

## THE IMPLICATIONS OF INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION IN MAINTAINING STUDENT RELATIONSHIP OF A MALAYSIAN PUBLIC INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

(IMPLIKASI KOMUNIKASI PEMASARAN BERSEPADU DALAM MENGEKALKAN  
HUBUNGAN DENGAN PELAJAR DI SEBUAH INSTITUSI PENGAJIAN TINGGI AWAM  
MALAYSIA)

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**Abstract:** Integrated marketing communication (IMC) is a business process that improves the higher education institutions' marketing strategy by sending clear and consistent messages throughout the institutions in every contact point. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the strategic processes of IMC in the Malaysian public institution of higher education (IHE) and its correlation with leadership in maintaining student relationship. Quantitative analysis was performed to observe the level of IMC implementation and leadership styles exhibited in the selected Malaysian IHE. The IMC four-stage framework and seven dimensions of full range leadership theory, which comprises of transformational, transactional, and *laissez-faire* leadership theory served as the basis of the study. The study found that the lecturers and administrative staffs of the Malaysian public university in Penang were adequately experienced in their job. They have also played their roles well by communicating with the students, and were thus respected, appreciated, and trusted by their students. Hence, they have created a strong emotional bond with the customer, and at the same time, maintained internal stakeholder relationships.

**Keywords:** Integrated marketing communication framework, student relationship, Malaysian public institution of higher education, full range leadership theory, Malaysian public university in Penang.

**Abstrak:** Komunikasi pemasaran bersepadu (IMC) merupakan satu proses perniagaan yang meningkatkan strategi pemasaran institusi pengajian tinggi dengan menghantar mesej yang jelas dan konsisten di seluruh institusi dari setiap sudut hubungan. Justeru, tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji proses strategik IMC di institusi pengajian tinggi (IPT) awam di Malaysia dan korelasinya dengan kepimpinan dalam mengekalkan hubungan dengan pelajar. Analisis kuantitatif telah dilakukan untuk melihat tahap pelaksanaan IMC dan gaya kepimpinan yang diperlihatkan di IPT Malaysia yang terpilih. Empat peringkat rangka kerja IMC dan tujuh dimensi teori rangkaian penuh kepimpinan yang terdiri daripada teori kepimpinan transformasi, transaksi dan *laissez-faire* disampaikan sebagai asas kajian. Kajian mendapati bahawa pensyarah dan kakitangan pentadbiran universiti awam Malaysia di Pulau Pinang mempunyai pengalaman yang mencukupi dalam tugas mereka. Mereka juga telah memainkan peranan dengan baik, dengan berkomunikasi dengan pelajar dan dengan itu, mereka dihormati, dihargai dan dipercayai oleh pelajar-pelajar mereka. Oleh itu, mereka telah mencipta ikatan emosi yang kuat dengan pelanggan dan pada masa yang sama, mengekalkan hubungan pihak berkepentingan dalaman.

**Kata kunci:** Rangka kerja komunikasi pemasaran bersepadu, hubungan dengan pelajar, institusi pengajian tinggi awam Malaysia, teori rangkaian penuh, universiti awam Malaysia di Pulau Pinang.

### Introduction

Ever since its introduction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, integrated marketing communication (IMC) has undergone several conceptual

transformations in order to meet the requirements of the constantly changing marketplace. At present, Schultz's (2004) definition of IMC can be deduced as the following: