INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION PRACTICES IN MALAYSIA GLCs AND IT RELATIONSHIPS WITH LOCAL CULTURES

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Abstract

The continuous changes occurring in the field of marketing communications led to an increasing relevance of researches on integrated marketing communication (IMC). Due to the fast pace of technological innovations, IMC is going to be a very dynamic discipline. In this study, the four stages of IMC framework and cultural dimension theory are highlighted as a potential lens through which researcher analyzes the current practices and implementations of IMC in GLCs. The study was conducted on nine selected GLCs in Malaysia located in the Klang Valley. GLCs senior management, executives, and stakeholders were the respondents for a purposive population of this case study. Results show that based on the four stages of IMC framework, most respondents perceived selected Malaysia's GLCs as practicing IMC concept in the respective organization. The highest mean score of M=3.909 was recorded on the perceived tactical coordination of marketing communication, followed by perceived commitment to market research in support of IMC (M=3.804), application of information technology in support of IMC (M=3.771), while the perceived strategic integration of IMC scored the lowest with mean score of M=3.756. Researcher also discovered that there is a weak relationship between the four stages of IMC framework and cultural dimension (r = 0.29, p < .01). This reflects that higher perceived cultural dimensions will result in higher IMC practice with regards to the four stages of IMC framework among GLCs top management. The findings in this study will be a great assistance for the management of GLCs to better utilize the tools in their marketing communications programmes. Empirical results of the present study will also allow researchers and senior management of GLCs to understand the function of IMC and use them more effectively.

Introduction

Organizations in this new millennium are seen as facing and experiencing the reality of high competition in an open and borderless economy. The ever increasing of global business challenges, technological advances, as well as the influx of well informed and knowledge customers, organizations are required to be more efficient in their marketing

communication functions in order to achieve business objectives. Hence, integration is seen as the best approach to address those issues. According to Kitchen and Burgmann (2010), they have no doubt that the current IMC concept has been and will be widely accepted as one of the effective business strategies. Many organizations see the potential of IMC and recognized the importance of this concept and some of them have already started implementing the IMC concept in their organizations. It has also been widely reported that many international companies such as FedEx and Dell have already adopted and practicing IMC programmes at respective organizations. This proves that IMC is one of the main factors for business success. Therefore, based on the above scenarios, this study was carried out with the main focus on determining the level of IMC practices in Malaysian government-linked companies (GLCs) and its relationships with local cultures.

Background

A recent study conducted by Ab Razak, et al, (2011) on GLCs' business performance has revealed that most of the GLCs exhibiting higher valuation as compared to non-GLCs. According to the report, those successes were due to GLCs' ability to earn higher returns on their investments (Ab Razak, et al, 2011). Additionally, GLCs have also been reported to have run and efficiently managed with lower operation expenses as compared to non-GLCs.

GLCs in Malaysia are defined as companies in which the government has the controlling stake (Malaysia, 2007). The controlling stake refers to, among others; the government have rights to appoint members of the board of directors, nominate senior management staff, award of tenders and contracts, and provide policy direction for GLCs either directly or through government-linked investment companies (GLICs). While GLCs undertake business activities, GLICs on the other hand, act as an investment arm of the government, investing in selected and strategic companies, including investment in GLCs" (quoted in Nordin H.M., and Fatimah, S. (2011) p. 10260).

GLCs have been reported as contributing very important roles in improving the country's economy and increasing equity of "Bumiputra". Many GLCs show remarkable business performance with continuing record of profits earnings. Since GLCs are parts of "government's agencies," obviously the chairmen and chief executive officers of GLCs were selected and appointed by the government, therefore, all business activities and decisions making are executed upon ministry's approval and directives. Government will ensures those GLCs are profitable, and any losses will be absorbed or bail out by the government. Therefore, this study attempts to reveal how much marketing communications activities are being carried out in those selected GLCs. The four stages of IMC framework is used as guidelines in measuring the level of IMC practices among GLCs.

The contemporary business trends have directly showed that the importance of IMC approach in the commercial sector is inevitable. In business operations, IMC is used to influence the use of brands, products and services among consumers. Kitchen and De Pelsmacker (2004), for example, consider IMC as major marketing communications

development of the last century and also as a key competitive advantage of marketing. They also concurred that based on the studies on advertising agency in the 1990's, IMC has been proven as a factor in increasing communication effects, makes creative ideas more effective, provides consistent communication and most importantly increases customer return on investment.

Mendez (2009) carried out anthropological research to explore whether ethnography contributes to the IMC process. Findings from the study show that to be successful in this highly competitive business environment, leaders should have equipped themselves with excellent knowledge and understanding on the multicultural audiences and at the same time they should be capable of adapting to various types of requirements within the organisation. As such, capability and knowledge of multicultural audiences are essential skills for survival and meeting organizational objectives.

Research on IMC is very relevant nowadays, considering the rapid development, improvement and changes in marketing communications discipline. It is therefore anticipated that in the near future, IMC concept will be highly recognized and accepted as a dynamic and very strong discipline (Porcu, Garcia, and Kitchen, 2012). Thus, with all these understandings, researcher is of the view that it would seem to be worthwhile to examine how Malaysian GLCs implement IMC and how this concept contributes to the organizations' successes.

The main aim of the study is to determine the level of IMC practices in selected government-linked companies based on the four stages of IMC framework developed by Schultz and Schultz (2004), and its relationships with cultural dimensions developed by Hofstede (1984). This study was conducted with nine selected GLCs' population in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Respondents of the study comprised of the selected GLCs' senior managements, executives, and stakeholders representing a purposive sampling from the population. Respondents' perception level based on the four stages of IMC framework and cultural dimensions attributes are assessed by quantitative methods in the form of questionnaires.

Researcher believe that the study on IMC practices and culture dimensions' influences will broaden our understanding and worldviews on IMC's functions, roles and practitioners skills apart from contributing to a broader literatures on IMC. Besides, it is also anticipated that findings from the study will add to another valuable knowledge on the dynamic of IMC practices that consequently could also yield a better understanding of how IMC practice might be influenced by cultural values. On another point, this research may also be an important foundation for future research related to the interrelationships between IMC implementation and cultural dimensions. The objectives of the study mentioned are designed specifically to identify and determine IMC practices in the selected GLCs and also to provide insights into the 'Four stages of IMC framework,' and cultural dimension theory. Eventually, findings from the study and new perspectives of IMC practices will be a small contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Finally, the findings in this study will be of great help especially for the management of GLCs and practitioners to better utilize marketing communications tools in any of their marketing programmes. Empirical results of the present study will also allow researchers and management to understand the overall concept and functions of IMC and utilise them more effectively.

Literature Review

Records show that the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) term was firstly introduced in the late 1980's (Kitchen et al, 2004). As mentioned in the literature, Schultz, D.E., Tannenbaum, S.I., and Lauterborn, R.F. (1993) concurred that in the beginning, IMC has been described as "the concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines (for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations) and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communication impact."

The concept of IMC as mentioned earlier refers to the combination and coordination of organization's communication elements such as public relations, electronic and printed advertising, sales promotions, personal selling, direct marketing and other marketing activities within a single unit (Shimp, 1993). Meanwhile, according to Churchill & Peter (1995), many organizations view marketing communication as activities that serve the purpose especially in increasing customers' awareness and creating high demand for their products. At the same time marketing communication can also help in distinguishing companies' brand from competitors. Varey (1998) remarks that marketing communications activities are able to convert potential or prospects into customers and at the same time existing customers could be retained. Thus, IMC is considered primarily as promotional in nature.

According to Kitchen, Brignell, Li, and Spickettjones (2004), the "one voice concept" is considered as the starting point of IMC practices in an organization. The authors further argued that if the meaning of "one voice concept" refers to the process of combining all elements of promotional mix as one entity by organization in creating the one voice phenomenon, then, not much is new, interesting or relevant are reflected by this concept. Yet, in sum it can still be concluded that this 'one voice' concept as the beginning point of IMC process in an organization. In another arguments, Celebi, Serra (2009) explains, that the IMC concept is more comprehensive as compared to the one voice concept. IMC concept requires a total harmony among communication elements such as employees, products, services, distribution channels, product pricing, conducive working area, and consumer satisfaction.

At the moment, there is lacks of generally accepted definition of IMC. This is due to the unavailability of generally accepted common understanding of the true meaning of IMC. However, it is clearly noted that the term IMC has been widely used just recently. According to Kotler (2003), the primary goals of marketing is to achieve higher standard of living in which in restricted definition, marketing can be defined as "a community process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating, offering and freely exchanging products and value with others." The value can be described as the ratio between costs and benefits, between what the customer gives and what he or she gets. Marketers use a combination of several methods, all intended to increase the benefits and reduce costs in enhancing their customer value offerings. Kotler (2003) further stresses that it is clear that the main goals of marketing communications is to prove further the concept of value and understanding the relationship between costs of consumers and benefits.

Another definition was developed by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) in 1989. Based on the study conducted by Christensen, Torp, & Firat, (2005), AAAA defines IMC as "....a concept of marketing communication planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines – for example, general advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations (PR) – and combines them to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact through the seamless integration of discrete messages".

In another perspective, Porcu, García, and Kitchen (2012) developed a new definition of IMC that will help in educating and enlightening marketing communication managers on the roles that IMC plays in current corporations. The authors define IMC as;

> *".....the interactive and systemic process of cross-functional planning and optimization of messages to stakeholders with the aim of communicating with coherence and transparency to achieve synergies and encourage profitable relationships in the short, medium and long-term." (pp.326)*

According to Porcu, García, and Kitchen (2012), there are four principle dimensions that distinguishing the IMC concepts; Firstly, "one voice, that represents the core of integration as it implies the clear delivery of coherent messages through all marketing communication tools" (quoted in Nowak, G. and Phelps, J.E.,1994) Secondly, "interactivity, the hallmark of the paradigm shift because IMC pretends to set a constant dialogue between the organization and its constituencies, including not just customers but stakeholders." (quoted in Duncan, T., Moriarty, S.E., 1998) Thirdly, cross-functional planning; "if in traditional marketing communications the basis is the marketing mix, according to this new paradigm the point of reference is the organization as a whole" (Porcu, García, and Kitchen, 2012), Finally, the fourth dimension, "the profitable long-term relationships that interactive communication at the corporate, marketing and marketing communication levels leads to long-term relationships and positively influence brand value" (quoted in Duncan, T., and Moriarty, S.E., 1998).

There are various advantages of IMC. Through IMC, management is able to determine which of the communication tools are more effective using different media are for any particular audiences. This is very much so since all communication tasks are managed and operated under one roof. IMC concept is reflected in the process of delivering the same message by a company to its target market such as customers, consumers, community, employees, and shareholders through multiple marketing communication tools. As quoted by Lindell (1997), communication tools like public relations, direct mail or advertisement having the same message to convey to their audiences. In another words, it may be difficult for the company to use different marketing communication tools in sending message to its audiences, however, what matter most to the company is that all of the audiences are receiving similar message ("Difficult market", 2002). On the other hand, Stammerjohan, Wood, Chang, & Thorson (2005) argue, in order to create value to IMC, it is inevitable for companies to combine various marketing communication tools for their campaigns. For example, companies can combine public relations with advertising, or electronic media with print media.

In contrast, one of the problems associated with IMC is that the company's marketing communication messages may be produced from different departments. For instance,

advertising department produce their own advertisement materials, while direct selling messages are developed by people from sales management. It is also observed that activities like sales promotion, direct marketing, and public relations, are sometimes handled by other functional specialists. This has consequent in budget allocation that was inevitably split among different departments (Celebi, Serra, 2009).

According to Pickton and Broderick (2005), organization sometimes overlooked the need for, and benefits of integration since the mindset that has been built up many years of practice has created work specializations. While Gonring (1994) argues about the fear of change and loss of control felt by individuals associated with the industry if IMC is implemented. Robbs and Taubler (1996) also highlighted the agency creative's' aversion to integration and their unwillingness to cooperate with the media and marketing communication tools. On the other hand, Schultz (1993) has commented on the limiting factors to the fulfilment of integration due to cult of specialization and the history, tradition and experience of companies. Hence, many organizations fail to appreciate IMC's strategic significance and relegate promotional activities to the tactical level.

Many organizations' structures are most likely does not suit IMC programmes. Ideally, IMC requires company to allow the practice of horizontal communication apart from the normal vertical communication as this will eventually able to reduce misunderstanding and conflicts among employees, functions and their daily tasks (Gould, Lerman, and Grein, 1999; Grein and Gould, 1996; and Schultz, 1993a). Kim, Han, and Schultz (2004), on the other hand explain, the implementation of IMC requires cross functional communications among strategic business units (SBUs), departments, as well as between senior managers and brand managers. Apart from that, IMC also requires an open-minded business culture. On another note, Eagle and Kitchen (2000) and Gonring (1994) stressed that, the loss of power and authority may create fears and cause organizational disputes and unrest among employees.

Pickton and Broderick (2005) also state, it is difficult to co-ordinate and manage disparate specialism as one entity due to the structure of organizations. In order to cope with the magnitude of the operations, organizations have typically subdivided their tasks into sub-units (departments). Another point concurred by Pickton and Broderick (2005) is that organization structures sometimes encourage separatism. Meanwhile, according to Eagle & Kitchen (2000), agencies and client's organizations are having different organizational cultures and structures. These differences may affect and limit the success of planning and implementing IMC in the organization. Schultz (1993b) explains that company background, experiences, and corporate cultures and traditions for examples, are other factors that contribute to the difficulties in implementing IMC programmes. Schultz (1993b) further states, the feeling that there is no real need for a change when the structure of the organization may often be considered satisfactory. The company may experience a drop in market position if there is no changes were made and the situation continues. Schultz (1993d) further pointed out that depending on the company's culture, openness to reorganization or welcoming new organizational structures will contribute to the success and high integration. Subsequently, this will open the path to the success of IMC implementation in the organization.

The Four Stages of Integrated Marketing Communication Framework

The four stages of IMC framework developed by Schultz and Schultz (1998) refers to the general patterns to the implementation of integration in which organizations appear to go through phases or levels of integration in their marketing communication efforts. According to Schultz and Schultz (1998), "...the phase or levels of integration are not as rigid as those that move organizations from minority to the age of majority. Organizations do tend to deal with similar issues, barriers and implications of IMC in roughly the same sequence. That is, they tend to start at tactical, task-oriented level. As they achieve success in these areas, they progress toward broader issues of communication planning and higher level issues of organizational and strategic alignment." (p. 18). Schultz and Schultz (1998) have identified four levels of IMC through which organizations appear to progress. The four levels are namely; (1) Stage 1: Tactical coordination of marketing communications, (2) Stage 2: Redefining the scope of marketing communications, (3) Stage 3: Application of information technology, and (4) Stage 4: Financial and strategic integration

According to Schultz & Schultz (2004), stage 1 refers to the starting point of implementation of IMC concept in the organization. All organization's marketing communications activities are coordinated at this tactical level. Basically at this stage the company is already coordinating all types of marketing communication programmes across all departments, regional offices, its products, and services offered. Stage 2 is classified by the American Productivity Quality Center (APQC)'s study as a "redefinition the scope of marketing communication" (Schultz & Schultz, 2004). At this juncture company is switching its point of view from a corporate operation driven to that of its customer, consumers and end users, and the company is also considering various points of contact for customers to get in touch with the company's brand.

Meanwhile, according to Schultz & Schultz (2004), stage 2 emphasizes on how a company applies information technology in its business operations in support of its marketing communication efforts. Basically, company at this stage is seen as investing substantial amount of capital on high tech mailing operations system in its attempt to send personalized information about company's product and services offered. Besides, company also distributes information through the internet or intranets. Some companies at this stage are reported as communicating with its audiences such as customers, suppliers, and employee using "in-house satellite television". Finally, at stage 4 it was reported that few companies have substantially progress at this level. One of the aspects of this stage is when senior management of the company is the one who drives and provides framework for dealing with organizational alignment and allocation of resources.

Cultural Dimensions Theory

The cultural dimensions theory explains the effects of a culture on the value of its members in a society. Using a structure derived from factor analysis, these values can be related to behaviour of its members. Many researchers have used this theory as a paradigm for their researches especially in cross-cultural psychology, cross-cultural

communications, and international management (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Cooper & Denner, 1998; Bond & Smith, 1996; Wright & Ricks, 1994; Inkpen & Beamish, 1994).

Cultural influences on organization management practices and analyzing variations among cultures has been recognized as important concepts in many literatures (Hofstede, 1980 and 1984; Hofstede and Bond, 1988). A comprehensive research was performed by Hofstede (1984) on cultural differences, and summarised that there are differences between cultures in terms of influenced cognition, attitudes, emotion, values, and how people related to each other. In dealing with the realities of contemporary business environment, knowing how cultural differences affecting people and social system are critical to organization's management. At present the Hofstede's Culture Dimensions Theory has established a profound influence on the field of cross-cultural studies within organization since it was firstly published in 1980. Hofstede's framework is now widely used by business scholars to examine cultural differences in management practices that contribute to the understanding of different management practices that are applicable in different cultural contexts (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Cooper & Denner, 1998; Bond & Smith, 1996; Inkpen & Beamish, 1994; Wright & Ricks, 1994).

The first value dimension of Hofstede's cultural dimension theory is 'Power Distance' refers to the unequal distribution of power in organizations. The main concept of this dimension is defined as "the extent to which members of a society accept that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1984, p. 831). Power distance is designed to measure how power is equally or unequally distributed within organization or society and how inequality is being accepted. Equal distribution reflects low power distance while high power distance refers to inequality of power distribution. Uncertainty Avoidance, the second value dimension refers to the unknown situations in which members are feeling secured and happy with (Golden & Veiga, 2005; Hofstede, 1993). Uncertainty avoidance refers to the ways individuals face the uncertainty and ambiguity in life. This dimension explains "the degree to which members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity, leading them to support beliefs promising certainty" (Hofstede, 1985, p. 347).

Masculinity, another value dimension is defined as "a preference for achievement, heroism, assertiveness, and material success" (Hofstede, 1985, p. 348). The people under this masculinity dimension culture are focusing more on material success, very assertive, tough, and aggressive (Hofstede, 1993 and Golden & Veiga, 2005). Masculinity is very much relates to the division of roles of males and females in a society and the sex role division is more on social rather than biological factor. According to Golden & Veiga (2005), individualism value dimension refers to the attitude of people that act as an individual and prefer to be differentiated from the group. In this culture dimension, individual's interest is more important that the group and everyone are to take care of his own. Hofstede (1984) used the dimension of 'Individualism' in his study looks at whether the ties between individuals are loose or tight. Finally, Hofstede (1998) defines Long-Term Orientation dimension as "....fostering of virtue oriented towards future rewards, in particular, perseverance and thrift" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 359). Based on the literature, this dimension is the latest dimension added to Hofstede's culture framework. This dimension is also referred to as Confucian dynamism, which looks at the people's consideration for the future.

Methodology

The purpose of the study is to determine the level of IMC practices and its relationships with the local cultures as perceived by management, executives, and stakeholders of the selected GLCs. The study was conducted and guided by the theoretical constructs of the Schultz and Schultz's Four Stages of IMC Framework, and Cultural Dimensions Theory as described by Hofstede (1984). The targeted informants of the study were the senior managements, managers, executives, and stakeholders of GLCs listed under G20 (a selection of large GLCs controlled by GLICs under the Government-Linked Company Transformation Programme (GLCTP) and is used as a proxy for performance of the GLCs. This list originally comprised of 20 GLCs but currently stands at 17 due to various mergers, demergers and other corporate exercises over the years). However, only nine GLCs as per Table 1 have agreed to participate in the research. Most of these nine GLCs are located in Klang valley, Malaysia.

Table 1: List of Participating GLCs

No.	Type Of Business	Establishment	No. of Employees
1.	Airports Management	1992	5,808
2.	Cellular telecommunication	1988	23,000
3.	Financial Institution	2003	40,000
4.	Fixed Lines Telecommunication	1985	27,830
5.	Islamic Banking	1997	4,000
6.	Oil and gas	1974	43,000
7.	Power utility	1990	33,500
8.	Property and Plantations	1910	100,000
9.	Transportation	1998	10,000

In this study researcher used the self-administered questionnaire consists of three parts namely, Part A; consists of four items on respondent's demographic profiles: Part B; consists of 26 items or statements for the various independent variables to measure the level of practice of IMC amongst selected GLCs in regards to Schultz and Schultz's (2004) four stages of IMC framework. Seven items for Stage One: Tactical Coordination, five items for Stage Two: Redefining the scope of marketing communication, seven items for Stage Three: Application of information technologies and seven items for Stage Four: Strategic and financial integration. Part C on the other hand consists of 23 items or statements for the various independent variables to measure the level of practice of IMC amongst selected GLCs in regards to Hofstede's cultural

dimensions. Four items for Power Distance dimension, six items for Uncertainty Avoidance dimension, four items for Individualism-Collectivism dimension, five items for Masculinity-Femininity dimension, and four items four Long-Term Orientation dimension.

A pilot study was conducted to test the validity and reliability of the instrument. The instruments were administered to senior management, managers, and executives of two GLCs in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. The targeted respondents were thirty respondents consist of managers, and executives of GLCs who were contacted personally to participate in the pilot study. Researcher delivered the questionnaires personally to them and respondents were given a week to complete the questionnaire. Table 2: below depicts the reliability coefficient of the instrument used in this study.

From the pilot study, several issues such as face validity, instructions, and statement clarity, questions layout and length of items were raised. Based on the responses provided by the respondents, some adjustment and improvements were made. In the actual study sample the participating respondents of the pilot study were not included.

Table 2: Reliability coefficient of the research instrument

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	
	Scores	# Items
Tactical Coordination of Marketing Communications	0.873	7
Redefining the Scope of Marketing	0.711	5
Application of Information Technology	0.822	7
Financial and Strategic Integration	0.720	7
Power Distance	0.843	4
Uncertainty Avoidance	0.950	6
Masculinity/Femininity	0.854	5
Individualism/Collectivism	0.841	4
Long-Term Orientation	0.823	4

It should be noted that this study is specifically limited in scope to nine selected GLCs in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. It is a case study bounded by the time of the surveys and

interviews, the location in Kuala Lumpur, and the particular GLC and its managers. Hence, this study cannot be thought to represent the experience of other GLCs in Malaysia. The assessments are generalizable to the theoretical constructs of the 'Four Stages of IMC Framework' and the 'Cultural Dimensions Theory', and therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to broader populations or other cultures. The reliability of the study is, therefore, limited to the population at the time of the surveys. Given the fact that this is a very large subject and there is a great amount of literatures and theories about IMC and cultural characterization, there have to be restrictions on information being used. Therefore, the possibility remains that the research methods of this study fail to fully capture all the IMC practices and the cultural influences shaping GLCs managements' characteristics and initiatives toward IMC.

Table 3: List of respondents participated based on respective industries.

No.	Industries	Distributed	Responded	Percentage
1.	Airport Management	50	27	54%
2.	Cellular Telecommunication	50	27	54%
3.	Financial Institution	50	49	98%
4.	Fixed Lines Telecommunication	50	30	60%
5.	Islamic Banking	50	30	60%
6.	Oil and Gas	50	35	70%
7.	Power Utility	50	30	60%
8.	Property and Plantation	50	30	60%
9.	Transportation	50	30	60%
	Total	**450**	**288**	**64%**

Table 3: above depicts the numbers of respondents participated in the present study. Out of 450 questionnaires distributed, researcher managed to collect data from 288 (64%) respondents. The highest responses recorded are from Financial Institutions, 49 (98 %) respondents, followed by respondents from Oil and Gas, 35 (70 %) respondents. Lowest responses were received from Airport Management and Cellular Telecommunication with 27 (54%) respondents each.

Results

RQ 1: *What is the level of IMC practices amongst GLCs, as perceived by management, executives, and stakeholders of selected GLCs?*

The following describes quantitative results of the level of IMC practice based on the Schultz and Schultz's Four Stages of IMC.

Table 4: Means score and standard deviation based on the Four Stages of IMC Framework.

No	Industries	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
1.	Airport Management	M = 3.85	M = 3.73	M = 3.80	M = 3.96
		SD = 1.00	SD = 0.78	SD = 0.94	SD = 0.78
2.	Cellular Telecommunication	M = 3.94	M = 3.83	M = 3.92	M = 3.74
		SD = 0.82	SD = 0.69	SD = 0.75	SD = 0.74
3.	Financial Institution	M = 4.02	M = 3.87	M = 3.85	M = 3.78
		SD = 0.79	SD = 0.73	SD = 0.81	SD = 0.78
4.	Fixed Lines Telecommunication	M = 3.70	M = 3.52	M = 3.38	M = 3.50
		SD = 0.96	SD = 0.90	SD = 1.08	SD = 1.05
5.	Islamic Banking	M = 3.98	M = 3.86	M = 3.75	M = 3.76
		SD = 0.58	SD = 0.81	SD = 0.72	SD = 0.63
6.	Oil and Gas	M = 3.79	M = 3.66	M = 3.67	M = 3.64
		SD = 0.73	SD = 0.82	SD = 0.81	SD = 0.74
7.	Power Utility	M = 3.95	M = 4.16	M = 3.67	M = 3.76
		SD = 0.77	SD = 0.85	SD = 0.77	SD = 0.68
8.	Property and Plantation	M = 4.10	M = 4.00	M = 4.00	M = 4.01
		SD = 0.61	SD = 0.71	SD = 0.63	SD = 0.60
9.	Transportation	M = 3.76	M = 3.53	M = 3.84	M = 3.64
		SD = 0.90	SD = 0.88	SD = 0.78	SD = 0.83

In summary, mean scores and standard deviations for each of the stages as perceived by 288 respondents of GLCs are as per Table 5.

Table 5: Mean scores and standard deviations for each of the stage.

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
M	3.89	3.79	3.76	3.75
SD	0.79	0.79	0.81	0.75
N	288	288	288	288

The following are quantitative data analysis and results summary for each industry based on the Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory.

Table 6: Means score and standard deviation based on the Cultural Dimensions.

No.	Industries	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity Femininity	Individualism Collectivism	Long-Term Orientation
1.	Airport Management	M = 2.47	M = 3.96	M = 3.16	M = 3.60	M = 3.42
		SD = 0.98	SD = 0.74	SD = 1.26	SD = 0.89	SD = 1.02
2.	Cellular Telecommunication	M = 2.82	M = 3.75	M = 3.00	M = 3.57	M = 2.94
		SD = 1.23	SD = 0.96	SD = 1.22	SD = 1.15	SD = 1.44
3.	Financial Institution	M = 2.50	M = 4.21	M = 3.22	M = 3.87	M = 3.53
		SD = 1.01	SD = 0.82	SD = 1.28	SD = 1.18	SD = 1.14
4.	Fixed Lines Telecommunication	M = 3.24	M = 3.55	M = 3.38	M = 3.52	M = 3.52
		SD = 1.14	SD = 1.02	SD = 1.14	SD = 1.01	SD = 0.95
5.	Islamic Banking	M = 2.95	M = 3.91	M = 2.87	M = 3.92	M = 3.82
		SD = 0.99	SD = 0.67	SD = 1.25	SD = 0.77	SD = 1.00
6.	Oil and Gas	M = 2.47	M = 3.31	M = 2.57	M = 3.03	M = 3.70
		SD = 1.08	SD = 1.23	SD = 1.09	SD = 1.16	SD = 0.87
7.	Power Utility	M = 3.00	M = 3.66	M = 3.07	M = 2.42	M = 3.00
		SD = 0.97	SD = 0.65	SD = 1.02	SD = 1.23	SD = 1.10
8.	Property and Plantation	M = 2.95	M = 3.83	M = 3.62	M = 3.76	M = 3.25
		SD = 1.06	SD = 0.75	SD = 0.93	SD = 0.95	SD = 1.16
9.	Transportation	SM = 2.13	M = 3.26	M = 2.88	M = 3.03	M = 2.93
		SD = 0.85	SD = 1.12	SD = 1.07	SD = 1.10	SD = 1.30

In summary, mean scores and standard deviations for each of the cultural dimension as perceived by 288 respondents of GLCs.

Table 7: Mean scores and standard deviations for each of the cultural dimension.

	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance	Masculinity/ Femininity	Individualism/ Collectivism	Long-term Orientation
Mean	2.72	3.71	3.08	3.41	3.34
SD	1.03	0.88	1.14	1.04	1.1
N	288	288	288	288	288

RQ2:   Are there any relationships between the Schultz and Schultz's Four Stages of IMC Framework and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions as perceived by management, executives, and stakeholders at selected GLCs?

In this study Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistics were used to determine relationships between Schultz and Schultz's (2004) four stages of IMC framework comprise of 'Perceived tactical coordination of marketing communications', 'Perceived redefining the scope of marketing', 'Perceived application of information', and 'Perceived financial and strategic integration' as dependent variables, and Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory. The independent variables for Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory were comprised of 'Perceived Power distance', 'Perceived Uncertainty Avoidance', 'Perceived Masculinity/ Femininity', 'Perceived Individualism / Collectivism', and 'Perceived Long-Term Orientation'. Forty-one correlations were analysed. Findings of the correlation analysis addressed the following research question.

Table 8: Correlation Matrixes between Tactical Coordination of Marketing Communications and Cultural Dimensions.

No.	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV) Tactical Coordination of Marketing Communications	
		R	**p (sig)**
1.	Power Distance	0.016	0.790
2.	Uncertainty Avoidance	0.245**	0.000
3.	Masculinity / Femininity	0.037	0.526
4.	Individualism / Collectivism	0.173**	0.003

| 5. | Long-term Orientation | -0.012 | 0.835 |

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 9: Correlation Matrixes between Redefining the Scope of Marketing and Cultural Dimensions.

No.	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	
		Redefining the Scope of Marketing	
		R	p (sig)
1.	Power Distance	0.027	0.650
2.	Uncertainty Avoidance	-0.020	0.741
3.	Masculinity / Femininity	-0.047	0.422
4.	Individualism / Collectivism	-0.106	0.072
5.	Long-term Orientation	0.020	0.738

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 10: Correlation Matrixes between Application of Information Technology and Cultural Dimensions.

No.	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	
		Application of Information Technology	
		R	p (sig)
1.	Power Distance	0.147*	0.012
2.	Uncertainty Avoidance	0.274**	0.000
3.	Masculinity / Femininity	0.230**	0.000
4.	Individualism / Collectivism	0.180**	0.002
5.	Long-term Orientation	0.024	0.679

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 11: Correlation Matrixes between Financial and Strategic Integration and Cultural Dimensions.

No.	Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	
		Financial and Strategic Integration	
		R	p (sig)
1.	Power Distance	0.200**	0.001
2.	Uncertainty Avoidance	0.333**	0.000
3.	Masculinity / Femininity	0.349**	0.000
4.	Individualism / Collectivism	0.239**	0.000
5.	Long-term Orientation	0.077	0.191

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 12: Correlation Matrixes between Four Stages of IMC Framework and Cultural Dimensions.

Independent Variable (IV)	Dependent Variable (DV)	
	Four Stages of IMC Framework	
	R	p (sig)
Cultural Dimension	0.290**	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Level of IMC Practice in GLCs

Respondents of the study have indicated their perception on the level of IMC practices in GLCs based on the four stages of IMC framework. Results show that respondents perceived the nine selected GLCs have already implemented and practiced some of the elements of IMC concept at respective organizations. On average 73.41 percent of the respondents perceived the selected GLCs have achieved stage 1 of the framework, 66.88 percent for stage 2, 66.87 percent for stage 3, and 64.73 percent for stage 4.

Findings for the tactical coordination of marketing communication (Stage 1) depict that 76.74 percent of the respondents expressed their agreement that the GLCs have created tailored campaigns to deliver distinctive messages to specialized segments. Meanwhile,

76.39 percent agreed that GLCs have established strong corporate guidelines on usage, tone and message development. And 75.35 percent of the respondents agreed that GLCs are employing direct marketing, sales promotion, event marketing, custom publishing, cooperative ventures, sponsorships, and electronic and interactive tools in their marketing activities.

On the other hand, findings for the Redefining the Scope of Marketing (stage 2) revealed that the selected GLCs in the study were perceived by 69.44 percent of the respondents as already put their communication programmes through a critical reality check that allows them to shift the focus from the messages that they want to transmit, to an understanding of what the customer receives. While, 67.71 percent of the respondents agreed that GLCs are considering all of the possible points through which the customer comes in contact with the brand. On the other hand 67.36 percent of the respondents believe that GLCs are also ensuring their internal marketing and communication programmes support or align with the external marketing and communication programmes.

As for the application of information technology (stage 3), data show that 75.35 percent of the respondents agreed that GLCs are pairing technology with appropriate customer needs and requirements. GLCs are also perceived to have utilized database to capture and store information about their customers, consumers and prospects as agreed by 71.88 percent of the respondents. Meanwhile, 68.40 percent of them said they agreed that GLCs are distributing information through the internet or intranets and uses in-house satellite television to communicate with their employees and suppliers.

The highest level of the framework, stage 4, financial and strategic integration is also perceived by respondents as being practiced in the GLCs. Respondents agreed that GLCs are reviewing every aspect of the company, from customer correspondence to product quality to human resources recruitment and training to compensation structures, and brought into alignment with the promises made to customers with 70.49 percent agreement. Meanwhile, 67.71 percent of the respondents said they agreed that GLCs are able to measure the return on customer investment. On the other note, 67.36 percent respondents agreed that senior management of the GLCs drive and provide framework for dealing with resource allocation and organizational alignment.

Relationships between the Four Stages of IMC Framework and the Cultural Dimensions Theory

According to Hofstede (1980 and1984), cultural has influences on organization management practices. Hence, it is noted that the Hofstede's framework has been widely used by business scholars to examine cultural differences in management practices that contribute to the understanding of the applicability of various management practices in different cultural contexts (Cooper & Denner, 1998; Earley& Gibson, 1998; Bond & Smith, 1996; Inkpen & Beamish, 1994; Wright & Ricks, 1994). Based on these facts, the study examines whether cultures have influence on the practice of IMC in the selected GLCs. Researcher performed correlation analysis between the four stages of IMC framework and the five cultural dimensions and arrived at the followings.

Based on the analysis, there is a weak positive and significant relationship was found between the four stages of IMC framework and the perceived Power Distance dimension. This finding supports Bond's, (2004) statements that Malaysian accepts a hierarchical order in which everybody has a place and which needs no further justification. Researcher concludes that the higher perceived Power Distance will result in higher IMC practice.

A weak positive and significant relationship was also found between the four stages of IMC framework and the perceived Uncertainty Avoidance. According to Bond, (2004), a low Uncertainty Avoidance society maintain a more relaxed attitude in which practice counts more than principles and deviance from the norm is more easily tolerated. Malaysia societies are exhibiting low Uncertainty Avoidance; they believe there should be no more rules than are necessary and if they are ambiguous or do not work. The result is therefore, shows that higher perceived Uncertainty Avoidance will result in higher IMC practice in GLCs.

Correlation between the four stages of IMC framework and the perceived Masculinity / Femininity also show a weak positive and significant relationship. Bond, (2004), states that in masculine countries, people "live in order to work" in which managers are expected to be decisive. High emphasis is given on equity, competition and performance. Hence, the higher perceived Masculinity / Femininity will result in higher IMC practice in GLCs.

Another finding also shows that there is a weak positive and significant relationship was found between the four stages of IMC framework and the perceived Individualism / Collectivism. This finding also support the statement by Bond, (2004), in which, according to him Malaysia is considered as a collectivistic society. Manifested in the close long-term commitment to the "member" group, be that a family, extended family or extended relationships. Collectivistic society fosters strong relationships, where everyone must takes responsibility for fellow members of their group. Result shows that higher perceived Individualism / Collectivism will result in higher IMC practice in GLCS.

Researcher also found that there is no relationship between the four stages of IMC framework and the perceived Long-term Orientation. Based on the literatures, individuals in high Long-Term Orientation dimension reflect a culture's tendency toward a future-minded mentality. In contrast, individuals in low Long-Term Orientation are reflecting a culture's tendency to pursue the short-term effects. Therefore, researcher concludes that the perceived Long-term Orientation have no effect on IMC practice in GLCs with regards to the four stages of IMC framework.

In sum the overall result (r = 0.290, p < .01) explains that there is a weak positive and highly significance relationship between cultural dimensions theory and the four stages of IMC framework. Hence, cultural influence can also be considered as one of the factor in ensuring smooth implementation of IMC in those GLCs.

Conclusion

The success of any business venture is dependent on effective financial management and efficient operations. GLCs have been considered as successful entity in Malaysia (Khazanah Report, 2013). Earlier, Ab Razak et al (2011) reported that GLCs have performed better than non-GLCs and have tendencies to exhibit higher valuation which they believe is closely related to the GLC's ability to obtain higher returns on their investment. Based on this understanding, most of the respondents surveyed agreed that the practice of IMC have existed in the selected GLC. Respondents also agreed that some IMC activities being carried out at all the four stages of IMC practice. In another perspective, with regards to the relationship between the four stages of IMC framework and cultural dimension, the study revealed that there is a weak positive and significant relationship. This shows that Malaysian culture has significant effect in the success of IMC implementation in GLCs. It is believed that higher perceived cultural dimensions will result in higher IMC practice. Finally, in view of the above, researcher suggests further research efforts to focus more specifically on how organizations define elements discouraging IMC such as mind set and structure of organizations. Furthermore, it would be interesting to determine how IMC can assist in improving companies' business performance and subsequently achieve financial objectives.

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