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**INTEGRATED MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES TO OVERCOME
BARRIERS.
THE CASE OF UNIVERSITY OF SASSARI, ITALY.**

**Internship Report for Obtaining the Masters Degree in Msc Management
(Specialization in Healthcare Management)**

**The final work is carried out under the supervision of:
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FACULTY OF ECONOMICS

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Work Authorship Declaration

I declare to be the author of this work, which is unique and unprecedented. Authors and works consulted are properly cited in the text and are in the listing of references included.

TEMIDAYO SOYINKA

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SIGNATURE

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ABSTRACT

The present report describes the activities undertaken within the curricular internship at the University of Sassari, as part of the master's degree in Management, in the Faculty of Economics, University of the Algarve (UALG). The report consists of two parts: literature review and the tasks done during the internship. The literature review starts with an introduction to the general concept of integrated marketing communication. It further explains the evolution of the definition and scope of integrated marketing communication concerning technological advancement. Also, the literature review highlights the tools of IMC, its importance, and barriers to its implementation in universities. The internship report describes the methodology adopted (participant observation), the main tasks of the internship, challenges faced, and solutions found.

In this context, the internship report aims to describe the role of an Integrated Marketing Communication intern at the University of Sassari. The internship was completed under the supervision of Tonito Solinas, communication manager in University of Sassari of the host company, and Nelson Matos, professor at the University of Algarve.

During five months – October 2018 to March 2019, the main tasks performed during the internship at University of Sassari, consisted of: 1) Digital content creation and management, this involved contributing and updating different web pages on the university's website; 2) Event management, as an intern within the department several opportunities came to be involved in the process of preparing the welcoming ceremony; 3) Identification of institutional partners for bilateral agreements, this task required to perform adequate research on potential and current public and private partners; 4) Administrative duties, which included handling emails, developing reports and supporting the communication manager. Overall, the internship was an opportunity to learn from other professionals, develop new skills in the job market, and apply the university's acquired knowledge in real-life working situations.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Higher Education Marketing, Internship Report, Communication Mix.

SUMÁRIO

O presente relatório descreve as atividades realizadas no âmbito do estágio curricular na Universidade de Sassari, como parte do mestrado em Gestão da Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Algarve (UALG).

O relatório está dividido em quatro capítulos: No capítulo 1, introdução –os objetivos do estágio, metodologia, relevância do estudo, e a estrutura do relatório de estágio são descritos. A metodologia deste relatório é de natureza qualitativa, uma vez que a análise de conteúdo dedutiva foi realizada após leitura e revisão da literatura sobre o tema. Em segundo lugar, a observação participante como método de pesquisa foi utilizada para identificar, descrever os desafios enfrentados e as soluções encontradas durante as tarefas do estágio. Nos últimos tempos, o ambiente de marketing e a competitividade de mercado tornaram-se mais complexos. Esta tendência também afetou a educação, conduzindo por sua vez a uma forte comercialização da oferta no ensino superior (Porcu et al., 2012). Neste contexto, a *Integrated Marketing Communications* (IMC), ou comunicação integrada de marketing tornou-se muito importante no campo do marketing devido ao avanço das tecnologias da informação e comunicação, e também devido à multiplicação dos canais de *mass media* e de redes sociais. A IMC como estratégia de comunicação, permite que todas as diferentes formas de comunicação sejam eficazmente vinculadas para criar um efeito impactante no grupo de interesse pretendido. A IMC garante a comunicação com os consumidores (bidirecional) e não com os consumidores (unidirecional).

No capítulo 2, revisão de literatura – foi efetuada uma revisão teórica do tema no contexto das tarefas desenvolvidas durante o período de estágio. A revisão inclui a definição e evolução da IMC, o mix da comunicação, redes sociais e o marketing de relacionamento. O capítulo explora ainda a evolução do conceito e propósito da IMC em relação ao presente contexto. Destaca-se

também as ferramentas do IMC, sua importância e barreiras à sua implementação nas universidades.

No capítulo 3, o estágio – explorou-se e descreveu-se a organização responsável pelo acolhimento, sua missão e objetivos. As tarefas realizadas e os desafios enfrentados durante o estágio, foram também relatados. O estágio ocorreu na Universidade de Sassari (UNISS), uma universidade com mais de 12.000 estudantes, 13 departamentos e vários centros acadêmicos e de investigação. Além de vários cursos de licenciatura e pós-graduação, a Universidade oferece a oportunidade de os alunos se matriculem em programas avançados de formação, e projetos de intercâmbio de estudantes de cariz internacional.

O período de estágio foi de cinco meses - outubro de 2018 a março de 2019, e foi realizado sob a supervisão de Tonito Solinas, gestor de comunicação da Universidade de Sassari. As principais tarefas realizadas durante o estágio na Universidade de Sassari consistiram em: 1) participação em reuniões e atividades para a criação de conteúdos para o ambiente digital. Esta tarefa conduziu ainda à participação do estagiário nas reuniões de forma ativa, com o propósito de oferecer e propor soluções para os desafios encontrados. Posteriormente, o estagiário procedeu à atualização das diferentes páginas web da universidade, bem como a criação de hashtags para anunciar causas sociais da universidade nas redes sociais.

Isto exigiu, a criação de conteúdos e divulgação de informações relevantes na página de Desenvolvimento e Cooperação Internacional (DEICO) da universidade, sobre oportunidades relacionadas com os planos de estudos, formação, e investigação que podiam ser de interesse dos professores, estudantes e outras partes interessadas da comunidade escolar. As informações publicadas nesta página foram geralmente obtidas de diferentes fontes (internas e externas), sobre as oportunidades de bolsa, programas de intercâmbio de investigação, e ainda eventos que poderiam ser de interesse para a esfera académica; 2) A gestão de eventos como estagiário, permitiu participar no processo de preparação da cerimónias de acolhimento. O projeto *Specialist International Clinical Training* (SICT), que envolveu médicos chineses foi um desses eventos. O projeto foi uma iniciativa coordenada pela Universidade de Sassari em colaboração com o Hospital

Universitário de Sassari. O projeto foi desenvolvido para fornecer formação especializada, com duração de três meses, para reforçar os conhecimentos de gestão e desempenho dos participantes no contexto das atividades clínicas. 3) Acordos bilaterais, esta tarefa exigiu a pesquisa sobre os atuais e potenciais parceiros da instituição.

As pesquisas realizadas para identificar potenciais parceiros (maioritariamente universidades de Itália ou de outro país de renome internacional) foram realizadas principalmente através da coleta de informações secundárias de fontes externas na Internet. O objetivo desta tarefa era reunir informações relevantes sobre os potenciais parceiros e sugerir de que modo a parceria poderia ser benéfica para a universidade para aprimorar a marca e o perfil internacional da universidade; 4) Apoio administrativo, esta função exigiu lidar com emails, fazer relatórios e apoiar o gestor de comunicação; 5) Brainstorming, como parte da equipa responsável pela criação de estratégias de comunicação, uma das principais tarefas era ter sessões de brainstorming em colaboração com a equipa de comunicação para discutir novas ideias, orientações e ferramentas de comunicação.

O projeto *Relive Waste*, foi abordado numa destas sessões no sentido de se identificar as hashtags mais adequadas.

No capítulo 4 - considerações finais, a análise crítica das tarefas realizadas durante o estágio e identificação dos conhecimentos adquiridos foram analisados e explorados. A experiência de estágio, permitiu ao estagiário trabalhar numa universidade de renome, com um cenário multicultural, onde o envolvimento no processo de aprendizagem com outros profissionais e colegas foi recompensador. Porém, o estágio foi também muito envolvente e desafiador, visto que a variedade de tarefas estimulou a necessidade de constantemente adaptação e motivação. Inclusive, complementou a educação adquirida em contexto académico e ofereceu a oportunidade de trabalhar em várias atividades de comunicação e gestão. O estágio permitiu desenvolver e aprimorar as relações interpessoais e aplicar os conhecimentos adquiridos na universidade num contexto ou situação da vida real, e ainda proporcionou a oportunidade de participar de decisões e projetos com impacto direto na instituição. Por último, o estágio e o mestrado em gestão possibilitaram o crescimento profissional e académico.

Palavras-Chaves: Comunicação integrada de marketing, marketing de ensino superior, relatório de estágio, mix de comunicação.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Theoretical Background

In recent times, the marketing environment has developed and become more complex. This trend has also affected education, and a strong *marketization* of higher education is taking place (Porcu et al., 2012). The emergence of the internet and the rapid growth of online tools has vastly increased the portfolio of marketing and communication tools available for organizations to reach their target audiences (Strategic Direction, 2006). Integrated marketing communication (IMC) as a communication strategy ensures that all forms of communication and messages are carefully linked together to create an impactful effect on the intended interest group (Kharat et al., 2020). Furthermore, Tewu et al. (2017) suggest that the use of IMC provides an opportunity for organizations to improve the marketing capability as globalization poses challenges to the marketing communication processes of organizations.

Similarly, Edmiston-Strasser (2009) concluded that IMC provides distinctive competitive advantages and a potential increase in institutional brand equity if used effectively. In this context, the internship at the University of Sassari offered the opportunity to examine how IMC strategy could be used and implemented. During the internship period, the main task consisted of designing, planning, and implementing marketing communication strategies for the university international activities.

1.2 Internship Purpose

The internship report's primary objective is to identify and describe the main activities and challenges faced during the internship at the University of Sassari. Therefore, the specific purposes set were the following:

- To present a literature review about the importance and role of integrated marketing communication to organizations;
- To identify the tasks, functions, responsibilities, and challenges faced during the internship.

1.3 Methodology

The methodology employed in this report was of qualitative nature since content analysis was performed to read, analyze, and review previous literature on the topic (Bowen, 2009). This secondary data was retrieved from online scientific journals. In other words, a literature review was made about integrated marketing communication and its relevance to convey the key messages and interactions with the audiences. Secondly, participant observation a "strategy that simultaneously combines document analysis, interviewing of respondents and informants, direct participation and observation, and introspection" (Denzin, 1989: 158) was also used as a research method for identification, description of the challenges faced during the internship tasks. The internship occurred in Italy, Sardinia in the University of Sassari as a communication trainee under the supervision of Tonito Solinas, the communication manager of the university. The internship started in October 2018 and ended in March 2019, totaling 500 hours.

1.4 Relevance of the topic

Marketing communications and, specifically, Integrated marketing communication (IMC) have become very important in marketing due to advancement in information technology and multiplications of media channels in the 21st century (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2010). It involves the coordination and integration of all marketing communication tools within a company into a seamless program in order to maximize the impact on end users at a minimal cost (Angalia, 2017). From this definition, the IMC moves towards interactive marketing away from traditional marketing. Conrad (2014) argues in this regard, that facts must be fitted to the target audience by knowing their interests and motivations and by listening to them. Baker (2003) also emphasizes the importance of feedback and two-way communication. This kind of marketing ensures communication with consumers (bi-directional) rather than to consumers (uni-directional).

1.5 Internship report structure

The report is divided into four main chapters.

Chapter 1: Introduction - This will introduce the topic of the internship – Integrated Marketing Communications, describe the goals for the internship and the internship report structure.

Chapter 2: Literature Review - A theoretical review of topics related to tasks developed during the internship period. They include the definition and evolution of integrated communication strategy, communication mix, social media, and relationship marketing.

Chapter 3: The Internship – This chapter will describe the host organization, its mission, and objectives. A description and analysis of the tasks performed, and challenges faced during the internship.

Chapter 4 – Final Considerations. This is a critical analysis of tasks performed during the internship and identification of knowledge gained as well as linking results to the literature review.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW - IMC

2.1 Definitions of IMC

Over the past two decades IMC as a concept has had many definitions and despite these definitions, the development of technology led to an increase of complexity in defining the ever changing scope of IMC. According to Schultz (1998: 8), "IMC is a strategic business process used to develop, execute, coordinate, measure and persuasive brand communication programs over time with targeted relevant audiences." IMC is a concept under which a company carefully integrates and coordinates its many communications channels to deliver a clear, consistent message (Kotler, 1999). As a management process, IMC integrates all marketing communications activities across relevant audience points to achieve greater brand coherence (Pickton & Broderick, 2004). As Šerić et al. (2015:3) claims, IMC can be defined "...as a consumer-centric business process that leverages on advancements in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to create customer database which in turn helps companies to deliver a clear and consistent message through the coordination and synergies of different communications tools, in order to build relationships with customers and create and maintain brand equity."

Porcu et al. (2017:13) presented a more holistic definition of IMC as an "...interactive process of cross-functional planning and alignment of organisational, analytical and communication processes that allows for the possibility of continuous dialogue by conveying consistent and transparent messages via all media to foster long-term profitable relationships that create value." The AMA (American Marketing Association) also proposed a definition, describing it "...as a cohesive combination of marketing communications activities, techniques, and media designed to deliver a coordinated message to a target market with a powerful or synergistic effect, while achieving a common objective or set of objectives." (AMA, 2018).

This concept provides a process of strategically managing audience-focused, channel-centered, and results-driven brand communication programs over time (Kliatchko, 2005). IMC is an

approach to brand communications where the different IMC tools work together to create a whole experience for the customer and are presented with a similar tone and style that reinforces the brand's core message (Csikósová et al., 2014). Similarly, Gordon-Isasi et al., (2020) states that IMC is a business marketing-oriented approach that embraces all the different types of communication and marketing of an organization as a whole and in a consistent way.

As table 2.1 shows, the definitions of IMC have evolved over the years and with it some key concepts were introduced, for example: a) Schultz (1998) stated that IMC is strategic business process; b) Kliatchko (2005) emphasized that IMC is audience focused and result driven process; c) Seric et al. (2015) eluded about the importance of ICT for marketing communications. Table 2.1 reinforces the theme that IMC is customer centered and involves an organisational conscious effort to achieve marketing communication objectives.

Table 2.1 – Evolution of IMC Definitions

Author and Year	Concepts Introduced
Schultz and Schultz (1998)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic business process • Expanded notion of brand communication. • Measurability. • Specified the multiple markets more explicitly, inclusive of external and internal audiences
Pickton (2004)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication mix integration • Creative integration • Intra-organizational integration • Inter-organizational integration • Information and database systems • Target-audience integration
Kliatchko (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience-focused • Channel centered (multiple channels) • Result-driven
American	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extensive brand communication

Marketing Association (2007)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation and measurement • External and internal stakeholder groups • Long-term brand value focus
Porcu et al. (2012)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One voice • Interactivity • Cross-functional planning • Profitable long-term relationships
Šerić et al. (2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of ICT • Synergize communication tools. • Create and maintain brand equity
Camileri (2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of interactive marketing especially through digital and mobile advertising

Source: Adapted from Porcu et al. (2017) and Camileri (2018)

In this context, the review of the definitions shows that the scope of IMC has been continually broadened. It reinforces the message that organisations or even universities (either public or private) see IMC as a business process in an organisation wide perspective. Furthermore, organisations must deliver a clear and consistent message about its brand in one voice throughout all the communication channels to its target audience to achieve predetermined results. In this respect, Conrad (2014) states that facts must be fitted to the target audience by knowing their interests and motivations and by listening to them. The target audience is both internal and external and should be the core process of data base building and message delivery system (Kliatchko, 2005). The main purpose of IMC is always to find original channels of communication with both actual and potential consumers so that all contact with the organization, product and brand can be transformed into a future communication opportunity (Oana, 2018).

Thus, the various concepts of Integrated Marketing communication emphasize the need for communication with consumers to be bi-directional rather than uni-directional. It is, therefore, paramount for organisations, public institutions and even universities to have proper integrated marketing communication strategies as well as proper implementation to ensure their brands thrive in this ever-changing business world.

2.2 Importance of Integrated Marketing Communication

IMC is crucial in marketing practice because it enables companies to reduce costs and to improve their effectiveness in a market where mass media and media in general are everyday more fragmented (Csikósová et al., 2014). IMC is also a balancing act between a company's own branding activities and the integration of customer-centered relationship orientation and content orientation (Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017). The growing importance of IMC can be attributed to three main changes in marketing communication: the diffusion of digital technology, branding and globalization (Adetunji et al., 2014). Additionally, Porcu et al., (2019) concluded that IMC offers organisations a crucial competitive advantage to achieve a superior sales-related performance and higher level of customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, with the boom of social media and social networks, the increase of smartphone usage by customers in the field of Marketing Communications has become increasingly relevant to IMC. One of the reasons lies in the emergence of the internet, which provided the stimulus for substantial changes in the communication landscape for example the use of mobile telecommunication is more prominent these days (Bruhn & Schnebelen, 2017). Another reason comes from the interactivity provided by the internet, a powerful and dynamic element for marketing communications (Porcu et al., 2012).

Additionally, IMC is customer focused, thus intends to grow and retain customers, with the purpose of becoming more than just advertising and promotion (Luck & Moffatt, 2009). The IMC is a system of beliefs or engagement, embedded in an organization's culture, underpinned by communication, driven by technology, and embraced by senior management. In this sense, IMC is a future way for universities to improve their communications with stakeholders (Schüller & Chalupský, 2012).

Moreover, in the virtual environment there are no geographical or political boundaries, enabling its importance to grow along with the usage of online campaign tools (Smedescu et al., 2017). All

in all, the theoretical framework shows that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is important for every organization in general. Therefore, IMC has become a common communication practice for both private and public sector organizations in the 21st century to send out *one sound* in terms of integrated messages across various promotional avenues and delivery systems (Kitchen & Schultz, 2009).

2.3 Tools of IMC

Integrated Marketing Communication offers several tools which synergizes information, thereby allowing organisations communicate effectively and concisely with the target audience. According to Kotler & Armstrong (2010), the five major integrated marketing communication strategy tools consists of the specific blend of advertising, public relations, personal selling, sales promotion, and direct marketing tools that the company uses to persuasively communicate customer value and build customer relationships customer value and build customer relationships (see Table 2.2). However, according to Belch & Belch (2004) in addition to the five tools mentioned above, the authors include Interactive/Internet marketing as an IMC tool.

TABLE 2.2 – Summary of IMC Tools and Their Main Characteristics

IMC Tool	Major Characteristics	Main Application
Advertising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Pervasive ● Amplified expressiveness ● Control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brand Awareness
Direct Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Personal ● Proactive ● Complementary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Enable dialogue with customers
Internet market and Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Interactive ● Up to date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To engage customers and prospects on social media.
Public Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● High credibility ● Ability to find hard-to-reach buyers. ● Dramatization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reinforce and modify brand image

Sales Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ability to be attention getting. ● Incentive ● Invitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To facilitate buying decision
Personal Selling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customized ● Relationship oriented ● Results oriented 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Brand personalization message

Source: Adapted from Keller (2016) and Ekhlassi et al. (2012)

Advertising

Advertisement is a genre of communication and a prominent part of the marketing communication tools (Adetunji et al., 2014). It is a mass-marketing communication tool that is designed to inform and persuade a large number of people (Camileri, 2018). Similarly, Bullmore (2016), defined advertising as a communication, usually paid-for, specifically intended to inform and/or influence one or more people. According to Philip Kotler (2005: 254), "Advertising is any paid form of nonpersonal presentation & promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor."

Advertising can be used via television, print (newspapers, magazines, journals), radio, press, internet, sponsorships and even people (endorsements). Furthermore, Kotler (2010) suggests that advertising helps to create a lasting sustainable image of the product as well as stimulate sales. However, Kotler (2010) notes that advertising can be very expensive and requires significant funding.

Direct Marketing

Direct marketing as an IMC tool seeks to create a one-to-one personal relationship with the target audience (Key & Czaplewski, 2017). It consists of direct connections with carefully targeted individual consumers to both obtain an immediate response and cultivate lasting customer relationships (Kotler & Armstrong, 2004) and incorporates mail and email advancements, indexes, and even direct reaction advancements on TV and radio to the segmented audience (Omingo & Mberia, 2019). The authors also concluded that there is positive and significant association

between direct marketing and student enrolment in public universities. Furthermore, directing marketing tools can be used to complement advertising and sales promotion (Anantachart 2005).

Internet Marketing and Social Media

The development of technologies and the increased popularity of social networks, led to IMC changes, the most relevant was its move from a selling and telling approach to one of listening and learning (Šķiltere & Bormane, 2018). In addition, the emergence of social media adds, transformed it into a new and unique communication dimension (contrary to the previously one-way communication) in which multi-way communications occur (Bruhn et al, 2017). Through social media, organisations can provide real time reactions, open conversations with customers as well as build brand equity (Valos et al., 2016). The author also suggested that speed is one of main strengths of social media as it allows organisations to respond quickly to opportunities and threats.

Furthermore, interaction on social media between consumers and marketers can be used to customize advertisement messages, segment audiences, and collect information about consumers' preferences to improve future products (Pavlou & Stewart, 2000). Using tools like Google or Yahoo Alert schools can keep track of what is being said online about the institution. This gives organisations the ability to be aware and strategically react to potential issues (Hayes et al., 2009).

Consequently, due to the rapidly evolving nature of social media, service marketers need to educate organisational stakeholders about implementation issues in order to achieve effective application of social media as a tool within marketing communication (Valos et al., 2016). On the other hand, comprehension is a critical part of internet marketing, as such, uncertainty arising from incomplete comprehension may deter customers from purchasing a product or return it after purchase, since it may not meet their expectations (Pavlou & Stewart, 2000).

Sales Promotion

Sales promotion is a tactical marketing technique with mostly short-term incentives intended to add value to a product or service, to achieve specific sales or marketing objectives (Muhanji et al.,

2015). It can also help to close the inability of advertising, by supplementing advertising after awareness is built, to generate sales (Anantachart, 2005). In addition, a study by Harjadi et al. (2017) analyzed the influence of integrated marketing on private universities and concluded that sales promotion is a great contributor for creating awareness among the community. However, overusing this tool can damage brand image and decrease the profit in the long-term period (Ekhlasi et al., 2012).

Public Relations

According to (Camileri, 2018:19) public relations (PR) is a "management function that helps an organisation to establish and maintain communication with the public". They are promotional tools which universities must use to build its corporate image, develop good relationships with its potential customers and organisations. Anantachart, (2005) and Wiwitan & Yulianita, (2018). By gaining favourable publicity and establishing good corporate image universities are able to eliminate unfavourable rumours or events.

Furthermore, Pickton & Broderick, (2004) emphasized that to establish and maintain goodwill, public relations must be a planned and sustained effort from an organisation. In addition, Belch & Belch, (2005) also noted that public relations have moved towards becoming more of a marketing function rather than just a traditional public relations role.

Personal Selling

According to Kotler & Armstrong (2008) personal selling is the personal presentation by the firms' sales force for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationships. In addition, Olumoko et al., (2012) and Camileri (2018) highlighted personal selling as an interactive conversational method of promotion which targets precise market segments. For instance, at educational expo, school representatives try to convert prospects into customers (i.e., students). Furthermore, Belch & Belch (2004) indicated that personal selling provides immediate and precise feedback as the customer's reactions can be assessed instantly there giving the opportunity to the salesperson to modify the message if the feedback is unfavourable.

Importance of IMC in Universities

IMC as a communication strategy is more paramount than ever has universities face stiff competition from each to attract new students. It possesses the capability to influence the brand market performance as well as the financial performance of brands directly and positively (Luxton et al., 2014). As such, application and implementation of IMC in universities has become a subject of research for many authors. For example, Edmiston-Strasser (2009) concluded that IMC exists in higher education institutes and is a more comprehensive effective marketing communication strategy.

Similarly, Foroudi et al., (2017) found that public relations have a positive influence on planned brand identity of universities. The author also suggested that increasing prevalence of social media provides higher education institutions the opportunity to engage in brand co-creation by interacting with past, present and future students on relevant digital platforms. In addition, Schüller & Rašticová (2011), Clark et al., (2016) indicated that social networks (i.e., Facebook, Twitter and YouTube) provide a huge potential for the communication between the universities and existing and future students as well as create high-quality relationship with other stakeholders.

Furthermore, Institusi et al., (2016) examined the role of IMC in maintaining student relationships in public universities. The study concluded that the presence of IMC higher learning institutions is an added advantage as it helps to create a strong emotional bond with the customer and maintain internal stakeholder relationships. Hence, it will provide many opportunities to build a two-way relationship with customers, which ended in better customer retention (Ekhlassi et al., 2012). The authors also note that IMC will open new channels to communicate with consumers. Additionally, it also reduces media waste, saves time, and centralizes all relevant information into a communication plan (Kliatchko, 2005, Pickton & Broderick, 2005, Csikósová et al., 2014).

Luck & Moffatt (2009) emphasized that with a cross-functional approach, IMC can elevate coordination among employees because everyone must work together for the same-shared purpose. Similarly, Csikósová et al. (2014:3) stressed the importance of IMC by stating that "Un-

integrated communications send disjointed messages which dilute the impact of the message while on the other hand, integrated communications present a reassuring sense of order." Additionally, Hayes (2007) concluded that integrated marketing systems would be vital to the future of universities, especially regarding their brand communication strategies.

Duncan and Everett (1993) in Baker & Hart, (2008) identified several factors underlying the importance of IMC with the most notable ones being: a) increased global competition; and b) decreasing effectiveness of traditional media. In addition, Muhanji et al. (2015) note that the synergies created by IMC activities can increase the marketing performance and lead to an operational efficiency and profitability. Similarly, Smith (1996) argues that IMC also fuses bright minds together to create synergistic sparks which in reduces repetition, workload, and stress levels.

In conclusion, Jemutai & Wambua (2016) emphasized that advertising, direct marketing, personal selling, sales promotion, and public relations boost the company's performance by enhancing customer attraction and customer loyalty and its implementation should be taken by top management.

2.4 Overcoming Barriers of IMC

Kitchen et al., (2004) and Kliatchko (2005) note that although IMC is becoming more widely accepted and recognized. However, there are still many conceptual issues that need further exploration and analysis by academics and practitioners in industry. The confusion about the nature of IMC, lies on some regarding it as a process, while others perceive it as a cohesion of creative execution of strategies (Baker & Hart, 2008). Additionally, the resistance to change from companies poses a barrier to IMC (Csikósová et al, 2014).

In this regard, Schüller & Chalupský (2012) concluded that universities face problems of poor communication between faculties when developing marketing communications, and they also

suggested that the academic staff can be reluctant to participate in marketing activities. Moreover, the lack of cross-functional teamwork within an organization decreases coordination and creates gaps across departments (Chaihanchai & Anantachart 2017). Similarly, Schultz et al. (2016) concluded that the lack of sophisticated customer targeting, segmentation strategy, and inadequate business structure was a major barrier to IMC. In addition, Beard (1996), Cândido and Santos (2011), and Ots and Nyilasy (2015) suggest that organisational structure and structural rigidity/bureaucracy in the public sector, tends to be an important source of conflict and a barrier for IMC implementation because of the redundancy or of the slow processes it causes.

Furthermore, Smedescu et al. (2017) emphasized that managers still have problems understanding the concept of IMC, which interferes with the implementation of IMC. In addition, technology development increased the deficiency of human resources in dealing with the digital era (Kerr & Kelly, 2017). Csikósová et al., (2014) also highlighted the reluctance of managers to adopt IMC even though the merits of an IMC approach were recognised by them.

However, Chaihanchai & Anantachart (2017) claim that to overcome IMC implementation barriers top management must support training of employees to understand the concept of IMC and ensure that it continues to occupy considerable prominence in the corporate agenda of twenty-first century organisations. Similarly, Schultz et al. (2016) noted that by standardizing IMC education and maintaining training, barriers to IMC implementation will gradually be overcome. From Table 2.3 it can be seen that IMC stakeholders of universities can be classified into two types: a) Internal (Current students, Alumni and Academic Staff) and b) external (Organisations, Prospective Students, Other universities, and Media).

TABLE 2.3 – IMC Target Audience in Universities.

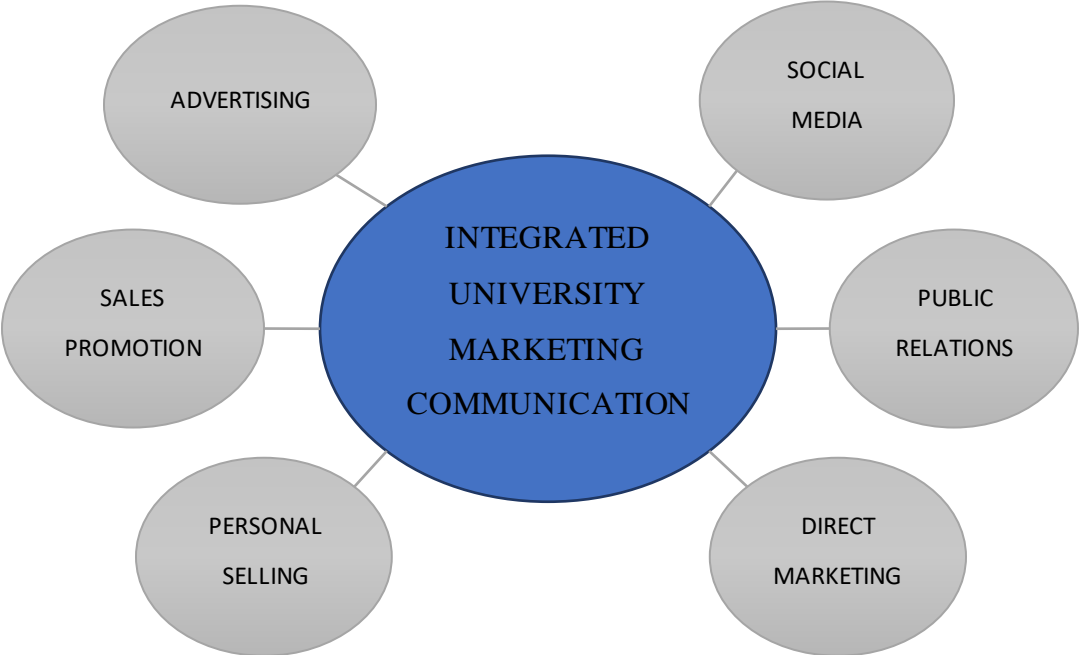
Stakeholders	Targets		
	Science	Education	Others
Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fundraising. - Participation in research projects. -Strengthening cooperation with the commercial sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using experts from commercial sector for educational purposes (lectures, tutorials, seminars). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Creating a stable list of companies on the base of long term partnership.
Alumni	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gaining money from sponsors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participation in research projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using selected alumni (specialists) for educational purposes (lectures, tutorials, seminars) - Setting a long term collaboration with alumni
Current Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Informing, communicating and supporting - Participation in research projects - Participation in solving practical problem for the commercial sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Informing, communicating, and supporting to: - provide high quality education - enable students to study abroad - provide students with the latest information - enable students to use the hi-tech devices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Preparation of educational, practical, and entertaining events for students

Academic Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting a research result promotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Highlighting the successes in educational sphere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More efficient internal communication; - Clear determination of competences.
Prospective Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informing about scientific projects. - Participation in practical problem solving for commercial sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing complete information about the possibilities of study 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attracting prospective students interested in education with high quality.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term cooperation with selected media in order to increase image and raise awareness of university/faculty. - Informing other stakeholders about scientific success via the media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term cooperation with selected media in order to increase image and raise awareness of university/faculty -Informing other stakeholders about successes in education via the media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term cooperation with selected media in order to increase image and raise awareness of university/faculty.
Other Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor marketing communications strategies. - Cooperation with other universities/faculties on scientific projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monitor their marketing communications strategies. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooperation with other universities/faculties on educational projects. - Student and lecturers Exchanges.

Source: Schüller and Chalupský (2012:4)

The use of IMC will ensure that both the internal and external stakeholders are fully synergized, thereby creating a unified message through the efforts of marketing communication (Figure 2.1).

FIGURE 2.1 – Integrated University Marketing Communication



Source: Own Elaboration

CHAPTER 3. THE INTERNSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SASSARI (UNISS)

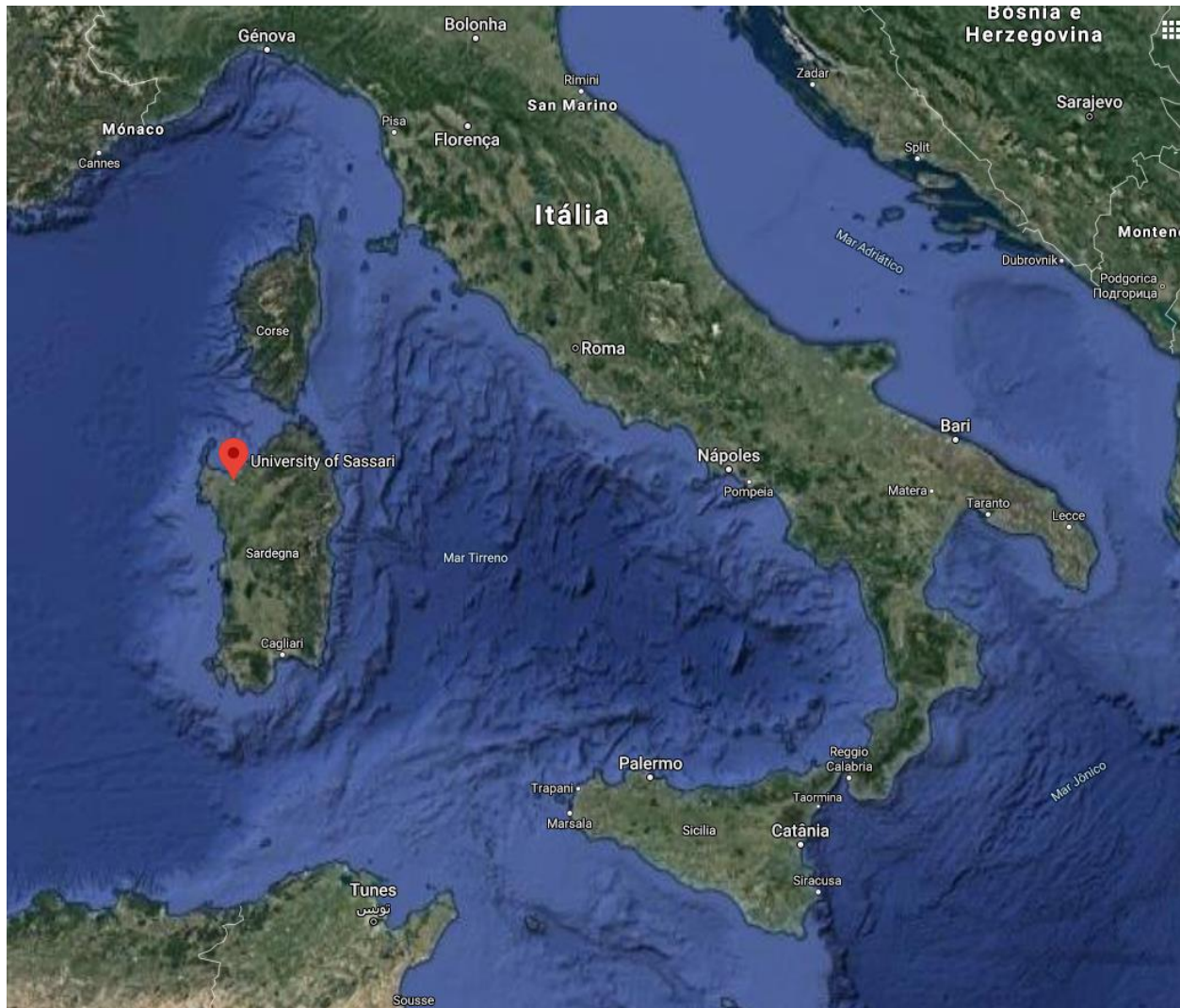
3.1 The search for the internship

An internship search can be tedious and unfruitful at the beginning because there is usually not much feedback from the companies and sometimes, no feedback whatsoever is given. Thus, it is important for interns to persevere and continue to search for the right internship opportunity. The first thing to do is to know when, where and how to search for these opportunities. Also, depending on each intern personality it is crucial to consider the climate and culture of the potential internship destination. After sending out several internship applications to organizations in Germany, France, Italy and Spain, the University of Sassari in Italy responded and accepted the internship position. The internship was in Sardinia, one of the most beautiful islands in the Mediterranean Sea. It has over 1500km coastline with many beaches and a mountain range. Sassari, where the university is located, is also one of the oldest cities in the region. It is something like an *open-air museum* and contains a vast amount of history and monuments.

3.2 UNISS – Past, Present and Future

The University of Sassari (UNISS) is a public university situated in Sardinia, Italy. It was founded 450 years ago by Alessio Fontana and officially launched in May of 1562 (UNISS, 2020). It was also the first university in Sardinia. The main campus of the university is in Sassari, North of Sardinia, while the other *campuses* are in Alghero, Olbia, Nuoro and Oristano.

Figure 3.1 – Geographical Location of UNISS



Source: Google maps, 2020

UNISS offers three-year undergraduate courses, masters, international masters, specialization schools and PhD courses. In addition, it also offers face-to-face and distance learning/e-learning in both the humanities and social sciences (UNISS, 2020).

The Mission of UNISS is:

- To be the focal center for critical sensibility towards knowledge and dissemination of scientific knowledge.
- To guarantee autonomy to its facilities in the fields of research and teaching.
- To promote active participation of all its members to University life and facilitate their integration with the territory.
- To contribute to the development of the local community (UNISS, 2020).

UNISS is today a medium-sized University, with over 12,000 students, approximately 700 scholars, 13 Departments and several academic and research centers. Besides several undergraduate and postgraduate courses, UNISS also provides the opportunity for students to enroll in advanced training programs and international exchange projects.

Figure 3.2 University of Sassari's Logo



Source: <https://en.uniss.it/> (2019)

The University of Sassari also promotes courses and research projects for the engagement of the local community and its global partners, creating an equal and sustainable environment for both students and staff members. The university undertakes initiatives to promote the sustainable development of the region of Sardinia and seeks to transfer knowledge across the territory, working for its cultural, civil, economic, and social progress (UNISS, 2020).

Over the past decades, UNISS has strived to promote more international projects through the university extension programs which aims to attract visiting scholars, professionals, and exchange students to the university. One of such programs is the SICT project designed to offer all Chinese medical doctors the opportunity to participate in a highly specialized training course lasting three months to hone their expertise in the management and performance of clinical activities. This project is an initiative coordinated by the University of Sassari in collaboration with the University Hospital of Sassari and supported by ERSU and ATP Sassari.

UNISS seeks in the near future to add more online courses and distance learning programs, and in addition to get more involved in international collaborations and projects. Furthermore, UNISS wants to be recognized as an important international Higher Education Institution (HEI).

3.2.1 UNISS - Swot Analysis

The SWOT analysis for the university aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the university and the opportunities and threats in the environment in which the university operates. The strength and weakness are the internal factors while the opportunities and threats are the external factors. The SWOT analysis shows that UNISS has some major strengths such as being a strong economic force in Sardinia and the Mediterranean region as well as providing a safe learning environment. This gives the university an advantage in attracting students looking to study abroad in a historic and peaceful city. However, from the SWOT analysis the most threatening problem is underfunding of universities and frequent change in the national government.

TABLE 3.1 – UNISS SWOT Analysis

	Helpful	Harmful
Internal	<p>STRENGTHS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Strong National and International Reputation; 2. Represents an Economic force in Sardinia 3. Qualified Academic Programs; 4. Provides Safe learning Environments 	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Structural Bureaucracy in the institution; 2. Insufficient number of Employee 3. Traditional Management practices 4. Old Infrastructures Inadequate financial resources and underfunding from the government
External	<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New Global Partnerships in the academic field. 2. Increase interest in global initiatives. 3. Demand for online courses and programs 4. Italy has a strong image among international students looking for foreign institutions to study (e.g., Erasmus+) 	<p>THREATS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National Government economic cuts 2. Frequent changes in the government 3. Covid-19 effects on the economy

Source: Own Elaboration

3.3 Internship - Job Description

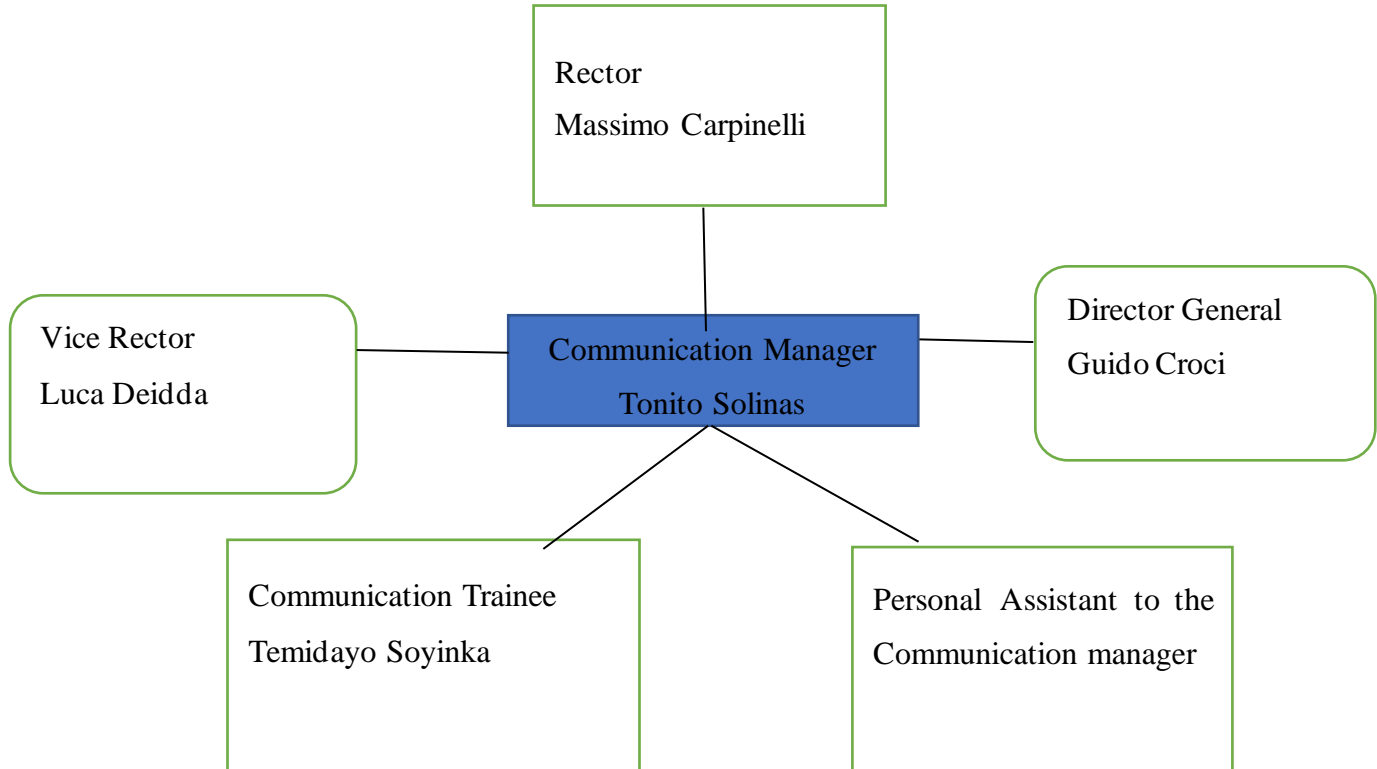
The internship took place in Sassari, Italy, at the university of Sassari, between October 2018 and March 2019, for 5-month, 500 hours. The internship position was communication trainee. The chosen company for the internship was the University of Sassari. The duration of the internship

was for five months. Internship as a communication trainee took place between October 18th, 2018 to March 17th, 2019.

As a communication trainee at the university, the task involved to work directly under the supervision of the university's communication manager – Tonito Solinas, with its Personal Assistant and another intern. The university accepts interns into the department to assist them in their communication planning and strategy. We all worked together as a team and provided support to each other when we had difficulties.

The main responsibilities were scheduling work activities with the different departments, developing data sheets for documentation, and maintaining communication with the different partners that the university had bilateral agreements. These bilateral agreements usually covered topics like student mobility and joint research opportunities and organization of conferences. In addition, as intern, researching potential partners (either public or private organizations) and creating organic content for the university's website was also requested.

Figure 3.3 Organisational Chart of Direct Colleagues at The University



Source: Own Elaboration

As a communication trainee the main task was to work with the communication manager. He was the main supervisor during the internship. Some of his main tasks included a) ensuring proper communication strategy for the university, b) managing international agreements of the university, c) coordinating the SICT program, d) event management of the university. The supervisor was also assisted by a personal assistant who managed his schedule and calendar.

3.3.1 Main Tasks – As Communication Trainee

During the five-month internship period, the following tasks described below were performed as a communication trainee.

Task 1 - Brainstorming Sessions

As a part of the team responsible for creating important communication strategies, one of the main duties was to have brainstorming sessions in collaboration with the team to discuss new ideas, directions and tools for communication. The purpose of these sessions was to generate *out of the box* solutions to help pass to the university's stakeholders, students, and potential students the right message. For example, during one of the brainstorming sessions we discussed which hashtags would be suitable for the *Relive Waste Project*. In the end, we concluded that the #relivewaste would be a good choice. This task also helped to develop interpersonal skills, while presenting and discussing different point of views with each other (i.e., team) frequently during these sessions.

These brainstorming ideas covered many topics, for example, topics to increase the number of potential students, topics to reinforce the image of the UNISS to change the community perception of the university, among others.

Task 2 - Content Creation

This responsibility involved contributing and updating different web pages on the school's website with proper researched and well written articles. Some content creation tasks that were worked on during the internship:

Example 1

Relive Waste Project - This was an EU initiative which UNISS was part of. The aim of the initiative was to stimulate innovation among public institutions and private companies for a more effective management of waste, resulting from intensive livestock farming, to facilitate cooperation between researchers, businesses, public authorities, and the civil society. On this project, the main task was to work with the communication manager (the internship supervisor) to research and develop content for the Facebook and Twitter pages of the project, and to attract more stakeholders to the goals of the project. To make the project topic trendier on social media we used hashtags (see figure 3.3) in the posts. However, this was not a straightforward result, because we

needed at least 30 to 50 posts with the hashtag to make the topic a *trend*. To maintain consistency and promote the topic we encouraged people to make posts related to waste and to add the hashtags.

Figure 3.4 - Sample of Hashtags Used to Trend the Project



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/relivewaste/> (2018)

Example 2

Development and International Cooperation (DEICO) – this page on the university's website was dedicated to providing information about scholarly/research related opportunities, and it promoted global events that could be of interest to the professors, young professionals, and other stakeholders within the school's community. This task required useful information to be collected

from different sources on scholarship opportunities, research exchange programs and events that could be of interest for the academic sphere.

The information was found online scholarships boards such as *Study in Italy* (<https://studyinitaly.esteri.it/en/call-for-procedure>) and *Study in Europe* (https://ec.europa.eu/education/study-in-europe/planning-studies/scholarships-costs_en). After gathering the information, the team organized and proofread it, and afterwards posted it on the DEICO website.

Figure 3.5 Sample of a DEICO Post



Source: Own Elaboration

Task 3 - School App

During the internship, one of the tasks involved working on the school's mobile app. The app was developed so that information for the students (e.g., on how to register, rules, procedures, deadlines, etc.) and other stakeholders (e.g., local news, conferences, etc.) in the university could

be easily accessible everywhere. The team ensured that error free content was published on the school's mobile app as well as created engaging content for the student users.

All the team read the content turn by turn. First, the interns would read it (individually), and afterwards collaboratively, discussing the corrections and changes to be made. After this process, the communication manager had to review the drafts. The final step was for the team and the manager to review the drafts collaboratively and only then the content would be published.

Figure 3.6 UNISS School Mobile Application



Source: <https://www.uniss.it/uniss-app-mobile>

Public Relations

Task 4 - Bilateral Agreements - The responsibility for handling the bilateral agreements for the university was another task. It required performing adequate research on potential and current partners of the institution. Research on potential partners (largely universities in Italy and other Internationally renowned universities around the world) was mainly done by gathering both positive and negative news from internet sources, like the University website, Online world news platforms (e.g., CNN.com) and University ranking sites such as (Times Higher Education).

The goal of this task was to gather enough information (e.g., financial, administrative) about potential partners and suggest how the partnership could be beneficial (e.g., joint programs, scientific research) to the university to enhance the university's brand, reputation and international profile.

Task 5 - Event Management

As an intern within the department several opportunities to be involved in the process of preparing welcome ceremonies for Chinese doctors occurred. Before the welcome ceremony, our roles as interns was to arrange the seats to follow design approved by the communication manager, check all the equipment such as the speaking post, microphones and to check if the camera was in the correct position. During the ceremony, we escorted the doctors to their respective seats and directed the vendors to the corners dedicated to them.

After the event, we took note and made an inventory of everything to ensure nothing was missing. For example, The Chinese doctors attended the university in connection with the Specialist International Clinical Training (SICT) project. The project is an initiative coordinated by University of Sassari in collaboration with the University Hospital of Sassari. It is designed to provide a highly specialized training course lasting three months to hone their expertise in the management and performance of clinical activities.

Figure 3.7 Cross Section of Chinese Doctors in University in Sassari in Connection with SICT Project



Source: <https://en.uniss.it/SICT> (2018)

Task 6 – Administrative Officer

Furthermore, as an intern providing administrative support was part of the duties. This task involved developing daily reports. For example, compiling data regarding expiration dates bilateral agreements and newly signed agreements into spreadsheets as well as creating google docs forms for survey. It also required performing basic accounting functions such as collecting and checking invoices, responding to general emails queries, and directing them to the right department and working closely with the personal assistant of the communication manager.

3.4 Critical Analysis of the Internship – Challenges and Recommendations

The internship forms part of the requirements needed to fulfil the Master's in Management at the University of Algarve, Portugal. This internship at UNISS allowed me to deepen knowledge concerning IMC and it provided the opportunity to gain professional experience. Although the internship assigned was *communication trainee*, this task involved the need to perform other duties such as assisting in administrative tasks, developing reports and basic accounting. This made the internship even more valuable as it provided the opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired from the courses marketing management, operations management, accounting, entrepreneurship, quality management, strategic management, and leadership/organisation management.

Furthermore, since the internship took place in Sardinia, it provided an international exposure which helped to understand another perspective and culture. Being a Nigerian who lived abroad for the first time, this was very helpful and a valuable experience to work in a multicultural space. In addition, the internship provided the opportunity to learn more about IMC strategies and challenges during its application. The main challenges were:

Advertising. This is the key IMC tool used by the university. During the internship period, most of the communication tasks were to do posts on the university's website. Thus, it was regularly updated with new information to ensure the content was relevant and interesting for the audience. Also, the university produced flyers which showed undergraduate and postgraduate programs offered by school in which a clear distinction was made between those that were offered in English and/or Italian. Moreover, the university had billboards placed at several strategic locations of the city, in which university's events were announced.

Educational Events and Fairs. In pursuit of making the university more recognizable and attract potential students, the university would send representatives to educational fairs. At these fairs, the courses and unique features of Sardinia were enumerated so that prospective students could

foresee what they would gain by attending UNISS. In line with this, the university tried to position itself as one of the best universities in Mediterranean area.

School Mobile Application. Mobile phones and portable devices continue to be an important way to reach most people and the UNISS's target audience. It became necessary for the university to develop an application where information could be shared and seen by the students, parents, visitors, and faculty staff. From this, we can see that mobile phone strategies for communicating have become more tailored, integrated, and impactful. Nowadays, the university's mobile application is gradually becoming a major resource for student retention and engagement.

Publicity/Public Relations. Publicity plays a crucial role as an integrated market communication tool in the University of Sassari. For example, the university hosted a conference on the World Day for Combat Desertification and Drought. The aim of this conference was to attract different stakeholders to share, compare and to activate strategies to reduce climate change. Events like these brought publicity and attracted sponsors to the university, because climate change is a global phenomenon.

Internet/Social Media. The university needs to be more present and active on social media platforms, especially on Twitter and YouTube since many students and potential students use these social applications to access information. The university would benefit from investing more in the social platforms, because these platforms can connect the university directly to the target audiences and disseminate information faster. In line with this, Hayes et al. (2009) state that social networks represent a rich source of information and metrics which can be used in the enrollment strategy of higher institutions. Also, the authors indicated that social networks are good tools for engaging students who have already expressed an interest in the school. Therefore, it is imperative for the university to consciously monitor this and take advantage of social media as a marketing communication channel.

Furthermore, a study conducted by Bado & Nyangau (2012) indicated that social media expands the recruitment base greatly (transcending both space and time). They note that all that is needed

is for the prospect to *meet* with an institution's admissions officer is an Internet-capable device. The authors also suggested that admission departments could develop formal online advising schedules and post them on the social platforms the institutions use to encourage prospects to sign up. In sum, better use of social platforms and networks, directed to specific targeted audiences by the university, will improve the IMC efficiency, success and create awareness for the UNISS in the Mediterranean region and abroad.

However, some problems still persist in the university which affects the proper implementation of IMC, among the most prominent are:

Bureaucracy. The most noticeable obstacle and daily challenge during the internship was the slowness and rigid procedures that existed within the system. For example, when it comes to mobilizing financial resources for programs and events, there are many bottlenecks and administrative hurdles which make planning difficult. This is because different departments of the university must approve figures and their availability. During this process, there is also usually a lack of urgency.

Lack of Funding. In addition to rigid administrative procedures, the university generally lacks major funding by the government. In fact, most universities in Italy including UNISS are mostly left to search for funds among private institutions and partner organisations. This poses a major threat to the university because they cannot afford the best of technologies and resources to make learning highly conducive and competitive on a global stage. However, to deal with this problem, the university tries to get into bilateral agreements with the purpose of attracting foreign scholars, to attract funding for research, from firms and corporations, national and international.

Shortage of Staff. The Communication Department was understaffed and relied heavily on interns to do the job. This is not sustainable as interns only come for a short period of time and cannot make lasting changes that will make the planning and implementation of communication strategy concrete. This is in line with the conclusion from Chaihanchai & Anantachart (2017) where they identified lack of skillful personnel as an obstacle to the proper execution and implementation

of IMC. The university needs more specialists in this department to ensure that the goal is eventually achieved.

3.5 Acquired Knowledge

The internship at the University of Sassari provided the opportunity to improve skills which will be useful for a future career and complemented the education acquired in the classroom. The position of intern in a communication department of a public high learning institution such as UNISS, meant that skills such as organisation, reporting, time management, managing social media, research and planning, interpersonal skills and many others were developed.

Throughout the course of this five-month internship, it offered the opportunity to work on various communication and administration activities. In addition, it helped to gain first-hand knowledge of working on a project. While working closely with the communication manager and with other departments, the internship helped to understand the importance of teamwork and coordination. In addition, the internship highlighted how crucial every stakeholder is for the success of a higher institution.

For example, during the planning of an event, we needed to get approval from the facility manager to book a room, then we also had to get the finance department to approve the budget for the programme. If coordination between these departments was good, then it would pose no problem. The internship experience served as an opportunity to learn about personal strengths and weaknesses. Over the course of the internship, personal confidence levels increased and overtime as intern it was possible to contribute more and more during meetings, by sharing ideas and asking questions whenever it was necessary.

CHAPTER 4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The main goal of the internship report was to identify and describe the main activities performed during the internship at the University of Sassari. Therefore, the following specific goals were set a) To present a literature review about the importance and role of integrated marketing communication to organizations; b) To identify the tasks, functions and responsibilities performed during the internship.

In conclusion, as indicated in the literature review, the internship allowed me to verify firsthand that IMC has evolved to become a powerful marketing communication tool for Universities, and in particular to UNISS. In Today's world, a strong communication strategy is important for every higher institution's brand and image as it is one of the main driving forces in making an organisation's message reach and resonate with its target audience. This is mainly due to prominence of the internet and better-informed consumers. For a university to reach its target audience in today's communication sphere, it must make concerted efforts to ensure that the message sent out is in line with its brand storytelling, and it is in unison with its mission statement. The overall assessment of the internship experience is that it was a valuable one, from an academic, personal, and professional perspective.

Thus, this internship report allowed me to describe the role and function performed as a communication trainee at the University of Sassari in Sardinia, Italy. Before the internship, knowledge about IMC was minimal. After the five-month long internship, it provided the opportunity to acquire knowledge not only about IMC but also about aspects of university management and administration. The internship also afforded the opportunity to become more familiar with the role educational institutions have on society and on the businesses. In the end, it was possible to get insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the university and identified things that needed improvement. Overall, much was learned during the internship as a communication trainee, it was a great opportunity to sharpen communication skills and

interpersonal skills within a multicultural professional environment. The work environment was also very pleasant as it promoted teamwork and respect for one and another. It was equally also very engaging and challenging as we were given a wider variety of assignments which kept us involved and driven.

Furthermore, the internship provided the opportunity to use theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom environment to examine practical situations (e.g., SWOT analysis) and many other external situations that affected the university. However, a downside of the internship was that there was not enough coordination between the departments and the responsibilities were not clearly outlined. This somewhat affected the transmission of information and delayed the planning and execution of certain tasks. The internship was a good platform to better understand the concept and theories which seemed abstract in the classroom. It also provided the opportunity to partake in decisions and real-life business projects which have direct impact on stakeholders, and on the university's image and brand.

4.1 Limitations and difficulties during the internship

Despite efforts to produce a comprehensive report on Integrated Marketing Communication implementation in University of Sassari, some limitations were found:

- The period of five months was not enough to totally understand the overall practices of IMC within the university.
- Limited access to top management of the university hindered access to the gathering primary data.

As this a qualitative study which uses participant observation as the methodology, the research is subject to certain degree of bias.

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