

## **Comparative Analysis of Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Companies in Port Harcourt, Rivers State**

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### **Abstract**

*This study comparatively examined the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies. The objectives of the study were to among other things: identify the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies in Port Harcourt, ascertain the ways in which the strategies differ in reaching out to consumers and evaluate the ways in which the integrated marketing communication helps the companies in driving consumers' patronage of the products in Port Harcourt. The study was premised on the Uses and Gratification theory. The survey design was adopted for the study. It has a population of 1,148,665 with 402 as sample size using the Krejcie and Morgan. Data were analysed using weighted mean score and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Amongst other things, the study revealed that the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Companies in Port Harcourt were utilised in terms of advertisement, sales promotion, personal selling, direct selling and corporate gifts. The study also found out that the integrated marketing communication strategies of the Companies have positive impact on their marketing goals in areas of brand identification and loyalty. The researchers recommended that the Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies in Port Harcourt should review their integrated marketing communication strategies to include the utilisation of the social media and the quality of their products and explore other means of differentiating their marketing strategies to avoid repetitive messages on the part of the consumers.*

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### **Introduction**

The concept of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) emerged and attracted considerable attention in the 1990s. Integrated Marketing Communication calls for recognising all touch points where the customer may encounter the company and its brands. The IMC leads to a total marketing communication strategy aimed at building strong customer relationships by showing how a company and its products can help customers solve their problems. It helps companies to adopt a consumer-centric, rather than market-centric perspective in creating brand messages. Companies adopt the concept of Integrated Marketing Communication in order to reach the heterogeneous audiences in different cultures. In recent marketing environment, nothing is more important than understanding and effectively communicating with consumers. This serves as a reminder to companies that the image people have about a company or brand does not just come from advertising, but from many different sources. Most importantly, Integrated Marketing Communication helps companies to initiate, develop, and nurture relationships with important

groups, especially customers (Arens, Weigold & Arens, 2013).

The Integrated Marketing Communication covers both the traditional and the contemporary marketing communication strategy. These include: advertising, sales promotion, public relations and publicity, personal selling and direct-response marketing for the traditional aspect. Contemporary integrated marketing communication elements include a wide variety of new options, such as online marketing, social media, cell phone marketing, buzz-marketing, branded entertainment, product placement and guerrilla-marketing. These new marketing communication elements and online media have changed the interface between consumers and organisations, where there has been a shift in power between the media and the consumer, with consumer-generated media turning consumers into content creators.

In Nigeria, the soft drink industry is dominated by the Nigerian Bottling Company (franchise of Coca-Cola of the US) and Seven-Up Bottling Company (franchise of Seven-up and Pepsi, both of the US). The market dominance of these companies reflects the length of time they have operated in the country. They maintained their investments in the Nigerian market throughout the difficult military era when their competitors either pulled out or failed to enter. Their dominance is also a testimony to the vast size of the multinational parent companies backing these Nigerian companies. Both companies are controlling the largest market share within the soft drink industry in Nigeria. Their competition is tight hence, a research on their marketing communication strategies is important.

Coca-Cola was first invented by a renowned Pharmacist, John Stith Pemberton, on May 8, 1886 in Atlanta, Georgia, United States of America. He tried to create distinctive syrup which could be sold at soda fountains. Initially, the syrup was mixed with carbonated water and then consumed. Frank M. Robinson, Pemberton's partner, a book keeper, gave the name "Coca-Cola" thinking that the two 'Cs' would sound well when advertised. He also designed the distinctive script in which the trademark was created and is still used today. Prior to Pemberton's death in 1888, Coca-Cola was sold to various parties with the majority of interest sold to Atlanta businessman, Asa G. Chandler. In 1894, Joseph Biedenharn installed bottling machinery and became the first to put Coca-Cola in bottles.

The shape of the bottle is still approximately retained in the present bottles. Since 1886, the company has changed its logo almost over ten times to suit the time and people's liking. Also, over the years, it has changed fifty slogans and made slight change in shape of the bottle. According to Hartlaub (2015), Coca-Cola started with the sales of nine bottles per day back in 1886, and by 2015, its sales had grown up to 1.9 billion servings per day. Hartlaub (2015) adds that approximately 94% of the world population is aware of the red and white logo of Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola is regarded as one of the most popular soft drinks across the globe. By May, 2018, Coca-Cola was 132 years old. In these years, Coca-Cola has expanded its market from USA to the global industry. Some of the famous brands of Coca-Cola are: *Coke*, *Diet coke*, *Fanta*, *Sprite*, *Minute Maid*, and *Powerade* (the coca-colacompany.com).

Nigerian Bottling Company (NBC) Limited was incorporated in 1951, as a subsidiary of A. G. Leventis, but production actually commenced in 1953 at Ebutte Metta, Lagos. The Head Office of Nigerian Bottling Company is at Iddo House, Lagos and has ten operating/manufacturing plants in seven structural regions. The seven structural regions of Coca-Cola Hellenic are: Lagos Mainland Region, Lagos Central Region (Note: the Lagos mainland Region and Lagos central Region, are on their own based on the Company's market segmentation policy). Eastern Region includes: Bayelsa, Rivers, Imo, Abia, Cross River, Akwa Ibom and Ebonyi States; Central Region includes: Edo, Delta, Enugu, Anambra, Benue and Kogi

States; Western Region includes: Kwara, Ogun, Ondo, Oyo, Ekiti and Osun States, North Eastern Region includes: Jos, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna, Taraba, Gombe and Bauchi States, and North Central Region includes: Zamfara, Kebbi, Niger and Sokoto States. Only 31 States of the Federation including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja are captured in the Coca-Cola Hellenic database. The remaining five states (Adamawa, Borno, Jigawa, Katsina, Nasarawa and Yobe) are not commercially viable for now (Coca-Cola Hellenic, 2018).

The staff strength of the company is a little over 3000 excluding contract staff. The Marketing Department exists as a supportive department to the Commercial Department. Nigerian Bottling Company Limited is headed by the Managing Director, with functional heads reporting to him and directors coordinate the activities of the functional heads and the senior managers (Jessica, 2018). The mission statement of a company helps to understand the reason of existence of the company. Coca-Cola's mission is "to refresh the world in mind, body and spirit. To inspire moments of optimism and happiness through our brands and actions" (Coca Cola, 2016, p.1)

The major values of the company include portfolio, partners, planet, people, productivity and profit. The company wants to create a culture where people are inspired to perform at their best possible level (The Beverage Marketing Corporation, 2007). Coca-Cola Hellenic Marketing objectives include: Ensuring availability of her products everywhere and every time. Ensuring that products are available and are made cold and ensuring all Coca-Cola selling outlets are activated to its standard (NBC, 2018). Coca-Cola relies on the marketing communication tools of media advertising and place advertising. It uses other marketing communication tools to maintain a competitive position in the global market.

Some of the strategies are: Event Marketing Strategy: Coca-Cola uses event marketing tools by sponsoring sports events such as World Cup, Olympics and social events such as concerts. By using this strategy, the company can target large audience in short time duration. Route-to-Marketing Strategy: This strategy uses Manual Distribution Centre (MDC), a partnership arrangement with Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company to reach the retailers. Pre-Seller Strategy: This strategy entails shop-to-shop sales by the distributors. Geographical Co-ordination Strategy: This strategy involves grouping of customers according to their geographical location for easy distribution. The advantage of this strategy lies on its cost effectiveness. For example, all distributors residing in a locality are supplied by the same truck thereby, reducing transportation/logistics costs. Activation/Signage Strategy: This strategy involves creation of awareness of Coca-Cola Hellenic products. The company pastes their logo/symbols in all their sales points/shops and also are involved in the distribution of branded products such as Ice-Coolers, Umbrella, T-Shirts, Caps, etc. Trade Discount Incentives Strategy: This strategy entails the distributors buying a truck of Coca-Cola drinks to get 60 cartons free (Jessica & Lina, 2018). Media Strategy: Coca-Cola started its media strategy using print advertisement in 1886. With the introduction of television, Coca-Cola was advertised through the new medium of communication. Brand Strategy: Diet coke has been quite a success for Coca-Cola as within two years since its launch. It was able to hold 1.3% market share of the soft drink market in North America alone. The advertising budget for the marketing of coke zero in 2006 was estimated to be \$75 million (Theresa, 2007).

A Lebanese, Mohammed El-khalil who came to Nigeria for the very first time in 1926 founded Seven-Up Bottling Company. Mohammed was the father of the Company's Chairman, Faysal El-Khalil. (Faysal El-Khalil served as the Chairman of the company in 2018 when this study was carried out). Seven-Up was incorporated in Nigeria in 1959 as a Private Limited

Liability Company under the name Seven-Up Limited. Its name was later changed to Seven-Up Bottling Company Plc in 1991 to comply with the Company and Allied Matters Act, 1990 (Seven-Up, 2018). The company metamorphosed from a very successful transport business (El-Khalil Transport—the then largest transport company in the entire West Africa) to a soft drink manufacturing company.

Nooyi (2006), states that Seven-Up Bottling Company Limited is one of the largest independent manufacturers and distributors of the well-known and widely consumed brands of soft drinks in Nigeria. He reports that the Company's brands are *Pepsi*, *7UP*, *Mirinda*, *Teem* and *Mountain Dew*, which are produced and marketed in all the nine manufacturing plants, namely: Aba, Ikeja, Ilorin, Enugu, Abuja, Kano, Kaduna and Benin, while Ijora remains the headquarters. The Company also markets their products all over their 200 distribution centres also known as depots spread over Nigeria. The company has staff strength of about 3458. On October 1, 1960, the exact day Nigeria won her independence, Nigerians also experienced the birth of the first bottle of 7Up rolled out from the factory located in Ijora, Lagos. Since then, the company has continued to grow in leaps and bounds. In the late 1980s, the company established two more plants in Ibadan and Ikeja. In the early 1990s, when Pepsi International took over 7Up International, Pepsi brand was introduced to the Nigerian people. Beirut is the global headquarters of Seven-Up Bottling Company. It has its operational bases in three African countries— Nigeria, Tanzania and Ghana. The majority of the company's shares (72%) are held by the El-Khalil family, which has moved the business from distributorship to sole manufacturer and marketer of Pepsi-Cola brand in Nigeria.

The vision is to become the most admired and innovative company in Nigeria, while its mission is to inspire and refresh a youthful lifestyle. The core values are: commitment and ownership – People will describe the business as “Our company”, reflecting the entrepreneurial spirit and sense of ownership. “Caring and rewarding” as the people in the company experience a feeling of brotherliness and freshness in their relationship with one another to build the organisation. Seven-Up has teamwork, integrity and trust as its marketing objectives.

The Company adopts aggressive marketing, constant technological innovation, introduction of new products to increase its share of the beverage market and boost its profitability, a wide distribution network (200 distributors); boost sales by enhancing manufacturing capacity and strengthening its sales and distribution; and regular promotions. The integrated marketing communication strategies of Seven-Up Bottling Company as reported by (Ogbonna, 2018) is as follows: Direct Supply Strategy: This strategy was adopted as a better supply strategy because it helped to tackle the limitations and challenges associated with indirect supply. The Indirect Supply could not be said to be a failure, rather it was surrounded with a lot of challenges which direct supply strategy was introduced to modify. Alternative Sales and Distribution (AS&D) Strategy: This strategy helps the company in attaining her communication goals such as: increase in sales volume, closeness to customers, market expansion, and identification of the competitor's strategy through closeness to customers. Key Accounts and Prestigious Accounts Strategy: This enables the firm to communicate effectively with her customers.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Observation showed that many consumers found it difficult to differentiate Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company's products from Seven-Up Bottling Company's products outside of the packaged bottles or cans, colours, contents and perhaps tastes. As a result, preliminary

experiments were conducted by the researchers on the consumers of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company's and Seven-Up Bottling Company's products, with some selected brands such as: Pepsi versus Coke, Miranda versus Fanta and 7up versus Sprite and served consumers in glass cups according to their choices of the colours. Forty consumers in schools, families, eatery and neighborhood were experimented upon. At the end of the experiments, only 40% of the consumers were able to identify the brands that they took. In spite of the consumers' inability to differentiate the tastes of the products, they showed differences in the choice of the products they patronised.

This show of loyalty to the respective brands by the consumers has questioned whether satisfaction derived from the consumption of the products or the marketing communication strategies adopted by the two companies could be the foundation of the choice of the companies' products and loyalty held by the consumers to the products. Thus, the problem of the study can be stated: to what extent do the Integrated Marketing Communication strategies of Coca-Cola Bottling Company and those of Seven-Up Bottling Company contribute to consumers' patronage of the companies' products?

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

The aim of the study is to comparatively analyse the Integrated Marketing Communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and those of Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were raised to guide the study.

1. What are the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and those of Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt?
2. In what ways do the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt, differ in reaching out to consumers?
3. How do the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company affect the company's marketing goals?
4. In what ways do the integrated marketing communication strategies help in driving the customers' patronage of the products in Port Harcourt?

### **Literature Review**

The Uses and Gratifications theory formed the theoretical foundation for this study. The Uses and gratifications theory is an audience-centred approach to understanding mass mediated messages, why and how people seek specific media to satisfy their information needs. It diverges from other media effects theories that question "what do the mass media do to people" to focus on "what do people do with media." It postulates that media are highly available product and the audience consumes the product. The theory queries how media users deliberately choose a medium that will satisfy given needs and allow one to enhance knowledge, relaxation, social, interactions/companionship, diversion, or escape. The Uses and Gratifications theory is based on the idea that media audiences are active rather than passive. This means that they do not only receive information, but also consciously attempt to process and decipher the message in their own context (Peirce, 2007).

The theory is important to integrated marketing communications because it was

originally created in order to explain and predict individual's attitudes towards objects and actions. The variables in the theory characterise marketing opportunities; it is measurable; marketers are able to decide which views about the consequence of a purchase decision are imperative; in what way these views are assessed; which notions about the behaviour are most important; and in what manner can consumers act in accordance with what others perceive.

### **Conceptual Review**

According to Whalley (2010), marketing communication consists of messages from companies to the customers about the companies' products, brands or in the case of corporate communications about the company itself. In a real sense, every marketing communication activity is a form of promotion that attempts to advance the interest of the company's brand and product range.

One of the first and widely quoted definitions of integrated marketing communication was proposed by the American Association of Advertising Agencies (AAAA) in 1989. According to Duncan and Caywood (1996), integrated marketing communication is a concept of marketing communications that recognises "the added value of a comprehensive plan that evaluates the strategic roles of a variety of communication disciplines (for example, advertising, direct response, sales promotion, and public relations), and then combines these disciplines to provide clarity, consistency and maximum communication impact" (p.16). In the above definition, integrated marketing communication is regarded as a theory or idea. It emphasises the added value feature of an integrated marketing communications plan, to combine and to integrate the various marketing communications functions (tactics) and vehicles in order to ultimately convey a unified and consistent message.

Shimp and Andrews (2012) define integrated marketing communication as "the coordination of the promotional mix elements (advertising, public relations, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing, online marketing/social media) with each other and with other elements of the brands' marketing mix (product, place, price) such that all elements speak with one voice" (p.36). They have identified five key features of IMC thus "Start with the customer or prospect; use any form of relevant contact or touch point; speak with a single voice; build relationships; affect behavior".

Pitta, Weisgal and Lynagh (2006) state that "integrated marketing communication requires marketers to identify the boundaries around the promotional mix and to consider the effectiveness of the campaign's message" (p.157). According to Dahl, Low and Eagle (2015), the marketing environment was undergoing profound environmental changes with implications for marketing communications.

According to Chul, Han and Schultz (2004), integrated marketing communication unifies and coordinates the organisation's marketing communications goals in order to promote a consistent brand message. Coordinating the brands' communications make the brand seem more trustworthy and sound as it is seen as a 'whole' rather than a mixture of different messages being sent out. The integrated marketing communications perspective looks at the 'big picture' in marketing, advertising and promotions. Schultz (2004) believes that Integrated Marketing Communication focuses too heavily on tactical implementation, attempting to make things look the same. He suggests that organisations need to find ways in which horizontal integrating processes and systems, including internal marketing communications and strategic planning frameworks, can be developed.

Therefore, integrated marketing communication is considered as a powerful business tool

for transmitting persuasive messages to influence existing consumers as well as gaining access to target audience and prospects. Apart from influencing consumers' buying behaviour, integrated marketing communication is also developed with the aim of reducing marketing budgets since integrated marketing communication could help enterprises to reduce the costs of advertisements and minimise duplicate advertising designs and photography (Csikósová, Antošová & Čulková, 2014). Applying integrated marketing communication effectively in businesses could increase marketing advantages for companies as well as decreasing marketing costs since integrated marketing communication could improve the cost effectiveness of mass media and media fragmentation (Fill, 2002; Csikósová et al, 2014).

### **Methodology**

The survey research design was adopted for this study. The survey design has the right attributes that will allow for guided systematic and objective collection of data and analysis. The population of this study comprised residents of Port Harcourt metropolis. According to the Human Resources Managers of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company's office in Port Harcourt, and his counterpart in Seven-Up Bottling Company, all residents of Port Harcourt consume their products. The projected population of Port Harcourt for the year 2019, according to World Population Review, is 1,148,665 (World Population Review, 2019).

The sample size of the study is 384 using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Going by the Table, sample for populations that are one million and above is 384. The sample size for the first set of population for the study (customers) is 384. The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. The researchers adopted the three parts division of Port Harcourt using the classification of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) which are: Port Harcourt East, Port Harcourt West and Port Harcourt North to collect data for the study. The second stage was to select four communities from each of the divisions using purposive sampling to ensure that a number of recognised neighbourhoods were selected. The third stage was to select a given number of respondents from each of the neighbourhoods selected. This was done by taking a random starting point and a fixed periodic interval. This interval, called the sampling interval, was calculated by dividing the population size by the sample size. Convenient sampling technique was used to select the target respondents to whom the copies of questionnaire were administered to.

The sample consisted of top management staff from the Marketing/Sales Department, Commercial Department and Public Relations Department, while both Coca-Cola Hellenic Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company were purposively sampled for the in-depth interview. Overall, the sample size for the study was 384 customers and 18 management staff of both companies making a total of 402 persons.

**Table 1: Multi-Stage Sample Chart**

S/N	Destination in PH	Selected Neighbourhood	Sample size	percentage
1	Port Harcourt East	Choba/Ogbogoro	66	17%
		Mgbuoba/Rumuekini/Alakahia	93	24%
		Rumuodoma/Rumuokoro	55	14%
		Rumuolumeni/Rumuepirikom	23	6%
2	Port Harcourt West	Rumuokwurusi/Elenwo	23	6%
		Ogbum-nu-Abali/Elekahia	15	5%
		Amadi-Ama/Fimie	13	3%
		Trans-Amadi/Rainbow	12	3%
3	Port Harcourt North	P H Township/Marine Base	27	7%
		Borokiri	20	5%
		Bundu-Ama/Ibeto	19	5%
		Nkpolu	18	5%
4	<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>384</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: *inec.org*.

### Results and Discussions

**Table 2: Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies in Port Harcourt.**

Item Statement	Brand	SDA(1)	DA(2)	A(3)	SA(4)	Total	Mean	Decision
I have seen my favourite brand marketed through ads.	Coca-Cola Hellenic	5	14	34	140	193	3.60	Accept
	Seven-Up	11	39	39	95	184	3.18	Accept
I have seen my preferred brand being popularised through sales promotion.	Coca-Cola Hellenic	25	30	62	76	193	2.98	Accept
	Seven-Up	14	49	51	70	184	2.96	Accept
I have seen my favourite brand being popularized through personal selling (face to face).	Coca-Cola Hellenic	38	20	18	117	193	3.11	Accept
	Seven-Up	4	14	34	132	184	3.60	Accept
I have seen my brand being popularized through direct marketing.	Coca-Cola Hellenic	11	46	39	97	193	3.15	Accept
	Seven-Up	25	24	64	71	184	2.98	Accept
Sometimes, I see my favourite brands in give-a-away products such as cars, fridges and other gift items that are covered with their brand messages.	Coca-Cola Hellenic	8	39	48	98	193	3.22	Accept
	Seven-Up	4	14	36	130	184	3.59	Accept

Table 2 summarises that both companies practise all the strategies of advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, direct marketing and give-away products. This was interpreted based on the fact that all the statements in Table 2 were accepted by the respondents in relation to both companies.

**Table 3: How the Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic**



**and Seven-Up Bottling Companies in PH differ in reaching out to Consumers**

Item Statement	Brand	SDA(1)	DA(2)	A(3)	SA(4)	Total	Mean	Decision
<b>The brand advertisements affect my choice of product.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	11	48	41	93	193	3.12	Accept
	Seven-Up	25	24	60	75	184	3.01	Accept
<b>The brand advertisements does not affect my choice of product.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	100	46	39	8	193	1.77	Reject
	Seven-Up	46	24	20	94	184	1.28	Reject

Table 3 shows that respondents from Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Company agreed that consumers consume their products and patronise the brand even in the absence of an advertisement.

**Table 4: Effects of brand quality as integrated marketing communication strategies on customers' choice of brand.**

Item Statement	Brand	SDA(1)	DA(2)	A(3)	SA(4)	Total	Mean	Decision
<b>I patronise the brand more because of the satisfaction I get from it.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	48	20	7	118	193	3.01	Accept
	Seven-Up	0	42	61	81	184	3.21	Accept
<b>The taste of the brand product enhances my preference for the brand.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	6	51	61	75	193	3.06	Accept
	Seven-Up	6	33	0	145	184	3.54	Accept
<b>The taste of the brand product does not reduce my preference for the brand.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	20	10	31	132	193	3.42	Accept
	Seven-Up	13	7	35	129	184	3.52	Accept

Table 4 which covers research questions three and four shows that brand quality measured by taste and satisfaction affect customers' choice of brand indicated by positive mean scores for all the statements. However, in all cases Seven-Up bottling company scored far above Coca-Cola Hellenic bottling company showing that the degree of acceptance was higher than that of Coca-Cola Hellenic bottling company.

**Table 5: Customers' brand loyalty of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies in Port Harcourt.**

Item Statement	Brand	SDA(1)	DA(2)	A(3)	SA(4)	Total	Mean	Decision
<b>I am loyal to my brand and product.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	80	36	11	66	193	2.40	Reject
	Seven-Up	0	28	71	85	184	3.31	Accept
<b>The price of my brand enhances my preference for the product.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	10	71	69	43	193	2.79	Accept
	Seven-Up	0	30	67	87	184	2.78	Accept
<b>The content quantity of the brand enhances my preference for the product.</b>	Coca-Cola Hellenic	56	26	31	80	193	2.76	Accept
	Seven-Up	13	7	35	129	184	3.52	Accept

Table 5 indicates that the respondents accepted to be loyal to Seven-Up brand and their loyalty could be traced to the price and volume of Seven-Up which made the consumers stick to their content and quality. However, they could not say the same for Coca-Cola Hellenic. Coca-Cola Hellenic consumers did not agree that they are loyal to the brand.

**4.3 Discussion of Findings**

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**Research Question 1: What are the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and those of Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt?**

Table 2 contains the mean of the responses on integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up bottling companies in Port Harcourt. The companies adopted the following strategies which include the use of gift items, advertisements, sales promotions, personal selling, guerrilla marketing and direct marketing. This implies that both the Coca-Cola Hellenic Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company have similar and seemingly identical integrated marketing communication strategies in reaching out to their consumers.

This is used especially as their goods are complementary in nature and can indeed, serve as substitute for each other. This makes competition thick in winning the loyalty of consumers for the various brands of product they offer. For example, both companies have social media handles, use celebrity endorsements, sponsor sporting activities, use branded gifts and sales promotions, among other marketing tools. These tools are deployed based on the results they get from frequent marketing research carried out by both companies.

The result obtained here corroborates Higgs and Polonsky's (2007) assertion which stated that consumers are increasingly in control of when, how and what media or content they want to attend to and consume. Consumers are no longer passive but active receivers of messages sent by marketers, but can now participate in creating messages, actively selecting the information they want to receive, and avoiding any unwanted and untimely messages.

Interestingly, the integrated marketing communication strategies adopted by both the Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and the Seven-Up Bottling Company tacitly describes the definition of the term in itself. Integrated Marketing Communication has been described as a customer-centric marketing communication concept which requires some sort of coordination of organisations' marketing communication tools.

**Research Question 2: In what ways do the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt, differ in reaching out to consumers?**

Table 3 contains the mean of the responses on how the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company differ in reaching out to consumers. This is because, responses from both companies agreed that the utility value of their products is complementary. The results showed that both Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies' consumers always consume their products and patronise the brand even in the absence of an advertisement. However, from all indications they are concentrated in branding graphics and identification, rather than on content utility and satisfaction. For example, Sprite (Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company) and Seven-Up (Seven-Up Bottling Company) were usually packaged in green bottles by both companies with the same colour marking the contents. The taste is also very similar and both products are advertised as thirst quencher to the consumers. The consumer will simply ask for the other in the event of absence of one. This makes brand loyalty a difficult task in the face of no incentives to the buyers.

The result obtained here is in line with the submission of Arens, Weigold and Arens (2011) whose opinion showed that brand is fundamental and has differentiating approaches for all products – name, words, symbols or design that identifies the product and its source and distinguishes it from competing products.

Shimp (2010) points out that integrated marketing communication is about influencing the buying behaviours of target audience by combining a variety of communication channels and marketing tools to convey consistent messages to consumers. This is because a product or a brand which exists in consumers' minds does not merely happen because of consumers' experience, but it is also affected by a medium and long-term effect which consistent messages establish on consumers' expectations and preferences through several communication tools (Mihaela, 2015). The Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and the Seven Up Bottling Company therefore, use product differentiation to compete for customers in the soft drink industry.

**Research Question 3: How do the integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company affect the company's marketing goals?**

Table 4 contains the mean of the responses on how integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies (measured by their brand qualities) affect the companies' marketing goals expressed as customers' choice of brand. The results of data analysis in this regard showed that the taste and satisfaction which the consumers get from drinking the brands (brand quality) to a great extent, affected their preference for both Coca-Cola Hellenic and Seven-Up Bottling Companies as indicated by positive scores of 3.01, 3.06 and 3.42 (for Coca-Cola Hellenic) and 3.21, 3.54 and 3.52 (for Seven-Up).

Invariably, the integrated marketing communication strategies of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company has been able to position the products in a better way where the consumers can readily identify them and make purchase decision based on their knowledge of the product. This gives the products an opportunity to dominate and have a fair share in the market place. According to Percy (2008), the five steps of integrated marketing communications strategic planning process include: identify and select the appropriate target audience; determine how that target audience make a product and brand decision; establish how the brand will be positioned within its marketing communication and select a benefit to support that position; set communication objectives; and optimise message delivery and the processing of the message.

**Research Question 4: In what ways does integrated marketing communication help the companies in driving customers' patronage of their products in Port Harcourt?**

Table 4 contains mean responses of respondents on ways in which the integrated marketing communication strategies assisted the companies in driving customers' patronage of their products in Port Harcourt. The analysis of the data in this regard shows that the integrated marketing communication strategies of both the Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and the Seven Up Bottling Company were successful in driving consumer patronage of their products. For one, those products are still in the market and selling. This shows that a lot of work had gone into keeping them active in the soft drink market. This is especially as there are other soft drinks from both local manufacturers and international competitors making inroad to the Nigerian soft drink market daily, yet none has been able to successfully upstage the products from both companies.

Also, the result corroborates Ojoma and Ayuba's (2017) study on impact of marketing strategies on the performance of soft drinks manufacturing companies in North-Central of Nigeria in which it was found out that there is a relationship between marketing strategies and company performance in soft-drink manufacturing companies in North-Central Zone of Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

It is obvious from the findings that integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and those of Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt include: advertisements, sales promotion, personal selling (face-to-face), direct marketing and give-away products such as cars, fridges and other gift items that are covered with their brand messages. Also, the reasons why integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company affect the companies' marketing goals are that customers patronise the brand because of the satisfaction they derive and their taste of brand product which enhances their preference for the brand.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusion above, the researchers therefore, recommend that:

1. Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and those of Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt should use the identified integrated marketing communication strategies which include: advertisements, sales promotion, personal selling (face-to-face), direct marketing, social media and give-away products such as cars, fridges, other gift items that are covered with their brand messages. Furthermore, quality (taste and satisfaction) which is one of the 7ps of marketing (product) can be an integrated marketing communication tool.
2. Since integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt, did not differ in reaching out to consumers, there is therefore, the need for Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company in Port Harcourt to enhance their brand visibility by making sure the taste of their products does not reduce.
3. Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company should strive to maintain the loyalty of its customers to its brands by improving on their integrated marketing communication strategic goals to ensure the company's marketing goals are achieved.
4. Seven-Up Bottling Company should strive to maintain the loyalty of its customers to its brands by improving on their integrated marketing communication strategic goals to ensure the company's marketing goals are achieved.
5. The integrated marketing communication strategies of Coca-Cola Hellenic Bottling Company and Seven-Up Bottling Company should be customers' patronage centered to ensure the companies' marketing goals are achieved.

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