



The Role of Integrated Promotional Strategies in Aiding the Success of SMMEs in the Retail Rector in Durban

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Abstract: The success of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) in Durban's retail sector is crucial for both local economic vitality and community engagement. Despite this importance, these enterprises often struggle with maintaining visibility and competitiveness. However, there is a solution in the form of integrated promotional strategies, which bring together different marketing channels to deliver a coherent message to the target audience. To better understand the impact of these strategies, this study aims to explore their role in the success of retail SMMEs in Durban. 217 owner-managers of retail SMMEs in Durban provided data using self-administered questionnaires with a 5-point Likert scale, resulting in an 88% response rate. Analysing the data using a variety of descriptive and inferential methods, we utilised the statistical software SPSS Version 29. The results displayed an overall agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of integrated promotional strategies such as sales promotion, branding, digital marketing, and social media. However, respondents had divided opinions on the effectiveness of public relations, email communication, and telemarketing. In conclusion, it was evident that integrated promotional strategies play a crucial role in the success of retail small and medium enterprises (SMMEs) in Durban by boosting visibility, strengthening brand recognition, and fostering customer engagement. Through the implementation of personalised and cohesive promotional strategies, SMMEs can better navigate the competitive market and ultimately achieve long-term growth and success.

Keywords: Integrated Promotional Strategies; SMMEs; Success; Retail Sector

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1. Introduction and research objective

The Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs) operating in Durban's retail sector are crucial players in the city's economy. They are the lifeline of trade and community involvement (Adams, 2022), providing essential goods and services to local residents. These enterprises not only contribute to the liveliness of Durban but also promote a sense of cooperation. However, as vital players in the city's urban landscape, retail SMMEs face the daunting task of staying competitive and remaining visible amid fierce competition within the bustling economic centre.

In light of this competition, the adoption of integrated promotional strategies emerges as a crucial tool for retail SMMEs in Durban. Traditionally, as discovered by Thair (2018), SMMEs often approach promotions in a siloed manner, focusing on isolated tactics like print ads or social media campaigns. However, this fragmented approach often leads to wasted resources and missed opportunities. Integration breaks down these silos, creating a cohesive narrative across all channels. Imagine a customer seeing a captivating Instagram post about a new product, followed by a targeted email with a discount offer, and then encountering the same product beautifully displayed in-store. Aligning with this, Gao, Melero and Sese (2020) posit that a seamless multi-channel experience not only increases brand awareness but also drives customers towards a purchase, creating a powerful synergy that isolated tactics simply cannot match. Integrated promotional strategies involve the coordinated use of various marketing channels, such as advertising, sales promotions, digital marketing, and public relations, to convey a unified and compelling message to the target audience (Twum & Yalley, 2021). This approach is particularly pertinent for SMMEs aiming to navigate the intricate landscape of Durban's consumer market.

Integrated promotional strategies play a pivotal role in enabling retail SMMEs to stand out in a crowded marketplace. The use of diverse channels facilitates not only brand identification but also product differentiation, helping businesses carve a distinct identity in consumers' minds. According to Kotler and Armstrong (2017), effective integrated promotional strategies are essential for brand identification, allowing businesses to create a distinctive image in the minds of consumers. Effective integrated promotional strategies play a crucial role in communicating the unique value proposition of SMMEs, creating brand recognition, and ultimately driving customer loyalty in a city characterised by cultural diversity and a discerning customer base. The integrated approach allows businesses to leverage various channels, adapting their messaging to appeal to different cultural segments, as discussed by Schultz and Kitchen (2019).

Furthermore, these integrated strategies empower retail SMMEs to effectively combat rivalry and establish a competitive edge. Smith and Zook (2019) discovered that by strategically blending various promotional tools, businesses can engage

customers across multiple touchpoints, creating a cohesive and memorable brand experience. The values and promotions enable businesses to communicate consistent messages, reinforcing their brand image and values while enhancing customer trust and loyalty.

However, Nkosana (2022) posits that amidst the potential benefits of integrated promotional strategies, many retail SMMEs in Durban grapple with challenges stemming from weak or inadequate promotional efforts. A lack of visibility, brand recognition, and ineffective communication strategies may lead to reduced customer traffic, diminished sales, and heightened vulnerability to market fluctuations. Recognising the critical need for SMMEs to overcome these challenges, this study aims to explore the role of integrated promotional strategies in the success of retail SMMEs in Durban.

In the course of this research study, the researcher defined SMME owner-managers as individuals who function as both proprietors and overseers of their businesses. The owner-managers are defined as self-employed individuals actively engaged in entrepreneurial endeavours, predominantly operating within industry sectors such as transportation, retail and wholesale, restaurants, accommodation, construction, and agriculture, among other sectors. Also, for this study, retail SMMEs are defined as autonomous establishments overseen and owned by individuals, featuring an employment capacity exceeding 1 and falling below 50 full-time employees. Finally, for this study, integrated promotional strategies refer to comprehensive and coordinated marketing approaches that involve harmonising various promotional tools and channels to convey a consistent and unified message to the target audience.

This investigation becomes imperative as it seeks to provide actionable insights for retail SMMEs, policymakers, and stakeholders in Durban. Understanding the dynamics of integrated promotional strategies and their influence on business success will help various stakeholders consider their impact on customer satisfaction, profitability, sales, cost savings, and overall brand equity. Moreover, the study aspires to offer tailored recommendations that empower SMMEs to thrive in the competitive urban environment.

The subsequent sections of this research explore the literature review of integrated promotional strategies, research methodology, empirical findings, discussions and lastly, recommendations.

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2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Integrated Promotional Strategies

Integrated promotional strategies entail the harmonious coordination and synchronisation of various promotional tools and channels within a marketing framework. These strategies aim to create a unified and consistent message across different promotional elements, including advertising, public relations, sales promotions, personal selling, direct marketing, and digital marketing (Duncan & Everett, 1993; Percy & Rosenbaum-Elliott, 2016). The goal is to ensure that all aspects of promotion work together synergistically, presenting a cohesive brand image and delivering a comprehensive and impactful message to the target audience.

Marketers often interchange integrated promotional strategies with the concept of integrated marketing communications (IMC). Integrated marketing communications is a broader approach that encompasses the coordination of all communication efforts, both promotional and non-promotional, across various marketing channels. While integrated promotional strategies specifically focus on coordinating promotional elements, IMC extends to the integration of communication strategies as a whole, including advertising, public relations, personal selling, and other communication channels (Schultz & Kitchen, 2000; Belch & Belch, 2018).

2.2. Integrated Promotional Strategies and Small Business Success.

Kitchen and Schultz (2001) argued for the implementation of integrated promotional strategies in SMMEs, emphasising the potential benefits of a coordinated approach. Kitchen and Schultz (2001) argue that an integrated approach to marketing promotions can enhance overall communication effectiveness. By coordinating various promotional elements, such as advertising, sales promotion, and public relations, SMMEs can convey a more cohesive and impactful message to their target audience. Kitchen and Schultz (2001) posit that integrated promotional strategies have the potential to positively influence customer perceptions. A consistent and harmonious message across different communication channels can contribute to a unified brand image, fostering trust and positive perceptions among customers. The emphasis is on the coordinated nature of integrated promotional strategies. By aligning different communication tools and messages, SMMEs can create a synergistic effect, ensuring that their promotional efforts work together seamlessly to achieve marketing objectives.

Mohammed's study (2015) provides evidence supporting the implementation of integrated promotional strategies in SMMEs. The study suggests that SMMEs implementing integrated promotional strategies experienced enhanced brand consistency. This consistency is crucial for establishing a recognisable and coherent brand identity across various touchpoints, contributing to a stronger and more

memorable brand presence. Mohammed's findings (2015) indicate that integrated promotional strategies positively impact customer engagement. Through a cohesive and integrated approach, SMMEs can create a more engaging and interactive experience for customers, fostering stronger connections and relationships. Integrated strategies ensure that each promotional element works cohesively towards common goals, maximising the impact of marketing efforts.

Fillis and Wagner (2005) explored the impact of integrated promotional strategies on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), emphasising positive contributions to brand development and customer relationships. The study by Fillis and Wagner (2005) suggests that integrated promotional strategies contribute positively to brand development in SMEs. This may involve creating a consistent brand image, effectively communicating brand values, and differentiating the brand in the market. Coordinating messages and interactions improves customer relationships. By coordinating messages and interactions, SMEs can create a more holistic and positive experience for customers, leading to increased loyalty and satisfaction. Smaller businesses can tailor these strategies to their specific needs and resources, making them a feasible and effective option.

Studies by Davies (2008) and Egan (2008) are of the view that it is not helpful for SMMEs to implement integrated promotional strategies. Davies (2008) argued against the implementation of integrated promotional strategies in SMMEs, citing the potential complexities and costs associated with this approach. SMMEs, often characterised by limited resources and personnel, may find the implementation of integrated promotional strategies challenging due to their inherent complexities. Integrated promotional strategies involve coordinating and aligning various promotional elements, such as advertising, public relations, and sales promotions, which may be intricate for SMMEs to manage effectively. Davies (2008) suggests that the costs associated with implementing integrated promotional strategies might outweigh the benefits for SMMEs. This could include expenses related to hiring specialised personnel, investing in technology and integration tools, and conducting extensive market research to tailor the strategy to the specific needs of the business. The argument emphasises the importance of tailoring IMC strategies to the specific needs of SMMEs. If the integrated approach is not customised to align with the unique characteristics, goals, and resources of SMMEs, it may not yield the anticipated benefits and could become an unnecessary burden.

Egan (2008) pointed out the challenges faced by SMMEs in maintaining consistency across various promotional channels, casting doubt on the feasibility and effectiveness of integrated approaches. SMMEs, often operating with limited staff and resources, may struggle to maintain consistency across diverse promotional channels. Integrated approaches require a cohesive and synchronised message across advertising, public relations, and other channels, which can be logistically

challenging for small enterprises. Egan (2008) suggests that executing integrated approaches might be inherently difficult for SMMEs. The multifaceted nature of the integrated promotion approach demands a level of strategic planning, execution, and monitoring that may stretch the capabilities of SMMEs. This difficulty in execution could lead to inconsistencies and dilution of the intended message. The argument underscores the resource constraints commonly faced by SMMEs. Limited financial resources and personnel may hinder their ability to implement and sustain integrated promotional strategies effectively, making it a less practical option compared to more focused and manageable approaches.

3. Research Methodology

This study employed a quantitative research design to address the issues investigated. This choice was made based on its ability to confirm and maintain data accuracy, as argued by Poni (2014). The empirical investigation was carried out in Durban, South Africa, a key economic centre with considerable regional and national significance (Todes & Houghton, 2021). Data was collected through self-administered questionnaires utilizing a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. To ensure the credibility and applicability of the research findings, the authors utilised a random sampling technique to select 217 owner-managers of retail small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs) as participants. This approach, endorsed by Cooper and Schindler (2014), adds both statistical rigour and the potential for generalising results. As highlighted by De Vaus (2014), random sampling allows researchers to draw meaningful conclusions about a larger population based on the characteristics of the selected sample. To analyse the data, the authors employed the widely used Statistical Packages for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29.

3.1 Research Questionnaire

Utilising a 5-point Likert scale, this study employed a quantitative approach to measure both dependent and independent variables - namely, the success of SMMEs and integrated promotional strategies, respectively. To effectively analyse the collected empirical data and draw meaningful conclusions, closed-ended questionnaires were intentionally utilised (Creswell, 2014). The step of conducting a pilot study was of utmost importance in refining and validating the research tools, specifically the questionnaire, as emphasized by Pearson et al. (2020). By conducting a thorough pilot study, the suitability and effectiveness of the research instrument, the questionnaire, were ensured in the context of SMMEs.

4. Data Analysis

The gathered data was coded into an Excel spreadsheet. The main data file was then exported and opened in Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 29 for thorough examination. The analysis involved the use of two crucial statistical approaches, namely descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.1. Sample Profile

The study obtained an 88% response rate, with 217 questionnaires distributed and 190 responses returned. Additionally, in Durban, most of respondents are male owner/managers, accounting for 67% of the total, while just 33% of the respondents are female. The findings demonstrated that Africans made up 46% of the respondents, followed by Asians (21%) and Indians (19%), who were entrepreneurs. Whites, who make up 14% of the respondents, constitute a somewhat smaller percentage. The age range of 26-35 formed 21% of the respondents, while the age range of 46-55 comprised 21% of the owner/managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMMEs). It was determined that 40% of the respondents were in the age range of 36 to 45. The percentage of respondents who were in their late 50s and early 60s (56-65) was 13%, while the percentage of owners and managers who were either very young (under 25) or very old (over 65) was 3% and 2%, respectively.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics serve the purpose of offering a succinct, yet comprehensive representation of the key features of a dataset, by breaking down intricate data into easily discernible patterns. As stated by Bluman (2013), descriptive statistics aid researchers and analysts in organising and summarising data in a way that is both meaningful and comprehensible. Among the various measures used for this purpose, those pertaining to central tendency - namely mean, median, and mode - hold particular significance. In the present study, these measures were calculated for all the promotional strategies, based on the inputs provided by the owners/managers in the sample. The resulting opinions have been tabulated in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Central Tendency Measures

		Sales promotion	Branding	Digital marketing	Word of mouth	Public relations	Telemarketing	Personal selling	Social media	Email communication
N	Valid	190	190	190	190	190	190	190	190	190
	Mean	1,9	1,7	1,8	2,1	2,6	2,4	2,3	1,8	2,5
	Median	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
	Mode	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 reveal that, on average, respondents generally agree or strongly agree with the effectiveness of various integrated promotional strategies, including sales promotion, branding, digital marketing, personal selling, word of mouth and social media. This finding concurred with Juska (2021) who found that SME owners perceive integrated promotional strategies as highly effective for business growth. Public relations, email communication and telemarketing being slightly neutral, indicates a mixed perception among respondents. The findings suggest that the surveyed individuals acknowledge the importance of these strategies in the context of retail SMMEs in Durban.

4.3. Inferential Statistics

Research typically does not involve studying every single individual within a population. Instead, researchers rely on samples to gather valuable insights. Through powerful techniques such as confidence intervals and hypothesis testing (Hays, 2013), inferential statistics allow researchers to make broader connections from their sample to the greater population with a measurable level of confidence. The authors of this study used regression analysis and Anova to investigate the influence of integrated promotional strategies on the success of retail SMMEs, as shown in Table 2 where the regression model calculations are displayed.

Table 2. Regression Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.465 ^a	0,216	0,177	0,866	0,216	5,505	9	180	0,000
a. Predictors: (Constant), email communication, branding, social media, word of mouth, digital marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, telemarketing									
b. Dependent Variable: Rating of the success of the business									

Table 2 above shows a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.465, indicating a moderate positive correlation between the predictors and the dependent variable. This suggests that there is a relationship, but it's not extremely strong. The R Square value is 0.216, which means that approximately 21.6% of the variability in the "rating of the success of the SMMEs" can be explained by the integrated promotional strategies included in the model. In other words, the predictors collectively account for 21.6% of the variance in the dependent variable. The model, with integrated promotional strategies as predictors, explains a statistically significant proportion of the variance in the success ratings of retail SMMEs. The F Change statistic and its associated significance value confirm the overall significance of the model. However, it's essential to recognise that there are other factors not considered in this model that may contribute to the success of retail SMMEs.

Table 3. ANOVA^a of the Regression Model

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37,191	9	4,132	5,505	<.001 ^b
	Residual	135,104	180	0,751		
	Total	172,295	189			
a. Dependent Variable: Rating of the success of the business						
b. Predictors: (Constant), email communication, branding, social media, word of mouth, digital marketing, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, telemarketing						

As shown in Table 3 above, the regression model which includes various integrated promotional strategy variables, significantly influences the rating of SMMEs success. The predictors collectively contribute to explaining the variance in SMMEs success ratings, as evidenced by the low p-value (<.001) in the regression section of the ANOVA table. This suggests that the integrated promotional strategies under consideration have a meaningful impact on how SMMEs are rated in terms of success.

Table 4. Integrated Promotional Strategies and Success

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.544a	9	0,001
Likelihood Ratio	26,688	9	0,002
Linear-by-Linear Association	12,548	1	0

The Pearson Chi-Square test shown in Table 4 assesses the association between variables, and the p-value (0.001) suggests that there is a significant association between the implementation of integrated promotional strategies and the success of retail SMMEs. The lower the p-value, the stronger the evidence against the null

hypothesis (i.e., no association). Similar to Pearson Chi-Square, the Likelihood Ratio test also indicates a significant association. The p-value of 0.002 reinforces the idea that there is a meaningful relationship between integrated promotional strategies and the success of retail SMMEs. These results collectively indicate a statistically significant association between the implementation of integrated promotional strategies and the success of retail SMMEs.

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The key findings of this research study can be summarised as follows:

According to the data presented (descriptive data) in Table 1, respondents showed predominantly positive views on the effectiveness of integrated promotional tactics, including sales promotion, branding, digital marketing, personal selling, word of mouth, and social media. However, public relations, email communication, and telemarketing evoked a more neutral response, indicating a diverse range of opinions among the participants. Overall, respondents surveyed recognise the significance of these strategies in the context of retail small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) in Durban.

A noteworthy correlation between the integrated promotional strategies and the success of retail SMMEs in Table 2 was noted, as evidenced by a moderately positive correlation coefficient ($R = 0.465$). Furthermore, the R square value of 0.216 indicates that approximately 21.6% of the variance in SMME success ratings can be attributed to the implementation of the discussed integrated promotional strategies. These findings demonstrate the potential impact of effective promotional strategies on retail SMME success.

The regression model, which includes various integrated promotional strategy variables, significantly influences the rating of SMME success. The predictors collectively contributed to explaining the variance in SMMEs success ratings, as evidenced by the low p-value ($< .001$) in the regression section of the ANOVA table. This implies that the integrated promotional strategies considered have a meaningful impact on how SMMEs are rated in terms of success.

The results of the Pearson Chi-Square test revealed a statistically significant correlation between the success of retail SMMEs and the implementation of integrated promotional strategies. Furthermore, the low p-values from both the Pearson Chi-Square and Likelihood Ratio tests strongly reject the null hypothesis, suggesting a clear association between the use of these tactics and retail SMMEs' success.

6. Recommendations

Given the positive perception of integrated promotional strategies among retail SMMEs, it is recommended that these strategies be tailored to the specific needs and contexts of SMMEs in Durban. This entails considering the unique challenges and opportunities faced by retail SMMEs and customising promotional efforts to maximise effectiveness. Strategies should be flexible and adaptable to the dynamic nature of the small retail sector.

Recognising the challenges highlighted by Egan (2008) regarding consistency across various promotional channels, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of maintaining a cohesive and aligned approach. Integrated promotional strategies should ensure consistency in messaging, branding, and customer experience across different channels, such as sales promotion, branding, digital marketing, and word of mouth. Implementing effective coordination mechanisms can help overcome the challenges associated with managing diverse promotional channels.

To effectively navigate the dynamic marketing environment, it is crucial to implement a system that regularly assesses and adapts integrated promotional strategies. Continuous monitoring of the effectiveness of each strategy, as well as the overall impact on SMME success, will provide valuable insights. This involves utilising performance metrics, customer feedback, and market trends to refine and optimise promotional approaches. By staying responsive to changing conditions, retail SMMEs can ensure the sustained relevance and success of their integrated promotional strategies.

These recommendations aim to enhance the strategic implementation of integrated promotional efforts, aligning them with the specific characteristics of retail SMMEs in Durban for improved success and sustainability.

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