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Driving Institutional Transformation: The Role of Integrated Marketing Communication in Burundian Higher Education: A Case of Université Sagesse d'Afrique

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Abstract: Higher education institutions (HEIs) in Burundi, especially Université Sagesse d'Afrique (USA), grapple with standing out in a crowded market where smart communication strategies are key to thriving. Even though Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) has proven effective worldwide, it's rarely used in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), leaving universities with patchy brand images and weak digital setups. This study takes a quantitative look at how three IMC elements message consistency, social media engagement, and digital tool use affect USA's organizational performance. We used a cross-sectional survey to gather data from 350 students and lecturers at the Kinindo, Asiatique, and Kamenge campuses, applying stratified random sampling. Python (version 3.11) handled the stats, including multiple regression and diagnostic tests to ensure the model's reliability. Overall, the full IMC framework explained 62% of the variation in organizational performance. Message consistency was the strongest predictor ($\beta = .48$, $p < .001$), which outranked social media engagement ($\beta = .25$) and digital tool use ($\beta = .18$). They were no notable differences by campus or respondent group ($p > .05$), indicating broad agreement on the University standing. These results reveal a "synergy effect": a university's reputation hinges on consistent messaging across all channels, not one-off marketing efforts. The study provides administrators with a hands-on framework to boost competitiveness, even with tight resources.

Keywords: Integrated Marketing Communication, Organizational Performance, Higher Education, Digital Marketing, Social Media.

1. Introduction

In today's rapidly globalizing and competitive higher education environment, universities face escalating pressure not only to deliver quality education but also to communicate their distinct value effectively. The ability to strategically engage key stakeholders students, lecturers, and the wider community has become a vital determinant of institutional success IMC, defined as a coordinated, strategic approach to managing all brand communication channels, is increasingly recognized as a core driver of organizational performance (Diemar, 2016; Mandagie & Rana, 2023). It enhances brand equity, strengthens stakeholder relationships and drives

institutional reputation, positioning communication as a strategic imperative rather than a peripheral activity.

HEIs globally are transforming their marketing strategies in response to digitalization and the need for stronger stakeholder engagement. Research shows that IMC improves brand cohesion, boosts marketing effectiveness and enhances customer relationships across diverse sectors (Desta & Amantie, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). Within higher education, universities have adopted digital tools and social media platforms as key vehicles for building brand image, fostering engagement and managing relationships (Fomunyam, 2020; Barus, 2024; Maring & Gmür, 2024). These digital transformations have redefined the educational marketplace, requiring HEIs to manage their communications strategically to sustain competitive advantage.

Despite IMC's proven success in various sectors, its application in Sub-Saharan African higher education remains underexplored. In Burundi, universities like USA operate in a competitive and resource-limited environment. Fragmented communication efforts, inconsistent branding and underutilized digital tools hinder their ability to project a cohesive institutional image (Huebner, 2020). Consequently, the role of IMC in enhancing organizational performance measured through student satisfaction, brand reputation and stakeholder loyalty remains insufficiently understood.

Despite IMC's proven success in various sectors, its application in Sub-Saharan African higher education remains underexplored, particularly in Burundi where universities like USA operate in resource-limited environments. Existing literature on IMC is geographically biased toward Western and Asian economies, often neglecting the synergistic effects of a comprehensive framework in developing contexts. Prior studies have typically focused on isolated elements such as social media engagement or digital marketing tools (Ismail, 2021; Popescu et al., 2021), neglecting their combined, synergistic effects within a comprehensive IMC framework. This creates a notable research void on how IMC consistency, digital tool usage and social media engagement collectively drive performance in the Burundian higher education sector.

Empirical evidence consistently supports IMC's contribution to organizational success. Studies across small enterprises (Butkouskaya et al., 2020), hospitality (Ngan & Thành, 2022), and education (Dagumboy, 2022) reveal that coordinated communication strategies significantly improve brand equity and performance. In educational settings, digital engagement enhances reputation and stakeholder loyalty (Mateus et al., 2023; Jiang et al., 2024). However, the evidence base for IMC in African HEIs remains sparse, particularly within Burundi, where institutional marketing frameworks are still evolving.

Within Burundi's educational landscape, HEIs such as USA face structural and technological barriers that complicate the implementation of integrated communication strategies. Limited marketing budgets, uneven digital infrastructure and a nascent culture of strategic communication amplify the need for data-driven approaches (Elugbaju et al., 2024). Understanding how IMC can be adapted to these constraints is essential for improving institutional visibility, student engagement and long-term sustainability.

This study aims to quantitatively assess the impact of IMC on the organizational performance of USA. And it specifically investigates:

1. The effect of IMC consistency on organizational performance.

2. The influence of social media engagement on performance outcomes.

3. The role of digital tools usage in enhancing institutional reputation and stakeholder loyalty.

The overarching aim of this research is to bridge the empirical and contextual gap in IMC research within Burundian higher education. The study seeks to provide a replicable, evidence-based model demonstrating how cohesive communication strategies enhance performance. By doing so, it contributes both theoretically by extending IMC and brand equity frameworks into a new context and practically by equipping administrators with actionable insights to build stronger, more competitive institutions.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Integrated Marketing Communication and Brand Equity

Previous research has shown that Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) is not merely a tactical marketing function but a strategic process that drives brand equity and overall organizational performance.

IMC integrates various communication channels advertising, public relations, digital media, and direct marketing into a cohesive strategy that ensures message consistency and audience alignment (Desta & Amantie, 2023). The synergy created through integration strengthens brand identity and fosters stakeholder trust, leading to measurable improvements in performance indicators such as customer loyalty and satisfaction (Foroudi et al., 2020; Singh et al., 2024).

However, findings remain inconsistent regarding how IMC operates across sectors and contexts. While Sharma et al. (2024) and Butkouskaya et al. (2021) found that IMC directly improves marketing performance in small and medium enterprises, Elrod and Fortenberry (2020) suggested that contextual variables such as institutional culture and leadership can mediate its effects. These discrepancies highlight the importance of studying IMC within specific sectors and cultural settings, as implementation practices and communication maturity levels differ widely.

2.2. Digital Transformation in Higher Education Marketing

Several studies have suggested that digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the marketing landscape of HEIs. Universities now operate as service-oriented organizations competing for visibility and enrollment, where strategic communication is as vital as academic excellence (Fomunyam, 2020). The rise of social media and web-based platforms has enabled institutions to engage directly with prospective students and alumni, enhancing brand awareness and reputation (Amalancei et al., 2021; Marešová et al., 2020).

Yet, while most studies agree on the positive role of digital tools, they diverge in assessing their depth of impact. For instance, Barus (2024) and Maring and Gmür (2024) demonstrated that social media engagement increases student loyalty and institutional reputation, whereas Popescu et al. (2021) cautioned that excessive reliance on digital platforms without consistent branding can dilute credibility. These differing outcomes often arise from methodological variation quantitative studies emphasize measurable engagement metrics, while qualitative ones explore perceptions and emotional connections. Together, these findings underscore the growing but complex influence of digital media on institutional performance.

2.3. IMC Effectiveness across Sectors

A significant body of literature supports the positive impact of IMC on performance across various industries. Studies in the hospitality sector (Ngan & Thành, 2022) and in SMEs (Butkouskaya et al., 2020) consistently report that integrated communication enhances customer engagement, sales outcomes and brand trust. Similarly, Dagumboy (2022) conceptualized an IMC framework tailored to Philippine universities, illustrating its applicability beyond traditional commercial settings. However, comparative studies reveal that outcomes often depend on sectoral maturity and technological adoption. Developed economies exhibit higher IMC performance linkages due to advanced digital infrastructure and professionalized marketing departments, whereas developing contexts face implementation barriers stemming from resource constraints and fragmented organizational communication (Hadiyati et al., 2024).

2.4. Divergent Findings and Methodological Insights

While the majority of existing literature has focused on Western and Asian contexts, results remain mixed when these models are applied to emerging markets. For example, Ismail (2021) observed that Lebanese universities used social media primarily for promotional rather than relational purposes, limiting long-term engagement. In contrast, Mateus et al. (2023) found that perceived value and student experience significantly mediate the link between university branding and reputation in Latin America. These variations often stem from differences in data sources, institutional governance, and cultural attitudes toward marketing communication. Quantitative approaches tend to validate IMC's structural impact, while qualitative studies expose contextual nuances, such as resistance to adopting marketing practices in academic environments.

2.5. The Underexplored Context: Sub-Saharan Africa and Burundi

The majority of empirical studies on IMC in education have focused on developed or emerging economies, leaving Sub-Saharan Africa and particularly Burundi largely underexplored. Existing African studies, such as Fomunyam (2020), acknowledge the rise of social media in university branding but stop short of quantifying its relationship with institutional

performance. The Burundian context presents unique challenges: limited digital infrastructure, low marketing budgets and fragmented communication systems.

These factors may significantly influence how IMC principles translate into measurable outcomes. Recent studies have highlighted the need for further investigation into how consistent messaging, digital tool integration and social media engagement interact to affect organizational performance in developing higher education systems (Rabenu & Shkoler, 2022; Othman et al., 2025).

2.6. Summary and Research Gap

This review summarizes key findings and identifies the main research gap addressed in this study. While there is strong theoretical and empirical support for the link between IMC and organizational performance, most evidence is derived from commercial sectors and developed economies. The existing body of work rarely explores the synergistic effect of IMC consistency, digital tool usage and social media engagement in a unified model within African higher education. Consequently, this study seeks to fill this void by providing empirical evidence from USA in Burundi, thereby extending IMC and brand equity theories into a new and under-researched context.

2.7. Conceptual Framework and Variable Definition

2.7.1. Theoretical Underpinnings

This study is anchored in two complementary theoretical perspectives of IMC and Brand Equity Theory.

IMC provides the strategic foundation for understanding how consistency and coordination across communication channels influence stakeholder perceptions and behaviour. It emphasizes synergy: the notion that messages delivered through multiple, harmonized media create a cumulative effect greater than the sum of individual efforts (Desta & Amantie, 2023).

Brand Equity Theory, on the other hand, explains how these consistent communications build and sustain the intangible value of a brand manifested through awareness, perceived quality, associations, and loyalty (Ruangkanjanases et al., 2022). Together, these frameworks suggest that coherent, strategically aligned communication enhances an organization's reputation and, ultimately, its performance.

2.7.2. Conceptual Logic of the Study

Drawing on these theories, the framework posits that organizational performance in a higher-education context is driven by three interrelated dimensions of communication effectiveness:

1. IMC Consistency: the extent to which stakeholders perceive uniformity and harmony in the university's messages across platforms (website, print materials, social media and internal communications). Consistency ensures that every interaction reinforces the same brand promise and identity, thereby enhancing credibility and trust.

2. Social Media Engagement: the level of interactivity, responsiveness, and relationship-building that occurs between the university and its audiences on digital platforms. Engagement transforms passive communication into dialogue, fostering emotional connection and loyalty (Maring & Gmür, 2024; Jiang et al., 2024).

3. Digital Tools Usage: the perceived effectiveness of the university's owned digital channels (e.g., website, mobile applications and email systems) in delivering information and facilitating services. Efficient digital infrastructure not only improves access but also signals institutional professionalism and innovation (Laradi et al., 2023).

These three constructs are hypothesized to act as direct predictors of organizational performance conceptualized here as a multi-dimensional outcome encompassing stakeholder satisfaction, institutional reputation, pride of association and recommendation intention (Mateus et al., 2023).

2.7.3. Proposed Relationships

Empirical literature supports each hypothesized relationship. Studies in both commercial and educational contexts confirm that message consistency strengthens brand identity and customer loyalty (Sharma et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). Likewise, interactive social media presence has been shown to build relational equity and positive behavioural intentions (Barus, 2024; Maring & Gmür, 2024). The adoption of digital tools further enhances institutional effectiveness by facilitating seamless communication and data-driven engagement (Hadiyati et al., 2024; Othman et al., 2025).

Accordingly, the following hypotheses guide the empirical analysis:

• **H1:** IMC Consistency has a positive and significant impact on Organizational Performance.

• **H2:** Social Media Engagement has a positive and significant impact on Organizational Performance.

• **H3:** Digital Tools Usage has a positive and significant impact on Organizational Performance.

2.7.4. Conceptual Model

The conceptual framework (**Figure 1**) illustrates these relationships. It depicts IMC Consistency, Social Media Engagement and Digital Tools Usage as independent variables converging on Organizational Performance as the dependent variable.

Arrows from each predictor indicate hypothesized positive relationships, while double-headed arrows between predictors reflect their intercorrelation acknowledging that in practice, digital and social media activities often reinforce message consistency.

The theoretical structure of this study rests on IMC and Brand Equity Theory, particularly Madhavaram et al., (2005) framework, which casts IMC and brand identity as essential foundations for brand equity. Unified messaging proves powerful because it reinforces a consistent brand identity, yielding synergistic impacts on organizational goals. We derive the hypothesized links to institutional success from this model, as depicted in the conceptual framework below.

Conceptual Framework: Organizational Performance Influencing Factors

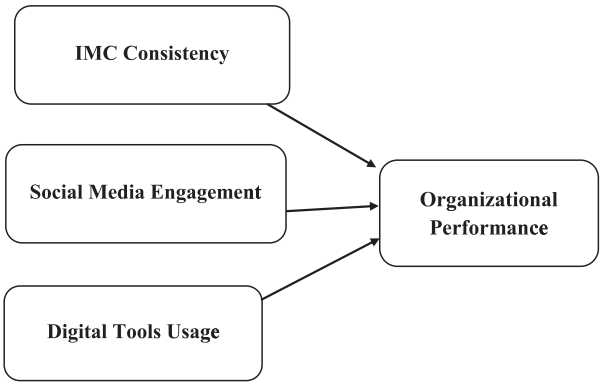


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized positive relationships between IMC Consistency, Social Media Engagement and Digital Tools Usage as independent predictors of Organizational Performance.

2.7.5. Contribution of the Framework

This integrated model advances existing scholarship in three key ways.

First, it moves beyond fragmented analyses of isolated marketing channels to test a unified IMC construct.

Second, it extends IMC and brand-equity theories into a Sub-Saharan African higher-education setting, thereby contextualizing global marketing concepts within a developing economy.

Finally, it offers a replicable empirical structure that university administrators can apply to evaluate and strengthen their own communication strategies. In doing so, the framework positions IMC not merely as a promotional function but as a strategic driver of institutional excellence, stakeholder satisfaction and sustainable competitive advantage.

3. Methods

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This study employed a **quantitative, cross-sectional survey design** to empirically examine the effects of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) dimensions, IMC Consistency, Social Media Engagement and Digital Tools Usage on Organizational Performance at Université Sagesse d'Afrique (USA) in Burundi.

A quantitative approach was selected because it enables objective hypothesis testing and statistical estimation of relationships among latent constructs. The cross-sectional design facilitated the collection of perceptual data from a large and heterogeneous group of stakeholders at a single point in time, thereby providing a comprehensive snapshot of communication practices and perceived institutional performance.

3.2. Participants and Analysis

The study population consisted of **5,120 students and lecturers** drawn from USA's three campuses (Kinindo, Asiatique, and Kamenge). Using the **Yamane (1967) formula**, a representative sample of **350 respondents** was determined. A **stratified random sampling technique** ensured proportional representation across campuses and respondent categories (students and lecturers).

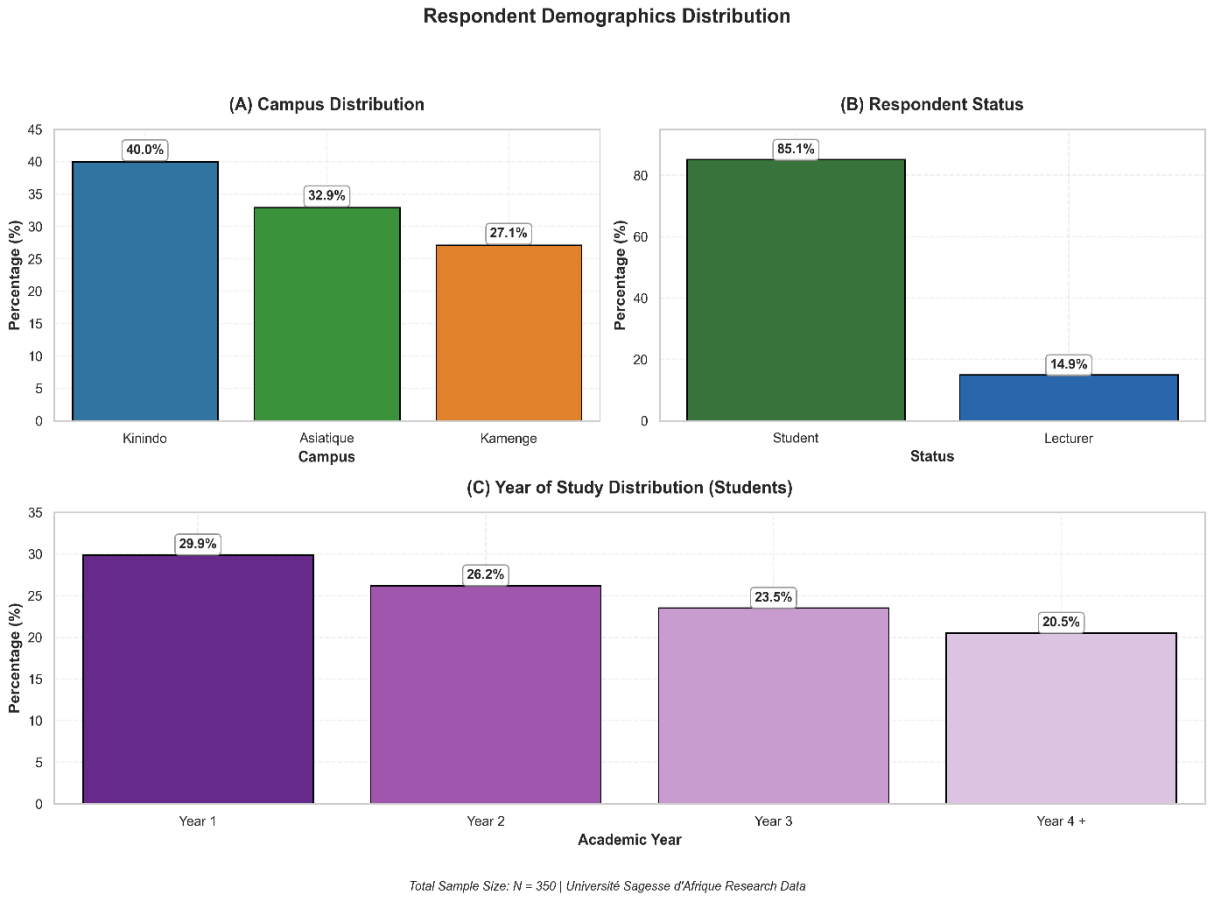
Data were collected using a structured questionnaire adapted from previously validated scales. Internal consistency was high, with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from **0.85 to 0.92,** indicating satisfactory reliability. Statistical analyses were conducted using **Python (version 3.11)** and included

descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation analysis, multiple linear regression, and diagnostic tests (Variance Inflation Factor and Durbin Watson statistics) to confirm the robustness of the regression model.The resulting demographic composition of the sample is detailed in **Table 1** and **Figure 2**.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 350)

Variable	*Category*	*Frequency (n)*	*Percentage (%)*
Campus	Kinindo	140	40.0
	Asiatique	115	32.9
	Kamenge	95	27.1
Status	Student	298	85.1
	Lecturer	52	14.9
Year of Study (Students)	Year 1	89	29.9
	Year 2	78	26.2
	Year 3	70	23.5
	Year 4+	61	20.5

Table 1 presents the distribution of participants by campus (Kinindo, Asiatique, Kamenge), status (student or lecturer) and academic level.



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure 2. Respondents Demographic Distribution

The **figure 2** illustrates the demographic distribution of the 350 respondents across campus, status, and year of study. The largest proportion of participants were from Kinindo Campus (40%), followed by Asiatique

(32.9%) and Kamenge (27.1%). A vast majority of respondents were students (85.1%), with lecturers representing 14.9%. Among students, the highest representation came from year 1 (29.9%), followed by year 2 (26.2%), year 3 (23.5%) and year 4 and above (20.5%), indicating a balanced participation across academic levels.

3.3. Measures and Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into five sections:

1. Demographic information: campus, role, and study level.

2. IMC Consistency: 5 items adapted from Sharma et al. (2024) and Singh et al. (2024) (α = 0.89).

3. Digital Tools Usage : 4 items based on Laradi et al. (2023) and Jiang et al. (2024) (α = 0.85).

4. Social Media Engagement: 5 items measuring interactivity and relationship building (α = 0.91).

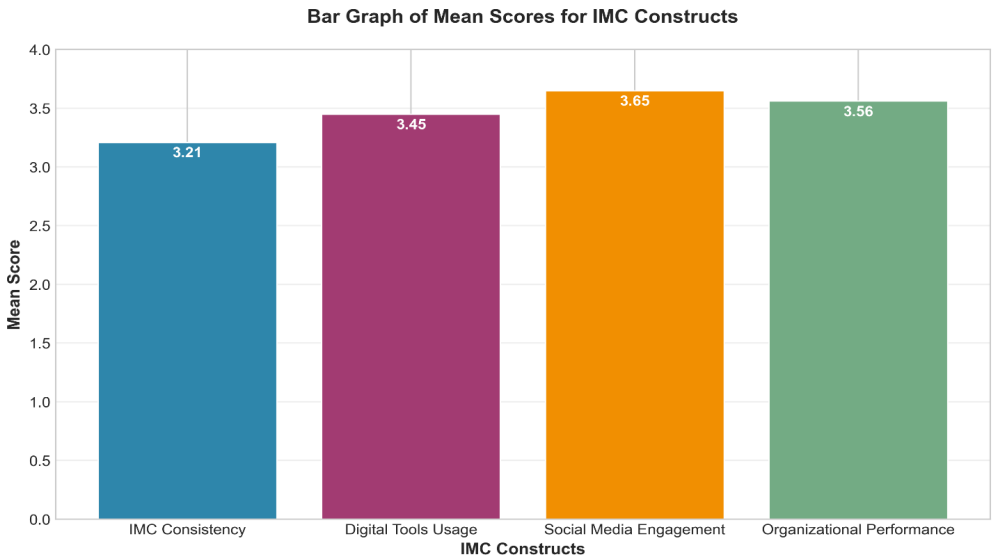
5. Organizational Performance: 6 items adapted from Mateus et al. (2023) and Ngan & Thành (*2022*) (α = 0.92).

All items used a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Internal consistency was verified using Cronbach's alpha coefficients and validity was ensured through adaptation of previously validated instruments. Prior to inferential testing, the psychometric properties of the measurement scales were evaluated to ensure data integrity. **Table 2** and **Figure 3** summarize the internal consistency coefficients and the central tendencies for each core construct.

Table 2. Reliability and Descriptive Statistics for Key Constructs

Construct	*Items*	*Cronbach's α*	*Mean*	*SD*
IMC Consistency	5	0.89	3.21	0.89
Digital Tools Usage	4	0.85	3.45	0.91
Social Media Engagement	5	0.91	3.65	0.78
Organizational Performance	6	0.92	3.56	0.82

Table 2 shows Cronbach's alpha coefficients (all > 0.85) and mean scores for the four primary variables.



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure 3. Bar Graph of Mean Scores for IMC Constructs.

Figure 3 highlights that **Social Media Engagement** received the highest mean score (3.65) while **IMC Consistency** received the lowest (3.21).

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected **between March and May 2024**. To ensure broad accessibility, the questionnaire was

administered both digitally (via Google Forms) and in printed format across the three campuses. All participants received an information sheet explaining the purpose of the study, emphasizing voluntary participation and guaranteeing confidentiality. The average completion time was approximately 15-20 minutes. Following data collection, responses were cleaned, coded, and analyzed using Python (version 3.11).

3.5. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis process comprised five stages:

1. Descriptive statistics: means and standard deviations.
2. Reliability analysis: Cronbach's α to assess scale consistency.
3. Correlation analysis: Pearson's correlation coefficients to test relationships.
4. Multiple regression analysis: to evaluate predictive power of IMC dimensions.
5. Diagnostic tests: normality, independence, homoscedasticity and multicollinearity (VIF).

3.6. Ethical Considerations

This study received ethical approval from the University of Burundi Research Ethics Committee. Before their involvement, all participants provided informed consent. In accordance with the principles of the Declaration of Helsinki (2013), all data were treated with strict confidentiality.

4. Results

This section reports the results of the statistical analyses conducted to test the study hypotheses. In addition to construct-level analysis, an item-level examination was performed to identify the specific components within each IMC dimension that most strongly influence Organizational Performance.

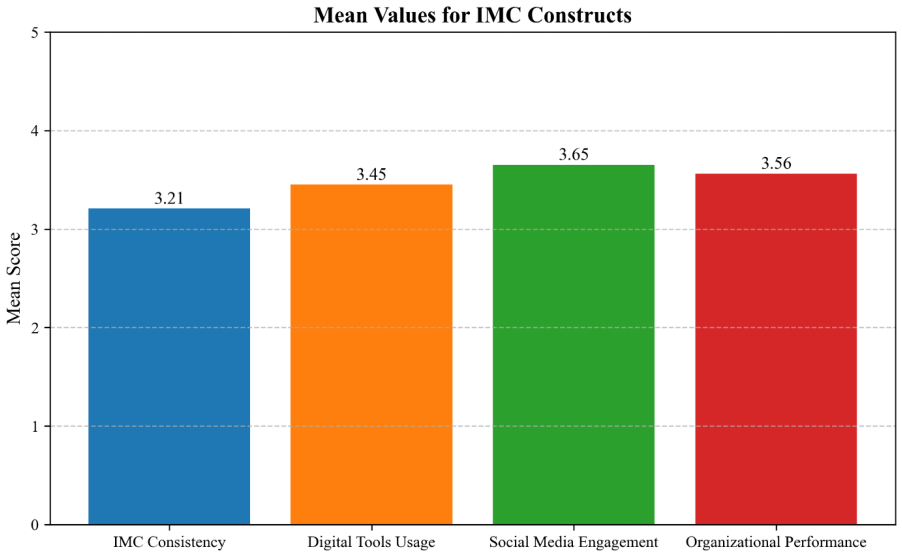
4.1. Descriptive Results

The descriptive analysis indicated moderate to high mean scores for all constructs. Social Media Engagement had the highest mean (M = 3.65), followed by Organizational Performance (M = 3.56), Digital Tools Usage (M = 3.45), and IMC Consistency (M = 3.21), as detailed in **Table 3** and illustrated in **Figure 4**. These values suggest that while participants recognize the importance of digital and social engagement, greater emphasis could be placed on maintaining message consistency.

Table 3. Descriptive Mean Scores of Constructs

Construct	Mean Score (M)
Social Media Engagement	3.65
Organizational Performance	3.56
Digital Tools Usage	3.45
IMC Consistency	3.21

Table 3 *presents the mean scores for the four key constructs measured in the study.*



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure 4 depicts the overall perception levels regarding the institution's communication effectiveness.

4.2. Correlation Analysis

Figure 5 presents the **final Pearson correlation matrix generated from the Python analysis**, visually confirming the strong positive associations reported in **Tables 4** and **4a**. In particular, the relationship between IMC Consistency and Organizational Performance (r = .712, p < .01) is clearly reflected in the intensity of the corresponding matrix cell. The graphical representation therefore corroborates the tabulated correlation coefficients and reinforces the robustness of the construct-level relationships.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix for Key Constructs

Variable	1	2	3	4
1. IMC Consistency	1			
2. Digital Tools Usage	.645	1		
3. Social Media Engagement	.601	.722	1	
4. Organizational Performance	.712	.683	.695	1

p < 0.01

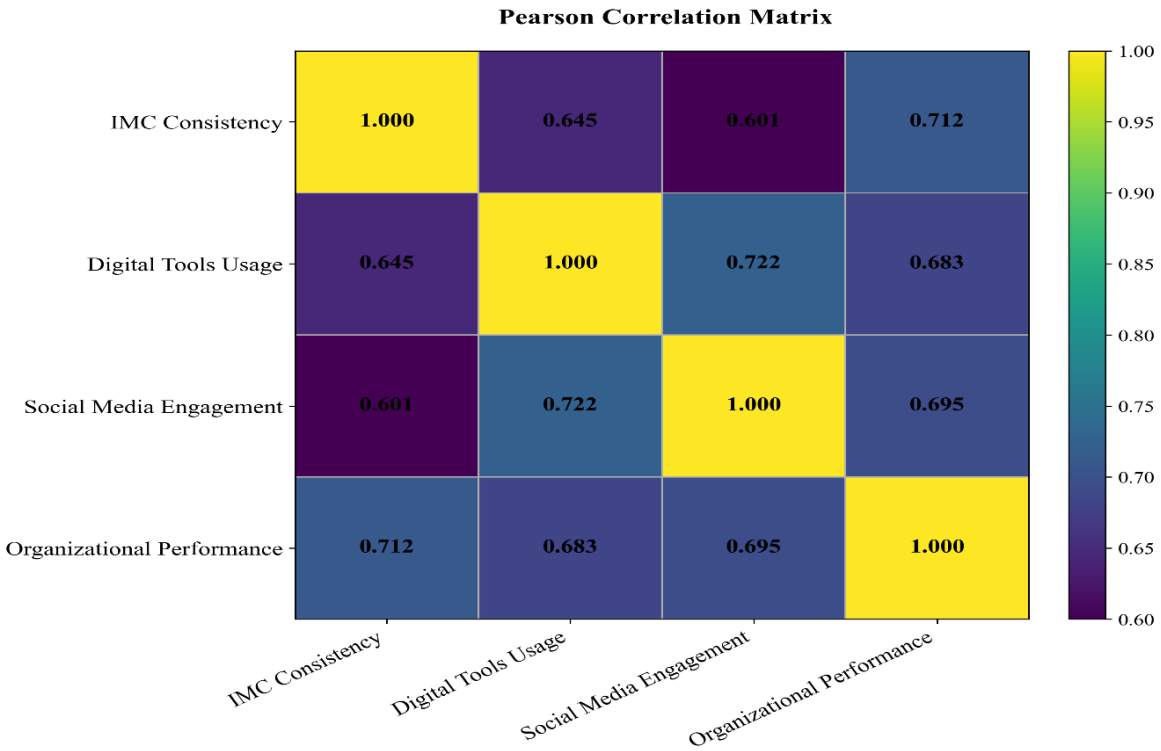
Table 4 *indicates significant positive correlations between all constructs.*

To enrich the analysis, item-level correlations were examined. As shown in **Table 4a**, specific items such as *"The university's messages are consistent across all platforms"* (IMC3) and *"I feel the university listens and responds on social media"* (SME2) showed particularly strong associations with performance indicators like *"I am proud to be associated with this university"* (OP4).

Table 4a. Selected Item-Level Correlations with Organizational Performance Items

IMC/Performance Item	r	p
IMC3 → OP4	.689	< .001
SME2 → OP5	.654	< .001
DTU4 → OP2	.621	< .001

Table 4a highlights the strongest item-level relationships within the correlation matrix.



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure 5. Pearson Correlation Metric

Figure 5 offers a visual representation of the interconnections between communication strategies and organizational outcomes.

4.3. Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to test the predictive strength and hierarchy of IMC dimensions on Organizational Performance (see **Table 5**).

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results and Predictive Hierarchy

Predictor	B	SE B	*β*	t	p	Effect on Performance
(Constant)	0.451	0.205	-	2.20	.028	-
IMC Consistency	0.442	0.058	.480	7.62	< .001	**Primary Driver**
Social Media Engagement	0.263	0.072	.250	3.65	.001	Significant Positive
Digital Tools Usage	0.162	0.065	.180	2.49	.013	Positive Enhancement

Model Summary: F (3,346) = 85.42, p < .001; R_2 = .62; Adjusted R_2 = .61. *Source:*

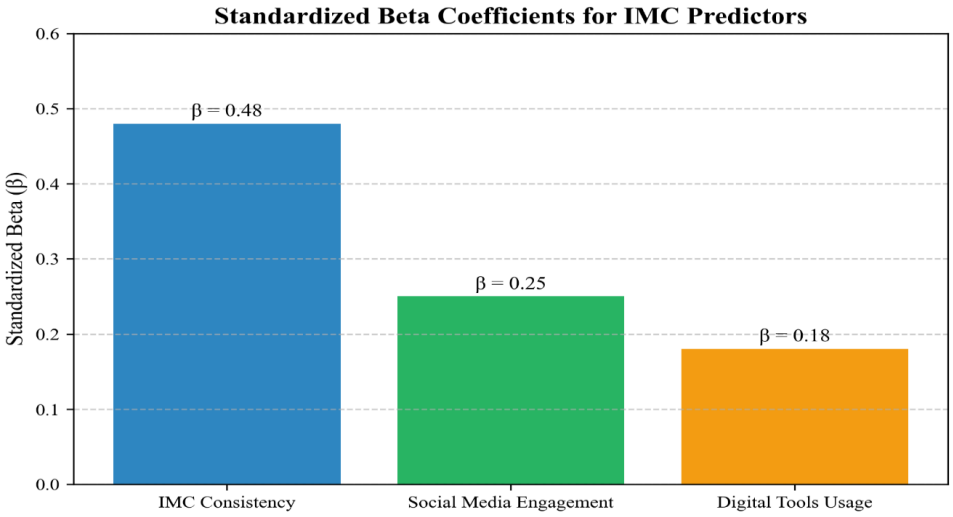
Table 5 shows that the model explains 62% of the variance in performance, with all three predictors reaching statistical significance.

To further deepen the analysis, an item-level regression was performed using stepwise selection to identify the most influential items within each construct. The results, summarized in **Table 5a**, reveal that not all items contribute equally. For instance, within IMC Consistency, the item *"The university's visual identity is uniform across materials"* (IMC2) had the highest standardized beta (β = .32), while in Social Media Engagement, *"The university actively engages with comments and messages"* (SME1) was the strongest predictor (β = .28).

Table 5a. Item-Level Regression Results (Top Predictors)

Item Code	Item Description (Abbreviated)	β	p
IMC2	Visual identity is uniform	.32	< .001
SME1	Actively engages with comments	.28	< .001
DTU3	Website is easy to navigate	.21	.002
OP4	Proud to be associated	–	–

Table 5a identifies the specific items that drive the construct-level relationships.



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure 6. Standardize Beta Coefficients for IMC Predictions

Figure 6 illustrates the relative impact of each IMC dimension at the construct level.

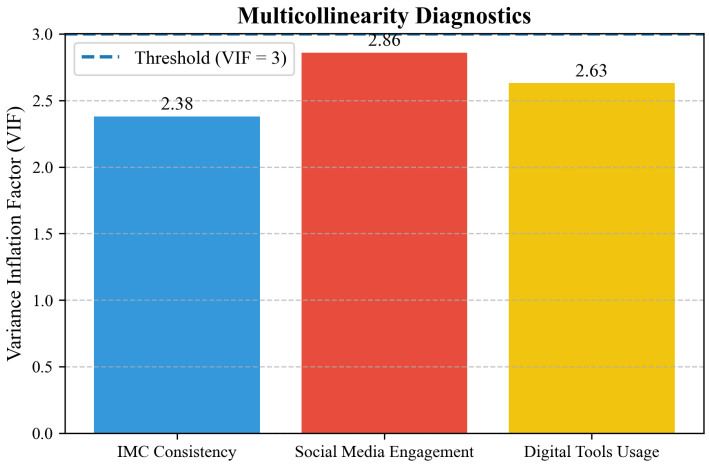
4.4. Model Diagnostics and Statistical Validation

Diagnostic tests confirmed the robustness of the regression model. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictors were below 3 (IMC Consistency = 2.38, Social Media Engagement = 2.86, Digital Tools Usage = 2.63), indicating no multicollinearity. The Durbin-Watson statistic of approximately 2.0 confirmed independence of residuals.

Table 6. Multicollinearity Statistics for Regression Model

Predictor	Tolerance	VIF
IMC Consistency	0.42	2.38
Social Media Engagement	0.35	2.86
Digital Tools Usage	0.38	2.63

***Table 6** confirms that all VIF values remain well below the critical threshold of 3.*



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure7. Multicollinearity Diagnostics

Figure 7 visually validates the structural integrity of the regression estimates.

4.5. Comparative Group Analysis

Independent-sample t-tests revealed no statistically significant differences ($p > .05$) in perceptions across campuses or between students and lecturers, indicating a uniformly perceived institutional image.

Table 7. Campus-wise Descriptive Statistics

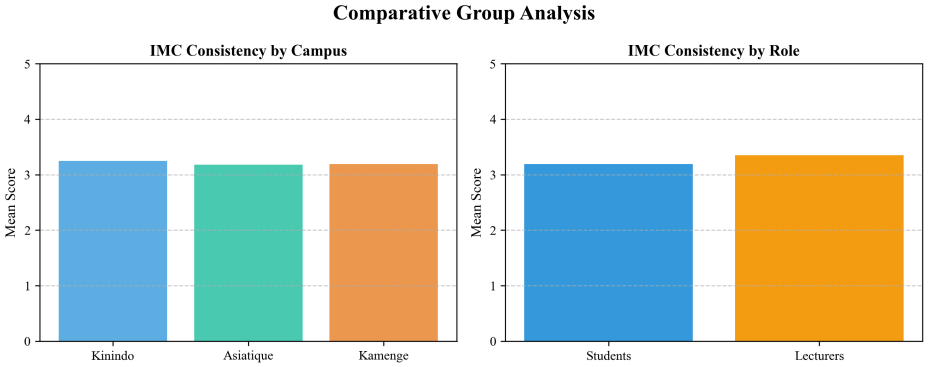
Campus	IMC Consistency	Digital Tools Usage	Social Media Engagement	Organizational Performance
Kinindo	3.25 (0.87)	3.48 (0.89)	3.68 (0.76)	3.59 (0.80)
Asiatique	3.18 (0.91)	3.42 (0.93)	3.62 (0.79)	3.53 (0.84)
Kamenge	3.19 (0.90)	3.44 (0.92)	3.64 (0.80)	3.55 (0.83)

Table 7 demonstrates consistent perceptions across campuses.

Table 8. Student vs. Lecturer Perceptions

Construct	Students (n = 298)	Lecturers (n = 52)	Mean Diff	t	p
IMC Consistency	3.19 (0.90)	3.35 (0.82)	-0.16	-1.24	.216
Digital Tools Usage	3.43 (0.92)	3.58 (0.85)	-0.15	-1.15	.252
Social Media Engagement	3.67 (0.77)	3.54 (0.83)	0.13	1.18	.239
Organizational Performance	3.55 (0.83)	3.62 (0.78)	-0.07	-0.60	.549

Table 8 reveals no statistically significant differences between students and lecturers.



Source: Authors' computation using Python 3.11 (Matplotlib)

Figure 8. Comparative Group Analysis

Figure 8 compares perceptions across campuses and respondent categories.

4.6. Summary of Predictive Power

The final synthesis confirms the predictive hierarchy established in **Table 5**. IMC Consistency emerged as the dominant driver (β = .48), followed by Social Media Engagement (β = .25) and Digital Tools Usage (β = .18).

5. Discussion

This study aimed to determine the impact of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) dimensions on the organizational performance of USA. In plain language, the research confirms that institutional performance measured by reputation, student satisfaction and loyalty is not driven by isolated marketing actions but by the strategic coordination of all communication efforts. The findings indicate that when a university maintains a unified message across its campuses and platforms, it fosters greater trust and commitment among both students and lecturers.

These findings are consistent with previous studies that reported a strong positive relationship between IMC synergy and brand equity (Desta & Amantie, 2023; Sharma et al., 2024). The high predictive power of IMC consistency (β = 48) reinforces the theoretical consensus that message harmony is the most critical driver of performance in service-oriented sectors. However, the results differ from earlier work, which suggested that universities in developing regions often struggle to use social media for relational purposes, focusing instead purely on one-way promotion (Ismail, 2021). At USA, the high mean score for social media engagement (M = 3.65) suggests a more interactive and mature digital relationship with stakeholders than previously observed in similar contexts.

One possible explanation for the findings is the "synergy effect" inherent in the IMC framework, where the combined impact of multiple harmonized channels is greater than the sum of their individual parts. In the competitive Burundian educational landscape, consistent messaging likely acts as a signal of institutional quality and professionalism, helping to overcome structural and technological barriers. Furthermore, the lack of significant differences between student and lecturer perceptions indicates that USA has successfully projected a stable institutional image across its three campuses.

The study contributes to the literature by providing new evidence on how the combined interaction of consistency, digital tools and social media engagement drives performance in a Sub-Saharan African higher education context. Implications of the results include the strategic necessity for HEI administrators to prioritize a unified communication framework over fragmented marketing tactics to ensure long-term institutional sustainability and competitive advantage. Methodologically, the study demonstrates the effectiveness of using Python-based statistical analysis to provide robust empirical insights in developing contexts.

Despite its strengths, this study has limitations. The research utilized a cross-sectional design, which only provides a snapshot of stakeholder perceptions at a specific point in time. Additionally, the data were collected from a single institution, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all universities in Burundi. To mitigate these issues, a representative stratified sample of 350 participants was utilized to ensure a high degree of statistical validity. These limitations suggest directions for future research, which should involve longitudinal studies or multi-institutional comparisons to track how IMC strategies influence enrollment and institutional growth over longer periods across the East African region.

6. Conclusion

This research addressed the critical problem of fragmented marketing communication within the Burundian higher education sector, specifically focusing on USA. The study aimed to highlight how inconsistent messaging across various channels hinders an institution's ability to drive organizational performance, measured through enrollment, reputation and stakeholder loyalty.

Key findings indicate that IMC consistency is the most significant driver of institutional performance (β = 48, $p < .001$). Additionally, the research underscores that social media engagement (β = 25) and the strategic use of digital marketing tools (β = 18) are vital positive predictors of stakeholder satisfaction and institutional reputation. The analysis revealed that the combined IMC framework explains 62% of the variance in organizational performance.

The implications of these findings are profound, underlining the urgent need for university administrators in Burundi to move away from isolated marketing strategies toward a coordinated, unified communication framework. Incorporating such a strategy could mitigate the challenges of limited marketing budgets and uneven digital infrastructure while fostering stronger stakeholder trust. Moreover, the study contributes to existing literature by providing a replicable model for HEIs in under-researched developing contexts.

This research acknowledges limitations such as its cross-sectional survey design, which captures stakeholder perceptions at a single point in time rather than tracking long-term trends. Furthermore, the analysis primarily focused on a single institution, which may affect the immediate generalizability of the results to all universities within the broader East African region.

The findings of this research confirm that IMC consistency is the dominant driver of institutional performance ($\beta = 48$, $p < .001$), explaining a significant portion of the 62% total variance observed. These results support the theoretical "synergy effect," where the combined impact of harmonized channels is greater than the sum of their individual parts. While the study is limited by its cross-sectional design and focus on a single institution, it provides a replicable model for HEIs in under-researched developing contexts. Future research should involve longitudinal studies to evaluate the long-term impact of IMC strategies on student retention and institutional growth across the broader East African region. Ultimately, institutional stability depends on a university's ability to anchor its communication in consistency, digital innovation and rigorous stakeholder engagement.

In conclusion, the competitive pressures of a globalized higher education environment demand proactive and strategic responses. Institutional stability and sustainable prosperity for future generations depend on the university's ability to anchor its communication in consistency, digital innovation and rigorous stakeholder engagement.

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