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**Title:** **Synergizing Public Relations and Marketing Communication for Enhanced Brand Equity in Retail Commerce: A Study of Sokoto Metropolis**

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## **Abstract**

This study explored how Public Relations and Marketing Communication coordinate to influence brand equity among retail firms in Sokoto metropolis. The study was anchored in Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) Theory. The study employed a qualitative case study design, through semi-structured interviews with (15) fifteen Public Relations officers purposively selected from retail firms in Sokoto metropolis which include Sauki Leader works. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clark's six-step thematic analysis. Findings revealed that fragmented communication practices, low budget allocation, leadership challenges and limited effective collaboration were the problem of the retail firms. The findings further indicate that firms with centralized communication leadership and shared digital platforms demonstrate stronger message consistency, improved customer engagement and enhanced brand loyalty. The study also found that adopting Integrated Marketing Communication principles in business and digital marketing can significantly improve brand equity.

**Keywords:** Synergizing, Public Relations, Marketing Communication, Brand, Equity, Retail Commerce.

## **Introduction**

Public Relations (PR) and Marketing Communication synergy has become important in the modern retail market system, because its where different brands differentiate themselves from other brands, energized customer loyalty and maintain a competitive boundary. Recent studies show that organizations that apply the integrated communication such as advertising, social media engagement, stakeholder relations and public relations campaigns achieve more customer perceptions and foster deeper engagement (Adesanoye, 2020). This shows that Public Relations helps to build credibility and trust, while marketing communication improved visibility and persuasion of customers, they create an impactful brand experience than when each of them operates separately.

According to International marketing experts, successful brands are those whose communication across all interactions present a consistent and unified message (Pearson & Malthouse, 2024). This unity is necessary in retail firms, where different businesses interact with consumers through various platforms such as physical stores, online channels, community programs and traditional media channels. Many researches from Nigerian retail firms shows that, many still manage Public Relations as an independent function rather than integrating it with marketing communication, resulting in a mixed messages and reduced brand identity (Adebisi & Bello, 2018). Sokoto Metropolis is among the retail marketing environments, therefore, such segmentation can lead to weaker brand associations and reduced customer loyalty.

Research shows that, retailers in these places frequently depends on traditional advertising, word-of-mouth and Radio stations, but rarely engage in coordinated PR campaigns or unified marketing strategies. A research on women entrepreneurs in Sokoto found that there is limited marketing

orientation and weak information dissemination among retail clusters (Bello & Muazu, 2020). Considering the access to media and literacy variations in the northern part of Nigeria, the risk of communication decay is higher, this shows the potential cost of inconsistent brand messaging. Therefore, retail brands in Sokoto may struggle to build strong brand equity compared to peers in more integrated communication environments.

Recent research indicates that; the global communication landscape has shifted decisively toward Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC). The need of incorporated communication in areas like Sokoto, has become vital as the consumers grow more advanced, digitally active and sensitive to brand image. Integrated Marketing Communications is not only a strategic choice but a fundamental requirement for maintaining competitiveness in the modern retail market (Adesanoye, 2020).

Brand equity is strengthened, when communication is consistent and aligned, also if marketing communication promises high quality brand and PR activities reinforce reputation, community engagement and stakeholders trust, then consumer's perceptions of quality brand, positive associations and loyalty will improve. Flashly adverts with weak stakeholder relations can erode brand equity despite heavy marketing spend (Mkpa and Oranusi). Therefore, the synergy between PR and Marketing Communication becomes a strategic lever for building brand equity. It is surprising that research on the synergy between PR and Marketing Communication in retail context remains limited Example Saukiespecially in Northern Nigeria.

Empirical evidence on how retail firms coordinate PR and Marketing Communications and how that coordination influences brand equity is scarce in state like Sokoto. While some studies have addressed PR strategies in telecommunications (Okpala & Rabi, 2022) or marketing communication in FMCG (Okocha, 2022), there is virtually no empirical research specifically that examining retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis linking PR–marketing integration to brand equity outcomes. The gap of this study is significant, because it gives the socio-cultural, infrastructural and media contexts of the northern Nigeria. Without such local evidence, retail managers in Sokoto may lack guidance on how to align PR and marketing communication to function effectively and to build strong brand equity.

### **Aim and Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to examine how the synergy between Marketing Communication and Public Relations (PR) Influences Brand Equity in businesses owners in Sokoto.

### **Objectives of the Study**

- i. To assess the level of integration between Public Relations and Marketing Communication among retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis

- ii. To examine how PR–Marketing Communication synergy affects key dimensions of Brand Equity (awareness, perceived quality, association, and loyalty).
- iii. To identify major communication challenges affecting PR–Marketing synergy and suggest ways to enhance brand equity in Sokoto retail sector.

### **Research Questions**

- i. What is the level of integration between Public Relations and Marketing Communication among retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis?
- ii. How does PR–Marketing Communication synergy influence the key dimensions of Brand Equity (awareness, perceived quality, association, and loyalty)?
- iii. What communication challenges affect PR–Marketing synergy, and how can brand equity be improved in Sokoto retail sector?

### **Literature Review**

#### **Public Relations, Marketing Communication and Brand Equity**

Public Relations (PR) refers to the strategic and ongoing communication efforts by an organization to build and maintain mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders and the public. PR is also described as “the act of reputation building the main purpose to establish and maintain a two-way communication between an organisation and its publics” (Ogbiten, 2010)”. PR includes media relations, crisis management, community engagement and corporate image work (Selem Consults et al., 2025). If Sauki Leader Works runs some Facebook ads for its new brand leather bag collection, or distributes flyers in Sokoto Central market, all these are marketing communication activities. Many studies have shown that marketing communication tools significantly influenced how consumers perceived and engaged with brands (Kofi Promise, Igwe & Ozuru, 2022). Brand Equity is defined as the added value a brand name impart to a product or service beyond its functional attributes, essentially how customers perceive the brand and how much those perceptions benefit the firms. Brand equity, it is commonly broken down into four dimensions namely: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty (Odeleye, 2021).

Public Relations and Marketing Communication are not independent entities they work together to build brand equity. If sauqi leather works advertises loudly proclaimed “premium handcrafted leather bags”, but it’s PR counterpart shows no support for that claim (no community engagement, no artisan story, no reputation work), customers may view the claims skeptically. On the other hand, if PR activities (artisan profile stories, craft-house visits, local heritage events) support the marketing messages, the brand equity also will be stronger. Evidence from Nigeria shows that when communication is coordinated, brand outcomes improve (Agodi & Aniuga, 2016). Brand equity in retail commerce is vital because consumers often choose between multiple similar options. Comparing this to Sokoto Sauki Leader Works that is well known locally, customers are more likely to buy from it repeatedly rather than from lesser-known leather makers. This, building brand equity through both Public Relations and Marketing Communications is a strategic marketing system in competitive retail market.

## **Synergy and Its Role in Integrated Brand Management**

The term synergy in brand management refers to the coordinated interaction between different communication functions, public relations, marketing communication, stakeholder engagement and digital campaigns such that the combined effect is greater than the sum of their individual parts. A study from Nigerian labelled this “contact synergy” in the airline industry, when PR and marketing communication work together, the brand awareness and loyalty improve significantly (Nadube & Koroba, 2019). This approach ensures that every message the consumer sees, hears or experiences supports the same brand story (Agodi & Aniuga, 2016).

According to IMC research, synergy reduces contradictory messages and enhances clarity and brand identity (Egwuenu & Aliku, 2017). With multiple touchpoints in retail marketing especially, (store, online, social media and word-of-mouth), synergy is critical. A customer interacting with Sauki Leather Works via Instagram, in the Sokoto store hearing a community sponsorship story should have the same brand message. If each message is different, the brand appears disjointed. Empirical work confirmed that firms with integrated communication achieved better brand outcomes (Agodi & Aniuga 2016).

## **Integration, Consumer Perception and Brand Loyalty in Retail Sectors**

Customer perception is shaped by different signs from what the brand carries (marketing), what the brand does (PR/ community relations), and how the brand is experienced (store products quality). These signals collectively form brand equity. Brand associations (what consumers think of when they hear the brand) and perceived quality (what they believe about the product) are also vital. In the brewing industry, associations and loyalty were significant predictors of performance (Odeleye, 2021). For the case of Sauki Leather Works in Sokoto, when customers relate the brand with “traditional Sokoto craftsmanship” and affirm that the leather quality is excellent, the customers will be more likely to purchase it again and prefer it over other products.

Loyalty in this part means repeated buying behaviour and a genuine preference supporting the brand. Studies from Nigeria confirms that integrating brand messages across communication channels significantly improves customer loyalty (Aremu et al., 2024). Business firms like Sauki Leather Works, customers that always buy their products regularly, recommend it and demonstrate this type of loyalty by requesting for more, makes the communication grow stronger. However, costumer’s loyalty in this study is not just only refers to costumers with repeated buying behavior but also to their genuine preference and continued support for the brand. Integrating brand messages across communication channels significantly improves customer loyalty this was confirmed by different researchers from Nigeria (Aremu et al., 2024). Customers who regularly buy products from Sauki Leather Works, give good recommendations and pay for more and always demonstrate this type of loyalty.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) Theory**

The marketing and communication sphere developed the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) theory in response to businesses' diverse initiatives for communication and marketing. Scholars like Don E. Schultz (early 1990s) formalized the concept of IMC, the idea that all brand communication tools (advertising, personal selling, PR, digital, etc.). The IMC concept gained traction in the late 1980s and early 1990s when marketing practice began seeing the need for coordination across media and channels.

#### **Assumptions of the theory**

##### **Some of the main assumptions of IMC include:**

- Brands should deliver a consistent, unified message across all communication channels (advertising, PR, direct marketing, digital).
- The coordination of communication tools creates synergy i.e., the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.
- A customer-centric approach, communication must begin with understanding the consumer (inside-out or outside-in) and structure all touchpoints accordingly.
- IMC ensure that integration improves brand performance in measurement and feedback loops, not just message frequency.

#### **Strengths and weaknesses of the theory**

##### **Strengths:**

- The IMC framework emphasizes strategic coordination of communication, which is highly relevant in an environment where firms use multiple channels and aim for consistent branding.
- It supports the idea of brand equity building, consistent messages across touch points help reinforce awareness, associations and loyalty.
- It addresses the practical gap between traditional marketing communication and modern consumer behavior (multiple touch points, social media)

##### **Weaknesses**

- To achieve best integration is difficult, because many firms still operate PR separate from marketing.
- When everything is coordinated too strictly, the messaging might become uniform and lose responsiveness to local context

#### **Alignment with this research**

This study focuses on synergy between PR and marketing communication in the retail sector of

Sokoto Metropolis and how this synergy affects brand equity. Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) theory fits exceptionally well here, because it provides the strategic framework to argue that integrated communication (Public Relations + Marketing Communication) leads to stronger brand equity outcomes (awareness, perceived quality, associations, loyalty). Through Integrated Marketing Communication Theory, it helps to frame how retail firms should coordinate their communication efforts and why this matters. It provides this study with a theoretical basis to evaluate the level of integration, its effect on brand equity, and the challenges hindering it.

## **Empirical Review**

Fadare, R. A., & Akwikwa, R. (2024) investigates brand reliability's effect on customer loyalty among fast-food firms in Port Harcourt. The study relies on brand reliability/trustworthiness and brand credibility theories showed perceived reliability translates into loyalty. Very small sample, 21 valid responses from a single location (Port Harcourt) using regression analysis. The study found that brand credibility, trustworthiness and believability had positive effects on customer loyalty in the fast-food retail context in Nigeria. The study shows that in quick service retail, consumer loyalty depends strongly on reliability and credibility signals. But the study is constrained by small sample size and narrow its focus (fast-food in one city). It does not explicitly examine how Public Relations and marketing communication integrate, it's localized in Southern Nigeria, small sample and limited generalizability, no exploration of brand equity broader dimensions (awareness, associations etc.) How recent research was used to address the gap: Subsequent studies widen location, consider digital channels, and explore brand equity more broadly.

Mkpa, O. N., & Oranusi, I. (2025) examines social media marketing strategies (content quality, interactivity, platform diversity, user-generated content, engagement metrics) and their impact on brand equity in the hospitality sector in Imo State, Nigeria. The study uses Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model, Social Exchange Theory, and Social Network Theory. The study uses quantitative design, questionnaire distributed to 260 hospitality consumers; structural equation modelling (SEM) used to test relationships. This indicate that all the social media marketing customers significantly influenced brand equity, user-generated content and content quality had the strongest effect. The study shows that in Nigeria's digital era, social media marketing alone has strong bearing on brand equity but it still treats marketing communication rather than explicitly PR; synergy with PR is not addressed. Also, hospitality industry rather than retail commerce. The study does not incorporate public relations activities or examine synergy between PR and marketing communication, focuses on one state (Imo) in Southern Nigeria does not target retail commerce (only hospitality). Moves beyond manufacturing/fast-food to hospitality, uses more robust methodology; emphasizes digital marketing channels, but still leaves unexplored the PR-marketing synergy in retail contexts and in Northern Nigeria.

Olumuji, E. & Bello, S. M., 2025) investigates the use of celebrity influencers on social media in promoting hospitality business

brands in Nigeria from a PR angle. The study applies public relations theory (influencer marketing as PR) and audience- engagement frameworks. Survey design among hospitality customers and PR/marketing practitioners, details not fully available in the abstract. This study begins to bridge PR and marketing communication by looking at influencer use (which spans both). But it remains limited to hospitality, Nigeria more broadly, and doesn't systematically examine synergy nor retail commerce, also Northern Nigeria remains unrepresented. No explicit synergy model of PR + marketing communication, retail context not covered; regional narrowness continues. Moves toward PR–marketing integration (influencer marketing) rather than pure marketing channels; starts exploring PR's role in brand equity.

## **Identified Gaps**

Previous studies have examined brand equity, customer loyalty and communication strategies in different sector of the Nigerian economy, existing literature largely investigate Public Relations and Marketing Communication Studies by Fadare & Akwikwa, (2024), and Mkpa & Oranusi, (2025) and Olumuji & Bello, (2025). Focus primarily on hospitality, fast-food and digital marketing environments with limited attention given communication integration within retail commerce. However, several persistent gaps remain:

- Lack of studies combining PR and marketing communication synergy explicitly in the model of brand equity (especially in Nigeria).
- Underrepresentation of Northern Nigeria and specifically retail commerce (many studies focus on Southern Nigeria and hospitality/manufacturing sectors).
- Limited qualitative insights from small-scale retail firms (most studies are quantitative, large firms or hospitality/manufacturing).
- Retail commerce context is understudied whereas your interest is in retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis, Northern Nigeria.
- Small-scale retailers/SMEs in local contexts (rather than large firms) need investigation.
- Synergy (coordination of PR + marketing communication) effect on brand equity dimensions remains insufficiently explored, especially how local SMEs operationalize it and how consumers perceive it.

## **Gap Identified by Current Study and How It Intends to Fill It**

The current study identifies the gap that there is no empirical investigation in Northern Nigeria (especially Sokoto Metropolis) of how synergy between Public Relations and Marketing Communication among retail firms influences brand equity (brand awareness, associations, perceived quality, loyalty). Specifically:

- It addresses PR–Marketing Communication synergy, rather than treating PR or marketing communication independently.
- It focuses on retail commerce (SMEs, small/medium retail firms) rather than large manufacturing or hospitality firms.
- This research is positioned within Northern Nigeria, focusing on Sokoto Metropolis a region that has received limited scholarly attention in communication and branding studies.

- The study seeks to evaluate how retail firms in Sokoto coordinate Public Relations and Marketing Communication at the organizational level while also examining consumers' perceptions of how such collaboration influences the major components of brand equity.
- The study uses a case study inquiry, the study aims to generate deeper, context and specific insights into how integrated communication strategies function within local retail settings.
- It also addresses a clear gap in existing literature on the intersection between communication integration and brand equity in under-researched markets and provides actionable solutions to help retail managers in Sokoto strengthen their communication effectively.

## **Methodology**

The study employed a qualitative case study design to obtain an in-depth understanding of how Public Relations and Marketing Communication synergy influences brand equity among retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because it allows researchers to explore participants' experience, perceptions and organizational communication practice. The population of study consisted of registered retail firms with active Public Relations and Marketing Communication units in Sokoto metropolis. According to the Sokoto State Ministry of Commerce and Industry (2024), reported that, there are approximately 62 large and medium retail firms operated within the Sokoto metropolis. From the population obtained, there were 15 retail firms that had both Public Relations and Marketing Communication units, they were purposively selected and one communication manager from each of the retail firms was interviewed. This approach ensured that, each participants possessed first-hand knowledge of communication management, thereby increasing the reliability and richness of the data (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Data were obtained through semi-structured interviews that lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. The data collected were analysed thematically using Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase framework. The data obtained were secured and used only for this study, following the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee guidelines at UNIZIK (2025) and the ethical principles of respect, integrity and participant welfare (Olaniran & Baruwa, 2020).

## **Findings and Discussion**

The data for this study were obtained through semi-structured interviews with Fifteen communication managers from different retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis that have both Public Relations (PR) and Marketing Communication Units. One of these retail firms include Sauki Leather Works, a prominent local indigenous leather fashion brand in Sokoto. Each of the interview conducted lasted around 20 to 30 minutes and was carried out with the consent of the participants. Public Relations and Marketing Communication aimed to evaluate, collaborate and assess how this partnership can affect brand equity. The plain and open conversations was

encouraged by semi-structured interview mode; participants were giving the chance to share their practical experiences of the different firms while the flexible questions allowed for a deeper insight into their joint efforts. The data were then analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-step, three main themes were observed, each of these themes aligned with the study's research questions.

### **Theme One: Degree of Collaboration between PR and Marketing Communication**

**Research Question One:** To what extent Public Relations and Marketing Communication integrated across retail firms in Sokoto Metropolis?

#### **Findings from Respondent One (PR Manager, fashion retailer):**

**Respondent Two:** Noted that: "PR and Marketing teams usually handle their tasks separately and only come together for major events like launching a new product or opening a new store".

**Respondent Three:** Said that: "Their cooperation often depends on instructions from the higher-ups rather than being the result of regular teamwork, explained a Marketing Manager from an electronics retailer".

**Respondent Five:** A PR Officer at a supermarket chain shared that: "Over the past six months, they've started using WhatsApp and Facebook to coordinate promotional efforts, which has helped improve communication and avoid doing the same work twice".

**Respondent Seven:** One of the Marketing Head at a household goods firms pointed out that: "Bringing both departments under single communication director has made their messaging more consistent and smoother".

**Respondent Eleven:** One of the Corporate Affairs Executive from a retail firm in Sokoto metropolis noted that: "There are still clear divisions between Marketing Communication and Public Relations since Marketing receives a larger budget, making it tough for Public Relations to prove its worth".

### **Interpretation**

Fifteen retail firms examined, of all the Public Relations and Marketing units, indicated that there were different levels of coordination between them. Sauki Leather Works for instance, exhibited teamwork by aligning with their retail firms. The Public Relations team focused on sharing the brand's environmental responsibility and story around craftsmanship of the retail firms, while the Marketing team concentrated on product promotions and digital advertisements. This collaboration has led to boost social media engagement and increased monthly sales during the Leather Heritage

Week campaign. This agreed with the idea behind Integrated Marketing Communication Theory, that highlights the value of consistent messaging and coordination across different communication channels to enhance brand strength. In Sokoto retail firms, its therefore, that effective collaboration is largely influenced by the management's role and technology use, alongside leadership style and a culture that promotes digital teamwork.

## **Theme 2: Effect of PR–Marketing Synergy on Brand Equity**

**Research Question 2:** How does PR–Marketing Communication synergy influence the key dimensions of brand equity (awareness, perceived quality, association, and loyalty)?

### **Findings**

The result indicates that, the collaboration between Marketing and Public Relations team has a strong impact on brand equity, with factors such as awareness, association, perceived quality and customer loyalty.

**Respondent One:** One of the respondent from one of the retail firms indicated that: “Launching collective campaigns significantly boost their social media presence, with Marketing running ads simultaneously and Public Relations sharing brand stories, lead to an increase in the engagement”.

**Respondent Three:** This respondent noted that: “When linking corporate social responsibility stories with product ads, it changed public opinion, and making their brand appear more responsible and trustworthy rather than purely profit-focused”.

**Respondent Five:** Another insight from this respondent which emphasized: “How customers emotionally connect with the brand when Public Relations communicators highlights the people behind it, by giving more meaning to loyalty programs”.

**Respondent Seven:** Stated that: “Feedback is also vital because it improved online ads after Public Relations took charge of managing customer reviews alongside with Marketing, making the brand feel more approachable and human”.

**Respondent Eleven:** This respondent noted that: “Coordinating messaging across radio, print, and social media platforms raised brand awareness and loyalty, which increases the sales following the integrated marketing campaign”. These findings between Public Relations and Marketing indicate that teamwork becomes stronger, and make more authentic brand connections with customers.

## **Interpretation**

The relationship between Marketing Communication and Public Relations in retail firms is to strengthen a brand across the level of awareness, how people relate to perceived quality brand and loyalty. When these teams harmonize their efforts together, their campaigns reach different locations, boost trust and create strong customer loyalty. If Sauki Leader Works for instance, combined Public Relations storytelling about local artisan and cultural heritage with digital marketing efforts, this will have led to boost online engagement and a rise in repeated selling within three months. Marketing Communications supports the idea behind the integration in achieving the best communication results that comes from integrating various tools like advertising, Public Relations and digital media into a cohesive brand message. Among the Fifteen retail firms being examined, those that kept their messaging consistent across the platforms such as social media and in-store ads reported better customer response and were viewed as more credible. This coordinated communication in the Sokoto retail market clearly plays a vital role in building strong consumer-based brand equity.

### **Theme Three: Communication Challenges and Strategies for Improvement**

**Research Question Three:** What communication challenges affect Public Relations and Marketing synergy, and how can brand equity be improved in Sokoto retail sector?

#### **Findings**

**Respondent One:** This respondent noted that: “The major challenge they are facing in their activities is funding, because the marketing department usually gets a large share in their budget, since the management believes it directly boosts sales”.

**Respondent Three:** Another respondent said that: “The management sees Public Relations as just a supporting role. Leadership and progress always comes from teamwork, while some managers not seeing the advantage in having joint planning meetings”.

**Respondent Five:** Noted that: “Lack of integrated communication systems is the one causing delays due to strong reliance on emails and physical memos. Thus, technology limitations also add to the problem”.

**Respondent Seven:** Another respondent added that, “High staff turnover disrupts collaboration because when important team members leave the retail firms, valuable knowledge goes with them”.

**Respondents Eleven:** Noted that “The team is making progress by holding monthly communication in reviewing meetings and using shared analytics dashboards, which are slowly helping to improve coordination”.

## **Interpretation**

The communication managers of several firms pointed out three main challenges that delay effective collaboration between Marketing and Public Relations teams. The first challenge is lack of good funding, Public Relations often received less financial support than Marketing. Secondly, leadership and organizational culture act as barriers between them, since managerial support for harmonizing these departments is weak. Lastly, inadequate digital tools and insufficient employee training slow down the teamwork and the general progress. These challenges reflect the main idea of integrated Marketing Communication Theory, which highlights the need for strong leadership, equitable budget allocation and collaboration across departments. This Sauki Leader Works for instance, addressed early problem of unconnected communication by assigning unprofessional Communication coordinator to manage both Public Relations and Marketing teams. This restructure will led to a better message coordination and better operations, cutting the campaign expenses and spending up the content production. This shows that the experiences of these retail firms in Sokoto appreciate the value of communication synergy and successful adoption of Integrated Marketing Communications which requires committed leadership, teamwork and fair funding.

## **Conclusion**

The study examined how Marketing Communication and Public Relations collaborate to build brand equity among retail firms in Sokoto metropolis, the study use sauiki Leader Works in Sokoto as a key example. The study found that, when coordinated communication is led strategically and backed by strong leadership, it will enhance brand performance. The level of Public Relations and Marketing integration vary among different retail firms. Those with connected leadership and digital coordination tools showed strong message collaboration, clearer brand identity and better audience engagement. Moreover, Sauki Leather works witnessed a significant development through social media sales and interaction by merging Public Relations storytelling that focus on marketing efforts. Those firms with integrate leadership and digital coordination tools were able to communicate more clearly, establish a stronger brand and engage their audiences more effectively. Integrated Marketing Communication emphasize that Communication improves the important aspects of brand equity such as awareness, perceived quality, brand association and loyalty by providing coordinated and dependable messaging. The study emphasizes that for steady brand growth in Sokoto retail market. Integrated Marketing Communication is significant.

## **Recommendations**

From the research findings, recommendations from this research were proposes for several practical strategies to enhance the cooperation between Marketing Communication and Public Relations in the Sokoto retail firms.

- i. The research makes a recommendation that promoting message consistency across all communication channels will assist to streamline coordination.
- ii. Enough funding should be provided for Public Relations and Marketing departments by the retail firms management.
- iii. Digital platforms like communication dashboards and online workspaces should be adopted by the retail firms because this can improve collaboration between departments.
- iv. Public Relations and Marketing Communication units should design annual communication strategies for the retail firms, this will encourage message alignment, and deepen consumer engagement.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The research contributes significantly to the body of Knowledge in different ways.

- i. In an area that hasn't been extensively examine in marketing communication and public relations research. The study uses Integrated Marketing Communications Theory specifically to retail firms
- ii. Marketing Communication and Public Relations plays a vital role in strengthening various elements of brand equity and retail firms, through strong evidence of collaboration between them.
- iii. The study illuminated hands-on strategies that local businesses can use, which include digital collaboration, unified leadership to drive better integration in their communications by applying Sauki Leather Works.

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