

QATAR UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

INTEGRATED MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION CONNECTING  
CUSTOMERS FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH AND BUILDING BRAND FOR

SME'S IN QATAR

BY

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A Project Submitted to

Faculty of the College of Business and Economics

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Business Administration

June 2019

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## ABSTRACT

ZAYYAN,MOHAMMED., Masters: May: 2019, Master of Business Administration

Title: Integrated Marketing and communication connecting customers for sustainable growth and building brand for SME's in Qatar

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SMEs in Qatar face various challenges to sustain and grow, which may even be a threat to their existence, leading them to exit the market if not dealt with carefully. This study focuses on Integrated Marketing and communication, a marketing strategy that can be implemented by SME owners to connect customers and build their brand effectively and efficiently. This research uses a mixture of both primary and secondary data in conducting the analysis. Secondary analysis is used to collect data regarding the state of SMEs in Qatar, to understand the challenges and the ability of the SMEs to sustain in this highly competitive environment. The primary data is collected with a sample of 40 SME owners in Qatar, recording their perception of the effects that IMC can have on their business. Comparing the challenges to the entrepreneur's perception on IMC will help in understanding if implementing IMC will help SMEs to overcome their challenges.

## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this research to my parents, brother and my fiancée, who stood by me lending their support, inspiring me and giving me strength at times when I felt I wouldn't make it. Thank you for always being there for me.*

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Ahmed Abdelhady Ahmed Mehrez for guiding me throughout my MBA graduation project, taking his time out for me even during his busy schedule, all the reviews and comments was very valuable and guided me in completing my research. I would also thank all the faculty members and my colleagues who has been a part of my beautiful journey in Qatar University.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Qatar is a developing country that has been attracting a lot of foreign investments, being a small country with a population of 2.72 million people residing in Qatar, small population and increasing investments can lead to a complex situation for SMEs to increase sales. Qatar is a country with a very high GDP, but the contribution of SME' or otherwise called as non-oil sector is very low. To overcome this, Qatar national vision 2030 focuses on diversification, leading to the SME development in the economy. Qatar National Vision 2030 has four pillars one of which is economic development and there are two driving forces for this pillar, which are economic diversification and private sector development (QDB 2016).

Blockade is one of the biggest crisis Qatar has ever seen, but this turned out to be a driving force for Qatar's diversification strategy. Blockade has created a huge gap in the market leading to the emergence of opportunities to invest and develop. This has helped Qatar from transforming from a consumer country into a producer country, before most of the products including food and agricultural products were imported but now in a short period of time Qatar has taken steps to overcome this issue which would have taken years in a normal case.

Global entrepreneurship monitor (GEM) report 2017 published data portraying social value about entrepreneurship, it is seen that there is a good number of Qatar nationals and non- Qataris who feel that entrepreneurship is a good career choice and successful entrepreneurs have high status in the country, among this large number of them are females. Qatar is now providing support for emerging entrepreneurs. Government institutions like Qatar Development Bank provides support to encourage the emergence of new entrepreneurs in the market. As more companies register in Qatar the competition will become more intense making it difficult for SMEs to sustain and

develop in the market, thus SME's should come up with a good business strategy including the use of best marketing tools and mix helping them to save money and reach their target audience.

Integrated marketing and communication (IMC), is a marketing tool that an entrepreneur can use to focus on its target market alone. This tool helps in creating a relationship with their customers with one logical statement that an entrepreneur wants to convey to their targeted customers. It will give the entrepreneurs an idea about what resources they have and will enable them in forming the communication channels before the product or service is marketed. In today's economy, the vast technological development has opened doors for many new entrepreneurs. New firms arise but only few have been able to make a mark or let alone survive. One of the main challenges a new entrepreneur face, is sustaining in the highly competitive market and developing a new brand image. The level of competition in today's market is very high and companies need to use highly innovative and effective methods to reach their customers.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### **2.1 Marketing**

There are various definitions for marketing, as per Dr.Philip Kotler marketing is defined as “the science and art of exploring, creating, and delivering value to satisfy the needs of a target market at a profit. Marketing identifies unfulfilled needs and desires. It defines measures and quantifies the size of the identified market and the profit potential. It pinpoints which segments the company is capable of serving best and it designs and promotes the appropriate products and services.” (Cohen 2011, date of retrieval 04.04.2014)

An effective practise of marketing, by an entity will help to set objectives that will promise to achieve the company’s goal in the future. There are various factors that could be included in marketing such as, strategies to increase sales and to contribute in growth. It is less complicated for firms with adequate resources to achieve their goals, but it is complicated for firms with fewer budget, less personal, even though such firms might possess passionate and motivated people. (Info entrepreneurs 2009, date of retrieval 04.04.2014)

Marketing idea can contain three things which are; thoughts, distinctiveness and action. To consider an idea to be applicable it should be unique, which will help to solve consumers problem and the firm should have enough resources to apply this idea. (Gregory 2014, date of retrieval 04.04.2014)

Furthermore, the world is changing and there are new ideas flowing into the market making the competing intense for minor companies forcing companies prepare themselves to confront challenges to meet the demand of market. Applying modern marketing tools to eliminate complications may raise chances for opportunities for

SMEs. Technological advancement and innovation in electronics are the key for growth in SMEs, latest electronic tools in the market helps the SMEs to achieve goals which took decades for major companies to achieve. The access to information the companies have today about consumers, products in the market, interest, trends in the industry will have a big impact in marketing since marketing today is all about attributes. (Vendhq 2014, date of retrieval 04.04.2014)

## **2.2 Small and Medium Enterprises Qatar**

Forming the definition of SMEs in Qatar is very important as it sets an example for all national contributions in developing this important sector. This definition was formed considering various factors; international experience, local situation, feedback from government and non-government organizations. The definition introduced was during the global entrepreneurship week in November 2015.

Small and Medium Enterprises means that, the companies registered under the laws of the State of Qatar, companies where the labour force should not be more than two hundred and fifty employees and for the companies of creative industries sector, the number of labourers should not be more than one hundred employees. The company's annual turnover should be one hundred million Qatari Riyals.

Table 1: Small and medium enterprises Qatar.

Sector	Criteria	Micro	Small	Medium
Agriculture	No. of employees	1-5	6-30	31-250
	Annual Turnover	Less than 1	1- 20	20-100
Manufacturing	No. of employees	1-5	6-50	51-250
	Annual Turnover	Less than 3	3- 20	20-100
Creative Industries	No. of employees	1-5	6-30	31-100
	Annual Turnover	Less than 1	1- 20	20-100
Construction	No. of employees	1-10	11-50	51-250
	Annual Turnover	Less than 3	3- 20	20-100
Trade	No. of employees	1-5	6-50	51-250
	Annual Turnover	Less than 3	3- 20	20-100
Other Services	No. of employees	1-5	6-50	51-250
	Annual Turnover	Less than 3	3-Less than 20	20-100

Source: Qatar Development Bank, National Definition of SME

### 2.3 Marketing communications

American Marketing Association defined Marketing communications in 2004 as “an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefits the organization and its stakeholders” (Gundlach & Wilkie, 2010, p.89). The definition published by AMA in 2004 was argued to be a very narrow definition as it didn’t cover the wide approaches of marketing and communication that has been used

in the fast growing technological world and hence AMA came up with a new and broader definition in 2007 “ *the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large*” (Gundlach & Wilkie, 2010, p. 90).

Marketing communications consists of advertising, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing. Integrated marketing and communication links all forms of communication with the messages that a business is trying to deliver to their customers and manages the relationship between the consumers and the offering of the company

### **2.3.1 Changes in Marketing Communication**

The boom of internet in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has changed the style of practising marketing communications by business organizations (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013). According to Smith and Taylor (2004) for communication internet is the most widely used and preferred channel because of the technological development. Emergence of internet for the changes in the style of communication of business organizations. Internet allows access to a wide group of consumers and enables efficient exchange of information. Thus, resulting to changes in communication strategies by business organizations (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013). The pattern of interaction and connection between consumers and business organizations has been changed due to the emergence of non-traditional media platform like social media also resulting to changes in marketing communication style (Kietzmann, Hernkens, MaCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Tuten & Angermeier, 2013). Dey (2013) explained that, social medial platforms have created opportunities for organizations to advertise their products and services with a low budget both locally and internationally.



As mentioned above, the change in technology enabled efficient methods to connect with consumers through traditional and non-traditional platforms, which resulted in companies to shift from traditional mass communication models to meet the increased options in marketing communications (Kotler et al., 2005). Hence, integrating the communication channels and coordinating all the messages for promoting business organizations is required and considered as a basic issue companies face (Keller, 2001)

## **2.4 Integrated Marketing and Communication**

IMC came into existence during the late 1980's and early 1990's in the United States. Over the years IMC was studied and developed, which lead to the creation of many definitions as years passed by. The development of IMC will be discussed below.

The first definition was developed by American Association of Advertising Agencies in 1989 "A concept of marketing communications planning that recognizes the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communications disciplines, e.g., general advertising, direct response, sales promotion and public relations—and combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency, and maximum communications impact." (AAAA 1989).

In 1993 Schultz came up with a new definition of IMC which focused on customer awareness and influence of customers, which will help in getting return on investments and improving profit margins. "Integrated marketing communications means talking to people who buy or don't buy based on what they see, hear, feel, etc.—and not just about [a] product or service. It means eliciting a response, not just conducting a monologue and it means being accountable for results delivering a return on investment, not just spending a budget (Schultz, D. E., Tannenbaum, S. I., & Lauterborn, R. F, 1991, p.17)."

In 1996 the focus was on consumer behaviour, studying the consumer behaviour helping the companies to improve the response rate of their target customers. Duncan T & Caywood defined IMC including consumer behaviour “as the process of managing all sources of information about a product/service to which a customer or prospect is exposed which behaviourally moves the consumer toward a sale and maintains customer loyalty” (Duncan T & Caywood ,1996 p.18).

The next stage of development transformed IMC to a complicated business process by focusing on branding. As markets expanded, branding became more important to the companies as it helps in increasing their value and also to acquire new customers. Schultz redefined integrated marketing communication including the concept of branding in 2004 as “a strategic process for planning, developing, executing, and evaluate coordinating, measurable, convincing brand communication programs over time with consumers, customers, prospects, and other targeted, relevant external and internal audiences” (Schultz & Schultz, 2004, p.20)

In 2008 Kliatchko, J.G. defined IMC as “IMC is a consumer driven strategic business process which manages stakeholders, content, channels and results of brand communication, programs” (Kliatchko, J.G.,2008, p.140).

In 2011 Floor & Van Raaij came up with a new definition of IMC as “a process where all messages and methods are geared to each other in such way that they complement and reinforce each other, and that added value is the result”.

IMC has now become part of most firm’s strategy in building brands by creating awareness and building customer relations, since it helps the firms in the fast-growing electronic media environment to target and reach their customers effectively.

#### **2.4.1 Factors influencing the IMC in SMEs success growth:**

IMC can be influenced by various factors like the nature of the objective that the company is trying to achieve by implementing IMC. Infrastructure, marketing budget and skills are some of the factors that influence IMC in SMEs (Schultz,1993). To implement IMC successfully the promotional mix should support the company's infrastructure. Other factors affecting IMC are investment, nature of the business, market situation, funds available for promotion and type of product or service like its price and lifecycle of the product (Brignell, Li, & Jones,2004).

#### **2.4.2 Barriers to integrated marketing communication in SMEs sector:**

IMC is considered as an important strategy for business growth but there are obstacles companies face to implement it (Saeed, Naeem, Bilal & Naz, 2013). According to Mpfu & Chigwende (2013) most SME's don not have a marketing plan because of the scarcity of resources. Hence, small businesses tend to practice trial and error strategies. Luxton, Hodge & Reid (2002) explains that managing marketing communications becomes harder due to the challenges small business face, especially when resources are limited and lack of expertise in marketing. Longenecker, Moore & Petty (2006) recognised that being affected by limited financial resources is one of the main problems that effect marketing communication in SMEs. Thrassou & Vrontis (2006) in addition to, lack of time and low marketing communication skills and the owner's only concern about the profits rather than the impact of communication in the market is a major obstacle in implementing IMC.

#### **2.4.3 Components of IMC**

Integrated Marketing Communication is a mixture of promotion tools which is used for communicating a constant message through various communication channels to

influence and convince existing customers and potential consumers (Ferrell & Hartline, 2008). According to Percy (2008), IMC has five components, which are advertising, direct marketing, sales promotion, marketing public relations, and personal selling.

### **Advertising**

Advertisement is defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2003) as “any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor”. Advertising is a non-personal method of presentation, which a company uses to promote their products and services through several communication platforms (Prasetyo & Nuzula, 2015). Advertising is also explained as a commercial means of mass communication designed to promote goods and services in order to develop demand and increase sales (Prasad, 2009). It is the means of promotional communication that is frequently divided into subcategories according to communication platforms, like printed media and broadcasting media (Hackley, 2010). Advertising is considered as an important activity for organizations, which helps to portray their brands, products and services to the target groups of consumers.

### **Direct Marketing**

The personal interaction between a consumer and a company is known as direct marketing, it is an interactive session that companies make use of in their businesses engaging their customers by communicating directly with them to encourage involvement (Chitty et al., 2014). Direct marketing is also recommended for companies, as a powerful marketing tool used for establishing and enhance customer relationships, since direct marketing is a tool used to communicate and present services and products to customers directly (King, 2008; Hollensen & Opresnik, 2015).

Furthermore, It is a marketing communication tool that helps to reduce the marketing cost for organizations, marketing activities like promoting products and services through platforms like social media and emails enables organizations to connect with their customers directly with the low cost of marketing (King, 2008; Hollensen & Opresnik, 2015).

### **Sales Promotion**

Sales promotion is a non-personal communication tool which engages various marketing techniques to improve sales and gather marketing information (Fill, 2013).

Sales promotion is a marketing activity that is employed by organizations to trigger consumers to purchase their products and services and to enhance buyer-seller relationships. It is considered as a short-term strategy which is used to raise sales volume by providing incentives to consumers during promotion period (Hollensen & Opresnik, 2015). besides that, sales promotion is employed in businesses to convince consumers to switch from their choice of brand to a different brand, and organizations provide incentive strategies like gift cards, big discounts and coupons to increase consumers attention and to persuade them to try their products and services (Chitty et al., 2014).

### **Personal Selling**

Personal selling is described as face-to-face marketing communication activity where a seller contacts the buyer and interacts with them directly (Hollensen & Opresnik, 2015). In other words, it is a person-to-person or oral communication between salespersons and prospective customers, with the purpose of persuading and transacting a sale of a product or a service (Chitty et al., 2014). Besides that, personal selling also focuses on innovating strong buyer-seller relationships in order to build companies

brand equity by increasing brand awareness and brand attitudes among customer groups (Chitty et al., 2014; Percy & Elliott, 2016).

### **Marketing Public Relations**

Public relations (PR) is a communication activity which is designed for building firms' image and set up a positive corporate image among the public and groups of consumers (Prindle, 2011). It is a marketing tool used for strengthening and developing the relationship between the company and their stakeholders, also developing the reputation of organisation (Fill, 2013). Traditional public relations are important for every organizations, Marketing Public Relations (MPR) has grown to be more important for organizations since its focus is on customers, products and firm's image (Chitty et al., 2014). MPR has become more important than PR because organizations can use marketing public relations to develop both public relations and create brand awareness at the same time, involvement of high advertising cost also makes marketing public relations more valuable compared to the public relations. (Chitty et al., 2014).

Furthermore, marketing public relations can also be used when launching a new brand or a new product in the market and also can be utilized to reposition an existing brand and developing a positive consumer attitude towards the brand (Copley, 2014).

### **2.5 Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Equity**

Brand equity is the value of the firm perceived by the consumers, making the firm unique from their competitors and increasing customer loyalty and customer awareness. Kellar(1993) defines Brand equity in 1993 as an effect of the brands knowledge on the consumers response to the marketing activities of the firm. Brand equity strategy building, and management has become the focus of the firms (Kellar2003). Sreedhar Madhavaram, Vishag Badrinarayanan, & Robert E. McDonald. (2005) defined brand

equity strategy as “A set of processes that include acquiring, developing, nurturing, and leveraging an effectiveness-enhancing, high-equity brand or portfolio of brand.” Consequently, developing brands to be stronger and more popular in the market is important because strong brand names will help companies to become more competitive (Hoeffler & Keller, 2002).

Kapferer(2012) and Malik(2009) recommended that applying marketing communication to brand management will help to add more value to products and services of a company by creating a constant impression of a brand through convincing messages, it will help to create brand awareness, formulate positive brand image and help to create familiarity of the brand among the target consumers and all of this contributing to the brand equity of an organization (Keller, 2013). According to Yeshin (2012) advertising can create brand familiarity, making brand noticeable in the market and helps in creating interest in the minds of target consumer, the companies can successfully achieve these by messages and methods of communication that they opt for advertising. IMC increases brand awareness by communicating consistent messages about a firm’s products, services and their brand through various channels of communication (Percy, 2014). According to Percy (2014) primary task of IMC is to create connection between a brand and needs in consumers’ mindsets. The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is considered as a strategic and operational approach for marketing communication, allowing companies to integrate and use several marketing communication tools and channels to reach their audiences to establish brand image and familiarity among target consumers (Keller,2009; Gabrielli & Balboni, 2010). IMC is now a process which is integrated with management and brands (Kitchen et al, 2004). An effective implementation of IMC potentially improves the effectiveness that a firm has on its portfolio of brands, and hence and can

have a positive impact on its brand equity (Sreedhar Madhavaram, Vishag Badrinarayanan, & Robert E. McDonald, 2005). Thus, to develop brand equity, Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is considered, it is suggested to be an important marketing technique for creating effective branding strategies. Therefore, IMC can make way for higher brand equity and financial performance (Madhavaram et al., 2005)

## **2.6 Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Position**

The objectives or goal of organizations today is to attain both monetary success and to establish themselves in both domestic and international markets (Baumgarth, Merrilees, & Urde, 2013). For most organizations especially, large firms brand positioning has become strategic marketing technique. (Ries & Trout, 2001). Brand positioning is also considered as a vital factor for SMEs, because positioning brands effectively will help them to set up their brand names in consumers' minds, making them identifiable and recognisable in the market (Hlatshwayo, 2015). However, branding has failed to support the development of SME's due to lack of clear positioning of their products and services. (Opoku, 2006). IMC is a recommended approach that enables companies to communicate consistent messages about their products, services and brands through various marketing communication channels (Saeed et al., 2013). In other words, IMC enables organizations to communicate with a consistent message which positions their brand, attracting target audiences to prefer their brand, products and services over the other via marketing communication channel (Yeboah, 2013).

## **2.7 The Strategic IMC Process (Larry Percy Model)**

Planning for marketing is acknowledged as a necessary step in business because it increases the capability of organizations to counter uncertainties and deal with



complicated business environment, helping firms to produce greater outcomes (Dibb, Farhangmerh & Simkin, 2001). In addition, planning for marketing is identified as an activity which supports to achieve the marketing objectives and contributing to the growth of the organisation (Taghian & Shaw, 2005).

### **2.7.1 Pre-Planning Process:**

First step in the process of IMC is to identify various market issues which will have an impact on the process of IMC. Companies marketing plan is the best source to get information, because the marketing plan is supported by company's communication (Pickton & Broderick 2005: 294; Prism Global Marketing Solutions 2017; Chron9 2017). According to Percy (2008: 245-247) five questions need to be analysed and answered before formulating an IMC plan, which are as follows:

1. Which product or a service is being marketed? Understanding the concept of the product and which need of a consumer the product or a service helps to satisfy?
2. What information of the product market the company knows?
3. Who are your main competitors and what do we know about them?
4. How or from where the sales will be generated?
5. How the company can make use of marketing communication to achieve their marketing objectives?

### **2.7.2 Integrated Marketing Communication strategic planning process**

**Step 1 Identifying target audience:** The initial step of the planning process is about identifying target audience. It is important for firms to define who they are targeting to whom they aim to sales of products and services to (Graham, 2013). When focusing on target audience it is important for the marketers to think ahead and look beyond

traditional demographic factors(Percy,2008). When identifying their target audience understanding the characteristics of the target audiences when formulating business strategy will help to increase the effectiveness of Integrated Marketing Communication (Ray and Chakraborty, 2014).

**Step 2 Determining how decisions are made:** The second step is related to determining how the target audience make their decisions and who all are involved in decision making process as show in table:2.2. to buy products and choose one brand over the others (Percy,2008). Rani (2014) recommend that recognizing and understanding the components influencing consumers interest, will make way for companies with more opportunities to formulate effective marketing strategies and advertising campaigns to influence their target audiences, allowing companies to meet the consumers' needs and wants to increase profitability of the firm. In addition, Lamb, Hair, and McDaniel (2012) mention that, to formulate proper marketing and communication strategies for the target segment, it is vital for companies to understand the product and service preferences of the target audience.

Table 2: Determining how decisions are made

Decision stages	Considerations at each stage			
	Need arousal	Brand considerations	Purchase	Usage
Who all are involved				
and Decision roles?				
Where stage is likely to occur?				
Timing of stage?				
How it is likely to occur?				

Source: Percy, L. (2008). Strategic integrated marketing communication

**Step 3 Brand Positioning:** The third step of the process is about brand positioning. For every organization brand positioning is a vital step since brand represents the products and services of a company, it will help the companies to create publicity allowing them to be more visible and recognisable to the consumers and helps in developing a brand images in the minds of the consumers (Olsson & Sandru, 2006; Shimp & Andrews, 2013).

**Step 4 Setting a communication objective:**

Marketing communication objectives helps to grow the value of the brand over through various marketing campaigns. Communication objectives succeed only when you constantly remind customers about brand the benefits that consumers seek that the brand possess than their competitors (AZ Central 2017). Setting up communication objectives for strategic planning of IMC is necessary for an organization because the

objective will help in presenting what companies would like their marketing communication activities to highlight about their brands to their consumers (Percy & Elliott,2016). It is important for a manager to set up communication objectives by choosing appropriate communication effects while creating a communication strategy (Percy & Elliott,2016). The Communication effects is a small part of communication objectives. They are of four types, which are as follows:

1. **CATEGORY NEED:** marketing a brand is only required if there is need for the product. This is more applicable for new products in the market. It becomes necessary to give importance for new products on the initial marketing communication in to create interest in the minds of consumers.
2. **BRAND AWARENESS:** The main aim of communication objective will be to create or strengthen brand awareness, irrespective of the type of marketing communication used by a marketer in their campaign. Marketing communication will not be effective without a connection between the message conveyed and the brand.
3. **BRAND ATTITUDE:** Similar to brand awareness, aim of communication objective is to create or develop brand attitude in marketing communication that is practised in a campaign. Brand attitude strategy is an important factor for creating a communication strategy for advertising and all other marketing communication forms. Brand attitude strategy is a explains the involvement of a person in the decision making during a purchase or use of a product or service.
4. **BRAND PURCHASE INTENTION:** A marketer's aim is to contribute to create an intention to purchase or use the brand, but this is not the primary objective. There will be no purchase intention without brand awareness and brand attitude.

**Step 5 Setting a media strategy:** The last step of the planning process is related to choosing appropriate media options. Selecting appropriate media platform for communication is vital and challenging because there are several media platforms available for communicating their messages. Thus, it is challenging for organizations to choose media platforms to facilitate and develop communication objectives (Percy, 2008). moreover, introduction of multi-channel services, where consumers can use their preferred communication channels to communicate with companies, creating an understanding of communication channel preferences and making convenient communication services available for consumers (Saungweme, n.d.). Therefore, It is necessary for companies to understand their consumers' communication channel preferences and select a suitable technology ecosystem which supports the agility and flexibility of an organization to meet the firm's communication channel demands (Leggett, 2013). After the selection of a primary and secondary media, the final step is allocating a media budget and finalize a media plan to implement an IMC campaign Percy, Larry (2014).

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is to analyse the perception of the SME owners on implementing IMC on SME's in Qatar and the need for SMEs to implement IMC in Qatar. The following are the research objectives:

1. Understanding the use of marketing tools at present
2. Perception of the SME owners in implementing IMC in Qatar:
  - a. What Effects can IMC have on Cost and budget?
  - b. Will IMC contribute in building brands?
  - c. Can implementing IMC help in building consumer relationship?
  - d. Barriers in implementing IMC
3. Understanding the current position of SMEs in Qatar and the need for SME owners to implement IMC.
  - a. Challenges faced by SMEs in Qatar
  - b. Sustainability of SMEs in Qatar
  - c. Reasons for firms to exit the market

### **3.1 Data Collection Method**

To Explore the above objectives of the research, a quantitative research method is applied with a mixture of both primary and secondary data. Quantitative method will help the researcher to compare the state of SMEs in Qatar and the perception of SME owners in implementing IMC. The data can be used for making predictions and can help in analysing cause and effect relations.

The secondary data was collected from secondary sources like articles, books and reports published online about SME's. the collected data is used to identify constraints faced by SME's in Qatar and for the data collection of the primary data, surveys was

distributed either as a hard copy or an online survey link was shared on visiting the SME offices, meeting their owners. The study includes a sample of 40 SME owners.

### **3.2 Ethical Considerations**

The questionnaire was reviewed by the Qatar University Review Board and the approval was obtained before distributing the survey (QU-IRB 1047-E/19)).

### **3.3 Consent**

A consent letter was given to the SME owners before beginning the survey and the survey only began after the approval of participants to consent letter.

### **3.4 Confidentiality**

The data collected through this study is strictly confidential, it was promised that the identity of the individuals participating in this study will be protected and will not be revealed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

### 4.1 Secondary Data Analysis

In this session we will be analysing the state of SMEs in Qatar to study the need to implement integrated marketing and communication in their business and how SMEs can implement it in their organization.

#### 4.1.1 Challenges faced by companies in Qatar

According to a recent study by Business Confident Index (2018), companies in Qatar face various challenges which effects their performance, making it difficult for them to grow or even sustain in the market. The chart below displays the percentage of companies of whose performance is being affected by the constraints.

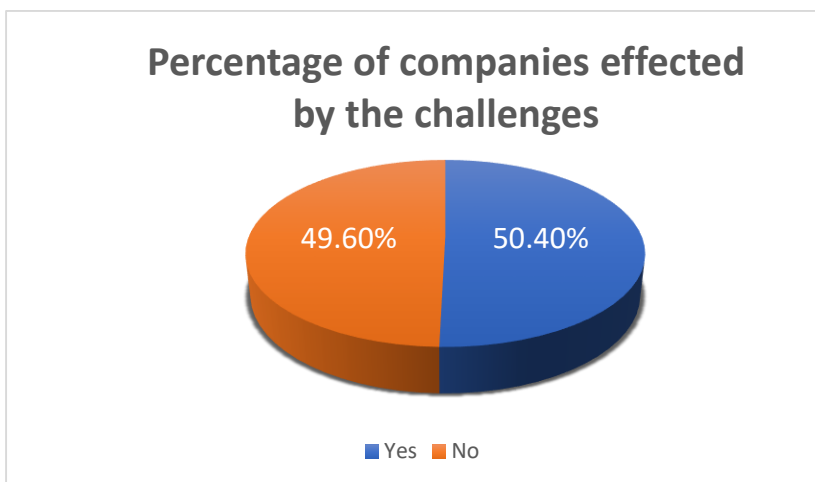


Figure 1: Percentage of companies effected by the challenges.

Source: Business Confident Index in the State of Qatar, 2018- Q1



Results from the above chart shows that 50.4% of companies in Qatar are facing challenges which is affecting their performance

#### 4.1.2 Main Challenges Faced by Companies in Qatar

Previously, we have seen the percentage of firms being affected by the challenges on their performance, now we will discuss what are the challenges? And how much affect each of them has on the companies in Qatar.

Identifying the challenges and its effect on SMEs will help in understanding the need for SME owners to implement IMC in their companies. The challenges will highlight the areas that require more focus and improvement, which can be compared to the process of IMC and predict how each step will overcome the challenges. The chart below shows the degree of effect on the companies and the table will help to identify each challenge.

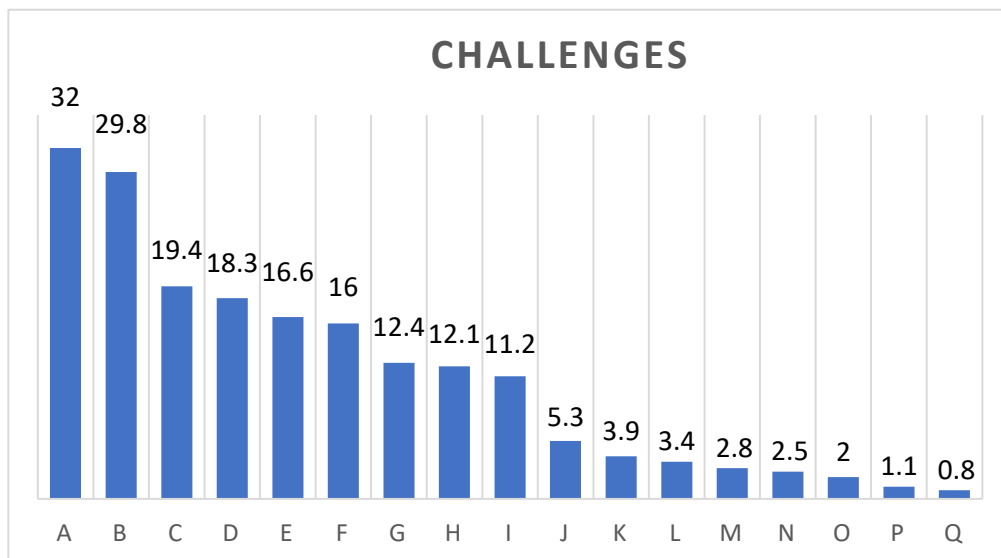


Figure 2: Challenges of SMEs in Qatar.

Source: Business Confident Index in the State of Qatar, 2018- Q1

Table 3: Challenges of SMEs in Qatar.

	<b>Challenges</b>
A	Rental cost
B	Insufficient demand
C	Delay in receivables
D	Shortage of materials or equipment
E	Cost of obtaining raw materials
F	Competition
G	Financial restraints
H	Difficulty to obtain raw materials
I	Cost of transport
J	Legislative restrictions and obstacles
K	Others
L	Routine
M	Cost of service and utilities
N	Shortage of labour force
O	Government fees
P	Customs tariffs
Q	Access to land, property registration and taxes

Source: Business Confident Index in the State of Qatar, 2018- Q1

Cost of rentals is a challenge for companies in Qatar which is the most effective, as the report shows that 32% of people says it is the most effective challenge which is having an effect on the performance of the SME's, followed by insufficient demand with 29.8%, receivable in delays with 19.4 %, shortage of materials 18.3 %, cost of obtaining raw material 16.6% and competition with 16%.

50.4% of the SME's performance are being affected by the challenges in Qatar. Underlining the top three challenges, which are Cost of rental, in-sufficient demand and delay in receivables. This indicates that there are big problems the companies are facing, which are:

- Low cash flow
- Low sales
- And high expenses for running a business

A state like this will influence the marketing activities of the firm, they may not be able to convey their messages with timely reminders for the customers without proper planning because the companies require high working capital and good cashflows to meet its high working expenditures like rental costs, delay in payments and insufficient demand will make it difficult for the firms to meet its monthly expenditures. The above discussed challenges can affect the marketing and sales of an SME, which can even lead a firm to very challenging financial crisis if they don't take planned measure, random expenditure on marketing has a very small chance of reaching their target customers. To increase sales, companies need to focus on their marketing, but low cash flow is a major burden for them. Thus, firms need to implement IMC for effective marketing activities with the funds available to them.

### 4.1.3 Sustainability of SME's in Qatar

It is important to understand the status of the SME's in Qatar because Integrated marketing and communications can help firms suffering from financial conditions and poor sustaining capability by eliminating unwanted expenditure in marketing activities and creating a planned and effective marketing. To understand the capabilities of SME's in Qatar, I have used the data from a report which is called "The state of small and medium enterprises in Qatar – 2016" published by QDB (Qatar development bank). This data is used to study the ability of SME's to sustain are:

- Net Profit
- Return on asset ratio.
- Quick Ratio.

The financial performance analysis of SME sector in Qatar was done by Qatar development bank with a sample of 193 SME's from manufacturing, trading and service sectors, the figure below will show the number of SME's from each sector.

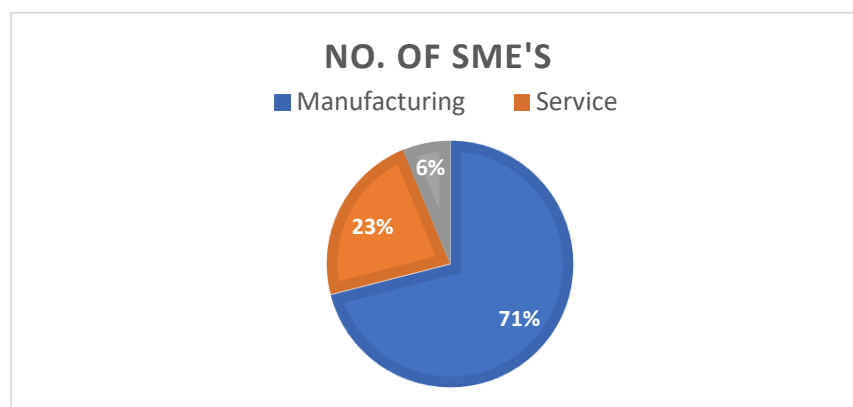


Figure 3: SMEs based on sectors.

Source: State of Small and Medium Enterprises in Qatar- 2016, QDB.

#### 4.1.3.1 Net Profit Margin Ratio

Net profit margin ratio is the measure of revenue percentage after deducting all the expenses from the sales. The following figure demonstrates the net profit margin ratio of Manufacturing, trading and Service SME's.

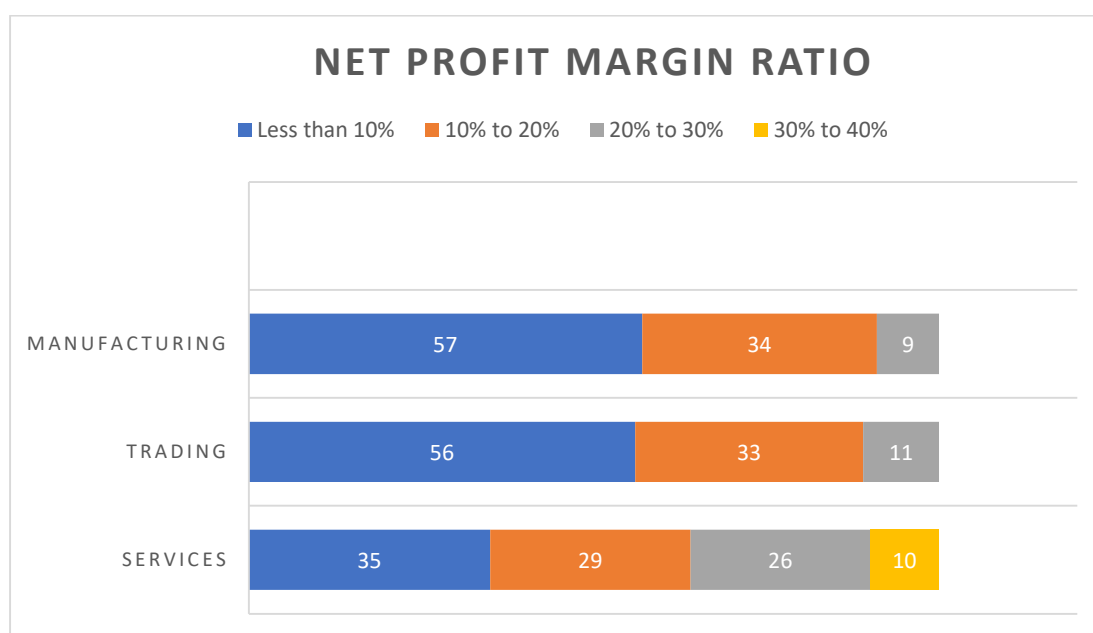


Figure 4: Net profit margin ration of SMEs in Qatar.

Source: State of Small and Medium Enterprises in Qatar- 2016, QDB

In the above figure, we can see that large number of SME's In Qatar are having net profit less than 10%, the highest number of firms having low profit margin are from manufacturing and trading sector with a percentage of 57 and 56 percentage of firms having net profit less than 10%. Were as, the service has the least firms with the net

profit margin less than 10%, yet the number is not a small number having 35% of firms with low profit margin.

#### 4.1.3.2 Return on Asset Ratio

Return on asset ratio provides management with a valuable information of how successful they are at efficiently utilizing company's assets in generating income. Low ROA can be due to inefficiency, poor management, lack of sales etc.

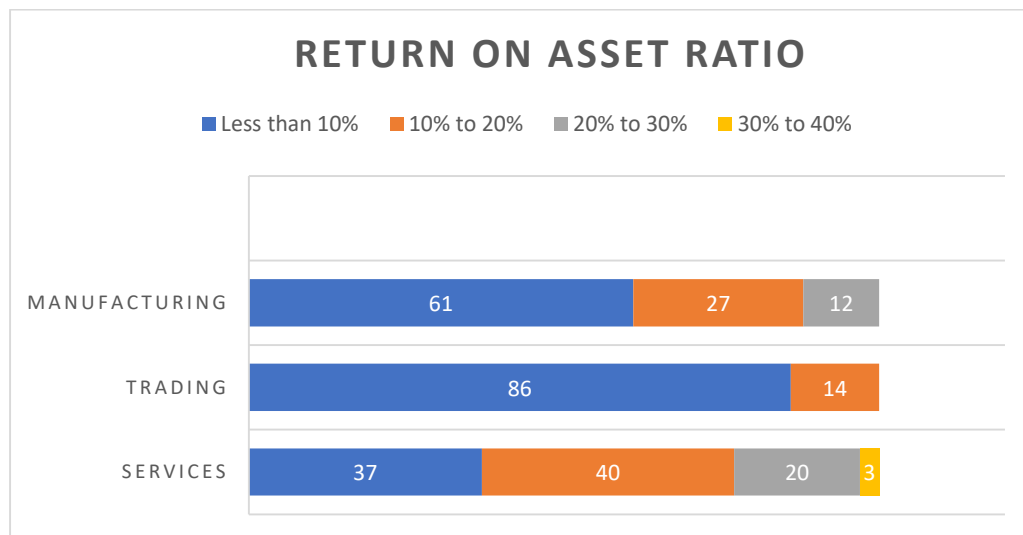


Figure 5: Return on Asset Ratio.

Source: State of Small and Medium Enterprises in Qatar- 2016, QDB

The data from above chart shows that trading sector has 86% of SME' with the least return on asset ratio i.e. with a ROA less than 10%, followed by manufacturing with 61% and service sector with 37% of SME's with less than 10% of ROA ratio.

### 4.1.3.3 Quick Ration

Quick Ratio otherwise called as acid test ratio measures the capability of a company to terminate its current liabilities by using the company's liquid assets which can easily transformed to cash. The satisfactory ratio considered for a firm is 1:1. In other words, a company having quick ratio less than one will not be fully able to pay its current liabilities. The following figure portrays the quick ratio of SME's in Qatar across manufacturing, trading and service sectors.

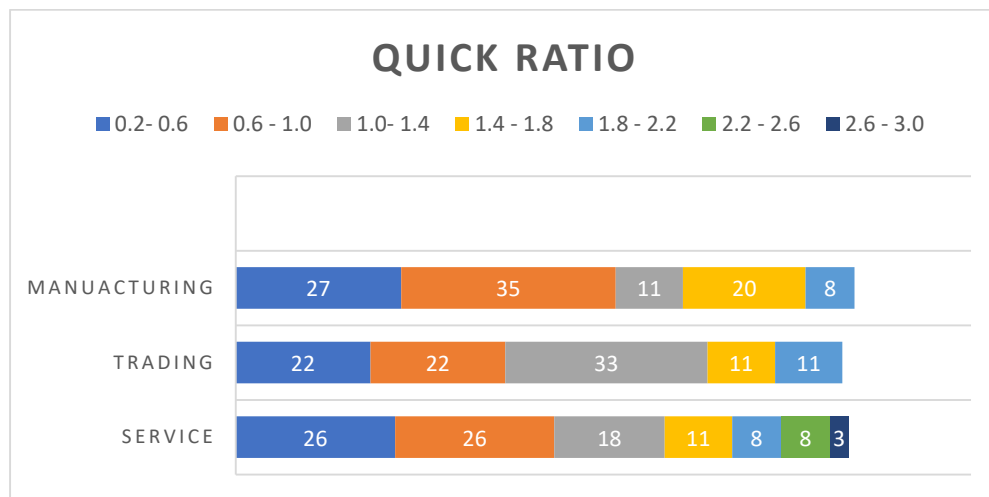


Figure 6: Quick ratio of SMEs in Qatar.

Source: State of Small and Medium Enterprises in Qatar- 2016, QDB

Studying the above chart and looking at the number of SME's of quick ratio below one we can see that under manufacturing sector there are 62% of SME's; of which 27% of SME's quick ratio is between 0.2 to 0.6 and 35% of SME's are between 0.6 to 1.0, 44% of SME's in the trading sector; in that 22% of SME's quick ration is between 0.2

to 0.6 and the other 22% of SME's is between 0.6 to 1.0 and 52% of SME's in service sector out of that 26% of SME's belong between 0.2 to 0.6 and the rest 26% is between 0.6 to 0.1.

Studying the data presented, we have seen that many firms are having net profits less than 10% and a quick ratio less than 1:1, which indicates that many firms are not capable to pay off their current liabilities by transforming their liquid assets to cash.

Return on asset ratio indicates that many firms are suffering from problems like:

- Poor management
- Inefficiency
- Lack of sales

This portrays the lack of clear-cut objectives, identified target audience, planned marketing activities, evaluation of the company's performance.

#### 4.1.4 Reasons for firms to exit the market:

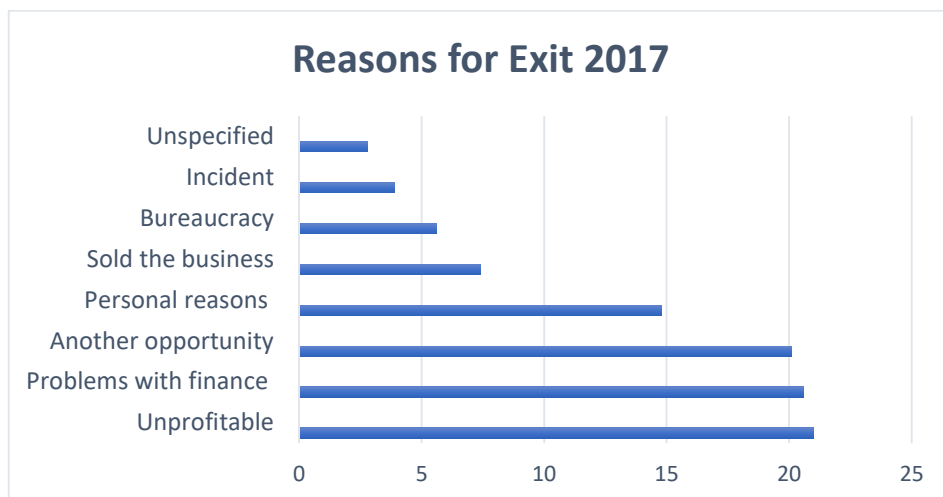


Figure 7: Reasons for Exit 2017.

Source: GEM, Qatar National Report- 2017, QDB

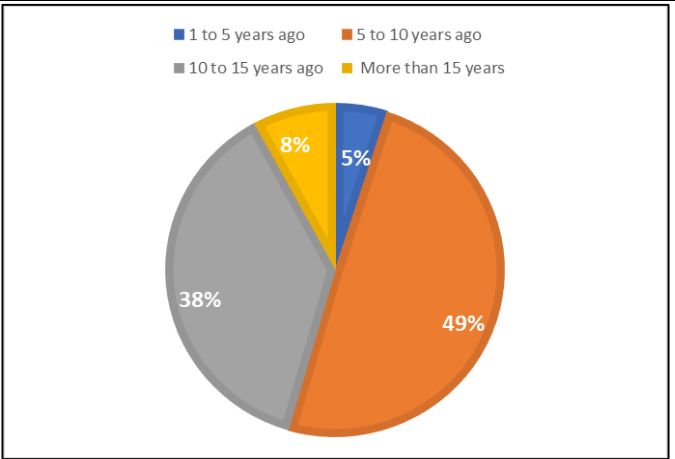
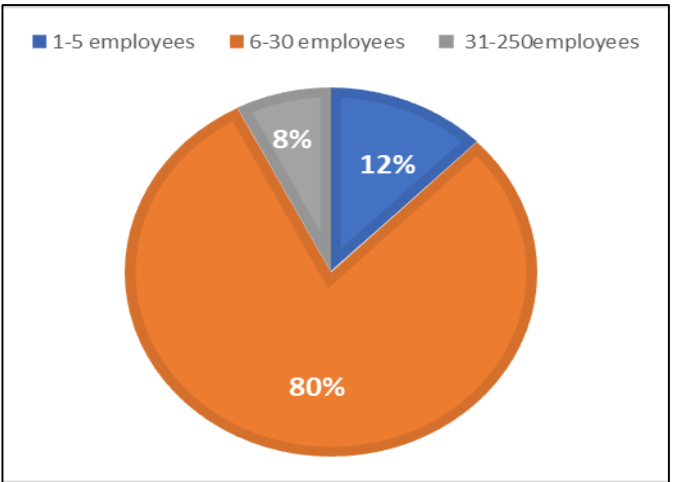


From the above figure which displays the reasons for exit by SME's in Qatar, the most important point to be noted is that 41.6% of the people answered that problems with finance and SME's for being on loss are the main reasons for exit, where 21% of the people said that unprofitable and 20.6% of people replied saying that problems with

## 4.2 Finding and results from the survey

### 4.2.1 Demographic Questions

Table 4: Demographic questions

No	Question	Results										
1	When was the firm established?	 <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Question 1: When was the firm established?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Time Period</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 to 5 years ago</td> <td>5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5 to 10 years ago</td> <td>49%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>10 to 15 years ago</td> <td>38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>More than 15 years</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Time Period	Percentage	1 to 5 years ago	5%	5 to 10 years ago	49%	10 to 15 years ago	38%	More than 15 years	8%
Time Period	Percentage											
1 to 5 years ago	5%											
5 to 10 years ago	49%											
10 to 15 years ago	38%											
More than 15 years	8%											
2	How many employees are currently employed in the firm?	 <table border="1"> <caption>Data for Question 2: How many employees are currently employed in the firm?</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Employee Count</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1-5 employees</td> <td>12%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>6-30 employees</td> <td>80%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>31-250 employees</td> <td>8%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Employee Count	Percentage	1-5 employees	12%	6-30 employees	80%	31-250 employees	8%		
Employee Count	Percentage											
1-5 employees	12%											
6-30 employees	80%											
31-250 employees	8%											

No	Question	Results														
3	Under which sector does your firm belong to?	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Sector</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>OTHER SERVICES</td> <td>47.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>TRADE</td> <td>40.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CONSTRUCTION</td> <td>10.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>CREATIVE INDUSTRIES</td> <td>2.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MANUFACTURING</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGRICULTURE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Sector	Percentage	OTHER SERVICES	47.50%	TRADE	40.00%	CONSTRUCTION	10.00%	CREATIVE INDUSTRIES	2.50%	MANUFACTURING	0.00%	AGRICULTURE	0.00%
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CREATIVE INDUSTRIES	2.50%															
MANUFACTURING	0.00%															
AGRICULTURE	0.00%															
4	No. of years worked in current organization:	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Years Worked</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>One year or less</td> <td>3%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2 - 7 years</td> <td>40%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8 - 13 years</td> <td>35%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14-19 years</td> <td>7%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 years or above</td> <td>15%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Years Worked	Percentage	One year or less	3%	2 - 7 years	40%	8 - 13 years	35%	14-19 years	7%	20 years or above	15%		
Years Worked	Percentage															
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8 - 13 years	35%															
14-19 years	7%															
20 years or above	15%															

The above table shows the results of the demographic questions asked in the survey. Question one indicates the year the firm was established; the results indicate that out of the 40 SME owners interviewed, 49% of their firms have been established between 5-10 years, 38% of them were age up to 10-15 years, 5% of the firms were only between 1-5 years old and 8% of them have been operating in Qatar for more than fifteen years.

The second question is about the number of employees, the results indicate that 80% of the firms belong to the category of small enterprises; with the employees between the range of 6-30 employees working in their firm, 12% of the firms are micro enterprises

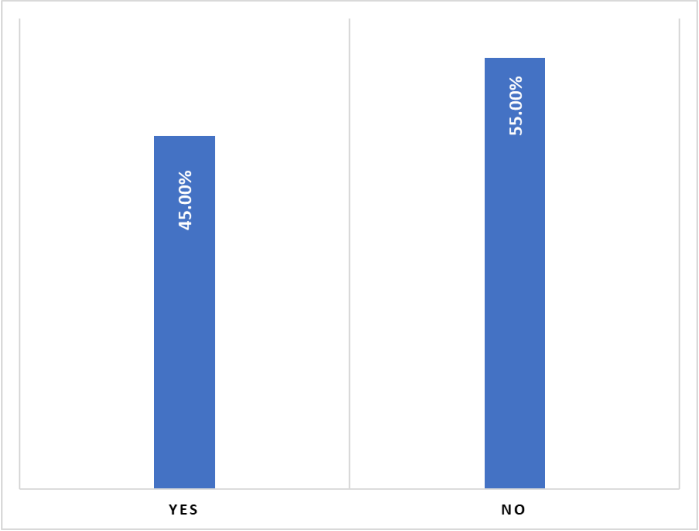
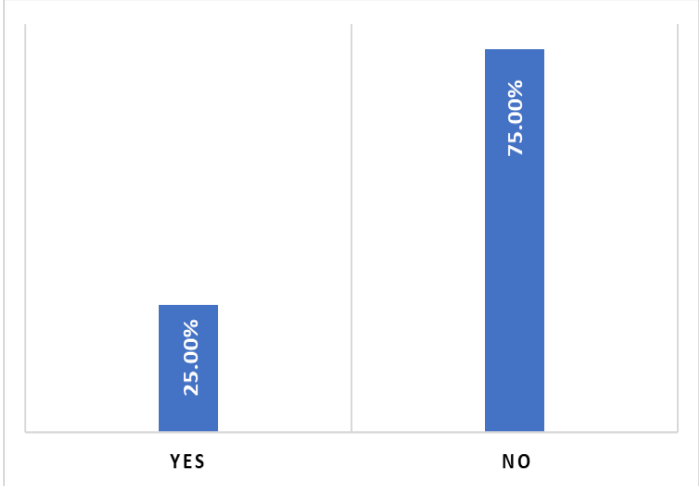
consisting of employees with the range of 1-5 and 8% of the firms belonged to the category of medium enterprises having employees between the range of 31- 250.

The third question from the above table shows which category the SMEs belonged to. According to the results, 2.5% of the firms belonged to creative industries; 10% of them belonged to construction; 40% of the firms belonged to the Trading sector and 47.5% of the firms were from various industries indicated in the question as other services.

The fourth part of the question shows the results of the number of years the subject working in the organization. Comparing the results, during the survey some interviewers mentioned that they purchased a running business and some were children of the founder who has taken over the business. According to the results, 3% of them has been working there for one year or less, 7% of them has been in the business between 14 to 19 years; 15% of them for more than 20 years; 35% of them for 8-13 years and majority of the subject that is 40% of them were in the firm for about 2-7 years.

#### 4.2.2 Online presence of SMEs

Table 5: Online presence of SMEs

Question	Results						
<b>5) Is the firm on social media platforms?</b>	 <p>A bar chart with two bars. The left bar is labeled 'YES' and has a value of 45.00%. The right bar is labeled 'NO' and has a value of 55.00%.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>YES</td><td>45.00%</td></tr><tr><td>NO</td><td>55.00%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	YES	45.00%	NO	55.00%
Response	Percentage						
YES	45.00%						
NO	55.00%						
<b>6) Does the company own a website?</b>	 <p>A bar chart with two bars. The left bar is labeled 'YES' and has a value of 25.00%. The right bar is labeled 'NO' and has a value of 75.00%.</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Response</th><th>Percentage</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>YES</td><td>25.00%</td></tr><tr><td>NO</td><td>75.00%</td></tr></tbody></table>	Response	Percentage	YES	25.00%	NO	75.00%
Response	Percentage						
YES	25.00%						
NO	75.00%						

The above table contains the answers to question five and six, these questions were asked to understand the presence of the company on social media and if the company owns a website.

Question 5 is about the presence of company in social media. According to the results, 55% of the firms is not on social media platforms and 45% of them where on social media platforms aiming to reach their target customers through these platforms.

Question 6 results will show the number of companies owning a website. According to the results only 25% of the firms had a website and 75% of them dint have a website.

### **4.2.3 Marketing Tools of SME's (Question 7,8 and 9 from the survey)**

In this session we are going to analyse three questions which are:

- The effectiveness of the marketing tools by the entrepreneurs in their business
- Marketing tools Implemented in their business
- How often are these tools used?

By analysing the data related to the above points we will be able to understand if the SMEs are able to practise the tools which they feel is effective to improve sales or if there are any issues which is stopping them from practicing it.

#### 4.2.4 The effectiveness of the marketing tools

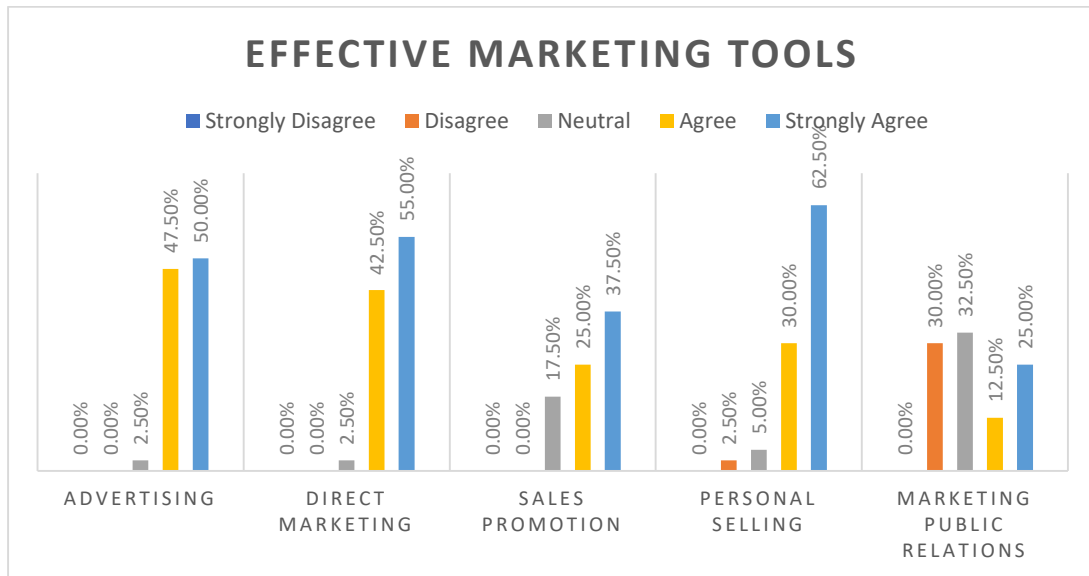


Figure 8: Effective marketing tools

The above chart displays data which shows the tools entrepreneurs think is the most effective in their business. According to the results, entrepreneurs feel that advertising, direct marketing and personal selling is the most effective with a percentage of 62.5%, 55% and 50% respectively, strongly agreeing to the effectiveness of the above tools; 30%, 42.5% and 40.5% of the respondents agreed with effectiveness of personal selling, direct marketing and advertising respectively showing that they are somewhat satisfied with the effectiveness of the above tools. According to entrepreneurs, it was said by some that sales promotion may increase sales only during the period of promotion and reduces the profit margin. Marketing Public relations were least effective as most SMEs interviewed does not have a public relation department and they feel it is only needed for large companies.

#### 4.2.5 Tools used by SMEs

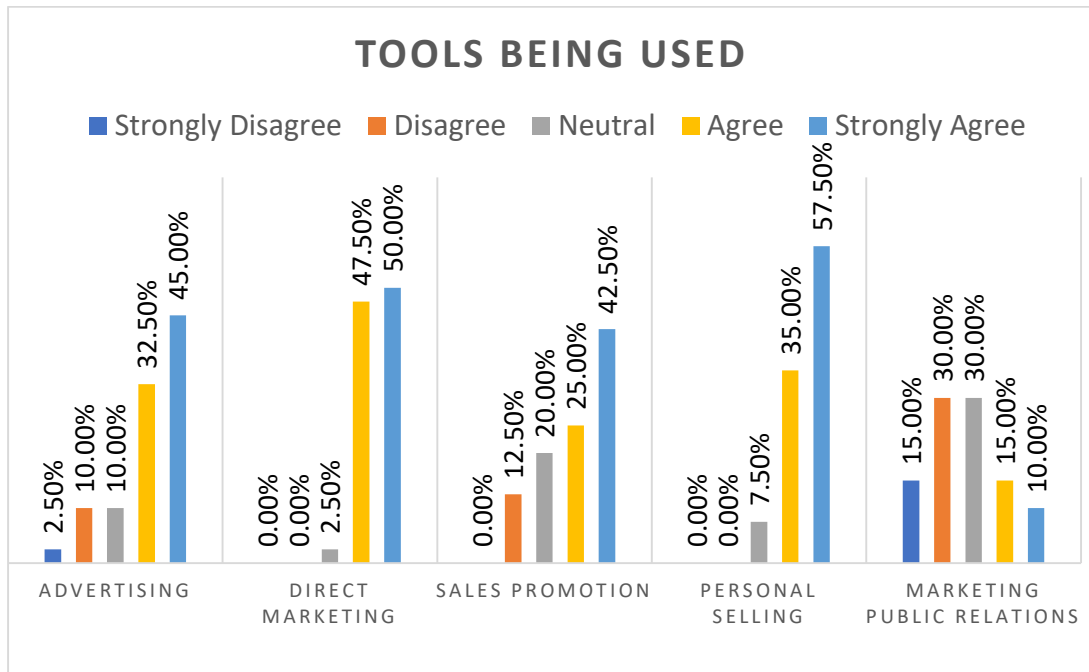


Figure 9: Tools being used

The above chart indicates personal selling is the most used tool with a vote of 57.5% of the sample strongly agreeing to it and 35% of the sample voted to agree with it followed by advertising, direct marketing and sales promotion with a percentage of 45%, 50% and 42.5% respectively strongly agreeing and a percentage of 32.5%, 47.5% and 25% respectively opted to agree. According to this data it is understood that marketing public relations is the least used tool by the SME's in Qatar, followed by sale promotion.

#### 4.2.6 Usage of the marketing tools

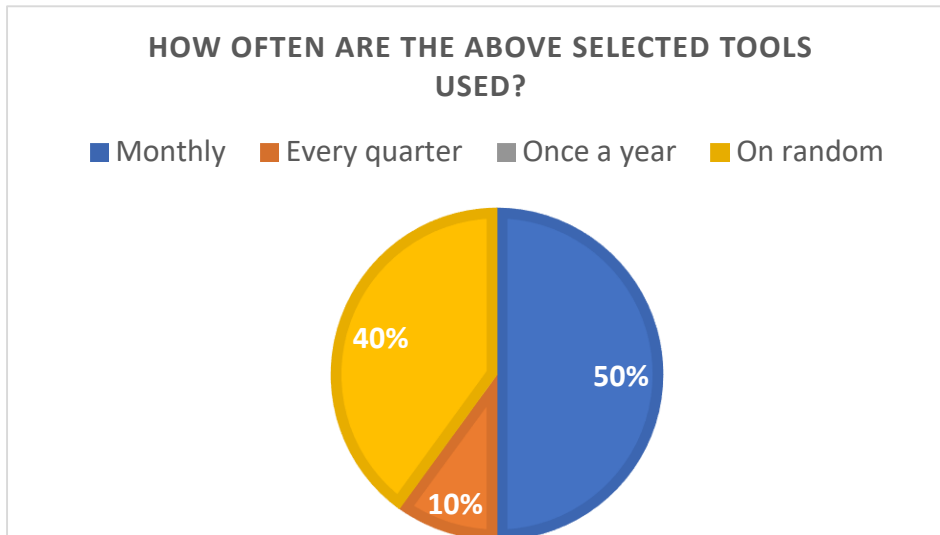


Figure 10: Usage of marketing tools in SMEs

While answering to this question on the survey it was said by the entrepreneurs that personal selling takes place on daily basis. The above chart indicates that, other tools are practiced monthly by 50% of the SMEs, 10% of them practice it on quarterly basis and 40% of them use it on random, this is due to the shortage of funds caused by delay in payments forcing them to delay marketing activities to when the funds are available.



#### 4.2.7 Marketing concentration (question 10)

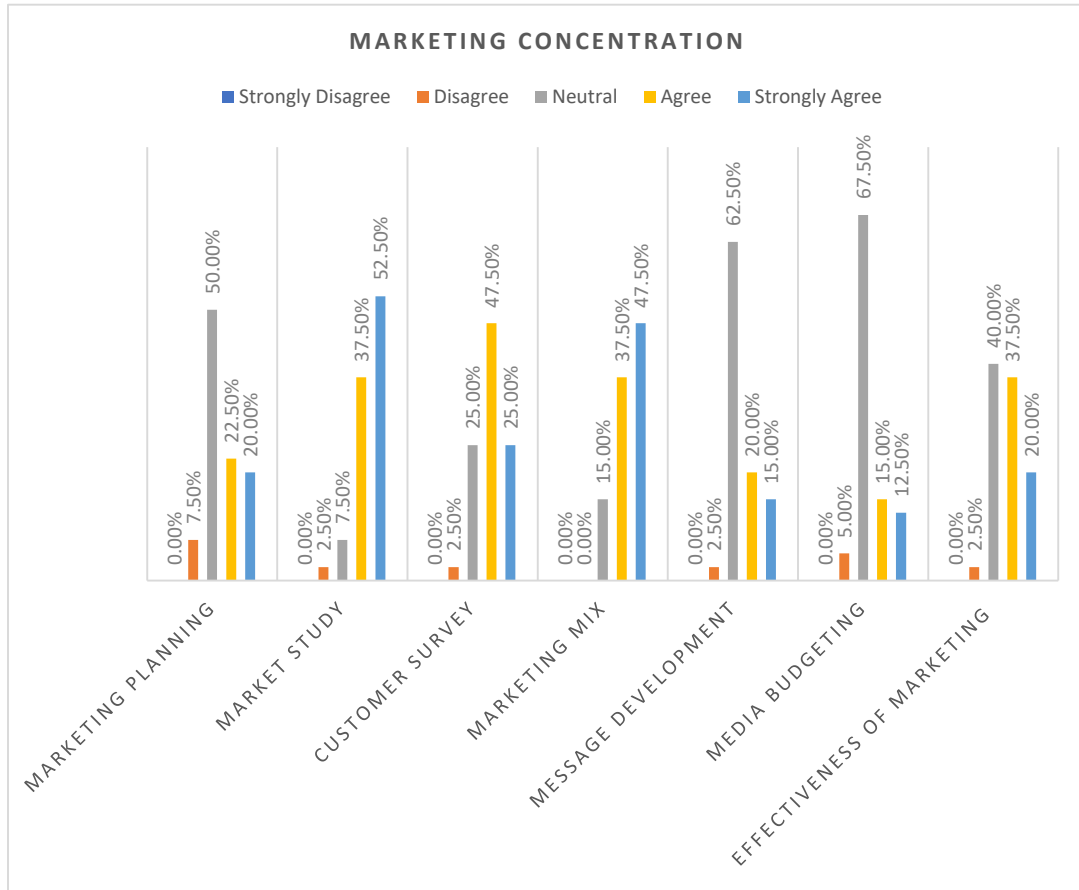


Figure 11: Marketing Concentration of SMEs

The above chart displays the data portraying the level of concentration on marketing activities by the SMEs. The results indicate that, SMEs focus on market study and marketing mix the most with the percentage of 52.5% and 47.5% of the respondents strongly agreeing and 37.5% of each agreeing to both market study and marketing mix respectively. This result show that there is not much importance given to marketing planning, message development and media budgeting since the results show that 50%, 62.5% and 67.5 % of the answers were neutral for marketing planning, message

development and media budgeting respectively. 47.5% of people agreed to customer service feedback and did not strongly agree to it because the feedback of using the service or product is noticed by the SMEs in their daily routine. The SMEs is seen to focus on market study because most of them seem to follow their competitors or the market leaders in the industry and does not focus much on coming up with something new.

#### 4.2.8 Integrated Marketing and Communication

In this part of the analysis, we will study the understanding of the entrepreneurs on integrated marketing and communication and how they think it will influence their business.

Table 6: Integrated Marketing and Communication

No	Question	Results												
11	Integrated marketing and communication is familiar to me	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>20.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>10.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>25.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>45.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	20.00%	AGREE	10.00%	NEUTRAL	25.00%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	45.00%
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NEUTRAL	25.00%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	45.00%													

No	Question	Results												
12	Integrated marketing communications provide the company with greater professional expertise	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>55.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>37.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>7.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	55.00%	AGREE	37.50%	NEUTRAL	7.50%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
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NEUTRAL	7.50%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													
13	Marketing communications tools will result to better coordination of the firm's promotional activities	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>37.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>52.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>10.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	37.50%	AGREE	52.50%	NEUTRAL	10.00%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
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AGREE	52.50%													
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DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													
14	Social medial platforms Creating Low Budget Opportunities.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>52.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>37.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>10.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	52.50%	AGREE	37.50%	NEUTRAL	10.00%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
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STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													

No	Questions	Results												
15	Effective implementation of marketing communications principles by businesses can help to have a better market acceptability among its competitors	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>37.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>45.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>17.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response Category	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	37.50%	AGREE	45.00%	NEUTRAL	17.50%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
Response Category	Percentage													
STRONGLY AGREE	37.50%													
AGREE	45.00%													
NEUTRAL	17.50%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													

Chart number one from the above table portrays the awareness of the SME owners about IMC, the results indicate that 45% of the SME owners who answered the survey are not aware of IMC, 20% of them strongly agreed to it indicating a thorough knowledge on IMC, 10% of them agreed to it, indicating the awareness but not a thorough knowledge of it, 25% of the owners answered the survey answered this question as neutral as they weren't very sure about IMC.

Chart number 2 represents if the entrepreneurs think that IMC can provide the companies with greater professional expertise and the results show that majority of the entrepreneurs, that is 55% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 37.5% of them agreed to it, 7.5% of them stayed neutral which means they neither agree nor disagree and zero disagreements on this statement

According to the data of chart number 4, it shows that 52.5% of the respondents of the survey has strongly agreed to the statement which says social created opportunities for

companies to do low budget advertisements, 37.5% of the respondents agree to it, 10% of the respondents were neutral and no disagreements on this statement.

Looking into the chart presented in the above table it is understood that 45% of the SME owners were unaware of IMC until we had a brief discussion about it. After our conversation, my briefing about IMC and the thesis, owners felt from their understanding that IMC can influence business in various ways such as:

- Improve professional expertise
- Better chance of market acceptability from their competitors
- Improve the coordination of the marketing activities

Thus, the following part of the research we will see the perception of the effects of IMC that can have on their business.

#### **4.2.9 Effects of IMC on Funds and marketing budget**

The Table below represents four charts, which shows the reaction of the SME owners on statements relating to effect of IMC on funds and marketing budget

Table 7: Effects of IMC on funds/Marketing Budget

No	Question	Results												
16	Implementation of IMC will reduce the overall marketing budget in the long run	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>50.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>45.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>5.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	50.00%	AGREE	45.00%	NEUTRAL	5.00%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
Response	Percentage													
STRONGLY AGREE	50.00%													
AGREE	45.00%													
NEUTRAL	5.00%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													
17	The use of IMC in an efficient manner will result to reduction in cost of marketing activities	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>60.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>32.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>7.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	60.00%	AGREE	32.50%	NEUTRAL	7.50%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
Response	Percentage													
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AGREE	32.50%													
NEUTRAL	7.50%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													
18	The use of IMC will help to reduce wastage in marketing funds	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>62.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>37.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	62.50%	AGREE	37.50%	NEUTRAL	0.00%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
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AGREE	37.50%													
NEUTRAL	0.00%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													

No	Question	Results												
19	IMC will improve the effectiveness of marketing	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>57.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>35.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>7.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response Category	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	57.50%	AGREE	35.00%	NEUTRAL	7.50%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
Response Category	Percentage													
STRONGLY AGREE	57.50%													
AGREE	35.00%													
NEUTRAL	7.50%													
DISAGREE	0.00%													
STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%													

Statement number 16 from the above table is about the statement which says IMC reduce the overall marketing budget in the long run. The results show that 50% of the respondents strongly agreed to it, 45% of the respondents replied answering agree, 5% of them voted to be neutral and none of them disagreed with the statement. The reasons for entrepreneurs those who voted to ‘agree’ and ‘neutral’ are maybe due to the lack of experience in implanting IMC and lack of knowledge.

According to the results of statement No. 17, it indicates that 60% of the SME owners believe that efficient implementation of IMC will result reduction of cost in marketing, 32.5% of the respondents agree to this statement, 7.5% of the people replied by voting to be neutral and no disagreement on this statement.

Statement no. 18 from the above table indicates that 62.5% of the SME owners believe that IMC will reduce wastage in funds used for marketing, 37.5% of the respondents agree to this statement and no disagreements regarding the statement.

Looking into statement number 19, it shows that IMC will improve the effectiveness of marketing. 57.5% of the survey respondents strongly agreed to it, 35% of the respondents agree to this statement, 7.5% of the people replied by voting to be neutral and no disagreement on this statement.

#### 4.2.10 Effect of IMC on building brands for SME's

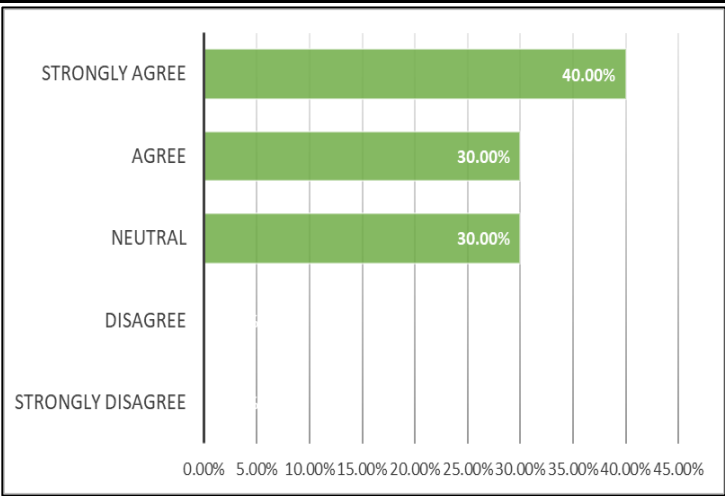
Table 8: Effects of IMC on building brands for SMEs

No	Question	Results												
20	coordination of communication messages and the media can increase consumer support for the product/ services	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>60.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>37.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>2.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response Category	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	60.00%	AGREE	37.50%	NEUTRAL	2.50%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
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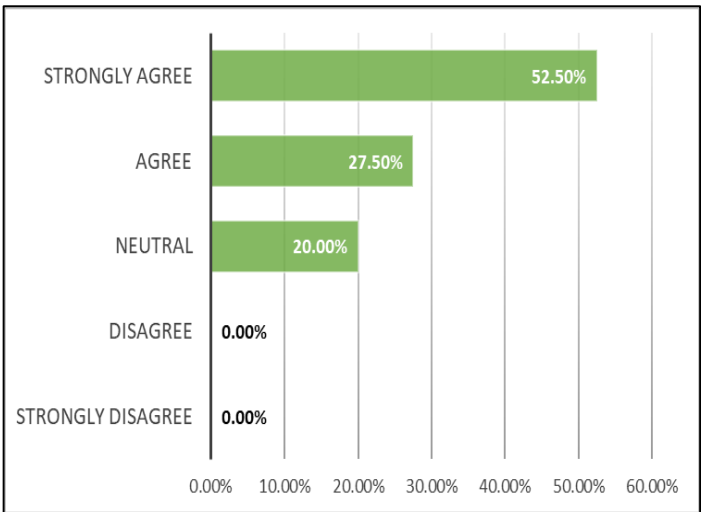


No	Question	Results
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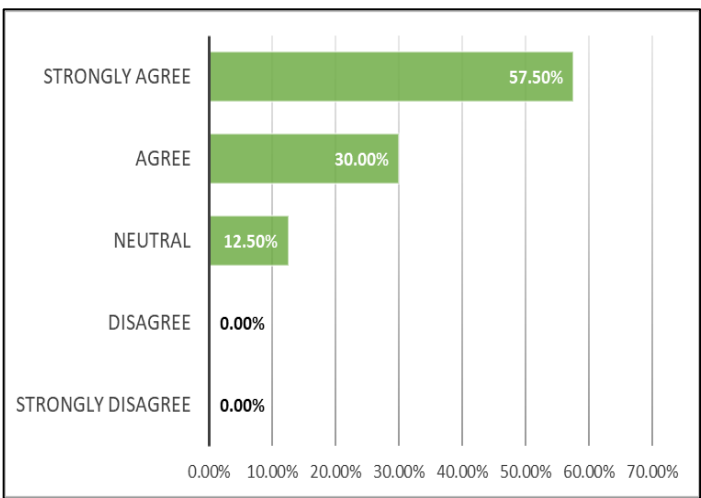
21 The use of IMC by SME's adds value to the consumers



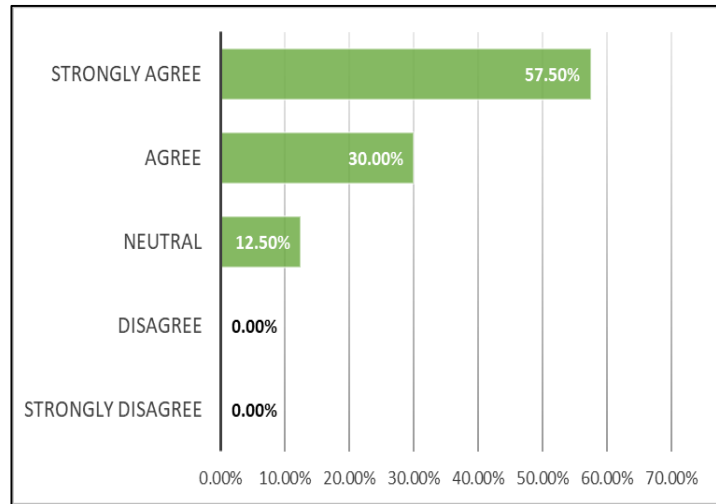
22 Effective use of IMC will help to develop strong brands in the eyes of the consumers



23 IMC will help to increase the market share of the company



**24** IMC increases brand awareness by communicating consistent messages



The statement number 20 from the above table indicates that 60% strongly agree that that proper coordination of communication message will help to gain consumer support, 37.5% of the respondents agree to this statement, 2.5% of the people answered as neutral since they don't agree and disagree and no disagreements regarding the statement.

According to the data of the chart of statement number 21, 40% strongly agree that IMC will help to add value to their customers, 30% of the respondents agree to this statement, 30% of the people answered as neutral since they don't agree but no disagreements on the statement. The reason for large number of SME's to stay neutral is because they believe not only IMC, but quality of the offering also matters to add value.

Results from statement number 22 indicates that 52.5% strongly agree that that proper coordination of communication message will help to gain consumer support, 37.5% of the respondents agree to this statement, 2.5% of the people answered as neutral since they don't agree and disagree and no disagreements regarding the statement.

Statement number 23 from the above table indicates that 57.5% strongly agree that IMC will help in gaining market share, 30% of the respondents agree to this statement, 12.5% of the people answered as neutral since they don't agree and disagree and no disagreements regarding the statement.

According to the statement number 24 which says IMC increases brand awareness by communicating consistent messages, 57.5% strongly agree to this, 30% of the respondents agree to this statement, 12.5% of the people answered as neutral since they don't agree and disagree and no disagreements regarding the statement. Communicating consistent messages will help to create an image of the brand in the minds of the consumer, when they are constantly reminded with one message.

#### 4.2.11 IMC building customer relationship

Table 9: IMC building customer relationship

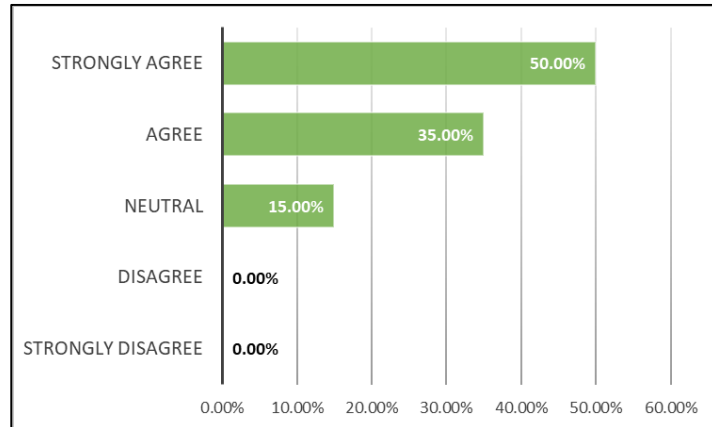
No	Question	Results												
25	IMC creates connection between a brand and needs in consumers' mindsets.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Response Category</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>STRONGLY AGREE</td> <td>55.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>AGREE</td> <td>32.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>NEUTRAL</td> <td>12.50%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>STRONGLY DISAGREE</td> <td>0.00%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Response Category	Percentage	STRONGLY AGREE	55.00%	AGREE	32.50%	NEUTRAL	12.50%	DISAGREE	0.00%	STRONGLY DISAGREE	0.00%
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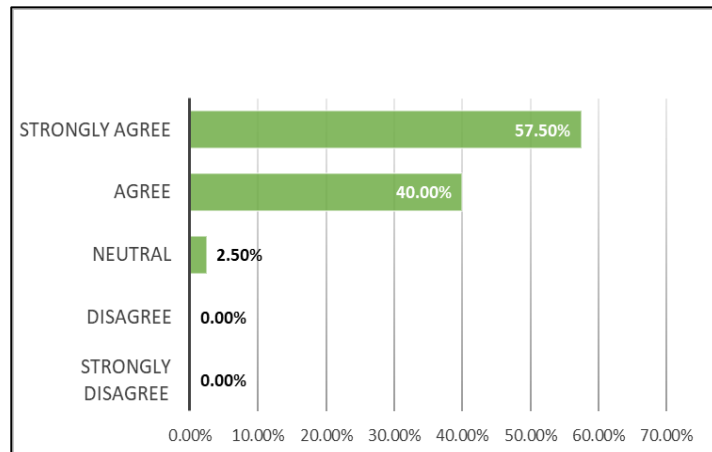
No	Question	Results
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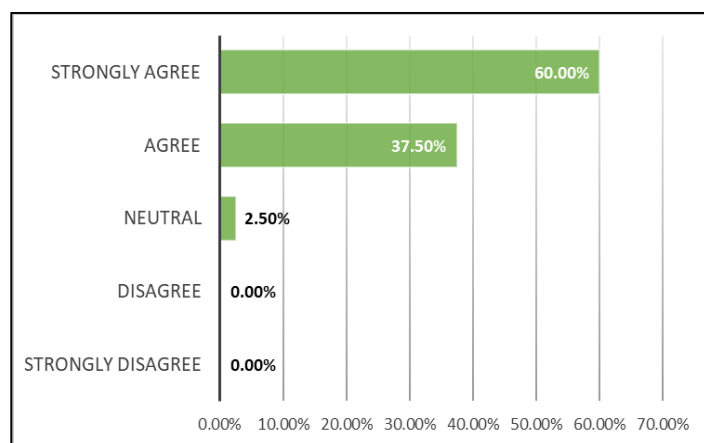
26 IMC will develop greater interaction between a company and their consumers



27 Reminding consumers of the brand will help in the development of the company's brand



28 Proper coordination of all messages, all media and the communication tools increase consumer loyalty.



Statement number 25, the owners were asked if “IMC creates connection between a brand and needs in consumers’ mindsets”. The results show that 55% of the respondents strongly agree to it, 32.5% of the respondents agree with it and 12.5% of the respondents stayed neutral.

In statement number 26, 50% of the owners who responded to the survey strongly agreeing to the statement which says IMC will create better interaction between the company and consumer, 35% of the owners who took the survey agreed to this, but did not have full confidence on the above statement due to lack of experience and knowledge and 15% of them chose to reply opting for neutral.

According to the statement number 27, reminding the consumers of the brand will help in company development. 57.5% of the respondents who answered this survey strongly agreed with this statement; 40% of the respondents opted to agree to it and only 2.5% of the people answered to be neutral. This means consumers should be constantly reminded by the company by continuous marketing activity and choosing various channels.

The last statement mentions that coordination of all messages, all media and the communication tools increase consumer loyalty, 60% of the owners strongly agreed to this statement, 37.5% of the people answered agree to this statement and 2.5% of the people decided to stay neutral.

Through open-ended questions, the SME owners were asked about challenges SMEs face in Qatar and barriers in implementing them, according to them the challenges are as follows:

#### **4.2.12 Challenges faced by SMEs in Qatar.**

- Blockade led to various obstacles like inflation, low availability of products and shipment time delay
- Payment delay is a major problem companies face in Qatar; this reduces the cash flow.
- High rental cost, obtaining a space in Qatar is very expensive and mostly after obtaining the space, rent increases every year by 10%
- Strict government regulations are another challenge for SMEs, which restricts them from taking risks and always playing safe due to which some good opportunities are lost.

#### **4.2.13 Barriers in implementing IMC**

- Creation of synergy between different departments and getting them to work together is a challenge, requires proper coordination and good flow of communication
- Resources are limited and sometimes very less for some companies, so the employees need to be creative and innovative when utilizing the budget
- Lack of thorough knowledge and experience about IMC

These are some of the barrier's entrepreneurs feel that they should overcome in implementing IMC.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Main objective of any firm is to increase sales and earn higher profit, but the secondary data presented in the previous chapter shows that the ability of majority of SMEs to sustain is low, with net profit less than 10% , return on asset ratio less than 10% and quick ratio less than 1, this indicates lack of sales, poor management, inefficiency and does not have the ability to cover their current liabilities, from this data it is understood that SMEs in Qatar are facing problems like low sales, delay in receivables, high operating cost and limited resources. These problems paid way to lack of efficiency, poor management. Scarcity of resources, mainly financial resources will lead them to practise trial and error method, which is why SMEs in Qatar need to focus on implementing IMC to practice effective marketing in order to increase sales. Now the study will discuss on how these problems can be addressed with IMC.

### **5.1 IMC on Improved management style for SME's**

As mentioned above, one of the problems SMEs face is poor management, this part of the chapter will analyse the current marketing activities of the company and perception of entrepreneurs in implementing IMC on over coming this issue. The primary data collected on concentration of marketing activities by the firm portrayed that highest concentration was given to market study, in other words SME's studied their competitors carefully watching every move of theirs and following the market leader, this shows the lack of innovative marketing techniques which can help them from distinguishing them from the competitors. This may be due to lack of marketing knowledge, experience or even fear to take risks in the fear of failure. The findings shows that 45% of the owners were unaware of IMC on understanding a brief about IMC, 55% of the SME owners strongly agreed and 37.5% of them agreed, making it a

total of 92.5% of the owners out of 40 accepting to believe that IMC can improve professional expertise, management activities and promote innovation. Creating a marketing plan, developing objectives identifying target customers will help in improving management activities,

## **5.2 IMC on effective utilization of resources**

The secondary data and the open-ended question asked to the entrepreneurs during the survey shows that one of the main challenge's companies face is to get their payments on time, leading to the reduction of cash flow of the company which effects their marketing activities. The data collected through the survey shows that 40% of the SME performed marketing activities on random without any prior planning or periodic marketing activities, some owners explained it was because of lack of availability of financial resources due to problems like delay in payments and it was seen in the data analysis that 55% of the companies were not utilizing the social media platforms and 75% of the entrepreneurs did not have a website for their company. The survey also collected the perception of the SME owners on the effect of IMC on the budget, process of implementing IMC includes identifying target customers, identifying media channels setting budget and planning, Understanding the process of IMC the owner's perception of the following are as follows:

- Reducing the overall marketing budget- 95% of the owners perceived this to be true (Strongly agree-50% and agree 45%)
- Will help to reduce the wastage of funds used in marketing- Strongly agree- 62.5% and agree 37.5%, on total of 100% acceptance without any disagreement

Process of IMC includes developing media strategy and selecting appropriate channels, a media strategy should be developed with the budget allocated for marketing and



appropriate medium for communication must be selected. Limited resources can influence selecting media channels. Advancement of technology and various social media platforms can help companies to reach their customers. Mix of traditional and digital marketing will help SMEs to achieve effective and efficient marketing goals.

### 5.3 Role of IMC in Improving Sales of SMEs

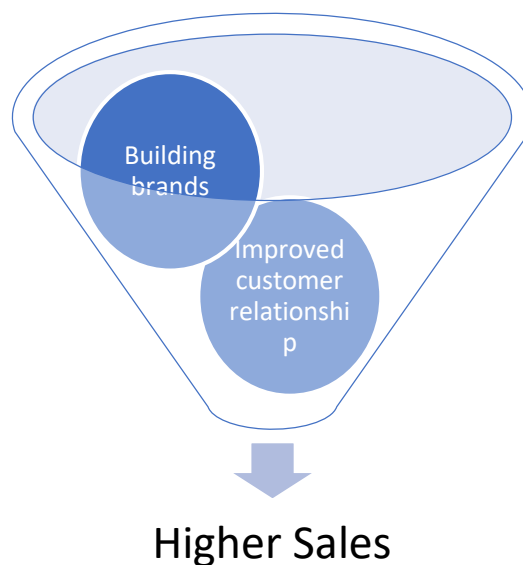


Figure 12: IMC on increasing sales

Improving management expertise, developing media strategy and effective utilization of the resources will also help in increasing the sales of the company, but is that enough? To ensure the sustainability of increasing sales and development of the firm, entrepreneurs need to focus on building brands and improving customer relationship. Using the data collected of the perception of the entrepreneurs on the effect of IMC in building brands and improving customer relationship from the previous chapter we will see if the entrepreneurs feel IMC will help the SMEs in tackling this issue.

Consumers require timely reminder with a single message for the marketing to succeed and to bring in returns from the investment made. Looking into the analysis from the previous chapter, it was understood that companies suffer from low sales, to increase the sales, companies must create a brand image which can be successfully achieved by a unified message that can be transmitted through various channels. IMC is about providing timely reminder's with unified messages through various source which will help the company to be noticed by target customers, creating an image of the company in the consumers' minds and build relationship with them. 87.5% (strongly agree 55%+ 32.5% agree =87.5%) of the participants of the survey believed that IMC can create a connection between the consumers mind set and the brand. According to 85% (strongly agree 50%+ 35% agree =85%) of the participants, agree that IMC can flourish greater interaction between the consumer and the company.

80% of the entrepreneurs accept that IMC will develop strong brands in the eyes of the consumers (strongly agree 52.5%+ 27.5% agree =80%) and the rest 20% of the entrepreneurs remained neutral. 97.5% of the 40 entrepreneurs who took the survey agree that reminding consumers of the brand will help in the development of the company's brand, out of which 57.5% of entrepreneurs strongly agreed to this and 40% agreed to this statement about IMC. 85% of the entrepreneurs believe that IMC will help in developing better interaction between the company and consumers,

## CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

Most of the SME owners in Qatar are going through a tough face working hard trying to tackle the challenges and make both ends meet. The analysis has presented various challenges SMEs must overcome and the perception of entrepreneurs about the effects of IMC on their business. With this study it can be concluded that entrepreneur's perception in implementing IMC is positive and it can be implemented to improve efficiency, develop brand image and create awareness to overcome the current situation of SMEs in Qatar by connecting customers for sustainable growth.

### **6.1 Future research**

Followed by the concluding statement are the recommendations, this research is conducted on a small scale with 40 SME owners so there is a need for wider research with a large sample to understand what IMC means to the SME owners on a large scale. Future research can be conducted on the effects of constant messages from various sources on consumers in Qatar.

### **6.2 Limitations**

The limitations of this research is the small sample size, a smaller sample was chosen because of time limitations, since collecting data meeting SME owners was very time consuming.

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## APPENDIX

### APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant,

We invite you to participate in our research study titled Integrated Marketing and communication connecting customers for sustainable growth and building brand for SME's in Qatar. The purpose of this study is to understand the benefits of using IMC by SME's to develop a brand Image and help in growth of the firm. Please note that there is no right or wrong answer to any of those questions. The survey will take approximately 5 minutes from your valuable time. Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from this study at any time or skip any question you like. The researcher will guarantee that no individuals will be identified from their responses. The results of the analysis will be strictly used by the researchers for study purposes *only*.

If you have further questions regarding the study, feel free to contact me at [mz1607528@qu.edu.qa](mailto:mz1607528@qu.edu.qa) or my Supervisor (PI) at [Ahmed.Mehrez@qu.edu.qa](mailto:Ahmed.Mehrez@qu.edu.qa).

For further questions related to ethical compliance of the study you may contact them at : [QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa](mailto:QU-IRB@qu.edu.qa)

Please indicate that you have read, understood and if you agree to participate.

Kindly click on “Yes” to start the survey.

If you do not wish to participate, kindly click “No” to exit.

YES      NO

Appreciate your time and effort,

**Researcher,**

**Mohammed Zayyan.**

1. When was the firm established?

- a) 1 to 5 years ago
  - b) 5 to 10 years ago
  - c) 10 to 15 years ago
  - d) More than 15 years
2. How many employees are currently employed in the firm?
- a) 1-5 employees
  - b) 6-30 employees
  - c) 31-250employees
3. Under which sector does your firm belong to?
- a) Agriculture
  - b) Manufacturing
  - c) Creative Industries
  - d) Construction
  - e) Trade
  - f) Other Services
4. No. of years worked in current organization:
- a) One year or less
  - b) 2 - 7
  - c) 8 - 13
  - d) 14 – 19
  - e) 20 years or above
5. Is the firm on social media platforms?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
6. Does the company own a website?
- a) Yes
  - b) No
7. Rate the tools according to their effectiveness in your business?

*1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly Disagree*

	Tool	1	2	3	4	5
1	Advertising					
2	Direct Marketing					
3	Sales Promotion					
4	Personal Selling					
5	Marketing Public relations					

8. Which of the following tools are being used by your firm?

*1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly Disagree*

	Tools	1	2	3	4	5
1	Advertising					
2	Direct Marketing					
3	Sales Promotion					
4	Personal Selling					
5	Marketing Public relations					

9. How often are the above selected tools being used?

- a) Monthly
- b) Every quarter
- c) Once a year
- d) On random

10. Rate the level of concentration in the following sectors

*1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly Disagree*

No	Sectors	1	2	3	4	5
1	Marketing Planning					
2	Market study					
3	Customer survey or customer feedback					
4	Mix marketing					
5	Message Development					
6	Media Budgeting					
7	Marketing Planning					
8	Measuring effectiveness of marketing activities					

## Integrated Marketing and communications

Integrated marketing communications (IMC) is a communication strategy that transforms your marketing department from non-similar functions to one interconnected approach. IMC takes your all the marketing channels from digital, social media, PR, direct mail and merges them with one unified message.

- Integrated marketing and communication create consistent messages throughout the channels reducing the risk in the minds of the buyers and creates value.
- IMC creates timely reminders and provide relevant information for the customers through the linked messages
- Unified and consistent messages have more impact than disjoint messages
- A good communication strategy will help in penetrating through the noise of various commercial messages.

**Based on your understanding of the above statement, kindly tick the box for each item.**

*1-Strongly Agree, 2-Agree, 3-Neutral, 4- Disagree, 5- Strongly Disagree*

No.	Statements	1	2	3	4	5
11	Integrated marketing and communication are familiar to me					
12	Integrated marketing communications provide the company with greater professional expertise					
13	Marketing communications tools will result to better coordination of the firm's promotional activities/efforts					
14	Social medial platforms have created opportunities for organizations to advertise their products and services with a low budget both locally and internationally.					
15	Effective implementation of marketing communications principles by businesses can help to have a better					



	market acceptability among its competitors					
<b><u>Effects of IMC on Funds/Promotional Budget in the long run</u></b>						
16	Proper implementation of integrated marketing communication (IMC) will reduce the overall marketing budget in the long run					
17	The use of integrated marketing communications in an efficient manner will result to reduction in cost of marketing communication					
18	The use of IMC will help to reduce wastage in the funds used for marketing promotions by the company the marketing activities of the firm.					
19	IMC will improve the effectiveness of marketing					
<b><u>Effect of IMC on building brands for SME's</u></b>						
20	Proper coordination of communication messages and the media can help increase consumer support for the product/ services					
21	The use of IMC by SME's provide value added services to consumers					
22	Effective use of IMC will help to develop strong brands in the eyes of the consumers					
23	IMC will help to increase the market share of the company					
24	IMC increases brand awareness by communicating consistent messages					

<b><u>IMC building customer relationship</u></b>						
25	IMC is to create connection between a brand and needs in consumers' mindsets.					
26	IMC will develop greater interaction between a company and their consumers					
27	Reminding consumers of the brand will help in the development of the company					
28	Proper coordination of all messages, all media and the communication tools increase consumer loyalty as advertising, sales promotion,					

29. What other factors you think can act as a barrier to the use and implementation of integrated marketing communication principles in SME's in Qatar?

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30. Name some challenges SME's in Qatar is facing which effects its growth?

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