that a product yields by brand. One of the main reasons for the importance of the concept is its strategic role in gaining competitive advantage obtained in the market. Brand value is considered as an asset for the company that promotes business cash flow and is a multidimensional concept that could be increased by strengthening its dimensions.

David Aaker is an academic pioneer in brand from the University of Berkeley. He defines brand as a symbol linked with a large number of assets and mental liabilities presented to identify and distinguish goods. Aaker’s model is a conceptual view seeking the emphasis on determining the features that make up the brand value from the consumer’s perspective.

Advertising: Claire and Paul (2011) stated that nearly one-third of the major brands around the world tried to launch a series of promotional programs by their apps. Advertising by applications has provided a great opportunity for marketers and not only well-known brands, but unknown brands can also benefit from it. Application advertising can be used for products that do not have striking and unique features in order to create excitement (Kirby and Marsden, 2006). However, these brands should note both message content and primary targeting with extra importance to implement successful application advertising program. Creating a message beyond expected or acceptable standards in TV traditional advertising or development of a creative message that could involve the viewer can be very effective to create an application-advertising program. Viral advertising must be something not found on TV advertising. Based on previous studies, emotional elements such as happiness, sadness, anger, and surprise could convey messages.

According to the theoretical background, the main research hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Main hypothesis: integrated marketing has a positive impact on profitability of Irancell Co.

Secondary research hypotheses have been proposed as follows:

1. Customer satisfaction has a positive impact on the profitability of Irancell Co.
2. Marketing strategy positively affects the Irancell corporate profitability.
3. Irancell corporate brand has a positive effect on the profitability of the company.
4. Advertising has a positive impact on profitability of Irancell Co.
2.2. Conceptual Model Research

![Figure 1. The conceptual model](image)

2.3. Methodology

This correlational research is applied in the objectives and descriptive in terms of data collection. The research population consisted of 410 employees of Irancell; as a result, a sample size of 226 individuals was obtained using the formula of limited sampling. However, 250 questionnaires were distributed to increase the generalizability. Of these, 225 questionnaires were collected, 200 of which were detected suitable for analysis. The sampling method used was simple random sampling, as the results of this research are not concerned with the education or organizational position of the participants. The questionnaire was evaluated by the five-point Likert scale (fully disagree = 1, disagree = 2, no idea = 3, agree = 4, fully agree = 5).

To test research hypothesis, the validity and reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by Cronbach’s alpha coefficient. A coefficient higher than 0.7 was obtained for all variables in the conceptual model, showing the appropriate internal consistency and reliability of the research construct (Table 1).

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha values

| Variable          | Cronbach's alpha | Total Cronbach's alpha |
|-------------------|-------------------|------------------------|
| Customer consent  | 0.912             |                        |
| Marketing strategy| 0.905             |                        |
| Brand             | 0.899             | 0.895                  |
| Advertising       | 0.805             |                        |
| Profit            | 0.890             |                        |

The reliability factor was used to assess the validity of IIM dimensions and profitability. In this study, the primary causes of these variables were extracted from the first order exploratory factor analysis, the results of which are as follows:

Table 2. Validity assessment by KMO

| Variable            | KMO index | Bartlett significance | Percentage of explained variance |
|---------------------|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|
| Customer satisfaction| 0.80      | 0.000                 | 23.10                           |
| Marketing strategy  | 0.85      | 0.000                 | 14.17                           |
| Brand               | 0.84      | 0.000                 | 10.05                           |
| Advertising         | 0.79      | 0.000                 | 19.47                           |
| Profit              | 0.78      | 0.000                 | 4.24                            |
Hypotheses: First, the data distribution was investigated to examine the hypotheses. To decide on the use of parametric or non-parametric tests, the normality of data was assessed by Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Table 3).

H0: Distribution of data is normal.

H1: Distribution data is not normal

The null hypothesis (normality of variables) is confirmed according to the results of the test.

| Table 3. Results of data distribution |
|--------------------------------------|
| Variable                             | Sig  | α   | Kolmogorov statistic | Test result         |
| Customers satisfaction               | 0.12 | 0.05| 1.600                | Normal distribution |
| Marketing strategy                  | 0.085| 0.05| 1.912                | Normal distribution |
| Brand                               | 0.08 | 0.05| 1.643                | Normal distribution |
| Advertising                         | 0.25 | 0.05| 1.643                | Normal distribution |
| Profit                              | 0.062| 0.05| 1.090                | Normal distribution |

3. The structural validity and reliability

Table 4. Terms of structural reliability and validity (Hair et al., 2006)

- Reliability
  - CR > 0.7

- Convergent validity
  - Factor loadings must be significant
  - Standard factor loads must be greater than 0.5 and, if possible, greater than 0.7
  - CR > AVE
  - AVE > 0.5

- Discriminant validity
  - AVE > MSV
  - AVE > ASV

Table 5. Establishment of structural reliability and validity

| Variables               | CR | AVE | MSV | ASV |
|-------------------------|----|-----|-----|-----|
| Customers satisfaction  | 0.873| 0.535| 0.366| 0.354|
| Marketing strategy      | 0.935| 0.568| 0.366| 0.328|
| Brand                   | 0.882| 0.556| 0.341| 0.274|
| Advertising             | 0.777| 0.603| 0.354| 0.302|
| Profit                  | 0.777| 0.603| 0.354| 0.302|

According to the values calculated for the indicators, it can be seen that all CR values are higher than 0.7, hence, there is a combined or structural reliability. By the establishment of four terms for convergent validity, convergent validity is also confirmed with respect to the values in the table. In addition, the amount of AEV is greater than the two values of MSV and ASV, hence, discriminant validity of the model is approved as well.

4. Findings

In order to analyze the hypotheses, the structural modelling was tested through path analysis for the primary and secondary hypotheses by LISREL software (Ver. 5.8). Table 6 shows the full variables incorporated in the research model.
Table 6. Guide to the abbreviations of the model variables

| Index                        | Symbol     |
|------------------------------|------------|
| Integrated Interactive Marketing | IIM       |
| Customer Satisfaction        | CS         |
| Marketing Strategy           | MS         |
| Company Brand                | (CB)       |
| Advertising                  | Advertising|
| Profitability                | Profitability|

4.1. Main hypothesis testing

Figure 2 shows the structural model of the main hypothesis of this study in a standard estimation mode. Figure 3 illustrates the structural model of the main hypothesis with significant effects.

Figure 2. The structural model of the main hypothesis in a standard estimation mode

Figure 3. The structural model of the main hypothesis with significant effects

Figure 3 displays significant relationships between the variables. If the t-statistic is between 1.96 to -1.96, the amount of variance explained is insignificant. Given the output of figure 3, all coefficients with a value greater than 1.96 are statistically acceptable.
Table 7 exhibits the results of causal analysis of structural equation modeling to test the main hypotheses. The results confirm the causal impact of e-business marketing on the business performance.

| Hypothesis                              | Sig. | t-statistics | Test result |
|-----------------------------------------|------|--------------|-------------|
| The impact of IIM on the profitability  | 0.80 | 9.89         | Confirmed   |

4.2. Sub-hypotheses testing

Figure 4 shows the structural model for the sub-hypotheses in a standard estimation mode. Figure 5 displays the structural model for the sub-hypotheses with significant effects.

Given the output of figure 5, all coefficients with values greater than 1.96 are statistically acceptable.

Table 8 exhibits the results of causal analysis of structural equation modeling to test the sub-hypotheses. The results confirm the causal impact of IIM marketing on the profitability of Irancell Co.
According to Table 8, the first hypothesis about the impact of the customer satisfaction on the Irancell company’s profitability is confirmed according to the critical coefficient or t-value (6.08), which is not in the range of 1.96 to -1.96. Since the critical value is also out of the range of -2.58 to 2.58, the hypothesis is accepted with a probability of 99%.

The second hypothesis concerning the effects of marketing strategy on Irancell corporate profitability is confirmed according to the critical coefficient or t-value (2.59), which is out of the range of -1.96 to 1.96. Since the critical value is also out of the range of -2.58 to 2.58, this hypothesis is accepted with a probability of 99 percent.

The third hypothesis concerning the effects of brand on Irancell corporate profitability is confirmed according to the critical coefficient or t-value (4.37) being out of the range [1.96 to -1.96]. Since the critical value is also out of the range of -2.58 to 2.58, this hypothesis is accepted with a probability of 99 percent.

The third hypothesis concerning the effects of advertising on Irancell corporate profitability is confirmed according to the critical coefficient or t-value (3.27) which is out of the range [1.96 to -1.96]. Since the critical value is also out of the range of -2.58 to 2.58, this hypothesis is accepted with a probability of 99 percent.

Table 9 shows goodness of fitting indices indicating a proper fitness of the model.

5. Variable ranking

The Shannon entropy is used to rank the variables. In fact, the philosophy of using Shannon entropy at this stage is to determine the weight of four independent variables affecting the dependent variable of company’s profitability with the help of data present in the analysis. Table 10 shows the values of the weighted independent variables using Shannon entropy.
Given the weights available, the importance of each variable can be obtained. Hence, any variable with a lower weight is ranked higher. Accordingly, it can be noted that the variable marketing strategy is at the first rank of influence and the variables customer satisfaction, advertising, and brand are ranked second to fourth, respectively.

6. Conclusions

Study of IIM and profitability has been an issue of interest in recent years. Our results also confirmed positive and significant impact of IIM on profitability. In addition, four aspects of IIM, namely customer satisfaction, marketing strategy, brand, and advertising were analyzed through structural equations reflecting the positive impacts and relationships between the dimensions and Irancell Company’s profitability. The results of this study are consistent with those reported by Bongo et al. (2014), Dadras et al. (2015), and Wang and Shohal (2012).

Based on the results, it is possible to achieve strategic outcomes in a competitive market, that is, entering new markets, improving market share, building a positive view, and awareness of services and business brands using the internet and e-marketing in marketing activities associated with the customer, i.e., the promotion and advertising of products, services, capabilities, and Irancell Company’s brand, answering customer questions, etc. as well as marketing activities related to distribution channels such as access of salesmen to all different information and activities related to marketing research.

In order to improve profitability, it is necessary to pay more attention to the development of IIM. Since IIM provides clear and important perspectives for managers leading to competitive advantage and, on the other hand, according to the decisive role of advertising through applications in corporate profitability (as evidenced in this study), the importance of this indicator is now well apparent to Irancell Co. Thus, the senior managers must be active in line with IIM in such a way that this type of marketing is considered part of the corporate culture and values of the company and all directors and employees actually commit to it focusing on the collection and dissemination of information on the needs of customers that would result in a higher profitability. Therefore, the managers of Irancell are recommended that, once a new technology is introduced to the market, to design and offer new services through applications, seriously implement activities related to research and development in the company, use advanced technologies in the presentation of new services, maintain good relations with customers, identify customer needs constantly, respond favorably to the customers as the priority activities, assess and review customer satisfaction continually, share information at the corporate level, immediately react the actions of competitors (other operators), analyze the strengths and weaknesses of competitors by their senior managers, and share information relevant to competitors with the employees.

Our company should carefully verify the quality of message transmission and sales through communication tools and different channels (provided in-person, online, and offline).

Marketing managers should monitor various new communication elements and compare them with other elements. In this regard, they should consider various elements of verbal communications. They should make sure of the solidity and establishment of brand image as one of the main goals of relationship marketing program. To associate the brand in the minds of customers, they should develop service quality through product offering via new processes such as application. They should develop a good relationship marketing strategy for more information on customer satisfaction and buying process of consumers.

For each stage of the consumer purchase process, suitable marketing communication tools should be used. Marketing communication activities should be designed and developed aiming at stimulating the activities of consumers (through advertising in the context of the sales process including applications).

The reactions of customers and their satisfaction with regard to marketing activities should be followed up and pursued.

To collect information related to clients from different departments and maintain in a unified database.

To develop ongoing marketing activities through improvement of product and service quality process that leads to the strengthening of the relationship with existing customers.

To adopt appropriate marketing strategies to retain existing customers by increasing their level of satisfaction.

Company executives should make continued efforts to achieve a steady flow of profitability from customers in long-term by strengthening the relationship with their customers.

Since all aspects of IIM have positive and significant impacts on Irancell corporate profitability, the company executives are suggested to only focus on one dimension of IIM. It is also necessary to highlight an optimal combination of four aspects of IIM in order to maximize profitability and create competitive advantage through a proper marketing strategy.
Due to the effectiveness of IIM components on profitability, the administrators need to create a proper atmosphere in their organization to pave the ground in order to access to IIM information of other operators, including the strengths and weaknesses, so that they are always prepared to respond properly in order to maintain and improve the competitive advantage. In addition, the company should develop an IIM-oriented strategy so that it takes into account the coordination between different units of the company and to share information between various offices (credit, collections, resource, and finance) in such a way to underlie value creation for the customers.

Due to the effect of IIM on the profitability, the importance of using new technologies (including applications) in service delivery is well evident. Irancell Company management requires continuous assessment of the customers’ needs and scrutinizing their satisfaction to allow creation of new values by selecting appropriate orientations.

By market positioning, attending competition arenas and exhibitions, familiarity with the latest market developments, and exploring the strategies and tactics of competitors, they should seek to offer their products with advantages better than their rivals did by the use of advertising and promotional activities as well as by the company’s capabilities. In addition, the following factors are suggested to be considered to prepare the organization for the implementation of e-marketing:

To consider an appropriate level of security programs for the implementation of advertising services through applications.

To adopt comprehensive policies by the company in the field of security and protection of customers' privacy and personal information and also proper information delivery on the policies

Secure and reliable network infrastructure and applications for clients to be organized at the corporate level.

To define a distinct strategy for the development of applications’ infrastructure.

Acceptable quality of communication and information equipment for advertising applications to be provided for clients.

Agreeable plans between IT and business managers to be developed in order to provide advertising services for related apps.

Development of integrated promotional marketing plans through applications in a formal process at the department and institutional levels.

Furthermore, the following propositions are presented for future research according to the results of this study and its limitations:

This research has specifically scrutinized the impact of IIM dimensions on the profitability of Irancell Co. However, because the parameters studied are not the only affecting factors and other important factors play important roles in this process, some of which have deficiency or absence of sufficient empirical evidence, it is recommended that investigations to be conducted on the effect of such factors.

Promotional marketing plans through integrated applications in a formal process at the institutional level.

Designing a development pattern for IIM at Irancell Co.

Examining the support and agreement of senior executives on IIM.

Conducting interventional studies, focusing on influential factors and predictors in relation to IIM, and ultimately assessing the impacts and aftermath events.

Investigating the impact of other moderating variables on the relationship between IIM and profitability.

Given the importance of IIM in various tasks, it is recommended that research of this kind to be expanded at different levels.

Conducting a research on this subject with an emphasis on differences in effective advertising on profitability at the company's various units.

Because it was not feasible to separately study and analyze each individual industries in the present study due to limitations, the relationship between IIM and long-term profitability at different operators should be examined to further clarify the study topic.

The efficiency and effectiveness of IIM on profitability improvement to be measured in a model using different models for IIM as mentioned in the literature.
Implementation of this research through exploratory-qualitative analysis method and quantitative testing using a fuzzy approach.

Other researchers are recommended to carry out investigations with other operators to compare other statistical populations and different educational levels with each other in order to augment the generalizability of the findings of this study.

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